

The qiblah — facing the Ka'bah

What the qiblah is, how to find it from where you stand, and what to do when you simply cannot tell.



☀ Turn your face

قَوْلٍ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ

“So turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Haram. And wherever you are, turn your faces toward it.”

Qur'an 2:144

☀ The change

For sixteen or seventeen months the Muslims faced Jerusalem. When the command came, the people at Quba turned mid-prayer.

Qur'an 2:142-144 • Sahih al-Bukhari 403 • 4486

☀ A condition of the prayer

Facing it is a condition for a valid obligatory prayer, standing beside purity, covering the 'aurah, and the time.

Qur'an 2:144 • 2:150

☀ Faced, never worshipped

'Umar said to the Black Stone: I know you are a stone that neither harms nor benefits. The direction is obedience, not reverence for a building.

Sahih al-Bukhari 1597

☀ The direction, not the building

Those at the Ka'bah face the structure itself. Everyone else faces its direction — which is why a long straight row is sound.

an-Nawawi, al-Majmu' • Qur'an 2:144

☀ From Malaysia

Roughly west-north-west, not due west. Take it from a masjid's mihrab, a checked compass bearing, or a JAKIM falak reading.

Qur'an 2:144 • JAKIM, Falak Syarie

☀ When the sun stands over it

Twice a year the sun passes directly above the Ka'bah at its noon. At that moment, face the sun and you face the qiblah.

- The shadow of an upright object then points away from it

Qur'an 2:144 • JAKIM, Falak Syarie

☀ If you cannot tell

فَإِنَّمَا تَوَلَّوْا فِئْتَمَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ

“So wherever you turn, there is the Face of Allah.” Ask, judge your best, and pray. A prayer offered on a sound effort stands.

Qur'an 2:115 • Sunan at-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Salah • hasan

☀ The exceptions

Voluntary prayer while travelling may face the way you are going. In real fear, pray on foot or mounted, however you are able.

Qur'an 2:239 • Sahih al-Bukhari 1096