



LIFE IS TEMPORARY

# Guides for Muslim Families

*What to do when someone dies, and how to prepare*

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كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ

*"Every soul will taste death."* Āl 'Imrān 3:185

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إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

*Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn. Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.* Qur'ān, al-Baqarah 2:156

## We are sorry. Here is what happens next.

You do not have to do this alone, or all at once. Your masjid has done this many times. Follow the steps in order, and open each one when you reach it.



As soon as you can, call your masjid's funeral committee.

They will arrange the washing, the shroud, the prayer and the burial, and tell you which funeral home to use.

1

### Have the death pronounced

In the first hour

A death has to be confirmed before anything else can happen.

☐

In a hospital or hospice, ask the staff to pronounce the death

☐

At home and unexpected, call 911

- ☐ Tell the staff early that the family needs a quick release for a religious burial

and

Close the eyes, cover the body, make duʿā

In the first hour · at the same time as the step above

Gently and without hurry. Those present can do this while the calls are made.

- ☐ Close the eyes and the mouth
- ☐ Straighten the arms and legs
- ☐ Cover the body with a clean sheet
- ☐ Pray for them, and say only good

#### EVIDENCE

The Prophet ﷺ closed the eyes of Abū Salamah and prayed for him. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 920

2

Call the masjid's funeral committee

In the first few hours

They arrange the washing, the shroud, the prayer and the burial, and usually know which funeral home to use.

- ☐ Call the funeral committee or the imam
- ☐ Tell them where the body is and who the next of kin is
- ☐ Agree a time for the ghusl and the janazah prayer

#### NO NUMBER?

Use the directory below, or call the nearest large masjid. They will know who to call.

3

### Ask whether a coroner is involved PAPERWORK

If the death was sudden

After an unexpected death a coroner or medical examiner may need to examine the body, which can delay burial.

- ☐ Ask the hospital or police whether the case has gone to the coroner
- ☐ Ask whether an autopsy is required
- ☐ Ask how to register a religious objection under your state law

#### STATE RULES

Whether an autopsy can be declined on religious grounds differs from state to state. Ask the medical examiner's office directly.

4

### Choose a funeral home that allows ghusl PAPERWORK

Within the first day

Many funeral homes work with Muslim committees. Your committee will usually name one.

- ☐ Confirm the committee can wash the body there
- ☐ Ask for no embalming and no viewing
- ☐ Ask the funeral home to file the death certificate and the burial permit

and

### Wash and shroud the body

Within the first day • at the same time as the step above

Done by trained Muslims of the same sex, or by the spouse. The committee usually provides the cloth.

- ☐ Confirm who will wash
- ☐ Confirm the kafan is ready

#### A SPOUSE MAY WASH

The Prophet ﷺ told 'Ā'ishah that if she died before him he would wash and shroud her himself. Sunan Ibn Mājah 1465 (ḥasan)

5

## The janazah prayer and the burial

As soon as possible

The prayer is often held after one of the daily prayers, and the burial follows straight after.

- ☐ Tell family and community the time of the prayer
- ☐ Confirm the grave in a Muslim cemetery or Muslim section
- ☐ Ask the plot price and the fee to open and close the grave

How to pray the janazah prayer >

### HASTE

The Prophet ﷺ told us to hurry with the funeral. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1315

6

## Get copies of the death certificate PAPERWORK

In the first week

Banks, insurers, the DMV and government offices will each want a certified copy.

- ☐ Order several certified copies through the funeral home
- ☐ Or order them from the your state vital records office

### WHERE TO ORDER

The CDC lists every state's vital records office. [Open ↗](#)

7

## Pay the funeral costs and list every debt

In the first weeks

The funeral is paid from the estate first, then the debts. Nothing is inherited until both are settled.

- ☐ Pay the funeral costs from the estate
- ☐ List loans, bills and money owed to family
- ☐ Ask a scholar about any unpaid zakat

### THE ORDER

Funeral, then debts, then bequests from a third, then the heirs. al-Sirājiyyah (al-Sajāwandī), opening chapter

and

## Find the will, and tell Social Security PAPERWORK

In the first weeks · at the same time as the step above

The executor named in the will leads what follows.

- ☐ Check papers at home, email, and with any attorney
- ☐ Confirm the funeral home reported the death to Social Security
- ☐ Ask about survivor benefits
- ☐ Secure the house and car, and keep the phone line active for sign-in codes

### SOCIAL SECURITY

Funeral homes usually report the death. Survivors can also call 1-800-772-1213. Open ↗

8

## Settle and divide the estate PAPERWORK

In the months after

Small estates may qualify for a simpler process in your state. One call to a local estate attorney will tell you.

- ☐ Open probate if the estate needs it
- ☐ Close accounts and cancel subscriptions

### ONE THIRD

A bequest is limited to a third, and an heir cannot receive one. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 2742 ; Sunan Abī Dāwūd 2870 (ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ)

☐ Pay any bequest, up to one third, to people who are not heirs

☐ Divide the rest by the fixed shares

See how the estate divides >

9

## Look after the family

Four months and ten days

Mourning is kept to three days, except by a widow, who mourns four months and ten days, the length of her 'iddah, or until she gives birth if she is pregnant.

