SHABBAT: EVENING PRAYERS

SHABBAT: EARLY MA'ARIV

Shabbat: Ideal Time for Ma'ariv

The ideal time for *ma'ariv* on Friday night is whenever will make everyone (or most people!) happy. It can be any time from *plag ha'mincha* (1 1/4 *halachic hours* before sunset), until 72 minutes before sunrise, but should properly be said before midnight.

Saying Ma'ariv at Plag HaMincha

You may say ma'ariv on Friday afternoon (*erev Shabbat*) as early as plag ha'*mincha* (1 1/4 halachic hours before sunset), as long as you say *mincha* before saying ma'ariv. So, if it is now plag ha'*mincha*, you may say *mincha* and then follow it as soon as you wish with ma'ariv.

NOTE On *erev Shabbat*, you do not need to say *mincha* before plag ha'*mincha* in order to say ma'ariv before sunset. This is unlike on weekdays, when you must say *mincha* before plag in order to say *ma'ariv* before sunset.

Answering Kedusha If You Accepted Shabbat

SITUATION You have begun *Shabbat* early and you are at a *minyan* where they are saying *kedusha* for Friday.

WHAT TO DO Reply to *kedusha*.

Beginning Shabbat Early When Friday Is Rosh Chodesh

SITUATION You begin *Shabbat* early when *Rosh Chodesh* falls on Friday.

WHAT TO DO Do not say *ya'aleh v'yavo* in *ma'ariv* (along with the normal *Shabbat* prayers).

KABBALAT SHABBAT

WHEN TO SAY KABBALAT SHABBAT

Start Kabbalat Shabbat Ideally before Sunset

Kabbalat Shabbat should ideally be started before sunset, and you should ideally get to *bo'i challa* at about sunset time. But you may start *Kabbalat Shabbat* after sunset and even after dark.

Latest Time To Say Kabbalat Shabbat

The latest time to finish saying *Kabbalat Shabbat* is before daybreak on Saturday morning.

Kabbalat Shabbat and Jewish Festivals

Kabbalat Shabbat is mostly omitted when *Shabbat* falls on:

- *Jewish festivals*,
- *Chol ha'moed*, and
- Right after the last day of a *Jewish festival*.

On these days, only *Mizmor shir...* and *Adonai malach...* are said.

LECHA DODI

Directions for Lecha Dodi

When saying *Lecha Dodi*:

- Face your normal direction for the first stanzas;
- For *bo'i v'shalom*, ideally, face the entrance to the *synagogue* (but the common practice is to face away from the *aron kodesh*).

VAYECHULU

Saying VaYechulu with Others

Friday night, it is a nice custom for men to say *va'yechulu* with at least one other *man*. It is best (but not required) to say *va'yechulu* with the entire *minyan*.

REASON The idea is that we are attesting (with other people, as in a court) to God's having created the world.

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