

Appendix to Book III, *The Book of Purity*

Al-Ghazali tells us that the devil is at work in our *wudu'* and after it. His “whisperings” and “insinuations” (*was was*) try to convince us that we have not done our *wudu'* sufficiently, that we've missed one millimeter on our face and have to go back to it, or perhaps we are convinced that then we have to go back and re-do our entire *wudu'*. Shaytan *wants* us to become obsessive compulsive about our *wudu'*. Why is that? It is because Shaytan wants us to stay stuck on the outward and spend more and more time on it so that we have less and less time for the inward.

We need not get obsessive about our *wudu'*! Knowing how to do *wudu'* according to our particular *madhhab* can guard against this obsessiveness about it. We need only to know how to do it according to our *madhhab*. Below is a chart outline the basics of *wudu'*. It is taken from the book, *Islamic Jurisprudence According to the Four Sunni Schools (Al-Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al'arba'a)* by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jaziri.

Perhaps you didn't know this, but there are four schools in Sunni Islam which outline four slightly different ways of going about our religious practice. Difference in these matters is not a bad thing. It is a wonderful thing, and difference actually comes from God's Mercy! Imam al-Shafi'i said, “Difference [of opinion] is a loving mercy” (*al-ikhtilafu rahmatun*).

Nowadays we live next to, go to school with and have friends from all over the world. They may pray with their hands at their sides while you have been taught to pray with your hands folded below your chest. Does that mean that they are wrong and you are right? No! This is one example of how our religious practice can differ slightly across *madhahib*. If you want to learn more, the book mentioned above, , *Islamic Jurisprudence According to the Four Sunni Schools*, is a wonderful book to have on your bookshelf at home as a *reference*. This means it is the kind of book that you don't have to read all the way through, but you go to it should any question about the specifics of worship arise, just like you would go to a dictionary for a specific word, or an encyclopedia for a specific topic.

You do not need to know all of information in the charts that follow. You should know the basic practices of your own school (*madhhab*), but it is also good for you to see how many practices there are, and how some of them differ according to school. It is good to know that these differences exist, so that in case you see someone doing something during *wudu'* that is unfamiliar to you, you do not immediately think they are doing something wrong!

“The imams of the four orthodox schools differ over the number of obligations entailed in ritual ablutions; however, those which are recorded in the Book of God Almighty come to four, namely: 1) washing the face, 2) washing the hands up to the elbows, 3) wiping either part or all of the head, and 4) washing the feet up to the ankles. As God Almighty states, “O you who have attained to faith! When you are about to pray, wash you face, and your hands and arms up to the elbows, and pass you [wet] hands lightly over your head, and [wash] you feet up to the ankles...” (5:6)

This much is agreed upon among the four imams, who only differ over how one is to wipe one's head... Some of the imams have also added further obligations to these four." (67)

What is obligatory in wudu'

Hanafi	Maliki	Shafi'i	Hanbali
	Making the intention	Making the intention	
Washing the face (temples and "white" area above and behind the ears are considered part of the face; long beard is <i>not</i> part of the face)	Washing the face (temples and "white" area above and behind the ears are considered part of the <i>head</i> , and therefore should be only wiped not washed; long beard is part of the face)	Washing the face (temples and "white" area above and behind the ears is part of the face; also, under the chin is considered part of the face; long beard is part of the face)	Washing the face (temples and "white area above and behind the ears are considered part of the <i>head</i> , and therefore should be only wiped not washed; long beard is part of the face)
Washing the hands up to the elbows (including the grooves in the fingertips and under long nails)	Washing the hands and arms up to the elbows (including the grooves in the fingertips and under long nails)	Washing the hands and arms up to the elbows (including the grooves in the fingertips and under long nails)	Washing the hands and arms up to the elbows (including the grooves in the fingertips and under long nails, and in between the fingers)
Wiping one-fourth of the head with water (equal to the palm of one's hand) (the outsides of the ears are <i>not</i> considered part of the head)	Wiping the entire head, from hairline to nape of the neck. If one has long hair, it must be wiped; braids should be loosened for this (the outsides of the ears are <i>not</i> considered part of the head)	Wiping any part of the head, be it large or small (the outsides of the ears are <i>not</i> considered part of the head; if hair is long, the part of the hair that is actually touching the head should be wiped)	Wiping the entire head, from hairline to nape of the neck. But only the hair which touches the head is necessary to wipe, not the entire length of the hair the outsides of the ears <i>are</i> considered part of the head)

