

Religion, Belief and Culture in our Community

Understanding, respecting and valuing the diverse communities of the United Kingdom



Working together to make the United Kingdom a safer, more sustainable and cohesive Nation

Cumbrian Supplement

Religion, Belief and Culture in our Community: Understanding, respecting and valuing the diverse communities of the United Kingdom: Working together to make the United Kingdom a safer, more sustainable and cohesive nation (Third Edition 2018) is included in the centre of this booklet.

This first and second edition of the Cumbrian supplement have been produced by South Lakeland Equality and Diversity Partnership (SLEDP) to provide local information to supplement the national guide. Please contact SLEDP with additional relevant information which can be added to future editions, and to enable SLEDP to engage with more relevant organizations.

www.southlakeland.gov.uk/your-council/equality-and-diversity/south-lakeland-equality-and-diversity-partnership

SLEDP is grateful to UCLAN for providing the Cumbrian census information included in this Cumbrian supplement.



**South Lakeland
Equality & Diversity
Partnership**

The Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria

Mrs Claire Hensman

Religious beliefs have a strong influence on the culture of a community. Indeed, for many people around the world, religious beliefs are central to their culture and provide the moral codes by which they live. Even where people in the contemporary world believe that the traditional beliefs of their parents and societies are not so relevant to their everyday lives, underlying religious beliefs about human worth and how to relate to other people and the Earth are still important parts of their lives.

Our diverse society is drawn from many cultural and religious traditions. Gaining an understanding of, and being sensitive to, those traditions and beliefs is a vital step towards developing the tolerant society at the heart of a prosperous and peaceful life for us all.

This invaluable booklet can help us all gain a better understanding of the beliefs, the background, and the cultural traditions and sensitivities of the religions represented in our community. I am delighted to endorse its publication and distribution in Cumbria. I particularly commend it to the professionals and volunteers whose service work takes them into the lives and homes of people. But I also recommend it to any of us who believe that the first step to a tolerant society is mutual understanding.



Claire Hensman
Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria

Cumbrian Preface

Cllr Guy Tirvengadam, Mayor of Kendal SLEDP Chair

The aims of the South Lakeland Equality and Diversity Partnership (SLEDP) are to seek to reduce inequality on the grounds of gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, rurality and religion/belief; to celebrate diversity and reduce discrimination; and improve the life chances and opportunities for people who live, work and visit South Lakeland.

Joe Murray, Chair of Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch Association suggested that the *Religion, Belief and Culture* booklet should be adapted for use in Cumbria. SLEDP agreed that this was a great resource that needed to be updated and adapted with a Cumbrian supplement produced to meet local needs. The SLEDP lead on this project was Jacquetta Gomes who is the SLEDP Lead on Interfaith and Multifaith and acknowledged as the first female Buddhist Fire Chaplain in the World. SLEDP worked with Shephard Ndlovu from the University of Central Lancashire in the preparation of the third edition of *Religion, Belief and Culture in our Community* and this Cumbrian supplement. SLEDP is also very grateful to the North, South and West Cumbria Community Safety Partnerships who have provided funding for the Cumbrian supplement.

As the current Mayor of Kendal, I am really pleased that the national booklet was launched in November 2018 during National Inter Faith week, and that this Cumbrian supplement is being developed and launched in World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) in February 2019. This fits in perfectly with my theme of Diversity. I believe that this will be a great resource for the emergency services and people in Cumbria. I am delighted that the SLEDP's contribution to updating the booklet has been acknowledged in the new national booklet.



Councillor Guy Tirvengadam
Mayor of Kendal and
South Lakeland Equality and Diversity
Partnership (SLEDP) Chair



Jacquetta Gomes
SLEDP Lead on Interfaith and Multifaith
and acknowledged as the first female
Buddhist Fire Chaplain in the World

Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner

Peter McCall



Cumbria's Police and Crime Commissioner Peter McCall said: "Whilst as Police and Crime Commissioner, I have a statutory responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to raise awareness and promote equality and diversity, more importantly, I am absolutely committed to eliminating discrimination, victimisation, harassment and other behaviours prohibited under the Equality Act 2010. I firmly believe that most people in Cumbria share my views on this but unfortunately there is always a small minority who need to be reminded of what is and is not acceptable. This booklet I hope will help us all to understand how to behave well with others whatever their background or personal story.

In order for me to do this, I need to be able to engage effectively with all communities in Cumbria and ensure everyone has a voice regardless of gender, background and ethnicity. It is therefore incumbent upon me to recognise and understand that we don't all engage with one and other in the same way, and I will do my utmost to ensure that all communities are given the opportunity to participate to the fullest possible extent in the decisions that affect their lives and in delivering the police services that make a difference to them.

Ultimately my aim is to ensure that Cumbria's policing service remains fair, transparent and equitable and is accessible to everyone - it is essential we understand the diverse communities we serve and have a workforce which reflects this. I am therefore delighted to fund and endorse this incredibly useful booklet which I firmly believe will help facilitate this and to promote respect, tolerance and good neighbourliness in Cumbria."

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service

Mark Clement, Strategic Fire Service Reform Manager



Currently the Fire and Rescue Service is going through a period of significant change, change that it must embrace if it is to prosper as a Service that continues to keep both our firefighters and the communities of Cumbria safe. Central to this change is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. By embedding this concept, we will ensure that the Service has access to the widest possible pool of talent to deliver our services in the most effective manner to our diverse communities across Cumbria.

Our vision is that in dealing with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion we go beyond just legal compliance. We have a diverse community and workforce where respect, fairness and inclusion are integral to our culture and values. These must be upheld in everything we do, from recruiting and developing talented employees through to delivering a professional service to our communities.

The development of this document is to be welcomed, as it provides valuable insight into the different Religions and Beliefs within Cumbria, and provides an increased awareness for our firefighters when delivering on their prevention, protection and response duties. This increased awareness will contribute to greater engagement between faith communities and the fire and rescue service. It will save lives.

This builds on previous work the Service has been involved in between Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) and Kendal Fire Station, that was born out of the Fire Service looking to engage with and also wishing to have an understanding of the cultures and faiths that make up our wider community.

Further fire safety information can be found on the service website <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/cumbriafire/> or by calling 0800 358 4777

AWAZ (Cumbria)

Aftab Khan, Development Manager



AWAZ Cumbria is a community development organisation. We have been supporting and empowering the voices of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people and underrepresented communities in Cumbria since 2005.

We do this to make Cumbria a more welcoming and caring place by connecting communities, advancing equality, challenging prejudice and discrimination. We believe in partnership working to enable community development, social integration and enterprise development through voluntary action and active citizenship.

Vision

Our vision is to make Cumbria a place where:

1. Everyone is welcome to live, learn, work, visit and conduct business;
2. People respect and celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity and maintain their heritage;
3. All communities work together to tackle discrimination and prejudice, and promote understanding.

AWAZ Cumbria is one of the key third sector infrastructure support organisation for advancing equality and building sustainable partnerships for celebrating diversity and organising Unity Festivals across Cumbria.

We are one of the core members of South Lakeland Equality and Diversity Partnership, and I chair Cumbria Safer Communities Network as well as Carlisle Equality and Diversity Partnership.

I believe that this Cumbrian Supplement for the national booklet *Religion, Belief and Culture in our Community: Understanding, respecting and valuing the diverse communities of the United Kingdom: Working together to make the United Kingdom a safer, more sustainable and cohesive nation* would help members of the diverse communities and service providers in understanding the needs and expectations of all the stakeholders. Furthermore, this booklet would help the service providers in identifying needs of new emerging religion and faith and non-faith communities as part of their Equality Impact Analysis (EqIA) processes to improve their quality of services and where necessary make changes in the way services are currently being delivered across Cumbria.

AWAZ will help to disseminate and publicize this Cumbrian supplement and the national booklet.

Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch Association

Joe Murray QPM, Chair of Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch Association



We live in communities where equality and diversity go cap in hand with our everyday life and our neighbours include people who represent different faiths and religions that we don't always understand or recognise. This guide, in my view, provides an insight that will benefit many people and organisations to better understand and embrace the different cultures that we now have throughout Cumbria and I hope it helps in building a more respectful society.



Barry Rigg CMgr FCMI, Head of Inclusion and Diversity - Service

The University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust
www.uhmb.nhs.uk



We are working towards becoming a truly inclusive employer and health service provider; we believe in creating an environment and culture that celebrates inclusion and diversity, dignity and respect, values, nurtures and harnesses difference for the benefit of patients, service users, their families, carers, citizens and our employees.

We are committed to the elimination of discrimination, in reducing health inequalities, promoting equality of opportunity and dignity and respect for all our patients, service users, their families, carers and our staff to ensure that we are a:

- Healthcare Provider of Choice in treating our patients, service users, their families and carers with care, compassion and dignity and respect;
- Employer of Choice in recruiting, training, developing, nurturing and retaining the best people;
- Partner of Choice for local, regional and national organisations, together creating innovative and mutually beneficial solutions for all;
- Organisation of Choice for all our population who are future patients, services users, prospective partners and employees who live and work in our area.

I have always believed that the only way to consistently provide the highest possible level of care is through being truly inclusive, creating the right conditions for staff to flourish and for our patients to receive the services that they need, in the way that they need them, in the right environment based on their individual needs.

We have recently been recognised nationally for the work we have done to become more inclusive – and this is down to how passionate and courageous many of our front line staff have been in making change happen. Our ambitions are big – we want to be the best and our aim is to become 'effortlessly inclusive'.

We recognise, respect and value every patient, service user, family member, carer and employee as an individual, recognising different needs and harnessing these differences to the benefit of all.

We are delighted to be a member of South Lakeland Equality and Diversity Partnership and one of the many sponsors supporting the promotion of the *Religion Belief and Culture in our Community: Understanding, respecting and valuing the diverse communities of the United Kingdom* guide.



