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* (*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.

© Copyright 2026 Richard B. Aiken | www.practicalhalacha.com