

# ATTIRE: MEN

## ATTIRE: MEN: TZNI'UT

### Attire: Men: Tzni'ut: Guidelines

Tzni'ut for men: Men must at least wear shorts. For men, tzanu'a attire when swimming is a bathing suit.

## ATTIRE: MEN: HEAD COVERING (KISUY ROSH)

### ATTIRE: MEN: WHEN TO COVER HEAD

#### Attire: Man's Head Covering Indoors

It is customary for men to wear a head covering always, even indoors. This is a custom, not a halacha. When praying or saying blessings or studying Torah or when in a synagogue or bet midrash, men must wear a head covering.

### ATTIRE: MEN: WITH WHAT TO COVER HEAD

#### Sleeve/Hand as Man's Head Covering

You may use your sleeve or someone else's hand (but not your own hand) to cover your head to say a blessing if you are not wearing a head covering.

#### Mesh Man's Head Covering

Wearing a mesh head covering (kippa) is OK if the threads cover more area than the spaces.

#### Size of Man's Head Covering

Minimum head covering (kippa) size should be large enough to be considered a head covering: a 3-inch diameter would be reasonable.

### ATTIRE: MEN: HEAD COVERING: HOLINESS

#### Kipot Have No Holiness

Kipot (yarmelkas, skullcaps) do not have any holiness (kedusha).

### ATTIRE: MEN: HEAD COVERING: PLACEMENT

#### Men's Head Covering on Top of Head

Wear a head covering (kippa) on top of the head, not over the ear as some men do.

### ATTIRE: MEN: HEAD COVERING: PRAYER

#### Wearing Hat for Prayer

For details on men's wearing a head covering for prayer, see [Attire: Man's Head Covering for Prayers or Torah Study](#)

## 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)

## 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 (tashmischei 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.

## TALIT KATAN

### TALIT KATAN: SIZE

#### Talit Katan: Size

The minimum size for the garment of a *talit katan* is large enough to wrap your torso in, in front and in back: 17 inches (43 cm) wide and 17 inches (43 cm) long, from the top edge to bottom edge and so the total minimum dimensions will be 17 inches wide by 34 inches long. The optimal size is 24 inches wide and 24 inches long on each side (resulting in dimensions of 24 inches by 48 inches).



The minimum width for a talit katan is 17 inches

### TALIT KATAN: MATERIAL

#### Talit Katan: Material

A *talit katan* (or a *talit gadol*) must be made from at least 51% natural fibers.

### TALIT KATAN: MARKING

#### Talit Katan: Marking Front and Back

A *talit katan* do not need to be marked with a front and back, but some people have a custom to do so.

### TALIT KATAN: BLESSINGS

#### Talit Katan: Blessings: Shema if You Wake Up Early

**SITUATION** You wake up early and want to say *shema* (in case you return to sleep and might miss the latest time to say morning *shema*).

#### WHAT TO DO

- You need to wear only a *talit katan* (not a *talit gadol*).
- Say the blessing *al mitzvat tzitzit*, even if you normally would later put on a *talit gadol* and therefore would not normally say that blessing over a *talit katan*.

## Talit Katan: Blessings: Shabbat or Jewish Festival Talit Katan

**SITUATION** You switch to a special talit katan right before Shabbat and Jewish festivals.

**WHAT TO DO** You do not need to say another blessing over the special talit katan if to switch:

- Is your normal intention (even if you did not specifically intend to switch when you put on your talit katan that morning), or
- Is NOT your normal intention but you did intend to switch later that afternoon.

You must say another blessing if to switch:

- Is not your normal intention and you also did not intend to switch when you put on the talit katan that morning.

## TALIT (GADOL)

### TALIT GADOL: DESCRIPTION

#### Talit Gadol: Size

The minimum size for a talit gadol is so you could put it over your head and wrap your body in it (even though this is not how you must wear it!).

#### Talit Gadol: Material

A talit gadol (or a talit katan) must be made from at least 51% natural fibers.

#### Talit Gadol: Color

A talit should be primarily white. Here are some details:

- A talit gadol should be either all white or white with black stripes. Avoid a very colorful talit that makes the white part look insignificant.
- Blue stripes used to be used: as with techelet, the blue reminds us of the sky, of God's throne (kisei ha'kavod), and of God.
- Even though the talit was originally supposed to have blue stripes, it is not the custom today to use blue stripes.
- Black stripes have no significance or importance.

#### Talit Gadol: Tzitzit Placement

Like all tzitzit, tzitzit on a talit gadol must hang over the edge of the talit and not hang down from the bottom (see diagram).



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

## TALIT GADOL: WHY

### Talit Gadol: Mitzva

Men wear a talit as a mitzva (wearing a four-cornered garment in order to wear tzitzit).

### Talit Gadol: Form of Honor

It is a form of honor for the congregation for the leader to dress up (some congregations have the custom of requiring the leader to wear a jacket for mincha for this reason). A talit is usually the form of dressing up for all men during prayer services.

### Talit Gadol: Humility

When a person speaks directly to God, it is very important to demonstrate humility. Since the Talmud says that covering one's head is a form of humility (and that learned Jews/talmidei chachamim used to cover their heads), men who wear a talit for prayer should ideally use it to cover their heads whenever they wear it, but the minimum is during the amida.