Washing the feet and ankles (including the cracks on the tops and bottoms of the feet)	Washing the feet and ankles (including the cracks on the tops and bottoms of the feet)	Washing the feet and ankles (including the cracks on the tops and bottoms of the feet)	Washing the feet and ankles (including the cracks on the tops and bottoms of the feet)
		Washing in the order that the body parts are mentioned in the Qur'an, namely, face, hands up to the elbows, head and feet.	Washing in the order that the body parts are mentioned in the Qur'an, namely, face, hands up to the elbows, head and feet.
(Continuity is considered <i>sunnah</i> not obligation)	Continuity of ablution (the next part should be washed or wiped before the previous part has dried)	(Continuity is considered <i>sunnah</i> not obligation)	Continuity of ablution (the next part should be washed or wiped before the previous part has dried)
	Rubbing or passing one's hand over the parts being washed (emphasized by Malik simply to convey that ablution involves more than just having water pass over these parts of the body)		

How sunnah-based practices are understood and categorized

Hanafi	Maliki	Shafi'i	Hanbali
Sunnah-based actions are divided into two categories: 1) those actions which are emphatically	Practice of the Prophet, but no evidence that it is obligatory. Sunnah is distinct from recommended (<i>mandub</i>), the	The terms sunnah, recommended (<i>mandub</i>), desirable and voluntary are equal: we are asked, but not	The terms sunnah, recommended (<i>mandub</i>), desirable and voluntary are equal: we are asked, but not

<p>enjoined; these are called 'recommended' (<i>mandub</i>) or 'desirable' 2) those which are not emphatically enjoined. The latter are 'duty' (<i>wajib</i>), which is less binding than 'obligation' (<i>fard</i>). If a person omits a <i>fard</i>, he is guilty of wrongdoing, but this is not the case with a <i>wajib</i>. However, omitting a <i>wajib</i> – that is, a sunnah-based action that is emphatically enjoined – makes one guilty of wrongdoing (although it is not as severe a kind of wrongdoing as failing to do a <i>fard</i>) and deprives one of the intercession of the Prophet (s) on the Day of Accountability.</p>	<p>latter the Prophet called upon people to do, but did not lay stress on it (this would be the equivalent of the "not emphatically enjoined" practices of the Hanafis and Hanbalis, except that Malikis, thus do not call them 'sunnah'; Malikis often call these "virtuous" (<i>fadilah</i>)). Sunnah merits reward for the accountable Muslim, but no punishment if omitted</p>	<p>commanded to do these acts. They merit reward if done, but no punishment if we omit them</p>	<p>commanded to do these acts. They merit reward if done, but no punishment if we omit them. Sunnah-based practices are divided into two categories: 1) emphatically enjoined (omission of these is 'undesirable'), and 2) not emphatically enjoined (omission of these is not 'undesirable')</p>
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The sunnah-based practices associated with *wudu*'

Hanafi	Maliki	Shafi'i	Hanbali
<p>The emphatically enjoined sunnah-based practices associated with ritual ablutions; (considered <i>wajib</i>, and therefore</p>	<p>The emphatically enjoined sunnah-based practices, which therefore merit reward, but no punishment if omitted</p>	<p>Sunnah, recommended, or desirable practices associated with ritual ablutions:</p>	<p>Either Sunnah-based recommended or desirable</p>

