

ATTIRE: MEN: TZITZIT

TZITZIT: VALUE

Tzitzit: Continuous Mitzva

Tzitzit have protective value; wearing them provides a continuous mitzva throughout the day and even at night (but only when wearing a garment which is primarily worn during the daytime).

TZITZIT: HOW TO WEAR

Tzitzit: Hanging Out

Wearing tzitzit hanging out of your clothes is a non-binding custom, not a halacha.

TZITZIT: WHEN TO WEAR

Tzitzit: At Which Age To Wear

Boys begin to wear tzitzit as follows:

Custom: When the boy is toilet trained and knows how to say the blessing.

Halacha: When the boy knows that two tzitzit go in front and two in back.

Tzitzit: At Night or While Sleeping

Tzitzit should be worn day and night but not during sleep. (The commandment is to wear tzitzit only during the day, but they still provide protection at night.)

NOTE Men (and boys) wear a talit katan even after dark but only on clothes which are primarily worn during the daytime), due to doubt as to whether tzitzit are required at night.

Tzitzit: When Hot

You do not need to wear a talit katan at any time when you would not wear a shirt, such as if it is too hot or if you are too sweaty. If you wear a shirt, you should also wear a talit katan.

Tzitzit: Interference with Activity

You do not need to wear tzitzit if they will interfere with an activity such as swimming, scuba diving, or gymnastics (and, for me, hanging upside down on a flying trapeze!).

TZITZIT: WHAT TO WEAR

Tzitzit: What To Wear: Which Garments Require Tzitzit

A garment or cloth requires tzitzit if:

- Worn by a male 13 years old or above,
- Contains at least 51% natural fibers (cotton, wool, silk, etc.), and
- Has four corners in which two corners are normally behind you and the other two are normally in front of you while wearing it (A shawl will not normally need tzitzit).

NOTE It is the widespread custom to begin wearing tzitzit at the age of *chinuch*—typically about three years old but this can vary by child.

Tzitzit: Knots and Wraps

Tzitzit strings have five knots separating four wraps of strings. This applies to tzitzit whether on a talit katan or talit gadol. The minimum length for tzitzit strings:

- From the first to fifth knots—at least 4 inches;
- From the fifth knot to the bottom (lower end) of the strings—at least 8 inches.

The wraps go around the entire bunch of strings as follows:

- At top but below the first knot: 7 times
- Below the second knot: 8 times
- Below the third knot: 11 times, and
- Above the bottom knot: 13 times

NOTE The total of the wraps' *gematria* values ($7 + 8 + 11 + 13 = 39$) equals the *gematria* values of Hashem (one of God's names) Echad (is One), as follows:

Hashem (spelled: yud, heh, vav, heh) = 26

Echad (spelled: alef, chet, daled) = 13

Hashem + Echad = $26 + 13 = 39$

Tzitzit: Shamash

The purpose of a shamash on tzitzit is to have a string long enough to make wraps.

Tzitzit: Placement

Like all tzitzit, tzitzit on a talit gadol should hang over the side edge of the talit and not hang down from the bottom.

NOTE They are still kosher even if they hang straight down, b'di'avad.

The tzitzit should hang down along the vertical border (screen left/model's right side)

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TZITZIT: CHECKING

TZITZIT: HOW TO CHECK

Tzitzit: For What To Check

Torn

In checking tzitzit, determine:

- Are any loops torn?
- Are 8 strings visible on each corner?

If you cannot see 7 strings due to one or more having been torn off, consult a rabbi.

Tangled

There is no problem if tzitzit are tangled. However, to untangle them:

- Is a superior way to fulfill the mitzva, and
- Allows you to easily check them to see if there are 8 tzitziyot.

Frizzy

If any tzitziyot are so frizzy that the individual tzitziyot cannot be distinguished, they are invalid (pasul).

NOTE To prevent frizziness during laundering, wrap the tzitziyot tightly in a rubber band before drying them in a dryer, or hang them to dry.

NOTE

- If the hanging end of a tzitzit string breaks below the lowest knot, the string is kosher.
- If more than one string breaks, or if one string breaks above the lowest knot, consult a rabbi since the tzitzit may not be kosher.

TZITZIT: WHEN TO CHECK

Tzitzit Checking: Before Blessing

You are not required to check tzitzit on a talit katan or talit gadol each day.

REASON We assume, based on the norm (chazaka), that the tzitzit are OK.

But it is a good idea to check them before saying the blessing over them each day.

Tzitzit Checking: Shabbat and Jewish Festivals

Do not check tzitzit on Shabbat or Jewish festivals.

REASON If there is something wrong, you might untangle them and thereby untie a knot, which is prohibited from the Torah.

TZITZIT: BLESSINGS

Tzitzit: Blessings: When To Say

Only say the blessing on tzitzit during the day.

Tzitzit: Blessings: Tish'a B'Av

On Tish'a B'Av, say a blessing on tzitzit in the morning as always.

TZITZIT: KISSING

Tzitzit: Kissing: Morning Shema

When saying morning shema, kiss the tzitzit when saying the words:

- “tzitzit” in the shema, and
- “emet” and “la'ad” in paragraph following the shema.

These are non-binding customs, not halacha.

Tzitzit: Kissing: Night Shema

Don't kiss tzitzit when saying the shema at night.

TZITZIT: HOLDING

Tzitzit: Holding: Morning Shema

Holding all four tzitziyot when saying the shema in the morning is not required, but it is customary to do so.

TZITZIT: PREVENTING FRAYING

Tzitzit: Preventing Fraying

You may tie knots in the ends of tzitzit strings to prevent fraying.

TZITZIT: DISPOSAL

Tzitzit: Disposal: How To Wrap

To dispose of items used for mitzvot (tashmishei mitzva) such as tzitzit or etrog, you may wrap in one layer of plastic and throw it into dry garbage, or wrap in two layers of plastic and throw it into wet garbage.

Tzitzit: Cut-Off End Disposal

You may cut off (shorten) tzitzit strings before the first time they are used and throw away the pieces without covering them. Once tzitzit strings have been worn, you must wrap them before disposal as above.

Tzitzit: Garment Disposal

Garments for talit katan and talit gadol have no special holiness (kedusha). But once used for a mitzva, the garments—like the tzitziyot themselves--must be wrapped before disposal, as above.