Bay Search & Rescue

Abigail Shepherd, General Manager



BAY SEARCH & RESCUE

ALL TERRAIN TRANSPORT, RESCUE & RECOVERY TEAM

Bay Search and Rescue is our local flood, snow and quicksand rescue service based at Flookburgh. Working with the Police, Fire, Ambulance service and HM Coastguard our 20 strong operational team of volunteers respond to requests requiring our specialist knowledge, equipment and vehicles. We are on call 24 hours a day 7 days a week and mainly operate in the local area but also help in neighbouring counties when required. The team is predominantly funded from proceeds from our charity shops in Grange over Sands and Milnthorpe.

www.baysearchandrescue.org.uk

Cumbrian Organizations

Relevant Cumbrian organizations include:

SLEDP South Lakeland Equality and Diversity Partnership



www.southlakeland.gov.uk/your-council/equality-and-diversity/south-lakeland-equality-and-diversity-partnership

AWAZ (Cumbria)



www.equalitycumbria.org/awaz-cumbria

SLIF South Lakeland Interfaith Forum



www.southlakelandinterfaith.com

Religion/Faith Statistics For Cumbria

From The 2011 Census

Religion/Faith	
Buddhist	1353
Christian	359,235
Hindu	559
Jewish	203
Muslim (Islam)	1336
Sikh	64
Other	1364
All Religions	364,114

No Religion	101,496
Not Stated	34,248
All No Religion/ Not Stated	135,744

Religion/Faith Statistics for Cumbria's Districts (Allerdale, Barrow-in-Furness, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden, South Lakeland) From the 2011 census

Allerdale

Religion/Faith	
Buddhist	183
Christian	72,702
Hindu	39
Jewish	19
Muslim (Islam)	193
Sikh	9

Barrow-in-Furness

Religion/Faith	
Buddhist	152
Christian	48,845
Hindu	104
Jewish	14
Muslim (Islam)	173
Sikh	7

Carlisle

Religion/Faith	
Buddhist	280
Christian	74,209
Hindu	237
Jewish	22
Muslim (Islam)	452
Sikh	32

Copeland

Religion/Faith	
Buddhist	148
Christian	55,706
Hindu	78
Jewish	14
Muslim (Islam)	226
Sikh	7

Eden

Religion/Faith	
Buddhist	131
Christian	37,163
Hindu	42
Jewish	32
Muslim (Islam)	116
Sikh	5

South Lakeland

Religion/Faith	
Buddhist	466
Christian	70,591
Hindu	52
Jewish	104
Muslim (Islam)	176
Sikh	10

Religion, Belief and Culture in our Community

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Alternative formats and translation

- Albanian** Me kërkesë, një përmbledhje e këtij dokumenti gjendet edhe në gjuhën shqipe.
- Arabic** ملخص لهذه الوثيقة متاحا أيضا باللغة العربية عند الطلب.
- Bengali** এই ডকুমেন্টের সারাংশও অনুরোধে বাংলায় পাওয়া যায়।
- Cantonese** 本文件的摘要也可應要求製作成中文(繁體字)版本。
- Farsi** خلاصه شده این مدرک هم در صورت درخواست به فارسی موجود است.
- Russian** Краткое содержание настоящего документа по отдельному запросу предоставляется также на русском языке.
- Gujarati** આ દસ્તાવેજનો ટૂંકસાર વિનંતી કરવાથી ગુજરાતીમાં પણ મળી રહેશે.
- Kurdish** کورتیهکی ئەم بەلگهیه ههروههها به پێی داواکاری به زمانی کوردی دەس دهکەویت
- Portuguese** Encontra-se também disponível um sumário deste documento em Português, a pedido.
- Polish** Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany w języku polskim.



0303 999 1000

The following formats are available on request:

Large print

(reformatted and increased to 18 point sans serif font)

CD ROM in plain text format to enable computer 'reader' systems to access and translate the information. Audio tape, audio CD and braille. Pictorial format suitable for people with learning difficulties ('easy read').

For translations of this document please contact:

Tel: 0303 999 1000

Fax: 01323 725574

Minicom: 01323 462003

Contents

Foreword	Page 4
Aim of this literature	Page 5
Introduction	Page 6-7
Cross-cultural communication	Page 8
Ethnic Origin guidelines	Page 9-10
Festivals and Celebrations	Page 11-13
Main Faiths	
Buddhism	Page 14-16
Christianity	Page 17-20
Hinduism	Page 21-25
Islam	Page 26-30
Judaism	Page 31-34
Sikhism	Page 35-39
Quick facts –Faiths	
Baha’i	Page 40-41
Buddhism	Page 42-43
Chinese Religions	Page 44-45
Christianity	Page 46
Christian Scientist	Page 47
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon)	Page 48
Hinduism	Page 49
Humanism	Page 50
Islam	Page 51
Jainism	Page 52
Japanese Shinto	Page 53
Jehovah’s Witnesses	Page 54
Judaism	Page 55
Paganism	Page 56
Rastafarianism	Page 57
Scientology	Page 58
Seventh-Day Adventism	Page 59
Sikhism	Page 60
Unitarianism	Page 61
Zoroastrianism	Page 62
Glossary	Page 63
Community Fire Safety	Page 64-65
Acknowledgements	Page 66
Community Fire Safety - Who Cares Campaign	Page 67

Foreword

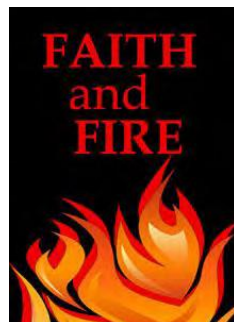
The United Kingdom's Fire & Rescue Services are dedicated to embedding fair treatment and dignity into our working environment and we value the contribution diversity brings to both the Service and the community. This 'Religion, Belief and Culture' Guide, helps to illustrate our commitment to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and developing good relations between people of different ethnic groups. It will help ensure that we develop robust policies and strategies that recognise and respond to the diverse and differing needs of our communities as we work towards achieving our key priorities as a Service.

Several UK Fire & Rescue Services offer Multifaith Chaplaincy. Chaplains possess a particular understanding of the relationship between faith and wellbeing. They can offer advice including what contributes to good relations between religions and between those who do not hold a faith.

The continued value of the "Religion, Belief and Culture" Guide, is recognised and has led to this revised third edition which has been created collaboratively between a number of UK Fire and Rescue Services, Faith and Cultural based organisations supported by the University of Central Lancashire and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

Roy Wilsher, Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council, said: 'The National Fire Chiefs Council is committed to diversity across the UK Fire and Rescue Service and we have a national committee which focuses on our workforce. The fire service is accessible to everyone - regardless of gender, background and ethnicity; it is essential we understand the diverse communities we serve and have a workforce which reflects this. To support this we are involved in a number of national initiatives to continuously build on increasing diversity and helping to transform fire services in the future.'

By creating and updating this Guide we are supporting our staff and our communities to better understand the world in which we live and work. We are also enabling cultural change and supporting cohesion. We know that to understand our communities better is key to delivering our services effectively and efficiently. We welcome the wide use of this document, copyright remains the provision of the publishers.



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

Aims of this Literature

- To provide an opportunity for a better understanding of religion/belief within the diverse communities of the United Kingdom
- To provide a general knowledge of their culture and historical background
- To give general information on the customs of dress, diet, visits, marriage, funerals, language, birth and medical matters
- To introduce some of the major festivals celebrated by the various religions, faiths and cultures.

This Guide has been prepared to increase awareness of some of the cultures which make up the modern communities within the UK. It is focused on religious groups although the authors are aware that not all faith groups represented in the UK are featured and those profiled provide a broad overview to the wide and varied range of beliefs which make their pursuit an enriching experience for thousands across the UK. The in-depth section has been restricted to those religions listed in the 2011 census with the quick facts section including a much wider range of beliefs.

At the end of this Guide is a quick reference to each of the religions and beliefs.

The Community Fire Safety section of this Guide has been included not just to promote general fire safety, but to encourage the reader to link religious festivals and customs to aspects of fire safety, particularly in the home of those celebrating their own religions, and to make communities in the UK safer.

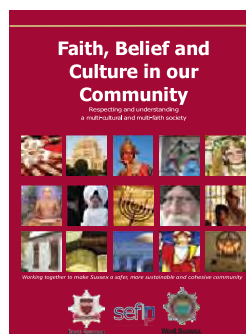
Fire & Rescue Services in the UK believe that education and publicity are the most effective ways of improving fire safety. They are committed to ensure they provide the public with a competent, diverse, safe and valued workforce that reflects the values held by the community in terms of equality, diversity and value for money.

The authors and contributors to this Guide including Surrey, West and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Services have received some very positive feedback about this Guide.

We encourage, and would like, religious and non-religious groups to contact us in order to improve the Guide and build positive relationships with all of the diverse religions and beliefs in the United Kingdom.



First Edition



Second Edition

Introduction

United Kingdom is made up of many diverse and culturally rich communities, which all contribute to our rich heritage. This Guide has been produced to help develop our knowledge and understanding of some of the faiths and cultural information of the local community in which we serve. It is intended that future editions will be more expansive providing further information to our personnel and the community.

What Do We Mean By 'Ethnic Diversity'?

Britain has been home to Black and Minority Ethnic communities for many centuries, with people with diverse histories, cultures, beliefs and languages settling here since the beginning of recorded time. In AD203 Septimus Severus arrived in Britain and was the first black Roman Emperor not born and raised in Italy. His legions were made up of different ethnic groups from Spain, Africa, Italy and Germany, some of which remained in Britain after their tour of duty. In the late Middle Ages the Moors from Spain (which was conquered by Muslims from North Africa) arrived in Britain and the number of Africans in Britain began to increase. Indians first arrived in Britain mainly because Britain traded with, and later colonised, India. In the 1840s large numbers of Indians began to migrate to the Caribbean as labourers. Some of these migrants or their descendants eventually settled in Britain.

It was Britain's involvement in the slave trade which began in the 16th century that had the greatest influence over the size and pattern of its black population. Over 400 years, Europeans transported many millions of Africans to labour in their colonies in the Americas. Many estate owners from the West Indies brought their household slaves to Britain to work as servants.

The Huguenots (Protestant refugees who arrived in the 17th Century), gradually became assimilated into the UK community. Others, such as Irish and Jewish groups who came over a longer period, have, to some extent, maintained a closer group identity. People from South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean arrived in substantial numbers after the Second World War to help meet severe labour shortages at that time. Subsequent decades have seen our communities enriched by those travelling from all parts of the globe, some fleeing persecution and war in the steps of the Huguenots, and others arriving at our invitation or on their own initiative to improve the quality of life for residents and incomers alike.

What Do We Mean By 'Religious Diversity'?

Whilst this Guide may be a useful source of information, it cannot be stressed too highly that we are all individuals, varying widely in our religious orthodoxy and having regard to the customs associated with our beliefs. It is worth noting that customs and cultural traditions sometimes become intertwined with religious observance.