merit reward, and are considered wrongdoing if omitted)			
1) utterance of the <i>basmalah</i> before one begins (or the first sentence of the <i>shahada</i> , or the <i>hamdalah</i>)	1) washing one's hands up to the wrists	1) appealing to God for protection from evil by saying "I seek refuge from God from the accursed Satan" or something similar	1) facing the <i>qiblah</i>
2) washing one's hands up to the wrists 3 times	2) rinsing out one's mouth	2) utterance of the <i>basmalah</i> (not any other formula as with the Hanafis)	2) cleaning one's teeth at the time one rinses out one's mouth
3) rinsing out one's mouth and nose, with water from one's right hand, 3 times each. (You can use the same water from your cupped hand for the mouth, but should use new water for the nose)	3) rinsing out one's nose	3) making the intention in one's heart (while uttering the <i>basmalah</i>) to conform to the sunnah-based practices in <i>wudu'</i> . (To be distinguished from the intention to remove ritual impurity, which is obligation (<i>fard</i>))	3) washing the hands 3 times
4) Parting one's fingers and toes so that water gets in between them	4) forcing the water out of one's nose with one's breath, holding one's nose with one's left hand and removing impurities with the little finger	4) verbal utterance of this intention as one begins washing the face	4) rinsing out the mouth and nose before washing the face
5) washing each part 3 times: the second and third washings are emphatically enjoined (not	5) wiping the outside and inside of the ears, including the ear canal	5) washing one's hands up to one's elbows 3 times; as one begins, one utters the <i>basmalah</i> and the	5) exaggerating the actions of rinsing the mouth and nose unless one is fasting

obligation)		intention to conform to the sunnah with these sunnah-based practices	
6) Wiping the entire head (remember, it is only obligation for the Hanafis to wipe one-fourth of the head, but wiping the entire head is <i>wajib</i> for the Hanafis, so to omit it is to be guilty of wrongdoing)	6) using new water to wipe the ears	6) washing the hands before rinsing the mouth	6) rubbing any part of the body with water if it repels water
7) wiping the ears	7) maintaining the proper order (in accordance with the Hanafis)	7) rinsing the mouth	7) using a generous amount of water while washing the face due to the presence of hair, depressions and bumps
8) conscious intention to remove the ritual impurity in order to make the prayer permissible	8) wiping the head again if some water remains in the hand after the first wiping	8) rinsing the nose the best practice: rinsing out the mouth, then the nose, with three successive handfuls of water, each handful being used in part for the mouth and in part for the nose	8) parting a thick beard when washing it
9) proper order according to the Quranic verse 5:6 (that is, to begin with the face, then hands and arms up to the elbows, then the head, and then the feet)	9) moving a ring one is wearing in order to get water under it	9) facing the <i>qiblah</i> while doing the ablution if possible	9) parting the fingers and toes if the water has already gotten in between them (if the water has not, then it is obligatory and not merely Sunnah)

10) continuity of action		10) placing a container with a wide opening to one's right and any other to one's left (with modern sinks, this does not apply)	10) using new water to wipe the ears
11) cleaning one's teeth and gums		11) uttering the supplications associated with the various actions (p89)	11) washing the right side before the left

The Shafi'is and the Hanbalis have many more sunnah-based practices associated with *wudu'*. They are listed below:

Shafi'i

12) cleaning one's teeth and gums, 13) saying the appropriate supplication while cleaning one's teeth and gums, 14) starting with the extremities (e.g. tips of fingers) if dipping into water, or from the top (e.g. wrists and ankles) if using a faucet or other falling water, 15) dipping water out with both hands in order to wash face, and not slapping water onto the face, 16) parting one's beard if it is thick, 17) wiping the entire head, then the outside and inside of the ears with new water, 18) rubbing the water, not just letting it fall, on the various body parts, 19) washing more than is actually required, 20) repeating the actions and utterances of the ablution 3 times, 21) continuity of action, 22) refraining from speaking unnecessarily, except for one's supplications, 23) not asking others for help unless necessary, 24) refraining from drying off the water, unless necessary, 25) drinking some of the water if any remains after completing the ablution, 26) moving a loose ring (Shafiis make no distinction between what kinds of rings are permissible and impermissible, agreeing here with the Hanafis and disagreeing with the Malikis

