ATTIRE

INTRODUCTION TO ATTIRE

Introduction to Attire

Various types of attire are considered appropriate for men, single women, married women, and children to wear in public. The standards vary somewhat due to location and era.

ATTIRE: SLEEPING COVERED

Sleeping Covered

A person should be covered with something when sleeping. This may either by a sheet/other bedding or by a garment that is worn.

NOTE This is a good practice and is expected but is not a *halacha*. It is part of modesty *(tzni'ut)* between people and God.

ATTIRE: GETTING DRESSED

Dressing in a Certain Sequence

Dressing in a certain sequence, such as putting on your right sock before your left sock, is proper behavior.

ATTIRE: BLESSINGS/TORAH/PRAYER

Attire: Blessings and Torah Study

The minimum attire required for saying blessings or studying *Torah* is shorts for men and a covered torso for women. But more of your body may need to be covered due to location and circumstances. For example, if men are in view, women's *tzni'ut* rules take over since they are more restrictive.

Attire: Man's Head Covering for Prayers or Torah Study

Wearing a hat for prayer (for men) is formal wear that shows honor to God. Men do not need to wear a hat but must have some type of head covering when saying blessings, when praying, or when studying holy texts (this is *halacha*). If a *man* said a blessing or prayer without a head covering, *b'di'avad*, it is OK and he does not need to repeat the blessing or prayer.

Attire: Amida

See Attire for *Amida*.

Praying in Bare Feet on Stone Floor

See Praying in Bare Feet on Stone Floor.

Attire: Men's Prayer near Immodestly Dressed Woman

See Men's Prayer near Immodestly Dressed Woman.

Attire: Women's Prayer near Immodestly Dressed People

See Women's Prayer near Immodestly Dressed People.

ATTIRE: SHA'ATNEZ

Attire: Sha'atnez: Sheep Wool with Linen

You may not wear clothing made by combing/felting, spinning, and/or twisting/weaving lamb's or sheep's wool with linen. You may also not wear a garment made of two pieces—one wool and one linen—that have been sewn together. Even one thread of wool or linen with the other material is forbidden (there is not batel in 1/60th for sha'atnez).

NOTE The acronym *sha'atnez* stands for shu'a, tuvi, nuz—three steps in processing wool and linen fibers.

ATTIRE: WOMEN AND MEN

ATTIRE: WOMEN'S/MEN'S (BEGGED ISH)

Attire: Wearing Other Gender's Clothing

Clothes that are worn by both genders may be worn by either gender, even if they were intended to be worn by just one gender. So women may wear clothes that have been made and intended for men (*begged ish*) if women wear those garments, too. There are some exceptions--consult a *rabbi*.

Attire: Men Wearing Women's Clothing

Men may not wear women's clothing.

Attire: Women Wearing Men's Clothes

A woman or girl may not wear men's clothes (*begged ish*), even:

- if for a different purpose than what men use them for, and
- if not for the purpose of looking like a *man*.

Attire: Woman Wearing Talit for Warmth

A woman should not use a *talit* to keep warm, even

- if there is no other garment in the *synagogue* and
- if she is listening to a *Torah* class.

Attire: Pistols and Other Weapons

Pistols and other weapons are considered to be men's attire (*begged ish*), but they may be worn or carried by women if in any place where there is danger.

ATTIRE: MIXED SWIMMING

ATTIRE: WOMEN

ATTIRE: WOMEN: TZNI'UT

Attire: Tzni'ut Guidelines for Women

To dress *tzenu'a*, women should:

- Cover torso to elbows and to knees;
- Cover collarbones (and hair, if married).

Also, the garments must not cling tightly to the woman's body.

NOTE If there are no men nearby (visible), women do not need to wear *tzanu'a* attire, including when swimming.

NOTE It is an act of piety to always dress *tzenu'a*, and is preferable always to dress *tzenu'a* when feasible.

Attire: Women: Tzni'ut: Lifeguard

If no female lifeguard is available, a male lifeguard may guard and women do not need to wear special *tzanu'a* attire. There is no difference between using a Jewish or non-Jewish male lifeguard.

Attire: Women: Socks or Stockings

Women wearing skirts below their knees do not need to wear socks or stockings, unless that is the custom in their community.

NOTE Custom is defined by how people who follow *halacha* dress, not by how non-religious people dress, even if the non-religious are the majority of a community.

Attire: Women: Open-Toed Sandals

Women may wear open-toed sandals if that is customary in their community.

Attire: Women's Blessings: Mikva

When women say blessings in the *mikva*, their bodies are covered by the water, which takes the place of clothing for that purpose.

ATTIRE: MARRIED WOMEN: HEAD COVERING (KISUY ROSH)

Attire: Married Women: Hair-Covering Guidelines

Married women should cover their hair when they leave their "*chatzeir*," which may mean house, yard, or domain. Married women should not appear in public without covering their hair.

NOTE It is an act of piety for married women to always cover their hair. (For extenuating circumstances, consult a *rabbi* for exceptions).

NOTE A married woman may have her hair exposed as long as its area is less than 1 square *tefach* (3.5" x 3.5", or about 9 cm x 9 cm). To measure this, add up all exposed hair to get a total area, flattened to two dimensions, as if it were a silhouette. It is an act of piety for married women to completely cover their hair.

To measure braided or bunched-up hair or hair in a pony tail, simply measure the cross-sectional area as it is. You do not need to measure the hair as if it were spread out flat.

When wearing a baseball-type hat, hair may be exposed on all sides, as long as the total exposed hair is less than 3.5" X 3.5."

To wear a "*kipa* sheitl," you may wrap your real hair around the sheitl, but only up to a total of 3.5" x 3.5."

Attire: Married Women: Hair Cuts

A Jewish woman may have her hair cut by any hairdresser, including men, whether Jewish or not, and there is no problem of his seeing her uncovered hair.

Attire: Married Women: Doctors

A married woman may allow her doctor to see her hair uncovered if necessary for treatment or examination.

Attire: Married Women: Hair Covered during Prayer

A married woman is not required by *halacha* to have her hair covered when praying alone, but the custom is for her do to so.

ATTIRE: WOMEN: PRITZUT

Attire: Women: Pritzut Even If Completely Covered

Pritzut is a deviation from the norm for people's attire, even if completely covered (or not properly covered!).

EXAMPLE A woman wearing a leotard and tights may be violating *pritzut* even if her body is completely covered, depending on where she is.

Attire: Women: Pritzut and Neighborhood Customs

Deviation from the accepted standard for attire (*pritzut*) may apply even to customs such as are followed in certain neighborhoods, and visiting women must conform to the local standards while there.

ATTIRE: GIRLS

ATTIRE: GIRLS: TZNI'UT

Attire: Girls: Age for Modest Dress

Girls should dress modestly from the age of *gil chinuch*, when they can understand the concept of why to dress modestly. This may start at 6 years old but may be older depending on the girl. Consult a *rabbi*.

NOTE The requirement that girls dress modestly from *gil chinuch* includes girls' wearing bathing suits around adult males.

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 (*kipa)* is OK if the threads cover more area than the spaces.

Size of Man's Head Covering

Minimum head covering (*kipa)* 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 (*kipa)* 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* (*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.

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 *tālīt gādōl* 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 *tālīt gādōl*, say al mitzvat *tzitzit* over your *tālīt kātān*.

NOTE If you remove your *tālīt gādōl*, go to a different building, and put the *tālīt gādōl* 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.

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