The Census of 2011 provided a level of knowledge of the declared beliefs of those who took part. This was a serious attempt by Government agencies to measure our religious traditions as a nation.

The figures used in this Guide are taken from the Census, apart from that for the Christian Church*, and may not be wholly accurate. The primary reason for believing that a number of groups were not accurately recorded was that the Census was conducted in 2011 and some of the figures may have changed in recent years.

Since the 2011 Census, NatCen's British Social Attitudes survey reveals that the proportion of people in Britain who describe themselves as having no religion has steadily increased. This decline in religious affiliation features amongst all age groups however, the Census remains the most comprehensive listing of self-identified religion and belief.

Introduction

Statistics for England and Wales from the 2011 Census

Religion/Faith	
Buddhist	246,734
Christian	33,253,016
Hindu	818,708
Jewish	263,557
Muslim (Islam)	2,708,466
Sikh	420,569
Other	241,126
<i>All Religions</i>	37,952,176
No Religion	14,075,054
Not Stated	4,037,465
<i>All No Religion/Not stated</i>	18,112,519

*The data for the Christian Church is based on returns from the churches themselves (a measure of attendance at church services and not belief). The Census recorded the number of respondents describing themselves as Christians as 1.07 million.

Cross-cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication (inter-cultural communication) is a term which relates to establishing and understanding how people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate with each other. Understanding and respecting cultural differences promotes clearer communication, breaks down barriers, builds trust and strengthens our relationship with our diverse communities.

Do check what individuals mean when they use the term 'cousin', 'uncle', 'aunt' etc. They may have a different meaning to what you are used to.

Do be careful when using jargon or slang when speaking to individuals from differing communities.

Do be careful how you use gestures or body language, it may be interpreted as offensive by some members of the community.

Do be aware of colloquialisms or terms of endearment, e.g. luv, dear, etc. What is innocent to you may be offensive to others.

Do seek advice, where possible, from colleagues with different cultural backgrounds, about how to communicate effectively.

Do be aware that handshaking between people from different genders is not always considered appropriate and do not be offended if an outreached hand is not returned.

Do be aware that within some communities, some women may not feel comfortable being alone in a room or building with a man who is not a relative.

Do take care to be patient and reassuring when accents or language hinder communication.

Do be aware that some acts of physical contact, even those done with the intention of comforting an individual e.g. putting an arm around them, may cause embarrassment or offence.

Don't ask for a 'Christian' name. Ask for the 'first' and 'last name' instead. There are a multitude of differences between how different cultures address themselves.

The only sure way of getting it right is to ask people how they would like to be addressed.

Don't assume that a response to a question in English means that the individual fully understands what you are saying.

Don't assume references to day or time has the same interpretation as yours, e.g. 'afternoon' may mean a different period of time other than the one you are used to.

Don't assume lack of eye contact during conversation is a sign of dishonesty or disrespect, in some communities it means the opposite.

Don't make generalisations about groups or individuals.

Don't assume an individual's language is the same as that of their country of origin.

Don't assume that all individuals from a particular country have identical cultural backgrounds or beliefs.

Don't assume just because an individual is raising their voice they are losing control or becoming aggressive.

Don't underestimate how your own cultural background may affect your perception and behaviour towards others.

Don't enter a room unless invited to do so. It may be a prayer room where important customs should be respected.

Don't forget that many people remove shoes before entering some rooms at home, as well as a Mosque, etc. If in doubt ask, you will be told if it is necessary or not.

Ethnic Origin Guidelines

When referring to people by ethnic origin, if you are unsure of how an individual or group may wish to be identified then it would be reasonable to ASK.

Below are terms frequently used to describe Ethnic origin:

African

This is often used to describe black people from Africa, but, individuals often prefer to identify with their country of origin and will use Nigerian, Somali, etc.

African Caribbean

This is often used as a general term to describe black people from the Caribbean, and should be discouraged. The terms 'Black African', 'Black British' and 'Black Caribbean' are now standard terms used and the umbrella term 'Black' as a general term can also be acceptable - although this is not universally acceptable.

'West Indian' is a historical term used in Britain previously to describe first-generation settlers from the Caribbean. In most contexts it is inappropriate and may be offensive.

Asian

This is a general term, and although not unacceptable, it is very imprecise. It is far more acceptable to the persons concerned to be identified in terms of their national origin, e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Mauritian, or region of origin, e.g. Bengali.

Although terms such as South Asian, in reference to people from the Indian sub-continent (Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi), or South Eastern Asian are sometimes used, many people may not be clear as to what you mean. Refer to people by their country of origin, (such as Sri Lankan, Vietnamese, Malaysian, etc.), when this is known, and you will reduce the risk of offence, however unintended.

Black

'Black' has more than one meaning, a literal meaning relating to skin colour but also a broader political meaning e.g. 'Black Politics'. Some people will define themselves as 'Black' even though others may not perceive them to be. Not all people find the term acceptable, but if it is used it should be as an adjective (a describing word)(e.g. 'black communities'), not as a noun (e.g. 'the blacks').

Black British

Although this is often seen on official documentation, when racial identity is an issue, people in general, particularly young people, will refer to themselves as 'Black'.

Ethnic Origin Guidelines

British

The term 'British' relates to characteristics of Great Britain or its people or culture. Nearly everyone born in Britain has British citizenship, regardless of colour or ethnicity and the term should not be used as another word for 'White'.

Coloured

This is not acceptable. Many people find it offensive. Although this term was in common usage some years ago, it is now used less often and has been replaced by the term 'Black'.

Non-White

Many people may find this term deeply offensive, as its origins relate to apartheid. The term should be avoided.

Half-Caste

The use of the term half-caste was widely used until recent times. It is now regarded as offensive by many people due to its origins within the Hindu Caste System, in which being half-caste could mean social exclusion for the individual concerned.

Mixed Race

This is generally accepted, but can sometimes have negative connotations. An alternative is 'mixed parentage' or 'dual parentage'. The term 'multi-racial' may also be used, for example as in reference to a 'multi-racial household'. 'Mixed cultural heritage' is increasingly used in educational circles.

Self-classification of Ethnic Origin

When dealing with people from any community their own self-classification of ethnic origin is important and should be recorded in line with their wishes. Where the self-classification may be perceived by others as derogatory, particularly in written statements, it is recommended that clarification is added in brackets e.g. Half-caste (mixed race/parentage) or coloured (Black).

Minority Ethnic Communities/Minority Ethnic

These terms are widely used and generally accepted in the broadest term to encompass all those groups who see themselves as distinct from the majority of the population in terms of cultural or ethnic identity and not just 'Black' or 'visible' minorities. 'Ethnics' as a term on its own is not acceptable. Neither should a term such as 'immigrants' be used generally, unless in its strict technical sense. It is also important to note here that the term 'communities' should be used. A community in its singular sense refers to one homogeneous group, which the minority ethnic communities living in one area rarely are.

Festivals and Celebrations

These are the main festivals and celebrations throughout the year. The Inter Faith Network maintains a current and up-to-date list of festivals which is available on its website www.interfaith.org.uk. The month of the festivals may change as some religions calculate the dates of their festivals depending upon the phases of the moon and the time of the solar year (luni-solar calendar) e.g. many Jewish Festivals and some Christian Festivals. Other religions operate a Lunar Calendar e.g. Islam which is 11 days shorter each year than the Gregorian Calendar. This means that most of the significant religious events move back by 11 days each year. In a 30-year period each major festival will have fallen in every month of the year. The Hindu religious calendar is based on 2 calendars the Hindu luni-solar calendar and the Hindu lunar calendar and some calendars are an amalgam.

January
The birthday of Guru Gobind Singh - Sikh
Ethiopian Christmas Day - Rastafarian
Makar Sankrant - Hindu
Losar – Buddhist varies Jan/Feb
Shogatsu - Japanese Shinto
Chinese New Year – Chinese varies Jan/Feb (luni-solar calendar)
Epiphany – Western Christianity
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - Christian
Baptism of Jesus – Christian (Epiphany Eastern Church)

March
Hola Mohalla – Sikh – mainly March (lunar calendar) Spring Military/Warrior Festival
Purim – Jewish varies Feb/March (luni-solar calendar) Jewish deliverance from ancient enemy
Holi – Hindu varies Feb/March (luni-solar calendar) Spring Festival
Spring Equinox - Pagan
Naw-Ruz - Baha'i
Jamshedi Noruz – Zoroastrian New Year and is also celebrated in Iran by Iranian Muslims BUT as the Spring Equinox
Khordad Sal – Zoroastrian- celebrates the birth of Zoroaster
Hina-matsuri - Japanese Shinto
Shubun-Sai - Japanese Shinto and Japanese Buddhist celebration of Spring
Palm Sunday – Christian varies March/April (tries to harmonise luni-solar calendar)
Good Friday – Christian (same as above)
Annunciation – Christian – normally 25 th March except in exceptional circumstances
Magha Puja – Buddhist – celebrates ideal Buddhist Community (lunar calendar)

February
Tu B'Shevat – Jewish varies Jan/Feb (luni-solar calendar)
Vasant Panchami – Hindu varies Jan/Feb (onset of Spring - ancient luni-solar calendar)
Mahashivratri – Hindu varies Feb/Mar honours the god Shiva
Imbolc – Pagan/Neo pagan/Modern Pagan - celebrates start of Spring
Parinirvana or Nirvana Day – Buddhist (primarily Mahayana tradition)
Setsubun - Japanese Shinto and Japanese Buddhist - celebrates the day before Spring
Lent – Christian varies Feb/March/April (tries to harmonise lunar and solar calendars)
Candlemas - Christian
Lantern Festival – Chinese - marks the end of the Chinese New Year varies Feb/March (luni-solar calendar)

April
Vaisakhi (Baisakhi-Sikh New Year) – Sikh – and is also celebrated by Hindus who celebrate it as harvest festival
Passover (Pesach) – Jewish varies March/April (luni-solar calendar)
Yom Hashoah – Jewish varies April/May (luni-solar calendar) Holocaust Remembrance day
Rama Navami – Hindu varies March/April (Hindu calendar based on amalgamated luni-solar calendars) celebrates the birthday of Lord Rama

Festivals and celebrations

April
Hanuman Jayanti – Hindu varies March/April (Hindu calendar based on amalgamated luni-solar calendars) celebrates the birthday of the god Hanuman
Ridavan –Baha’i – 12 day festival, start date varies between April/May (depends on the exact date of the Spring equinox)
Mahavira Jayanti – Jain varies March/April (Hindu calendar based on amalgamated luni-solar calendar) it celebrates the birth of the last great Jain spiritual leader
Easter – Christian varies March/April (tries to harmonise lunar and solar calendars)
Ching Ming – Chinese usually April sometimes March (dated according to traditional Chinese solar calendar) a day to honour the Ancestors.
Lailat-ul-Bara’h – Muslim Meaning Night of Forgiveness. April. Timings vary according to Islamic calendar.

