

PREPARED FOR VISITORS

# Your easy guide to visiting a mosque



**MCB** MUSLIM COUNCIL  
OF BRITAIN



**#visitmymosque**

# What are mosques?

**Mosque - An Islamic place of worship and a centre for education and information. Set features of a Mosque include a prayer hall, a minaret, and a niche housing the pulpit known as the 'mihrab', and is often domed.**

The English term 'mosque' is originally derived from the Arabic 'mas-jid,' which literally means a place of prostration, where 'ma' means 'place' 'sujud' means 'prostration,' that is the act by which 'worshippers fall on their faces to pray.'

## Etymology

When the word first appeared in English in the 1400s, it was rendered as moseak or muskey. By the 16th century, the spelling mutated to mosquee. Etymologists date the current spelling, mosque, to the year 1717. Like most English words of Arabic origin, "mosque" came to English via the Spanish who first adapted it as mesquita, according to the Chambers's Etymological Dictionary of the English Language. (Modern Spanish speakers now call masjid mezquita).



# What can I expect when I visit a mosque?

Every mosque offers a unique experience, and you can be confident of a warm welcome by volunteers.

For example, some mosques will be put on guided tours of the building. In contrast, others may play a video, have exhibitions and stalls about Islam, or showcase recent charity initiatives undertaken by the mosque.

**Why isn't my local mosque taking part?** Some mosques are not purpose-built and do not have the capacity or the facility to host an open day. Others may have their open day on a different date due to their calendar commitments.

We will continue to reach out to more mosques and encourage them to get involved yearly. Please tell us which mosque in your area you'd like to visit by getting in touch with us by email:

[mosques.queries@mcb.org.uk](mailto:mosques.queries@mcb.org.uk)

**Do mosques have a dress code?** Mosques will differ in dress code. Like many places of worship, such as historic church sites in France or Italy, mosques may ask guests to respect the sacredness of the building and its worshippers.

**“The MCB Visit My Mosque initiative is an open invitation to you and your family to spend the day exploring and asking questions.”**

Secretary General  
**Zara Mohammed**

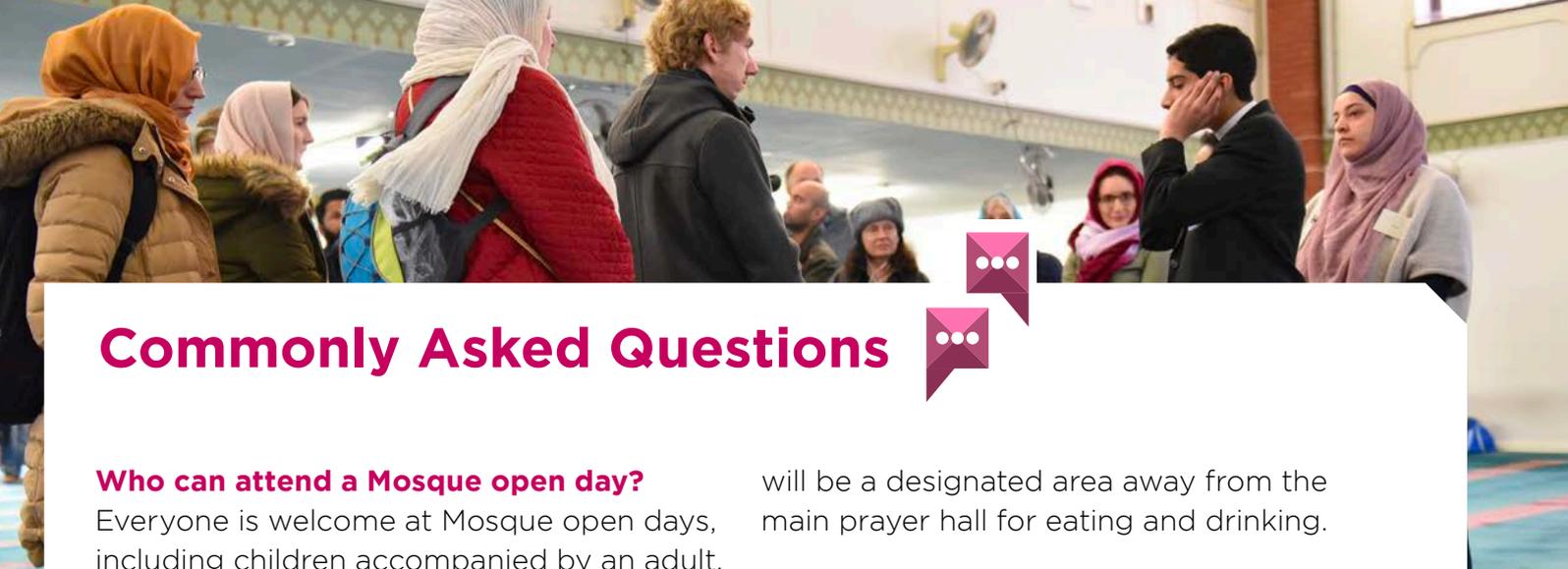


**Here is a quick list of things to consider when visiting a mosque.**

It is encouraged to wear modest, loose-fitting long-sleeved and comfortable clothes.

There are spaces where the prayers are conducted, and you may be requested to wear a head covering in the prayer hall. Mosques tend to have extras; however, having a personal one is much better!

Mosques will request upon entry to the prayer space for shoes to be removed to preserve the sanctity of the space



## Commonly Asked Questions

### **Who can attend a Mosque open day?**

Everyone is welcome at Mosque open days, including children accompanied by an adult. If you require assistance or have questions about accessibility, please contact the Mosque you wish to visit.