☐ Bring food and help with the household

☐ Help the widow with errands and appointments

☐ Make du'ā for the one who has died

What to say and do when you visit >

### EVIDENCE

No mourning beyond three days except for a husband: four months and ten days. A pregnant widow's term ends with the birth. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1280 ; Qur'ān, al-Ṭalāq 65:4

### FOOD

Prepare food for the family, for what has happened has occupied them. Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3132 (ḥasan)

General guidance, not a fatwa or legal advice. Rules on autopsies, embalming, burial permits and probate differ by state; your funeral home and a local estate attorney can confirm them.



## The washing and the shroud

The ghusl is the last service a family gives the one who has died. It is usually done by trained volunteers from the masjid, and family members of the same sex may take part. This page explains what happens, so you know what to expect and what to ask for.

- 1** Who washes  
Men wash men and women wash women. A wife may wash her husband, and most scholars allow a husband to wash his wife; the Ḥanafī school does not.  
Sunan Ibn Mājah 1465 (ḥasan)
- 2** Privacy and gentleness  
The washing is done in a private room, with the body covered from navel to knee throughout. Only those washing, and family who wish to help, are present. Handle the body gently, as you would if they were alive.
- 3** Begin with the right side and the parts of wuḍū'  
The washers begin with the right side of the body and the places washed in wuḍū', then wash the whole body.  
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1255
- 4** Wash an odd number of times, with sidr, and camphor at the end  
The body is washed three times, or five, or more if needed, with water and sidr (lote-tree leaves), and camphor is added to the last washing. Then it is dried gently.  
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1253
- 5** The kafan  
A man is shrouded in three plain white sheets, with no shirt and no turban. Many scholars recommend five pieces for a woman: a lower wrap, a shirt, a head covering and two sheets. The ḥadīth behind the five pieces is graded weak, and one garment that covers the body is the minimum: Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr was shrouded in a single cloak at Uḥud.  
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1264 · Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3157 (graded weak) · Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1276

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#### WHAT FAMILIES CAN ASK FOR

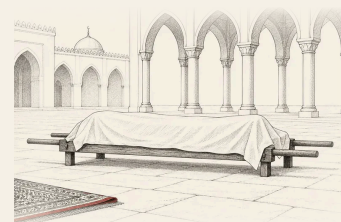
To be present or help; no embalming; plain white cotton; the washing as soon as possible.

#### LEARNING TO DO IT

Many masajid run ghusl workshops. Learning before you need it is a great service. Ask your masjid's funeral committee when the next one is.

#### NEXT

The janazah prayer



## How to pray the janazah prayer

The funeral prayer is prayed standing, with no bowing and no prostration. The imam leads; everyone else stands in rows behind him. It has four takbīrs, and something is said after each one.

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1

Stand in rows and make your intention

Stand behind the imam facing the qiblah, with the body in front of him. Intend in your heart to pray the funeral prayer for this person.

The Prophet ﷺ prayed for al-Najāshī with the people in rows behind him and said four takbīrs: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1245

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2

First takbīr, then al-Fātiḥah

Raise your hands and say *Allāhu akbar*, then recite al-Fātiḥah quietly.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

*In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. [All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds - The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense. It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path - The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.*

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1335 · Arabic: Tanzil; translation: Saheeh International

**Where the schools differ.** The Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools praise Allah here instead of reciting al-Fātiḥah. The Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī schools recite it, following Ibn ʿAbbās. Follow your imam.

3

Second takbīr, then blessings on the Prophet ﷺ

Say *Allāhu akbar* and send blessings on the Prophet ﷺ, as in the sitting of every prayer.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ، وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ، وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ، اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ، وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ، وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

*O Allah! Send Your Mercy on Muhammad and on the family of Muhammad, as You sent Your Mercy on Abraham and on the family of Abraham, for You are the Most Praise-worthy, the Most Glorious. O Allah! Send Your Blessings on Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You sent your Blessings on Abraham and on the family of Abraham, for You are the Most Praise-worthy, the Most Glorious.*

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3370

4

Third takbīr, then the duʿāʾ for the one who has died

Say *Allāhu akbar* and pray for them. This is the heart of the prayer; any sincere duʿāʾ fulfils it, and this is one the Prophet ﷺ said.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ وَارْحَمْهُ وَعَافِهِ وَاعِفْ عَنْهُ وَأَكْرِمْ نَزْلَهُ وَوَسِّعْ مَدْخَلَهُ وَاغْسِلْهُ بِالْمَاءِ وَالتَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ وَنَقِّهِ مِنَ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا نَقَّيْتَ الثَّوْبَ  
الْأَبْيَضَ مِنَ الدَّنَسِ وَأَبْدِلْهُ دَارًا خَيْرًا مِنْ دَارِهِ وَأَهْلًا خَيْرًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَزَوْجًا خَيْرًا مِنْ زَوْجِهِ وَأَدْخِلْهُ الْجَنَّةَ وَأَعِذْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ أَوْ  
مِنْ عَذَابِ النَّارِ