## TALIT GADOL: WHEN TO WEAR

### Talit Gadol: Amida

A talit is required only when saying the amida prayer, but the universal custom (for men who wear talitot!) is to wear the talit during the entire shacharit service.

**NOTE** A talit is worn for shacharit, musaf, and all day and night on Yom Kippur; it is not commonly worn for mincha or ma'ariv (except on Yom Kippur).

### Talit Gadol: Prayer Leader during Amida Repetition

A prayer leader should be especially careful to cover his head when saying the reader's repetition of the amida. A hatless prayer leader covers his head with the talit gadol during the private amida (also during the public amida and repetition). If wearing a hat, he does not cover his head with the talit.

### Talit Gadol with Talit Katan

Wear a talit gadol even though you are already wearing a talit katan, as a means of honoring the prayers.

### Talit Gadol: Married Men

Once a man has been married, he must wear a talit when saying shacharit and musaf, even if he becomes widowed or divorced.

### Talit Gadol: Mincha

When wearing a talit at mincha Torah reading--such as for an aliya, hagbaha, or glila--you do not need to wear it until after kedusha, but some people have that custom.

## TALIT GADOL: BLESSING

### Talit Gadol: Which Blessing

The blessing over putting on the talit gadol is lehit'ateiph ba'tzitzit.

### Talit Gadol: What the Blessing Covers

Saying the blessing on a talit gadol, while intending to cover all other talitot (whether talit katan or talit gadol), will cover:

- All talitot that you already put on.
- All talitot that you will put on later that day.
- If you go out of whichever building you are in when you say the blessing on your talit, you must say a new blessing if you put on a talit (even the same talit) in a different building.

**EXCEPTION** You may intend for the blessing NOT to cover other talitot.

**EXAMPLE** You say the blessing over your talit gadol on the morning preceding Yom Kippur. You may intend for your blessing not to cover the talit gadol that you will put on just before Kol Nidrei.

**NOTE** If you don't have a talit gadol, say al mitzvat tzitzit over your talit katan.

**NOTE** If you remove your talit gadol, go to a different building, and put the talit gadol on again, you DO say a new blessing.

### Talit Gadol: Placing Talit on Head

Placing the talit gadol over your head while saying the talit blessing is a halacha, but wearing it on your head any other time is a custom.

### Talit Gadol: Replacing One You Removed by Choice

Do not say a new blessing when you replace a talit that you chose to take off, with the intention of putting it back on (such as removing it to go to the bathroom).

### Talit Gadol: Replacing One that Fell Off

Say a new blessing when you replace a talit gadol that fell off your body completely (not just if it slipped off one shoulder).

### Talit Gadol: Blessing when Borrowed for Aliya/Prayer Leader

If you borrow a talit, such as for an aliya or to serve as prayer leader, it is not customary to say a blessing on it.

**NOTE** If you want to say a blessing on a borrowed talit, ask the owner to “give” it to you as a gift, which you will later give back as a gift.

### Talit Gadol: Blessing on Loaned or Borrowed

Do not say a new blessing when you put back on your talit gadol that you loaned someone if you are at the same prayer service.

### Talit Gadol: Blessing between Bar'chu and Amida



**SITUATION** You began shacharit on your way to synagogue and are between bar'chu and the amida when you arrive. You have not yet put on a talit.

**WHAT TO DO**

- Put on a talit immediately.
- Say the blessing on the talit after you finish the amida.

### Talit Gadol: Blessing over Public Talit

You may say the blessing on a public talit gadol available at the synagogue, even though it is not your talit.

**REASON** It is assumed that the talitot at synagogues are there to be used by anyone.

### Talit Gadol: Blessing Once Married

Once a man is married and wears a talit gadol, he stops saying the blessing on tzitzit on his talit katan; it is covered by the blessing on his talit gadol.

## TALIT GADOL: HOW TO PUT ON

### Talit Gadol: Putting on in Morning

To put on a talit in the morning:

- Say the blessing lehit'ateiph ba'tzitzit.
- Put the garment over your head and down to your nose.
- Gather the two tzitziyot from the right side and the front one from the left side and swing them over your left shoulder (you do not need to bunch up the talit before doing so).
- Wait for at least 2 ½ seconds and say the appropriate verses (see a siddur for the text).

## TALIT GADOL: HOW TO CARE FOR

### Talit Gadol: Folding, Rolling, Hanging

You do not need to fold a talit after using it; you may roll it or hang it up. The only requirement is that you take care of it and don't crumple it or treat it disrespectfully.

## ATTIRE: BELT

### Belt/gartel with Robes

You only need to wear a belt/gartel (for saying blessings, prayer services and for studying holy texts) if:

- You are wearing an open and loose garment such as a robe (or other toga-like garments) and
- You are not wearing any undergarments.

**NOTE** The belt separates upper from lower parts of your body and this requirement is not normally relevant for Western attire. If it is your family tradition, you should follow that. There may also a kabalistic reason to wear one.

## ATTIRE: SHOES

### Leather or Synthetic Shoes in Halacha

In Jewish law, only leather shoes are considered to be “shoes” for purposes of the Nine Days, mourning, Yom Kippur, shiv'a, or ritual impurity. Non-leather shoes may normally be worn during those periods.