**I can't make the VMM days. Can I visit another time?** Absolutely! Mosques are open seven days a week, and most offer private tours and visits for local schools, other faith groups and anyone interested. Contact your local/preferred Mosque to arrange a visit.

**What do I wear to the Mosque?** There is no specific dress code, and standard practice varies in mosques. However, the prayer areas are treated as sacred spaces; therefore, we would recommend both men and women dress modestly.

### **Can you eat or drink in the Mosque?**

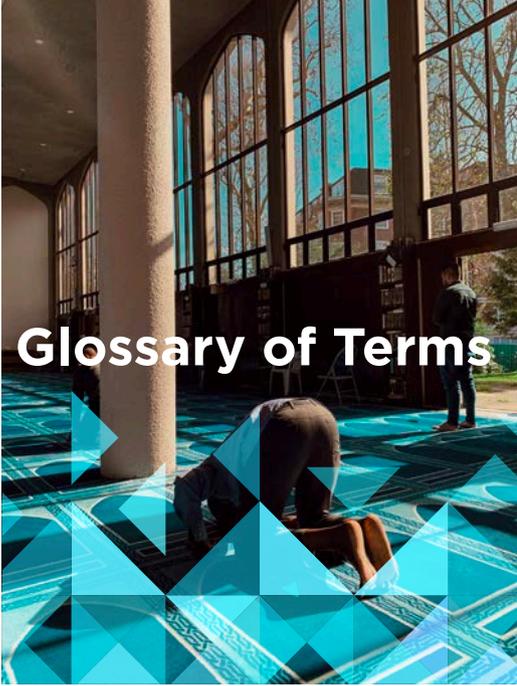
A chat over a cup of tea or refreshments is an integral part of the Visit My Mosque event experience! In most Mosques, there

will be a designated area away from the main prayer hall for eating and drinking.

**What do I say when I meet Muslims in the Mosque?** You are welcome to say assalamu-alay-kum (peace be unto you) as this is the greeting Muslims use when meeting. If someone greets you with assalaamu-alay-kum, you can reply by saying wa-alay-kum salaam (peace be unto you as well). But generally, you can greet as you would do anywhere with hi or hello.

**Is it ok to shake hands?** People of the same gender often shake hands or even hug, and with the opposite gender, a smile is welcome, alongside placing your hand over your heart. However, some Muslim women will prefer not to shake hands.

**Can I take photos?** Yes! You are welcome to take pictures of the Mosque and its contents. However, remember to ask permission from people in the Mosque before photographing them.



## Glossary of Terms

**The Qibla** is the direction Muslims face when praying towards the Ka'ba in Makkah – a cubed shaped building, used as a unified point of direction for all muslims around the world.

**The Mihrab** is a niche in the front wall indicating the direction of Makkah; because of its importance, it is usually the most ornate part of a mosque, highly decorated and often embellished with inscriptions from the Qur'an.

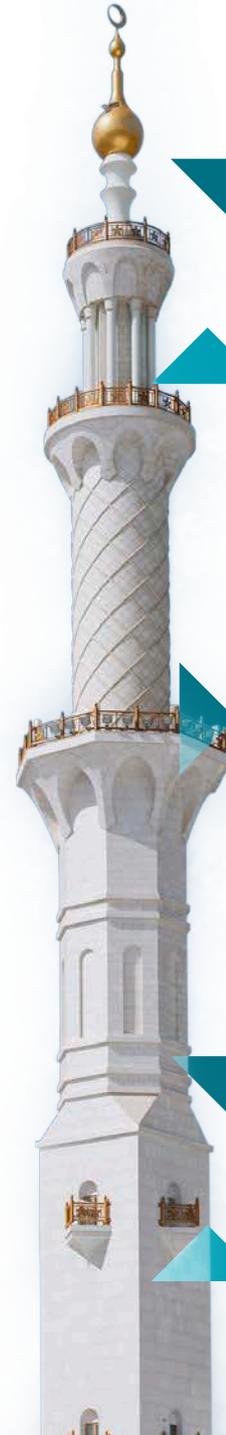
**The Minbar** is a pulpit in the form of a staircase on which the Imam stands when delivering a sermon on Friday prayer. The pulpit is usually situated to the right of the mihrab and is often made of elaborately carved wood or stone.

**A Minaret** is a tall tower attached or adjacent to a mosque. It is designed to project the call to prayer (vocal) far and wide. It usually can be heard loud and clear throughout a town or city. In the UK only some mosques project their call to prayer externally. The minaret has also developed to a visual symbol for recognising a place of prayer.

**The Adhan** is the call to prayer that periodically emanates from a mosque, for the five obligatory prayers. It is always made live, inviting the faithful to pray. This would be recited by a Mu-adhin (caller to prayer).

**The Wudu Area** also known as ablutions area, is a place where worshippers can perform their ritualistic wash before prayer. Most mosques will have a dedicated ablutions area, for both men and women.

**Salah** is the arabic word used to describe the obligatory prayers that are performed by all believing men and women. This includes bowing, prostrating and recitation of prayers for the purpose of spirituality contemplation and closeness to God.





Find a mosque near you



**MCB** MUSLIM COUNCIL  
OF BRITAIN

[mosques.queries@mcb.org.uk](mailto:mosques.queries@mcb.org.uk)

[www.visitmymosque.org](http://www.visitmymosque.org)

[#visitmymosque](https://twitter.com/visitmymosque)

Our Community Partner