May
Beltane – Pagan (Northern Hemisphere) celebrates the Gaelic or ancient May Day
Yom Ha’Atzmut – Jewish varies April/May (luni-solar calendar) Independence Day (Israel)
Wesak (Buddha Day) - Buddhist
Declaration of the Bab - Baha’i
Ascension of Baha’u’llah - Baha’i
Pentecost/Whitsun – Christian varies May/June (tries to harmonise luni-solar calendar)
Ascension Day – Christian varies May/June though usually May (as above)
Corpus Christi Day – Western Christian Church varies May/June (tries to harmonise luni-solar calendar)

June
The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev - Sikh
The Dragon Boat Festival – Chinese varies May/June (Chinese lunar-solar Calendar)
Shavuot – Jewish varies May/June (luni-solar calendar) celebrates the giving of the Torah

June
Summer Solstice – Pagan/ Neo Pagan and Modern Pagan
World Humanist Day - Humanist
Ramadan – Muslim this is called the Holy Month of Ramadan. Celebrated May/June dates vary each year
Laylat al-Qadr Night of Power- Muslim- varies dates 27th day of Ramadan and celebrates revelation of Quran to Prophet Muhammad
Eid-UI-Fitr-Muslim- varies as it marks the end of Ramadan

July
Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I - Rastafarian
Asala/Esala Dharma Day – Buddhist celebrates the First Discourse of the Buddha and the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of The Law
Martyrdom of the Bab - Baha’i
Ratha Yatra – Hindu Chariot Festival

August
Birthday of Marcus Garvey - Rastafarian
Tish B’Av – Jewish varies July/August (luni-solar calendar) commemorates destruction of 1 st and 2 nd Temples
Raksha Bandhan – Hindu South Asian celebrates brother/sister relationships/platonic
Janamashtami – Hindu varies Aug/Sep (Hindu lunar calendar) celebrates the birthday of Lord Krishna.
Lughnasadh or Lammass – Pagan/Neo Pagan/Modern Pagan traditional harvest day
Khordad Sal (Shenshai calendar) – Zoroastrian varies Aug/Sep (dates vary according to Zoroastrian calendar) celebrates the birth of Zoroaster
Paryushana - Jain No Ruz (Shenshai New Year’s Day) - Zoroastrian

Festivals and Celebrations

August

Farvandigan (Fasil) - Zoroastrian

Transfiguration - Christian

The Assumption - Christian

Hajj – Muslim

Eid-UI-Adha - Muslim marks the end of Hajj

September

Ethiopian New Year - Rastafarian

Ganesh Chaturthi - Hindu

Autumn Equinox/Mabon – Pagan/Neo Pagan and modern Pagan

Al-Hijara (Islamic New Year) 2018/19

Ashura – Muslim The Day of Atonement varies

October

Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement – Jewish varies (10th day after Jewish New Year)

Rosh Hashanah/Jewish New Year – Jewish varies but is normally Sep/Oct and is increasingly dated based on a range of calculations and calendars

Sukkot/Thanksgiving For Protection after fleeing Egypt – Jewish varies but is 5 days after Yom Kippur

Simchat Torah – Jewish the final days of Sukkot (2 days)

Navaratri Nine Nights Festival – Hindu varies Sep/Oct (Hindu luni-solar Calendar)

Dussera/Victory of Good over Evil – Hindu varies Sep/Oct (Hindu lunar calendar)

Samhain/New Year – Pagan/Neo Pagan/Modern Pagan varies Oct/Nov

Birth of the Bab - Baha'i

Mid-Autumn Festival – Chinese varies Sep/Oct (Chinese lunar calendar)

November

Beltane – Pagan – (Southern Hemisphere) celebrates the Gaelic or ancient May Day

Diwali/Festival of Light - Hindu, Sikh and Jain

Birthday of Guru Nanak – Sikh varies Oct/Nov (Hindu lunar calendar)

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur - Sikh

Anniversary of the Coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I - Rastafarian

Birth of Baha'u'llah - Baha'i

Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha - Baha'i

Milad un Nabi (birthday of the Prophet Mohammad) – Muslim November

Advent – Christian varies Nov/Dec (tries to harmonise luni-solar calendar)

All Saints Day - Christian

All Souls Day - Christian

December

Hanukkah/Festival of Lights – Jewish varies Nov/Dec (luni-solar calendar)

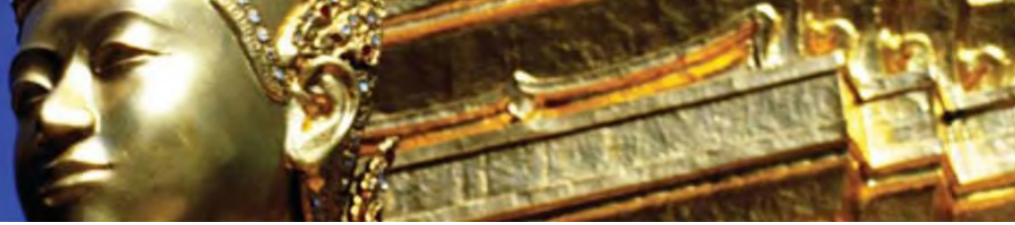
Winter Solstice/Yuletide – Pagan/Neo Pagan/Modern Pagan

Bodhi Day/Day of Enlightenment - Buddhist

Zartusht-no-Diso (Shenshai) – Zoroastrian commemorates the death of Zarathustra

Christmas - Christian

Feast of the Immaculate Conception - Christian



Buddhism

Buddhism began in Northern India which is now Nepal, over 2500 years ago and is based upon the teachings of Siddhattha/Siddhartha Gotama who became known as the 'Buddha' Shakyamuni - the enlightened one. After searching for a way to free himself and others from suffering he discovered enlightenment. For the next forty five years he instructed those who were willing to listen in the methods to achieve this for themselves. Nothing was written down by the Buddha, but he left a legacy in the form of a teaching (the Dhamma) that was at first conveyed orally by the religious order the Sangha (a community of monks and nuns) that he founded and guided. Monks and nuns (mendicants) are not permitted to proselytise, they are spiritual companions who can only teach when asked to do so. In order to help people realise that the normal understanding of life is inadequate, the Buddha spoke about 'dukkha' (roughly translated as unsatisfactoriness). He summarised his teachings as the Four Noble Truths about dukkha; its origin, its ending and the path to its ending. These core teachings were to be measured against one's experiences and used for guidance. They are known as the Four Noble Truths; first that all life is unsatisfactory, second that this springs from our craving. Complete happiness can be gained by the third, which is the absolute elimination of craving. This is achieved by the fourth Noble Truth, which comprises of following what is referred to as The Noble Eightfold Path, i.e. the path of right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. All eight components of this path are required to be developed together in order to achieve full enlightenment. The Dhammacakka Wheel represents the doctrine 'set rolling' by the Buddha. The eight spokes symbolise the Eightfold Path, the fourth Noble Truth and the Path to the end of suffering. Buddhism is divided into a number of different traditions and there are two main schools. The Theravada, or 'Teaching of the Elders' spread into South and South East Asia and is sometimes known as the Southern Transmission/School. The Mahayana, or 'Great Vehicle' spread North and along the Silk Road and is sometimes known as the Northern Transmission/School.

Dress

Generally there are no religious requirements for everyday dress for lay Buddhists. Buddhist monks or nuns of the Theravada school wear robes of orange or ochre colour. They shave their heads and carry bowls, in which they carry the food that other Buddhists give them as they are prohibited from growing food or having money.

Language

The main language for Buddhists is the spoken language of the country of residence. Depending upon the particular school the teachings have been written in, either Pali (Theravada school) or Sanskrit (Mahayana school).

Diet

The requirement to be vegetarian or not varies between Buddhist traditions and from region to region. Many Buddhists refrain from consuming alcohol, but this is a personal preference or part of a Precept (Rule of Training) within specific sects of Buddhism.

Visits in the Home

There may be a small shrine or image of the Buddha in the home. A gift of flowers would be acceptable when visiting. Shoes should never be worn in a shrine room. Never enter a shrine room without being invited.



Buddhism

Place of Worship

When visiting a Vihara or shrine, offerings of food for the community, flowers and incense are welcomed. When entering a Vihara or shrine it is respectful to dress modestly and remove shoes. Seating is usually on the floor and it is important to remain quiet as the shrine room is used for meditation; visitors are not expected to join in but may do so if they wish.

Names

As Buddhists come from a wide variety of backgrounds it is best to ask what people call themselves. If a name is required for records, it is advisable to first ask the family name and use this as the surname.

Birth

The birth of a baby is a special time for family celebration. There are no universal birth marriage or death ceremonies in Buddhism. These ceremonies vary from country to country and culture to culture and according to Buddhist tradition and not family tradition. Monks may be invited into the home to chant texts from Buddhist scriptures and the baby may be taken to a Buddhist temple to be blessed by the monks.

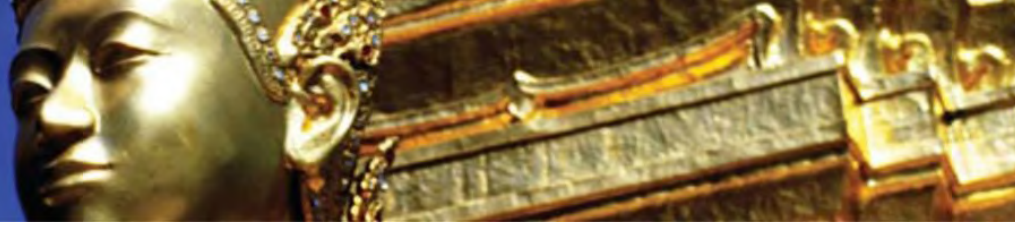
Marriage

There are a range of marriage customs across the very large and diverse communities where Buddhism is practiced. Some Buddhist marriages are arranged by their parents. Dress is usually the wearing of 'best clothes' to suit what best reflects the guests' own tradition. The marriage ceremony is considered secular and registration of the marriage is universally required by law in all Buddhist countries and communities and can therefore take place almost anywhere. After the ceremony the couple can either invite the monks into their home or visit a Vihara to have the marriage blessed or give a sermon. After the wedding ceremonies there is generally feasting and celebration for the bride and groom, relatives and guests.

