

Guidelines for Visitors to our Islamic Center

We are glad that you have decided to visit our mosque and are excited to host you! We have an open door policy to all who would like to visit and observe the daily prayers and participate in the activities at the Islamic Center of Ann Arbor. To provide some guidance for our guests, we have listed answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about visiting a mosque. If you need further clarification please contact us at executivedirector@mca-a2.org.

What should I wear?

One of the most important values within Islam and to Muslims is the concept of modesty. Modesty is a virtue that is implemented in many facets of Islamic life. The most noticeable demonstration of modesty is Islamic dress. While we do not expect our non-Muslim friends to abide by the letter of Islamic law, we do have a general expectation of modesty within the Islamic Center. This can be achieved by wearing loose-fitting clothes for both genders. For men, it is better to wear long pants, and for women to wear pants or full-length skirts or dresses (along with long sleeves). Muslim women typically wear a headscarf, and visitors may do so if they choose.

Why do we take our shoes off?

The purpose behind the removal of shoes is to keep the prayer hall as free from dirt as possible to preserve the cleanliness and sanctity of the mosque. Islam is a religion of purity – purity of faith, purity in how we earn and spend our wealth, purity in speech and good manners, and also purity with regards to the cleanliness of our bodies, clothes, and places of worship. In addition, because Muslims place their foreheads on the ground during the prayer, we like to ensure that the cleanliness of the prayer hall is maintained. The areas within the Islamic Center where shoes are expected to be removed are labelled and there is a designated area for shoes to be placed.

Where are the women praying?

To provide our Muslim Sisters with privacy, the women of the congregation offer prayers in a separate room adjacent to the main prayer hall.

What happens when people join the prayer late?

In general terms, they will join the prayer that is already in progress, and after the Imam (leader of the prayer) has finished, they will complete the portions that they missed in a specified manner according to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him).

How do Friday prayers work?

Friday is the day of congregational prayers for Muslims. A sermon followed by a short prayer at the mosque in congregation is substituted for the regular noon-time prayer. The service begins with the call to prayer, followed by two short sermons punctuated by a brief pause in the middle. After the sermons, another call to prayer is made and the congregation stands to follow the imam in the prayer.

Do Muslims shake hands with the Opposite Gender?

Please be aware that many Muslims do not shake hands with anyone of the opposite gender besides their spouses or immediate family. That is, men do not shake hands with unrelated

women, and women do not shake hands with unrelated men. In order to avoid awkwardness, it is better not to extend one's hand to the opposite gender unless they extend their hand first.

In addition to these common questions we often find that visitors have a host of interesting questions about Islam that it seems they have been waiting for the opportunity to ask. We hope that you will come with your questions and that you will not hesitate in asking them. The only bad question is the one that is not asked.

Etiquette while observing the Muslim Prayer

Cell phones

A ringing cell phone is a distraction to any service at the mosque--please silence or power-off phones when entering the building.

Talking during prayer

Even outside prayer times, please don't disturb worshippers who may be praying. Avoid standing close to them or walking in front of them. If you need to talk to someone during the prayer, please take the conversation outside the prayer hall into the lobby or hallways so as to not distract those who are praying.

Not standing/walking in front of someone praying

If you are walking through the prayer area and encounter someone who is praying, please walk behind, instead of in front of him or her.

Thank you again for your interest in visiting our mosque. The spirit of dialogue and openness is vitally important among all people, and especially among neighbors. We hope that these guidelines have proven helpful and we look forward to your visit.