*O Allah! forgive him, have mercy upon him, give him peace and absolve him. Receive him with honour and make his grave spacious; wash him with water, snow and hail. Cleanse him from faults as Thou wouldst cleanse a white garment from impurity. Requite him with an abode more excellent than his abode, with a family better than his family, and with a mate better than his mate. Admit him to the Garden, and protect him from the torment of the grave and the torment of the Fire.*

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 963 • For a woman, “him” becomes “her” (lahā)

The Prophet ﷺ also prayed this du‘ā’ over the dead, for the whole community. It can be said with the first or in its place.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَمَيِّتِنَا وَصَغِيرِنَا وَكَبِيرِنَا وَذَكَرْنَا وَأُنْثَانَا وَشَاهِدِنَا وَغَائِبِنَا اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَأَحْيِهِ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ تَوَفَّيْتَهُ مِنَّا فَتَوَفَّهُ  
عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهُ وَلَا تَضِلَّنَا بَعْدَهُ

*O Allah, forgive our living and our dead, our young and our old, our male and our female, those of us present and those absent. O Allah, whoever of us You keep alive, keep him alive in faith, and whoever of us You take, take him in Islam. O Allah, do not deprive us of his reward and do not let us go astray after him.*

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3201 (ṣaḥīḥ, al-ʿAlbānī) • also Tirmidhī 1024, ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ; Ibn Mājah 1498

*Allāhumma-ghfir li-ḥayyīnā wa mayyitinā, wa ṣaghīrinā wa kabīrinā, wa dhakarīnā wa unthānā, wa shāhidīnā wa ghāʾibīnā. Allāhumma man aḥyaytahu minnā fa-aḥyihī ʿalā al-īmān, wa man tawaffaytahu minnā fa-tawaffahu ʿalā al-islām. Allāhumma lā taḥrimnā ajrahu wa lā tuḍillanā baʿdah*

#### FOR A CHILD

The prayer over a child is the same. After the third takbīr, pray for the child and for the parents. The Prophet ﷺ said that a miscarried child is prayed over and that forgiveness and mercy are asked for its parents.

وَالسَّقَطُ يُصَلَّى عَلَيْهِ وَيُدْعَى لِوَالِدَيْهِ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ وَالرَّحْمَةِ

*The miscarried child is prayed over, and forgiveness and mercy are asked for its parents.*

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3180 (ṣaḥīḥ, al-ʿAlbānī)

The wording most often taught for a child is not from the Prophet ﷺ. Al-Bukhārī records it, without a chain, as what al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, one of the generation after the Companions, used to say. It is a good du‘ā’ and widely used; say it knowing where it comes from.

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ لَنَا فَرَطًا وَسَلْفًا وَأَجْرًا

*O Allah, make him for us one who goes ahead to prepare the way, a forerunner, and a reward.*

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Janā'iz, heading of the chapter on al-Fātiḥah in the funeral prayer (words of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, without a chain)

*Allāhumma-ḡalhu lanā faraṭan wa salafan wa ajrā*

Abū Hurayrah, a Companion, prayed over a child who had never done wrong and was heard saying the shorter du'ā' below. Mālik records it in the Muwaṭṭa'. This too is a Companion's own practice, not a saying of the Prophet ﷺ.

اللَّهُمَّ أَعِذْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ

*O Allah, protect him from the punishment of the grave.*

Muwaṭṭa' Mālik, Kitāb al-Janā'iz 16:18 (Abū Hurayrah's own practice)

*Allāhumma a'idhhu min 'adhāb al-qabr*

**For a girl**, -hu (him) becomes -hā (her): *ij'alhā, a'idhhā*. More on when a child dies.

5

Fourth takbīr, then the salām

Say *Allāhu akbar*, pause briefly for a short du'ā', then turn your head to the right and say *as-salāmu 'alaykum wa raḥmatullāh*. Many also turn to the left.

6

If you missed it, or they died far away

**At the grave.** A woman (or man) who used to sweep the masjid died and was buried without the Prophet ﷺ being told. He asked to be shown the grave, and prayed over it there. The schools differ on who may do this and for how long after the burial, so ask your imam before you go.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1337

**In absentia.** When al-Najāshī, the king of Abyssinia, died far away, the Prophet ﷺ announced his death and led the funeral prayer for him in Madinah. This is the *ṣalāt al-ghā'ib*, prayed as above but with no body present.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1245

**Where the schools differ.** The Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī schools allow the prayer in absentia; the Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools do not, and hold that the body must be present. Some scholars allow it only soon after the death. Follow your imam and your masjid's practice. Dār al-Iftā' al-Miṣriyyah, fatwā 4248: the funeral prayer in absentia (2004)

#### IF YOU ARRIVE LATE

Join at the imam's next takbīr and follow him. Ask the imam how to complete what you missed.

#### IF YOU DO NOT KNOW THE ARABIC

Pray for them in your own words after the third takbīr. Allah hears every language.