Alcohol

Alcohol, drugs and tobacco is prohibited for monks and nuns. For lay people there is no blanket prohibition although abstinence is preferred restraint is strongly advised, lay people should not become intoxicated and lose self-control through consumption of drugs, alcohol or tobacco.





Buddhism

Medical

Many Eastern Buddhists favour home remedies in the case of illness. For hospital stays, a Buddhist monk or nun would prefer to be treated by a member of staff of the same sex. Showers are considered to be preferable to baths. There are no religious objections to blood transfusions or transplants. A Buddhist should be informed of the effects of medicines if they are likely to cause drowsiness or unconsciousness. It is one of the training protocols for many Buddhists that they take no drugs that might cloud their mind. If a person is very ill or dying specific texts should be recited or chanted to prepare the individual or to ease their mind.

Funerals

The belief in rebirth means that death has a special meaning in Buddhism. After death, a monk from the same school of Buddhism as the deceased should be informed as soon as possible. Buddhists view death as natural and inevitable and hope the deceased may gain a favourable rebirth (if they have not attained Nibbana/ Nirvana). Buddhists are generally cremated. Traditional Buddhist funerals can be quite elaborate, whilst other Buddhist funerals can be quieter in character however, the rituals are always elaborate and must be carried out in a highly particular manner.

Festivals

Buddhist holidays are determined according to the phases of the moon. No particular day of the week is designated a holy day, instead quarter moon days are used. Lay Buddhists in Western countries try to at least celebrate the full moon day, though if it is not feasible on the actual day it will be celebrated on the nearest Sunday. Different schools of Buddhism celebrate different special events throughout the year.

Wesak

Highpoint of the Buddhist calendar. Celebrating Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. This festival is celebrated by all schools of Buddhism and is a lively event which involves dancing, food, singing, praying and chanting.

Losar

Losar marks the Tibetan New Year and is celebrated for three days.

Magha Puja

Magha Puja (Sangha Day) is the second most important Buddhist festival which commemorates the day that Buddha recited teachings to 1250 enlightened disciples who came to hear him.

Parnirvana

Parnirvana or Nirvana Day celebrates Buddha's death when he reached total Nirvana.

Asala

Asala is the anniversary of the start of Buddha's teaching.

Bodhi Day

Buddhists remember the enlightenment of Buddha while he was sitting under the Bodhi tree.



Christianity

Faith

Christianity is based on the life, death through crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who lived as a Jew in the Middle East over 2000 years ago. The Common Era (CE) is the secular equivalent to the Christian calendar. The Christian holy book is the Bible, comprising the Jewish scriptures or Old Testament and the New Testament, about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Christians belong to the Church which is a term used both to describe many of the buildings in which Christians meet, as well as the community of Christians who worship together, particularly on a Sunday. They pray regularly to the One God, whom they believe to have been revealed to the human race as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Cross is a symbol of the sacrificial death of Jesus, bringing forgiveness for human sins and of his resurrection which opens the way for eternal life with God through faith in Christ. Belief and right behaviour are closely linked as faith should be demonstrated through actions which reflect Jesus' teachings.

The Church is found in many forms: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Free Church as well as many other types of traditions. Christians are people of all cultures and ethnicities and are numerically the largest of the world's religious groups.



Dress

There are no dress codes for Christians, though modesty is encouraged, particularly in places of worship. Men remove their headwear and in some countries women cover their heads in church. Many Ministers wear robes when conducting acts of worship and some, including many monks and nuns, wear identifiable robes throughout the day. Many Ministers also wear a white collar underneath their shirt (affectionately referred to as a dog collar) to distinguish themselves from lay people and identify themselves to lay people.

Language

The language of the people of the country is usually used in worship, with the Bible translated from its original Hebrew and 1st Century Greek. However, various ethnic-based Churches express their worship in the language of the culture concerned (e.g. Russian Orthodox).

Diet

As far as the majority of Christians are concerned, there are few prohibitions on food, but fasting is encouraged as an aid to devotion, particularly during the seasons of Lent and Advent. Some traditions do adhere to specific restrictions on certain days of the week and at certain festivals.



Christianity

Visits in the Home

Many Christians say a prayer of thanks and request for blessing before meals. Family prayers may be said, with Bible readings. Candles or sacred pictures may be used as devotional aids. A simple fish symbol is also often used to identify Christians.

Visits in the Places of Worship

Most Christians gather for worship in purpose-built churches or chapels, though they may worship anywhere, indoors or out. There are growing numbers of house churches either where there is no suitable building or where a church is 'outreaching' into a new community. One of the main acts of worship for all Christians is a commemoration of the Last Supper when Jesus shared bread and wine with his followers as representations of his life, given for the salvation (reconciliation of man with God) of human beings through their faith in Jesus' life death and resurrection. This service may be called the Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper or Mass. Visitors are welcome to join in Christian worship, though they may only receive Holy Communion if they believe/are Christian.

Names

The family name or surname is preceded by one or more 'Christian' names chosen by the parents and used in the Baptism service. Most women adopt the man's surname upon marriage, but this is not a requirement.

Birth

The birth of a child in many church traditions is followed by Baptism (sometimes called Christening), when water is poured on the child's head to symbolise the washing away of sin which was accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ. It is usually through Baptism that a person becomes a member of the Church. Baptism can take place at any age, with some traditions only accepting those who have reached an understanding and faith of their own Baptism. However, it depends on the church/denomination, some do baby Baptism/Christening whilst others do dedication (dedicating their child to God).

Marriage

Bride and bridegroom exchange vows with each other in the presence of a member of the clergy, who then pronounces God's blessing on their union. They may also exchange rings and other traditional customs may be observed which are not actually requirements of the Christian faith.

Medical

Prayers are said for people who are ill and these may be accompanied by the 'laying-on of hands' invoking the healing power of the Holy Spirit, as Christians believe in God's power to heal. Christian ministers visit those who are ill and hospitals usually appoint chaplains, who co-operate with and complement the work of the medical staff and are happy to go to see anyone who asks for them.

Funerals

The body of a dead person is treated with respect and is buried or cremated after a funeral service. There are no objections to autopsies. Christians believe that after death God will give them bodies fitting to their new state with God. On earth they enjoy 'communion' with other Christians, living and dead, because of their union with the living Christ.



Christianity

Festivals

The year is divided into 'seasons' and special days. These are the main ones: (not all these festivals are celebrated by all Christians)

Advent

This season prepares for Christmas and also the Return of Jesus Christ, or Second Coming.

Christmas

Celebrates the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Epiphany

Marks the visit of wise men from the East to Bethlehem; they were the first Gentiles (people who are not Jews) to greet the birth of Christ and to have his identity revealed to them as Divine.

Lent

Begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts 40 days, commemorating Christ's sojourn in the wilderness. Lent is a time of fasting and penitence.

Holy Week

Concludes Lent and marks the trials and sufferings of Christ. The Friday of Holy Week is called Good Friday because it is the day Jesus was crucified and died for the sins of humanity.

Easter

Easter is a great celebration commemorating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Ascension Day

Is 40 days after Easter and marks the time when Jesus was seen no more and ascended to God the Father.

Whitsun/Pentecost

Celebrates the day when Jesus' disciples experienced the effect of the Holy Spirit and were inspired to spread the message about Jesus throughout the world.

Candlemas

Candlemas marks the midpoint of Winter, halfway between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox. It is also called 'The Presentation of Christ in the Temple' and commemorates the day Mary took Jesus to the Temple to present him to God. The day also marks the blessing of candles in church.

Corpus Christi

A Roman Catholic holy day which commemorates the Eucharist – a ritual in which they believe that a wafer and wine become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. Proclaiming the truth of transubstantiation, when the bread and wine become the actual body of Jesus in the Mass is one of the most important and significant spiritual events of the Faith.





Christianity

Christian Churches found in the UK

- Baptist Church
- Church of England (Anglican)
- Churches with a significant ethnic focus (e.g. black majority churches, Chinese church etc.)
- Independent traditions of churches including chapels and modern church movements
- Methodist Church
- Orthodox Churches e.g. including the Coptic Church which is the main Christian Church in Egypt
- Quaker (Society of Friends)
- Roman Catholic Church
- Salvation Army
- United Reformed Church
- New frontiers
- Vineyard

Other groups found in the UK

Alongside the Christian Churches whose beliefs are described in the section above, there are a small number of other religious groups with beliefs or terminology which shares some aspects of belief (or recognisable formalised structures) with the Christian Church, but they also have a number of significant differences of belief from that of the Christian Churches.

- Christadelphians
- Christian Science
- Jehovah Witness
- Mormon
- Seventh-Day Adventists
- Spiritualist
- Unitarians



Hinduism

Faith

'Hindu' was the word historically used of people living by the river Sindhu in North West India. The word 'Hinduism' is a collective term for the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus. It is a relatively new concept particularly associated with the British Empire and its desire to exert control and rule through formal structures which then effectively simplified and codified what had been the complexity of numerous regional and community beliefs. The Hindu way of life is referred to as the Sanatana Dharma (the eternal religion) or Vedic Dharma (pertaining to the Vedas), it has no precise traceable beginning, nor is there a single founder. There is great diversity within the religion and its followers. The regional, linguistic, caste and economic background of individuals will determine the way Hinduism is practiced by individuals. Hindus follow the sacred texts known as the Vedas (knowledge). They believe in an indescribable, all-encompassing oneness, an ultimate reality, referred to as Brahman.

Brahman is depicted as having 3 aspects:

Brahma - the creator

Vishnu - the sustainer

Mahesh - the completer



A central belief is in the existence of a cosmic or natural order, a balanced way of living, physically, socially, ethically and spiritually. These are interpreted as the four human achievements of:

Dharma - observing religious law

Artha - acceptance of power, wealth and possessions

Kama - achieving quality and enjoyment of life in a balanced way

Moksha - liberation from the continuous cycle of births and deaths (samsara)

Duty to others and taking responsibility for one's actions is fundamental to the notion of Dharma. Failure to do so results in a price to pay - Karma.