Hanbali

12) taking care to wash more than what is required of the face, hands and feet, 13) washing each relevant body part a second and a third time (even if the water has already completely covered the area; if it has not, then a second and third washing are obligatory), 14) keeping one's intention present in one's heart throughout the ablution, 15) consciously intending to perform the sunnah-based actions of the ablution while washing one's hands up to one's wrists, 16) uttering one's intention under one's breath, so that his lips move, but he is silent; and not seeking others' help (unless necessary), 17) after completion, looking upward and saying the *shahadatain* and subsequent supplication

That which is “virtuous” in *wudu*

(This is a category that only pertains to the Hanafi and Maliki schools, the other two schools including many of these things in the sunnah-based practices. See chart above.)

Hanafi	Maliki
That which is “virtuous”, supererogatory, desirable, recommended	The “virtues” (<i>fada’il</i>) Lesser reward than for the sunnah-based practices, and no punishment for omitting these
1) sitting in a higher place than the source of the water to avoid used water splashing back onto one’s body	1) performing one’s ablutions in a ritually pure place
2) inserting one’s wet finger inside the ear canal	2) minimizing the water used while still covering all of the necessary parts
3) uttering the <i>shahadatain</i> , the two testimonies of faith, while cleaning each part of the body	3) beginning with the right side and ending with the left
4) performing one’s ablutions in a ritually pure place	4) placing an open container from which one can dip and extract water on one’s right, and a container with a small opening into which the excess water can be poured on one’s left
5) not performing ablutions with water that has been heated by the sun	5) beginning with those parts which merit priority (e.g. when washing the face, beginning with the forehead and moving down; wiping the head from the front to the back)
6) washing the uppermost parts of the body before the lower ones	6) washing each part a second and a third time, <i>after</i> the first washing has already covered the entire area with water. (i.e. if it takes all three washings to get the entire area wet, it only counts as one, or if the part was covered completely only with the second washing, then the third counts as a second, and the <i>fadilah</i> has thus not been completed)
7) not allowing the water with which one has rinsed the mouth and nose to go back into the container of water from which water is being taken	7) cleaning the tooth and gums prior to the albution

8) facing the <i>qiblah</i> while performing the ablution	8) uttering the <i>basmalah</i> as one begins and not speaking unnecessarily except for the mention of God
9) moving any rings so that water can get under it	9) maintaining the proper order in both sunnah-based practices and obligations

The Hanafis have many more “virtuous” practices, which are listed below:

10) refraining from asking others for help in performing the ablution, although there is no harm in asking for help in preparing the water, 11) drinking some of the remaining ablution water while standing up and facing the *qiblah*, 12) washing more than the area required, 13) washing the bottoms of the feet with the left hand out of respect for the right, 14) wiping off the ablution water with a cloth, though not rubbing too rigorously, 15) reciting Sura 97, al-Qadar 3 times after completing one’s ablutions, 16) after this, standing facing the *qiblah* saying the *shahadatain* and accompanying supplication (p93-4), 17) not speaking needlessly during the ablution except for the mention of God, 18) combining the intention of one’s heart with the utterance of one’s tongue, 19) uttering the *basmalah* and one’s intention while washing and drying every part, 20) dipping out water with one’s right hand to rinse the mouth and nose, 21) forcing the water out of one’s nose with the aid of the left hand, 22) not reserving a container for oneself such that it prevents other from using it, 23) using an ablution vessel made out of earthenware and the like, and if it has a handle, washing it 3 times, 24) placing an open container for dipping to one’s right and any vessel to one’s left, 25) washing the inner corners of one’s eyes, 26) praying 2 *raka’ahs* at a time when it is not undesirable, 27) preparing *tahur* (ritually pure) water for one’s ablutions, 28) not performing one’s ablution with water or soil on from land acquired by illegitimate means, 29) uttering the supplications associated with the different parts of the body (p94)