#### FOR THE FAMILY

What to say to them, and du'ā's for the one who has died. Du'ā's for the grieving

## **AFTER THE PRAYER**

The body is taken straight to the grave. Follow if you can. **The full step-by-step guide**



## Visiting a grieving family

You do not need the perfect words. Go, sit with them, help with something practical, and pray for the one who has died.

1

### What to say

The Prophet ﷺ sent these words to his grieving daughter: *To Allah belongs what He took, and to Him belongs what He gave, and everything with Him has an appointed time. So be patient and hope for reward.* Saying *innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rājiʿūn* and making duʿā' for the one who has died is always right.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1284 • Qurʾān, al-Baqarah 2:156

2

### Tears are a mercy

When the Prophet ﷺ wept as his grandchild was dying and was asked about it, he said it was mercy that Allah places in the hearts of His servants. Let the family grieve.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1284

3

### Bring food

The family is occupied with what has happened. Cook for them, or organize meals for the first days, so they do not have to.

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3132 (ḥasan)

4

### Mourning lasts three days, except for a widow

Mourning is kept to three days, except by a widow, who mourns four months and ten days, or until she gives birth if she is pregnant. After the first days, check in on her quietly with help for errands and appointments.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1280 • Qurʾān, al-Baqarah 2:234

#### THE REWARD

No believer consoles his brother in a calamity except that Allah clothes him in garments of honour on the Day of Resurrection. Sunan Ibn Mājah 1601 (ḥasan)

#### PRACTICAL HELP

Offer something specific: “I will bring dinner on Tuesday,” “I can drive to the funeral home.”

#### THE WORDS IN ARABIC

These words of condolence, Umm Salamah’s du‘ā’ and the du‘ā’ for the one who has died, with their Arabic. Du‘ā’s for the grieving

## Du‘ā’s for the grieving

What the Prophet ﷺ taught us to say when someone dies: for ourselves, for the one who has gone, and to the family they leave behind. Each is given with its Arabic, a transliteration and its source.

1

When you hear the news

Say the words Allah praised in the Qur’ān: *innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji‘ūn*, “we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.” Umm Salamah heard the Prophet ﷺ say that whoever is struck by a loss and says this, with the du‘ā’ after it, Allah will reward them and give them something better in its place. When her husband Abū Salamah died she said it, wondering who could be better than him, and later married the Prophet ﷺ.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ اللَّهُمَّ أَجِرْنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَأَخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

*We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return. O Allah, reward me in my affliction and give me something better than it in exchange.*

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 918

*Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji‘ūn. Allāhumma-ʿjurnī fī muṣībati wa akhlif lī khayran minhā*

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

*And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return." Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.*

Qur’ān, al-Baqarah 2:155-157 • Arabic: Tanzil; translation: Saheeh International

2

For the one who has died

When Abū Salamah died, the Prophet ﷺ closed his eyes and prayed for him by name. Say it with the name of the one you have lost in place of “Abū Salamah”.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي سَلَمَةً وَارْفَعْ دَرَجَتَهُ فِي الْمَهْدِيِّينَ وَاخْلُفْهُ فِي عَقْبِهِ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَلَهُ يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَافْسَحْ لَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ وَنُورْ لَهُ فِيهِ

*O Allah, forgive Abū Salamah, raise his rank among the rightly guided, and be his successor for those he leaves behind. Forgive us and him, O Lord of the worlds. Make his grave spacious for him and give him light in it.*

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 920

*Allāhumma-ghfir li-[name] wa-rfa' darajatahu fil-mahdiyyīn, wa-khlufhu fī 'aqibihi fil-ghābirīn, wa-ghfir lanā wa lahu yā rabbal-'ālamīn, wa-fsaḥ lahu fī qabrihi wa nawwir lahu fih*

He also taught Umm Salamah what to say for herself and her husband together:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلَهُ وَأَعْقِبْنِي مِنْهُ عَقْبِي حَسَنَةً

*O Allah, forgive me and him, and give me after him a good replacement.*

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 919

*Allāhumma-ghfir lī wa lahu wa a'qibnī minhu 'uqbā ḥasanah*

**For a woman**, -hu (him) becomes -hā (her): *wa lahā, minhā, qabrihā*. The du'ā's of the janazah prayer itself are in the janazah prayer guide.

### 3

At the grave, after the burial

When the Prophet ﷺ finished burying someone, he would stand at the grave and tell those there to pray that the one who had died be kept firm, because they were being questioned at that moment. Stay a little, and ask Allah for their forgiveness and firmness in your own words.

اسْتَغْفِرُوا لِأَخِيكُمْ وَسَلُّوا لَهُ التَّثْبِيتَ فَإِنَّهُ الآنَ يُسْأَلُ

*Ask forgiveness for your brother and ask that he be made firm, for he is now being questioned.*

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3221 (ṣaḥīḥ, al-Albānī) • Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ: ḥasan

*Istaghfirū li-akhikum wa salū lahu al-tathbīt, fa-innahu al-āna yus'al*

### 4

What to say to the family

When the Prophet's daughter sent for him as her son was dying, he sent her his salām and these words. They are the best thing to say to a grieving family, in Arabic or in English.