'Om' is the most sacred syllable often spoken during the practice of any Hindu rites. It is a holy character of the Sanskrit language, the language of God. The character is a composite of three different letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. The English equivalent of those are 'a', 'u' and 'm' and represent the Trimurti. The Trimurti is composed of the three supreme Hindu Gods: Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer. These three letters when pronounced properly in unison create an invigorating effect in the body. Because of its significance this sacred syllable is spoken before any chants to show God we remember him. The sign in Hinduism also represents the whole universe.



Hinduism

Hindu Society

The word 'caste' comes from the Portuguese and the correct term is 'Varna' (societal groupings). The four Varnas are:

Kshatriya - kings, warriors and technologists

Brahmin - priests, historians, educators

Vaishya - agriculturalists and artisans (now extended to traders of goods and finance)

Shudras - workers who provide labour and service

The Varnas were not originally hereditary, nor were there any rules limiting social interaction or marriage between these classes. The scriptures original emphasis was that a person would be categorised according to personal qualities, rather than by birth.

Caste remains important in Hindu marriage negotiations but is becoming less restrictive in terms of employment opportunities.

Birth

Before the birth of the child there are two important and significant ceremonies; one is in the third month called Punsavana (foetus protection) and the second is in the seventh month and is the equivalent of a baby shower called the Simantonnyana. After the birth of a child a brief ceremony called the Jatakmarā takes place to welcome the child into the family and give thanks for the health of both mother and child. The rite of naming the child (Nama Karma) is usually carried out by the family priest on the 11th day after the birth according to the horoscope and guidance from an astrologer.

Dress

Many male Hindus choose to wear western style dress. Some orthodox Hindu men wear a clay marking on their foreheads known as a Tilak and wear, at the back of their heads a tuft of hair known as 'Sikha'. Some Hindu women will wear a 'bindi' - a red spot on the forehead denoting membership of the Hindu faith. Most married women wear a necklace known as a 'angal sutra' which is placed around their neck when they get married and which they would not wish to remove. Some Hindu women may prefer to wear saris or Shalwar Khemeez (baggy trousers and long tunic). Most Hindu women in Britain today are free to choose their own dress codes.

Language

The religious language is Sanskrit. Hindus may speak several languages other than English including Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil and Bengali.



Hinduism

Diet

Hindu diet is most concerned with the purity of food and vegetarian food is generally considered to be more pure than non-vegetarian food and beef is taboo for most Hindu people. Hindus are usually vegetarians owing to the principle of not killing. However, if they do eat meat, they should refrain from beef. Vegetarian Hindus will refrain from eating meat (including fish), eggs and any product that has been made from non-vegetarian ingredients. Many Hindus do not drink alcohol or smoke. Some communities follow strict vegetarian rules whilst others do not. Some communities maintain dietary purity during specific times of the year or during specific festivals.

Many Hindus (and especially women), observe fasts or vrats (vows) as devotion to a deity on behalf of the well-being of themselves and their family. These vows entail the avoidance of certain foods at certain times, such as on particular days of the week, of the lunar month and of the year.

Visits in the Home

Traditionally, Hindu women are responsible for looking after the home and family. The man normally takes financial responsibility for the family and goes out to work. However, in Britain today, many Hindu women work whilst continuing to play the traditional role in children's education and socialisation into Hindu beliefs and practices at home and in the community. The household will normally have a shrine. This is where 'puja' (worship) is performed. If you are invited to look at the shrine room you should remove your shoes. It is polite to accept refreshments and food offered. During the meal it is polite to take and eat food with the right hand and afterwards give thanks and wash the hands.

Place of Worship

Worship can take place in the home or in the 'Mandir' (temple). Inside the temple will be large and colourful images of the Hindu Gods. When entering a 'Mandir' shoes must be removed and no one must wear clothing or accessories made of leather or fur. Consider taking an offering of fresh fruit or flowers, it is not expected but it would be welcomed.

Women should cover their heads (although this is not compulsory). Men take their hats off. Seating is on the floor with men and women sometimes seated opposite each other. It is disrespectful to point the feet towards the sacred area at the front of the temple.

Twice a day at home and five times a day at a Temple there is a short 'arti' ceremony. This is when light is offered to the Gods. Afterwards a lamp is brought amongst the worshippers who put a coin on a tray, place their hands over the flame and touch their heads as a symbol of accepting the light of God. Visitors may wish to take part in this ceremony or just stand aside and watch.





Hinduism

Names

Depending upon cultural background and tradition, Hindus may have three or four names. Where names are required for records it is advisable to ask what should be used.

Marriage

Arranged marriages are common, arranged by parents with the consent of the couple. Factors such as similar backgrounds and the preference of the bride and groom are taken into consideration. Most Hindus approve of their children choosing their own partners.

A Hindu marriage can take place in any suitable place. There will be both a religious ceremony and a registry office wedding. The religious ceremony is performed in the ancient Sanskrit language. The bride will usually marry in a red or deep pink sari. During the ceremony the couple's clothes are tied together and they walk around the sacred fire, known as 'The Seven Steps'. After the marriage, the bride may have a red bindi painted on her forehead by the groom as a sign of her new status. In Hindu religion divorce is not allowed, however, according to the law of India people can divorce if they wish.

Medical

Hindus have no problem in accepting medical treatment as they respect life and health. The ancient practice of Ayurvedic medicine is still followed today by many Hindus. For hospital stays most Hindu women would prefer to be treated by a female member of staff. There are no religious objections to organ donation, transplants or post mortems.

Funerals

Hindu belief is that the soul of the deceased will either be re-born or has completed the cycle of birth and death and re-birth and can rejoin with the Creator. Hindu people prefer to die at home where the body remains for 24 hours prior to cremation. After death the body is washed and covered. It is preferable for the family to handle the body. The eldest son or other senior male relative would be consulted in all arrangements. Under Hindu tradition, close relatives of the deceased observe a 13 day mourning period, during which they may wish to remain at home. White is the colour of mourning and Hindus are generally cremated. The ashes of the deceased are scattered at a place of importance to the deceased. Sometimes the ashes of the deceased are sent to family members in India for scattering on the River Ganges. Ten days after the death a ceremony is held at the home of the deceased to liberate the soul for its ascent into Heaven and those taking part are expected to bring fruit.

Festivals

There are many Hindu festivals, listed below are some of the main ones:

Holi

Marks the end of Winter and the appearance of Spring. Festival of coloured powder and water. Bonfires are also lit at this time.

Rama Navami

Celebrates the birth of Lord Rama.



Hinduism

Janamashtami

Birthday of Lord Krishna. There is fasting till midnight, when a symbolic image of Krishna is welcomed into the temple with flowers and great rejoicing.

Navratri/Durga Puja

Navratri means nine nights and it is the Gujarati name for Durg Puja. It celebrates the victory of good over evil.

Diwali

New Years Eve for most Hindus in the UK. The focus of the festival is the celebration of Rama and Sitas' return from voluntary exile. The highlights of the festival are the lights and fireworks.

Makar Sankrant

The first Hindu festival of the solar calendar year where prayers are recited and sweets made from sesame seeds are given to signify that the days become longer.

Raksha Bandhan (Rakhi)

Celebration of bonding where a holy thread is tied around the wrist as a 'bond of protection' to signify that the strong must protect the weak from evil.

Vasant Panchami (Saraswati puja)

Festival dedicated to the Hindu goddess Saraswati.

Ratha Yatra

Hindu chariot festival that represents the travels of Lord Krishna.

Mahashivratri

The festival celebrated in honour of Shiva.

Hanuman Jayati

This is celebrated to commemorate the birth of Hanuman Ji, the Monkey God.

Ganesh Chaturthi

This is an eleven day festival which celebrates Lord Ganesh, the God of Wisdom.

Dusseera

Marks the day on which Lord Rama liberated his wife from Ravana, the King of Lanka. The festival culminates in the burning of an effigy of Ravana to signify the end of evil.



Islam

Faith

Islam means submission to the will of God. Islam began in Arabia 1400 years ago when Allah (God in Arabic) revealed His final Truth to the world through Muhammad (SAW) Allah's final prophet. Muhammad (570CE-632 CE) was born in Saudi Arabia and taught that there is only One God and that he Muhammad was God's final Messenger or Prophet. Muhammad taught those who believed this revelation (Muslims) what God's expectations were. The revelations were according to Muhammad divine messages written down later by scribes and make up the Holy text called the Quran (the recitation). In addition to following the requirements in the Quran there are 5 main duties called the 5 Pillars of Islam. Like all religions there are differing interpretations within Islam. There are two main 'sects' within Islam, Sunni Islam and Shia Islam and there are four main Sunni schools of thought and three Shia schools of thought.

The letters SAW are often seen after the Prophets name, this is as a mark of respect. They mean 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. The star and crescent moon is the centuries-old Islamic symbol.

Muslim belief entails submitting one's life to the will of Allah as revealed by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) through the Quran and to do so through the declaration of faith, regular prayer, almsgiving (Zakat), fasting and pilgrimage. Muslims meet for prayers at a mosque. The main duties of a Muslim are summed up in the Five Pillars of Islam:-

The Shahada - testimony of faith

Salah - the obligation to pray five times a day taking place at dawn (Fajar), midday (Zuhr), late afternoon (Asr), after sunset (Maghrib) and late evening (Isha), facing in the direction of the holy city of Mecca

Zakah - to give a fixed 2.5% of one's income to charity

Sawm - observe the fasting month of Ramadan

Hajj - requires Muslims, who are able, to go on pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca) once in their lifetime.

Muslims believe that God has sent many prophets throughout history to all the nations. All the prophets preached faith in one God, life after death and a moral code for life. The prophets include Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (SAW). Muhammad (SAW) is considered to be the final prophet and the perfect model of how people are to live. Prayers are obligatory from puberty onwards except for women who are menstruating or in the post-natal period. People who are not fully conscious are also exempted from prayers. Friday is the day for congregational prayers.





Islam

Dress

Modesty in dress is crucial for Muslim people. The outward modesty should reflect the inner commitment to God and the inner commitment should be reflected outwardly. Clearly this is an issue of complexity and individual choices will vary significantly. Many men choose to wear western style clothing whilst some men wear traditional clothing including a head covering. The issue of women's dress is more complex as there are significant differences in cultural and social expectations/traditions given that Muslims come from all walks of life and from many diverse countries. Many Muslims in the UK were born in the UK to first, second and third generation immigrants and their choice of clothing is shaped by their family heritage including being British. The issue of women wearing Hijab and the different kinds of covering/veiling and the extent of covering is a matter of choice within the context of community in the UK today.

