

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

How to Teach Your Child to Pray

The prayer step by step -
a chart for the wall

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For parents

Teach the movements before the words.

A child who can follow the shape of the prayer has a frame to drop the recitation into. Taught the other way round, the words have nothing to attach to.

Pray beside them, do not send them.

"Come and pray with me" is a completely different proposition from "go and pray". Most nightly struggles come from the second.

Surah al-Fatiha is the priority.

It is recited in every rak'ah of every prayer. Nothing else comes close in value for the effort - have a teacher listen to it early.

Slow is fine.

The goal is a child who prays at twenty-five, not one who performed correctly at seven.

About the sources

Each entry names the collection it is narrated in - Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah - or, for the Quran, the exact surah and verse. We give collections rather than hadith numbers because numbering differs between printings. This is a learning aid for families, not a substitute for a teacher or a scholar.

The prayer, step by step

1 Niyyah - intend the prayer

The intention is in the heart, not on the tongue. A child simply needs to know which prayer they are about to pray.

2 Takbir - raise the hands and say Allahu Akbar

Hands up level with the shoulders or ears, then say Allahu Akbar. From this moment, the prayer has begun and talking stops.

3 Qiyam - stand and recite

Surah al-Fatiha in every rak'ah, then a short surah in the first two. This is why al-Fatiha and the short surahs are the first thing a child learns to recite correctly.

4 Ruku' - bow

Bow with a straight back, hands on the knees, saying Subhana Rabbiyal-'Azim three times.

5 Stand up from bowing

Rise saying Sami'Allahu liman hamidah, then Rabbana wa lakal-hamd.

6 Sujud - prostrate

Down on seven bones: forehead with nose, two palms, two knees, the toes of both feet. Say Subhana Rabbiyal-A'la three times. This is the posture children usually love most - let them.

7 Sit, then prostrate again

Sit briefly between the two prostrations, then go down a second time.

8 Tashahhud and salam

In the final sitting, recite the tashahhud and the salawat, then turn the head right and left saying As-salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullah.

A note on differences between schools

The sequence above is the core the schools of fiqh agree on. They differ on hand placement, some sitting positions and certain wordings; those differences are longstanding and each is grounded in evidence. For how your family prays, ask your teacher or local imam.