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ وَلَهُ مَا أَعْطَى وَكُلُّ عِنْدَهُ بِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى، فَلْتَصْبِرْ وَلْتَحْتَسِبْ

*To Allah belongs what He took, and to Him belongs what He gave, and everything with Him has an appointed term. So let her be patient and hope for reward.*

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1284

*Inna lillāhi mā akhadha wa lahu mā aʿtā, wa kullun ʿindahu bi-ajalin musammā, fal-taṣbir wal-taḥtasib*

Speak well around the dying and the dead. The angels say *āmīn* to what is said there, so let it be duʿāʾ and good words.

إِذَا حَضَرْتُمُ الْمَرِيضَ أَوِ الْمَيِّتَ فَقُولُوا خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ يُؤْمِنُونَ عَلَى مَا تَقُولُونَ

*When you are with the sick or the dead, say what is good, for the angels say āmīn to whatever you say.*

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 919

Short and sincere is enough: “May Allah forgive him and have mercy on him.” “May Allah give you patience and reward you.” “I am here; what can I do this week?”

## 5

What not to say

**Do not say for certain where they are.** When a woman told the dead ʿUthmān ibn Maẓʿūn, “I testify that Allah has honoured you,” the Prophet ﷺ asked how she knew, and said that he himself hoped good for him. Say “we hope” and pray, rather than declare. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1243

**Do not wail or curse.** Weeping is a mercy; striking the face, tearing clothes and crying out against Allah’s decree are not. At Abū Salamah’s death, when his family cried out, the Prophet ﷺ told them to pray only for good for themselves. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1294 • Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 920

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَطَمَ الْخُدُودَ، وَشَقَّ الْجُيُوبَ، وَدَعَا بِدَعْوَى الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

*He is not one of us who strikes his cheeks, tears his clothes and cries out with the cries of the Days of Ignorance.*

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1294

**Do not hurry them out of grief.** Avoid “it was for the best,” “at least...,” or comparing their loss to another. Listening is often the kindest thing.

## 6

### Condolence: the first days and food

Condolence (*ta'ziyah*) is consoling the family, urging patience and praying for the one who died. It is usually offered in the first three days, which is how long mourning lasts for everyone but a widow; someone who was away or only heard later can still offer it. Keep visits short unless the family wants company.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1280 • Sunan Ibn Mājah 1601 (ḥasan)

Feed the family; do not expect them to feed you. When news came of Ja'far's death, the Prophet ﷺ told his household to cook for Ja'far's family, because what had happened had taken all their attention.

اصْنَعُوا لآلِ جَعْفَرٍ طَعَامًا فَإِنَّهُ قَدْ أَتَاهُمْ أَمْرٌ شَغَلَهُمْ

*Prepare food for the family of Ja'far, for something has come to them that occupies them.*

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3132 (ḥasan)

For practical help with visiting, see visiting a grieving family.

#### NO ARABIC?

Pray in your own words, in any language. These are the words the Prophet ﷺ used; any sincere du'ā' is heard.

#### VISITING

What to bring and how long to stay.  
Visiting the family

#### PATIENCE

Real patience is at the first blow of the loss. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1302

#### LETTING PEOPLE KNOW

Ready-to-send messages for the death, the janazah time and du'ā'.  
Notify family and friends

# When someone dies abroad

Whether the death happened overseas or the family hopes to bury someone in their home country, the same choice comes first: bury where they died, or bring them home.

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**1**

## Contact the US embassy or consulate

If a US citizen dies abroad, the nearest US embassy or consulate helps the family with local burial or the return of the body, and can issue a Consular Report of Death Abroad, which you will need in the US. The State Department cannot pay to bring remains home.

U.S. Department of State, Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad

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**2**

## Decide: bury there, or bring them home

Burying where the person died keeps to the haste the Sunnah asks for, and costs far less. Bringing a body home can take days or weeks of permits and flights. Scholars differ on moving a body before burial: many advise burying where the person died, and some schools discourage moving it without a strong reason. Ask a scholar before deciding.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1315

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**3**

## If you bring them home, ask about embalming first

Airlines and the countries involved set their own rules for transporting a body, and some require embalming. Ask the funeral home on both ends what is required, and whether refrigeration or a sealed container is accepted instead.

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**4**

## If you bury in another country from the US

A US funeral home that works with Muslim families can arrange the paperwork, the consulate of the destination country, and the flight. Ask for the total cost in writing before you agree.

Federal Trade Commission, The FTC Funeral Rule

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### THE JANAZAH

The prayer can be prayed wherever the body is. Family elsewhere may pray the funeral prayer in absence, as the Prophet ﷺ did for al-Najāshī; ask your imam. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1245

### NEXT

The full step-by-step guide

## Assets in another country

Many families here own a house, a plot or a bank account in the country their parents came from. When the owner dies, that property is dealt with under the other country's rules and in its offices. This guide covers the first months, and what to do now so your heirs are not left guessing.

- 1

Do the US side first, and order extra copies

Order several certified copies of the death certificate. Most offices abroad want their own original, and many want it apostilled or legalised and translated. Whether you need an apostille or a longer legalisation depends on the country (see the table below).