Diet

Islamic Law determines the type of food and the way food is prepared: food which conforms to Islamic Law is Halal (permitted) whilst food which does not is Haram (prohibited). Muslims do not eat pork or any pork by-products. Alcohol is also forbidden. Muslims are allowed to eat poultry, mutton and beef as long as it is 'halal' which means killed and prepared by a Muslim according to Islamic law.

A vegetarian or fish meal would be acceptable if prepared with Halal ingredients.

Visits in the home

Islam values cleanliness and courtesy and shoes should be removed and placed side by side upon entering a Muslim home. You may see pictures of Makkah and there may also be a copy of the Quran on a shelf covered in a cloth and quotes from the Quran on plaques on the wall. Devout Muslims pray five times a day. If you arrive unannounced you may interrupt their prayer, wait for them to finish, it only takes a few minutes. If you are a male be aware some Muslim women may not be comfortable in the company of a man who is not a relative. Some Muslims may not be happy to shake hands with a person of another gender. It is polite to accept refreshments if offered. Within Islam, women and men are treated as equals. Traditionally women are responsible for looking after the home and family. Men have the main responsibility for providing financially for the family.

Visits in the Place of Worship

A Mosque is the place of worship for Muslims. It can also be used as a community and educational centre. A Mosque can be a converted house or a domed building; some mosques have a minaret, which is a tower for calling the faithful to prayer. Friday midday is the busiest time as all male Muslims are expected to congregate for prayer at the time of the Zuhr prayer.

On entering a Mosque you are expected to remove your shoes. Women should wear long-sleeved and high necked tops and to cover the head with a scarf and avoid visiting a mosque when menstruating. Muslim men tend to cover their heads during prayer. Outside the prayer room there will be running water for people to ablute before prayer. Women and men enter by separate doors and sit in separate parts of the mosque. Visitors are welcome to sit quietly at a place at the back of the mosque whilst prayers are in progress but are not expected to join in. The main room of a mosque is normally empty of furniture except a pulpit. The mihrab at the front is an alcove, which marks the direction of Makkah, which is the direction people face when praying.



Islam

Names

Many Muslims use the names of prophets of Islam as their first name. Some Muslim names are based on one of the traditional 99 names of God. A Muslim should not be addressed by their religious name only, but use the personal and religious name. It is best to ask the person what name they would like to be called and what their surname and personal names are.

Birth

After birth a member of the family, normally the father, will recite the Muslim call to prayer (Adhan) in the baby's ear. All boys are normally circumcised as soon as it can be arranged.

The baby is named about seven days later at a ceremony called the 'Aqiqah' where his/her hair is shaved off to mark the start of a new life.

A celebratory meal is held with friends and family where halal meat and other food is shared with a portion of this being shared with the poor. Today there are further opportunities to share in halal giving to the poor in Muslim communities around the world as part of this celebration.

Marriage

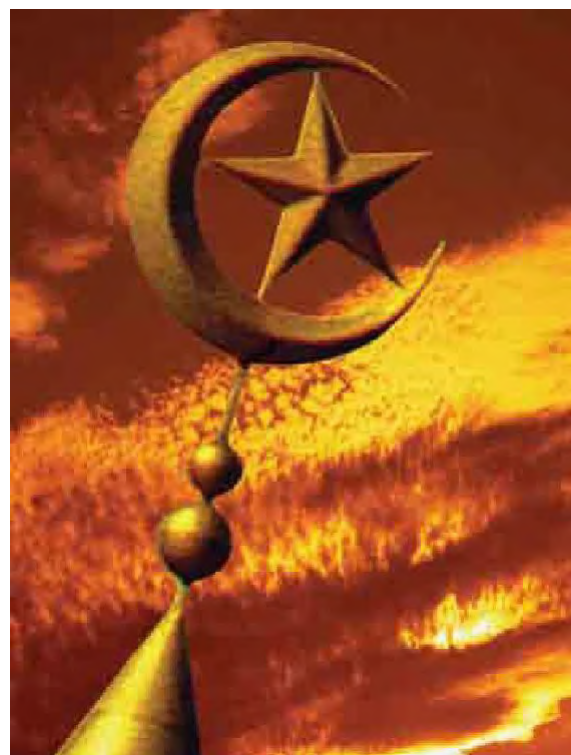
Islam encourages marriage; in many Muslim communities arranged marriages are common. The wedding ceremony doesn't necessarily take place at a mosque it can take place anywhere. A registry office wedding can also take place. The bride traditionally wears red and deep pink.

The ceremony involves the bride and groom saying out loud three times that they want to marry the other partner. The couple sign a contract which has been drawn up beforehand.

In some countries, where the law allows, Muslim men may have up to four wives but only if the first wife allows, although in British law only the first wife is recognised. The man must treat all his wives equally both financially and emotionally. There should be a good reason to marry another woman, e.g. if a woman is widowed and cannot provide for herself and family then another man will marry her and take her into his family but only on the condition that the first wife agrees. Divorce is allowed but as with other faiths divorce is very regrettable.

Medical

Modesty is of the utmost importance. Men and women prefer to be treated by members of staff of the same gender, and would not attend for tests in short gowns.





Islam

Funerals

A terminally ill Muslim should have their bed turned towards Makkah. A dying person should be in a quiet place, preferably surrounded by his or her loved ones. Prayers would be recited by relatives or friends and if possible the person who is dying should attempt to recite the Shahada (the Muslim declaration of faith and belief). Muslims believe Allah chooses when a human being should be born and should die. Following death Allah will judge that individual's life on Judgement Day. The body should be blessed upon death and those present should close the eyes of the deceased person. Funerals should take place within 24 hours or as soon as possible after death and are always burials as cremations are forbidden in Islam. Muslims believe that the soul leaves the body at the point of death and that unless the body is buried within 24 hours the soul will be unable to progress to heaven. Because of these beliefs, any delay in burial can be very distressing for the bereaved. Muslim graves are plain and donations of flowers, for example, would not be appropriate.

Festivals

The Islamic calendar consists of 12 lunar months which means that the Muslim year is 11 days shorter than the Gregorian year. Most Holy days are therefore 11 days earlier each year in the Gregorian calendar which means that over a period of years the cycle of Holy days is held over the whole of the Gregorian calendar. There are no festivals as such in Islam, only thanksgiving prayers, as Islam forbids demonstrative 'festivity' and processions etc. However, some Muslims interpret this less literally and may regard some important days such as Eid as festivals. Listed below are some of the main ones: -

Al Hijrah

Islamic New Year begins, a commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) establishment of Islamic social order. A day of celebration of the beginning of the Muslim community.

Eid
Eid (id) means recurring happiness. This is a religious holiday, a feast for thanking Allah and celebrating a happy occasion.

Milad al Nabi

Commemorates Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) birthday.

Eid-UI-Adha

Marks the end of the time of annual Pilgrimage, a day of thankfulness, marked by feasting and distribution of food to the needy. Muslims wish each other 'Eid Mubarak'.

Eid-UI-Fitr

Marks the end of Ramadan. It is a three-day event the first day being a quiet day of celebration. 'Eid' cards are sent and friends wish each other 'Eid Mubarak' (Happy Eid). A special Eid prayer is read in the morning of each Eid at the local mosque, and is usually very well attended.

Ramadan

The ninth month of the Muslim year. A time of fasting from sunrise to sunset each day. Fasting is seen as an opportunity to deepen a sense of devotion, to acknowledge the blessings of life and to show thanks and gratitude to Allah. The Quran was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) in the month of Ramadan.



Islam

Hajj

The annual pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims should complete at least once in their lifetime.

Ashura

Major festival for Shia Muslims which commemorates the martyrdom of Hussein - a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Lailat ul Barah

Also known as the Night of Forgiveness, this festival takes place two weeks before the beginning of Ramadan and is a time for asking and granting forgiveness.



Judaism

Faith

Judaism is the faith of the Jews dating back over 4000 years, originating in the Middle East. The history of the Jewish communities in Britain is a long and complex one marred by periods of persecution and expulsion. Written records date the first significant presence from the time of the Norman Conquest. Jewish people settled in England initially with the Normans and were active citizens until they were expelled in 1290. It is likely that small numbers of Jewish people were living in England in the time of Elizabeth I on an informal basis, but they were formally readmitted under Cromwell circa 1650's. It took until the 19th century to achieve equality of rights with Anglicans.

The Jewish faith believes in one God. Jews believe there will be a Messiah in the future. The central belief in God is contained in the Shema prayer, which is recited twice daily 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One'. Jews believe that God has revealed his will for them, as revealed to Moses, in the Torah (The Holy Book) which is made up of the first five books of the Bible and sets out the Ten Commandments, and the Talmud which is a written collection of interpretations of the Bible and instructs on the Jewish way of life. The Jewish scriptures are known as the *Tanakh*. Worship takes place at a synagogue.

There are many Jewish traditions which can be separated into two groups:

Orthodox - Orthodox Jewish people believe that the laws and teachings of the Torah must be followed today exactly as God passed them down in the time of Moses.

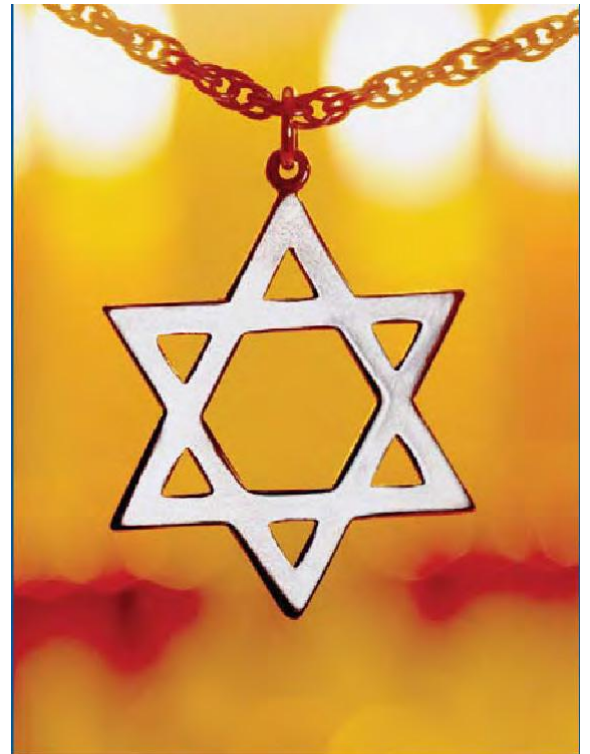
Non Orthodox - Non Orthodox Jewish people, including those following Reformed or Progressive traditions, believe that some of the Torah's teachings can be adapted to be more relevant to a modern society.