HCCH, Apostille Convention status table
- 2

Gather what exists, and do not sign quickly

Find the deeds, account numbers, branch names, national ID numbers of the deceased and of every heir, and marriage and birth records. Relatives abroad may be holding some of it. Do not sign a paper that sells, gifts or gives up a share until a lawyer has read it. Anyone who offers to “settle everything” for a fee, or says only one heir needs to sign, should be checked against the heirs' certificate.
- 3

Hire a lawyer in the country where the property is

Local rules decide who inherits what and which office issues the proof. One Egyptian firm puts it plainly: without the inheritance declaration, no bank releases funds and no property can be transferred. Ask for fees and steps in writing.

Alzayat Law Firm (Egypt), Inheriting property in Egypt from abroad
- 4

Get the heirs' document first

Every country in the table has a document, from a court or an office, that names the heirs and their shares. Banks and land offices act on it. In Pakistan it is a succession certificate or letter of administration from NADRA, issued after a public notice, and a dispute among heirs sends it to court.

Letters of Administration and Succession Certificates Act 2020 (Pakistan), Gazette of Pakistan
- 5

Heirs in the US can act through a power of attorney

You usually do not have to travel. A power of attorney, signed before a notary or at the country's consulate, lets a lawyer or relative act for you. Pakistan runs an online service through NADRA and its missions. India asks for attestation by an Indian consulate. Remember that a power of attorney ends at the owner's death, so it helps with filing the case, not with a sale the owner never finished.

6

### Expect the shares to differ from a calculator

Some countries add rules on top of the classical shares. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, section 4 of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961 gives the children of a son or daughter who died first the share that parent would have had. In Pakistan the Federal Shariat Court struck this down, but the appeal is pending and a Sindh High Court judgment treats the section as still operating. Egypt, the West Bank and Syria have an obligatory bequest (*wasiyyah wājibah*) of up to a third for such grandchildren. Our inheritance calculator uses the classical shares; the local result may be different.

High Court of Sindh, Civil Rev. Application S-105 of 2023, quoting Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961 s. 4 • The Daily Star (Bangladesh), Daughter's share in succession: Law Commission's report revisited, 3 June 2012 • Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyyah, fatwa on the heirs of a son who died before his parent (Law 71 of 1946) • Personal Status Law of 1976, article 182 (An-Najah Maqam legislation database) • Chatham House, New amendments to personal status law offer small gains for women's rights (Syria, 2019)

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7

### Bank accounts: a nominee is not the owner

Courts in Pakistan and India have said that naming a nominee does not make that person the owner. The nominee collects the money and then has to hand it to the heirs. If an account names one child as nominee, expect the bank to ask for the succession certificate anyway.

High Court of Sindh, Naz Bibi v. Wahid Bux, Second Appeal 85 of 2019 • SCC Online, Rampali v. State Govt. of NCT of Delhi (Delhi High Court, 2017), applying Sarbati Devi v. Usha Devi (1984) 1 SCC 424

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8

### Check the US tax side

A US citizen's or resident's estate counts property abroad. Most estates are far below the federal threshold, but the foreign house is part of the total, and a foreign death tax paid may earn a credit. Heirs who receive foreign accounts should ask a tax professional about reporting them.

IRS, Instructions for Form 706

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9

### Plan now: write down what you own there

Make a one-page list for your family: each property with its deed or plot number, each bank and branch, who holds the originals, the name of a lawyer you trust there, and which relative is most reliable. Update it each year. This one page saves months.

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10

### Plan now: a will that covers foreign property

A US will may not be accepted for land abroad. Lebanon, for example, requires a court's approval of a foreign will, and one Egyptian firm says a foreign will cannot override the mandatory rules. Many people ask a lawyer in that country about a short local will for the property there, and have it made so the two wills do not cancel each other. In the Sunni schools a bequest can pass at most a third, and not to someone who is already an heir, unless the other heirs agree after the death.

PBL Law Group, International estate planning in Lebanon • Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 2742 • Sunan Abī Dāwūd 2870 (ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ)

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## 11

## Plan now: joint accounts and gifts need care

A joint account or a nominee may not do what people expect, and in an Islamic-law country it does not replace the heirs' shares. A gift during life is a real transfer of ownership, may carry local taxes, and may be unfair to other children. Ask a scholar and a lawyer in that country before you move property.

**NOT LEGAL ADVICE**

This guide is not legal advice. Laws change and families' facts differ. Check with a lawyer in the country where the property is.

**HOW WE CHECKED**

Each fact below is linked to its source. Where we could not verify a point it says so. Please tell us if a rule has changed.

**IF THE OWNER DIED ABROAD**

When someone dies abroad

## Country by country

The document heirs need and where to start. "Apostille" says whether the country accepts the apostille (checked on the HCCH table); if it does not, US documents usually need the longer legalisation by its embassy or consulate. Check with the embassy.

| COUNTRY  | DOCUMENT HEIRS NEED                                                                                                                                                                                   | WHERE TO START                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | APOSTILLE |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Pakistan | Succession certificate (movable property) or letter of administration (immovable), issued by NADRA's Succession Facilitation Unit. If an heir objects, or an heir is a minor, the case goes to court. | NADRA. Heirs can authorise one of them to apply for all, and biometrics can be taken at a notified office abroad. A power of attorney can be arranged online through NADRA and a Pakistani mission.<br><br>Letters of Administration and Succession Certificates Act 2020 (Pakistan), Gazette of Pakistan · Consulate General of Pakistan, Los Angeles: online power of attorney attestation | Yes       |
| India    | Succession certificate from a civil court under the Indian Succession Act 1925                                                                                                                        | A lawyer in India. From abroad: a power of attorney holder in India, or video                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Yes       |

|            |                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |     |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
|            | (covers bank balances, shares and similar). Muslim personal law decides the shares.                                                                             | appearance if the court allows; documents attested by an Indian consulate.<br><br>Kotak Mahindra Bank, Succession certificate in India: a guide for NRIs · Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 (India); summary                                                                                                                              |     |
| Bangladesh | Succession certificate from the District Judge (Succession Act 1925, Part X).                                                                                   | A lawyer in Bangladesh. Section 4 of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961 applies to orphaned grandchildren.<br><br>The Succession Act, 1925, Part X (Bangladesh Laws) · The Daily Star (Bangladesh), Daughter's share in succession: Law Commission's report revisited, 3 June 2012                                                                        | Yes |
| Egypt      | Inheritance declaration (i'lām al-wirāthah) from the family court. According to one Egyptian firm, no bank releases funds and no property transfers without it. | A lawyer in Egypt. Heirs abroad can sign a power of attorney at an Egyptian consulate. Foreign documents are authenticated by the Egyptian embassy and translated into Arabic.<br><br>Alzayat Law Firm (Egypt), Inheriting property in Egypt from abroad · Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyyah, fatwa on the heirs of a son who died before his parent (Law 71 of 1946) | No  |
| Jordan     | Not verified.                                                                                                                                                   | A lawyer in Jordan, and the sharia court in the area of the deceased's last residence (not verified).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | No  |

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |     |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Palestine (West Bank) | Not verified. The Personal Status Law of 1976, as published in the Palestinian legislation database, has an obligatory bequest for grandchildren (article 182).                         | A lawyer in the West Bank. Reports say land cannot be sold until the sharia court issues an inheritance certificate; we did not verify this.<br><br>Personal Status Law of 1976, article 182 (An-Najah Maqam legislation database) | No  |
| Lebanon               | Certificate of inheritance (ḥaşr irth), issued by a single judge at the first-instance court of the deceased's last residence. Muslim estates go to the Sunni or Shia religious courts. | A Lebanese lawyer. A foreign will needs court approval before it is enforced. Lebanese inheritance tax applies to assets in Lebanon.<br><br>PBL Law Group, International estate planning in Lebanon                                | No  |
| Syria                 | Not verified. The obligatory will (article 257) was widened in June 2019 to include the children of a daughter who died first.                                                          | A lawyer who knows current conditions. Procedures and access may have changed; not verified.<br><br>Chatham House, New amendments to personal status law offer small gains for women's rights (Syria, 2019)                        | No  |
| Türkiye               | Certificate of inheritance (mirasçılık belgesi), issued by a civil court or a notary. A foreign certificate is recognised only if it is a foreign court decision.                       | A lawyer in Türkiye. Which law fixes the shares was not verified here.<br><br>A. C. Ruhi, Mirasçılık belgesi ve yabancı bir ülke mahkemesinden alınan mirasçılık belgesinin Türkiye'de tanınması, Terazî Hukuk Dergisi 9(92), 2014 | Yes |
| Iran                  | Certificate of heirs, verified by the competent tribunal of the deceased's residence. Shares follow Twelver Shia                                                                        | A lawyer in Iran. A bequest above a third needs the other heirs' consent (Civil Code article 843).                                                                                                                                 | No  |

law in the Civil Code. A dual national who holds Iranian citizenship is treated as Iranian.

D. Gorji V., La successione ereditaria in Iran, Filodiritto, 10 March 2022

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## Morocco

Act of notoriety (heirs' deed) by a notary or adoul. Status of this row is unconfirmed: one firm's article only.

A lawyer in Morocco. Per that firm, Islamic law applies to the Moroccan assets of Muslims, and a dual national counts as Moroccan only. A foreign notarial document needs a Moroccan court's validation.

Yes

Giambrone Law (Casablanca office),  
How international succession is managed in Morocco

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## Nigeria

Varies by state. In Kwara State a court held that the High Court probate registry may not issue letters of administration on a Muslim estate.

A lawyer in the state where the property is, who knows whether the Sharia court or the High Court handles it.

No

Ishola and Solahudeen, Muslim estate and probate practice in Kwara State (Al-Hikmah University Journal of Public and International Law, 2017)

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## Somalia

Not verified. We found no official procedure we could confirm.

Take careful local advice. Do not sign anything that lets one heir sell for all.

No

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Sources for the apostille column: HCCH, Apostille Convention status table. Not legal advice; check with a lawyer in that country.

## If you have no Muslim family

If your family is not Muslim, they may not know what you would want, and by law they may be the ones who decide. A little preparation makes sure you are washed, prayed over and buried as a Muslim.

- 1** Tell your masjid, and keep their number with you  
Let your imam or the funeral committee know your situation. Many committees will step in for a Muslim with no Muslim relatives, and some burial funds exist for exactly this.
- 2** Write your wishes down, and sign them  
Families usually follow clear written wishes. Write your janazah wishes and give a copy to your family and to your masjid.  
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 2738
- 3** Name someone to carry them out  
In many states the closest relative has the legal right to decide about burial unless you have named someone else in a signed document. An estate attorney can tell you how to name a Muslim friend or your masjid to carry out your funeral wishes where you live.
- 4** Talk to your family while you can  
Explain what a Muslim burial involves: a quick burial, a simple washing and shroud, no cremation. Most families honour wishes they have heard in person.

### YOUR ESTATE

Muslims and non-Muslims do not inherit from one another by the Islamic shares; many scholars allow a bequest of up to a third to non-Muslim relatives, who do not inherit. Ask a scholar. Ask a scholar and an attorney together. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6764

### FIND YOUR MASJID

The directory

# When a child dies

Nothing prepares a parent for this. The steps are the same as for any death, and your masjid will carry as much of it as you let them.

- 1 Call the masjid's funeral committee  
They arrange the washing, the shroud, the prayer and the burial, as for any Muslim. Tell the hospital early that you need a quick release for burial.
- 2 The prayer is the same, with its own du'ā'  
The janazah prayer has the same four takbīrs. After the third, the imam prays for the child and for the parents. You can pray in your own words.  
How the janazah prayer is prayed
- 3 A miscarriage or a stillborn child  
Scholars differ on whether a baby who died before birth is washed, named and prayed over, depending on how far the pregnancy had come. Ask your imam; there is no wrong question.
- 4 Your child's place  
The Prophet ﷺ said that a Muslim whose three children die before puberty will be granted Paradise by Allah, out of His mercy to them. As his grandchild was dying, he wept, and called it mercy.  
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1248 • Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1284

## FOR FRIENDS

Bring food, take the other children for an afternoon, and keep visiting after the first week. Visiting a grieving family

# Autopsy, embalming and organ donation

Three questions families are asked in the first hours. Knowing your rights ahead of time keeps the burial simple and quick.

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1

Routine embalming is not required by law

No state law requires routine embalming, though some states require embalming or refrigeration after a set number of hours, or for transport. Funeral homes may require it for a public viewing, which a Muslim funeral does not have. Tell the funeral home clearly: no embalming, no viewing.

Federal Trade Commission, The FTC Funeral Rule

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2

An autopsy can sometimes be required

After a sudden, violent or unexplained death, the medical examiner or coroner may order an autopsy. Some states let families object on religious grounds; ask the medical examiner's office what applies in your state, and ask them to work quickly so burial is not delayed.

See your state's guide

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3

Organ donation: scholars differ

The International Islamic Fiqh Academy permitted organ donation under conditions, including the donor's consent and no sale of organs. Other scholars do not permit it. If you have a view, write it in your wishes so your family does not have to decide for you.

International Islamic Fiqh Academy, Resolution 26 (1/4), 1988

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4

Vaults and caskets

No state law requires an outer burial container, but many cemeteries do. Muslim cemeteries often allow burial in the shroud alone, or with a simple box. You may buy a casket elsewhere; the funeral home cannot charge you for doing so.

Federal Trade Commission, The FTC Funeral Rule

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## WRITE IT DOWN

Your answers to all three belong in your janazah wishes.

# What a Muslim funeral costs

A Muslim funeral is simple by design, and it can cost much less than a typical American funeral. Often the largest cost is the grave.

- 
- 1** **Where the money goes**  
Usually: the funeral home's basic services and transport, the washing room, the shroud, the grave plot, and the fee to open and close the grave. There is no embalming, no viewing and no expensive casket.
  - 2** **What it can cost**  
Costs vary widely by city and cemetery. Families in New York have reported costs from about \$6,000 to more than \$50,000 because of cemetery shortages. Ask for prices in writing before you agree.  
AboutIslam, New York funeral costs
  - 3** **Your rights at the funeral home**  
The funeral home must give you an itemized General Price List to keep. Apart from a basic services fee, you pay only for what you choose, and you can buy a casket elsewhere without paying the funeral home a fee.  
Federal Trade Commission, The FTC Funeral Rule
  - 4** **Masjid burial funds**  
Some masajid run funds that families join for a yearly fee, which then cover a member's funeral. For example, as listed on its site in October 2026, Dar Al-Hijrah in Virginia charges \$540 a year per person for coverage of up to \$10,000. Ask your masjid whether it has one.  
Dar Al-Hijrah funeral fund
  - 5** **Who pays**  
The funeral is paid from the estate first, before debts and before anything is inherited. If the estate cannot cover it, family and the community step in.  
al-Sirājiyyah (al-Sajāwandī), opening chapter
- 

## FIND A BURIAL FUND

The directory lists masjid burial funds where we have found them.