Dress

Dress differs depending on the degree of orthodoxy. Many Orthodox Jewish men keep their heads covered with a kippah or skullcap. Some married Orthodox women cover their heads, body and limbs. Hasidic (Ultra Orthodox) Jews can be recognised by their dark clothing, long coats, wide brimmed hats, side locks and beards. Other Jews do not wear any distinctive clothing.

Language

The main language is English, or in the case of non-UK citizens the language of the country of origin of the individual but English is always one of the major languages spoken.





Judaism

Diet

Jews are religiously expected to uphold the Kashrut, which refers to 'kosher' food. The laws of Kashrut detail the permitted and forbidden animals, fish and fowl and describe the separation of dairy and meat. Kosher food is food that has been specially prepared, e.g. meat soaked in water and then salted to remove all the blood. Jews are allowed to eat meat which comes from animals that both chew the cud and have split hooves and farmyard fowl such as chickens. These must be slaughtered by a 'schochet' - specially qualified person. The only kinds of fish Jews are permitted to eat are those which have both fins and scales.

Visits in the Home

In most Jewish households there will be a 'mezuzah' which is a small box positioned on the right hand doorpost of each room except the bathroom and toilet, this box contains a parchment containing part of the Shema (the daily prayer). There may be a seven branch candelabrum called a Menorah, or a nine branched one called a Chanukia lit when the festival of Hanukkah is celebrated.

The Jewish Sabbath begins at dusk on Friday and lasts until dusk on Saturday. Orthodox Jews spend that time in study, prayer and rest. All work, including driving, is forbidden on the Sabbath. Devout Jewish men pray three times a day and women twice a day either at a synagogue or wherever they are.

Places of Worship

If you wish to visit a synagogue for a visit it is best to telephone ahead of time. For security reasons most synagogues do not welcome visitors they are not expecting. A synagogue is used for prayer, study and for the Jewish community to gather together. Men are expected to cover their heads when entering a synagogue; women cover their heads in orthodox synagogues. There will be a 'mezuzah' on the internal doors of the synagogue. In Orthodox synagogues men and women sit separately. In the prayer hall there will normally be an ark containing the Torah scrolls, a bimah from which the scrolls are read and seats for worshippers. Most synagogues have a Rabbi which means teacher.

Names

Jewish names are often from Biblical sources followed by a family name. If a name is required for records it is advisable to ask first for the surname then any other names. Most married women take their husband's name.

Birth

Male Jews are circumcised on the eighth day after birth (depending on his birth weight), this is known as Brit Milah. Also at this time the boy will be given his Hebrew name. A Jewish medical practitioner known as the Mohel will carry out the circumcision. The name of a girl child is given by her father at a naming ceremony in the synagogue. At the age of 13 for a boy and the age of 12 for a girl according to Orthodox and Conservative Jews and at the age of 13 for Reform Jews they are accepted as full adult members of the Jewish community. A boy is 'bar mitzvah' which means 'son of the commandment' and a girl is 'bat mitzvah' which means 'daughter of the commandment'. There is normally a celebration at this time. These celebrations can vary widely depending upon the tradition to which the family belong.



Judaism

Marriage

Under Jewish law a marriage is entered into by the free choice of both partners. A Jewish wedding can take place anywhere. The ceremony itself takes place under a canopy called a huppah. The groom stands under the canopy, the bride joins him and walks around the groom, usually seven times, a blessing is given and a ring placed on the bride's index finger. The couple read and sign their written marriage contract and share wine from the same glass, which is then ritually broken under the groom's foot at the end of the ceremony. When the couple step out from under the canopy, it is customary for the guests to call out 'Mazel Tov' which means good luck and be happy. There is usually a reception afterwards. Marriage should be a life-long commitment but divorce is permitted under certain circumstances. It must be carried out according to strict guidelines otherwise the couple will be considered still married even if they have obtained a legal civil divorce. A divorce ceremony must be held where the husband must issue a divorce document, called a get, to his wife. This get must be prepared by a scribe under the guidance of a Jewish ecclesiastical court.

Medical

Visiting the sick is a solemn duty for members of the Jewish faith, prayer forms an important part of support. An Orthodox Jewish person would prefer to be treated by a member of the same gender. If a patient is terminally ill it is important that the person should not be left alone, a companion will stay with the patient reading prayers. A dying person may wish to say the 'Shema' which is a Hebrew prayer known verbatim by many people.

Funerals

Jewish belief is that after death, the deceased has gone to be with God who will judge the life the deceased has led. Funerals should take place before sunset on the day of the death of the person but not take place on the Sabbath or on a major Jewish festival. Cremation is forbidden under Jewish law and it remains taboo for the majority of Jews, including those in the Non-Orthodox traditions. Burial therefore remains the norm. Funerals are plain and donations of flowers are not appropriate. Jewish law requires that tombstones are erected for each and every individual who has died. Following the funeral, there is a period of mourning lasting seven days which the family observes, and which is known as Shiva (traditionally known as Shiva sitting the third period of mourning). During this time members of the family are not expected to return to work.

Festivals

Rosh Hashanah

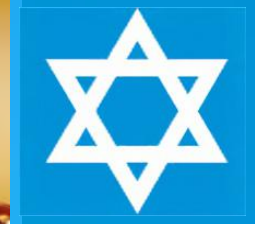
Celebrated in either September or October this is the Jewish New Year and the beginning of a 10 day period of repentance, which ends on Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur

Day of Atonement. Celebrated usually in October. The day is spent in prayer and fasting, looking back over the past year's deeds and asking for forgiveness for sins committed and promising to lead a better life the following year.

Hanukkah

Festival of Lights. Celebrated in December. This festival is a happy festival celebrated over eight days. A nine-branch candelabrum is lit which is called a Menorah or Chanukia. Each night of the festival the number of lights increases until the eighth day when the Menorah is ablaze.



Judaism

Sukkot

A seven day festival commemorating the fact that the Israelites were living in temporary shelters in the wilderness during their journey to the Promised Land.

Pesach

Festival of Freedom which lasts for eight days. Commemorating the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery, both a joyous and sorrowful occasion.

Tu B'Shevat

The 15th day of the Jewish calendar and the beginning of Spring in Israel. It celebrates 'New Year for the Trees' and it is customary to eat more fruit on this day.

Simchat Torah

Celebrations in the synagogue which mark 'Rejoicing with/of the Torah'.

Purim

Purim is the most festive of Jewish holidays and commemorates a major victory over oppression.

Yom Hashoah

Day to Remember the Holocaust and the six million Jews who perished.

Tish B'Av

The saddest day of the Jewish calendar to commemorate the tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people over the years.

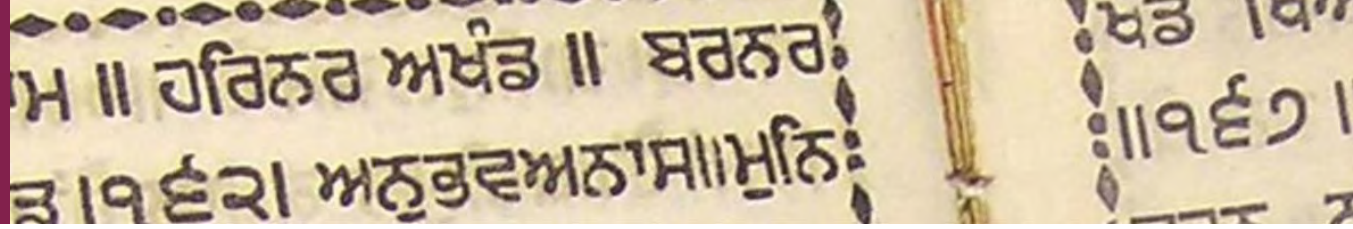
Shavout

Festival celebrating the 'time of the giving' of Jewish law and the harvest season.

Yom Ha'Atzmut

Israeli Independence Day commemorating the declaration of independence of Israel in 1948.





Sikhism

Faith

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion which began in the Punjab Region of South Asia over 500 years ago. Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak, the first Guru or teacher of the faith and consequently this region was the traditional heartland of Sikhism. Prior to partition in 1947 this region was in India. At partition it was divided between India and Pakistan and Sikhs now live on both sides of the border. British Sikhs are of both Indian and Pakistani heritage.

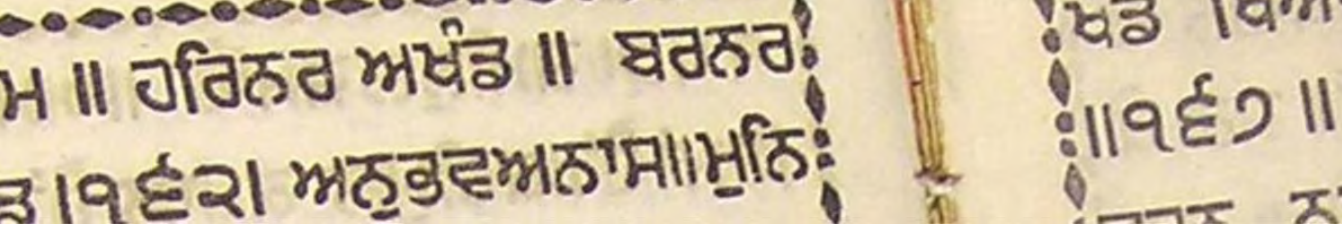
The word Sikh is derived from the Sanskrit word Sish which means Disciple. The Sikh religion is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak, supplemented by the successive Gurus and is enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book). The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh stated that after Him there will be no more human Gurus. Sikhs are ordered to accept Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh scripture) as their Guru. The Guru Granth Sahib is treated as a living Guru and is given the utmost respect. Sikhs meet for worship at the 'Gurdwara'. Gurdwara is a Punjabi word meaning 'gateway to the Guru'.

For Sikhs, there is only one God. God is without form or gender, everyone has direct access to God and everyone is equal before God. A good life is lived as part of a community, by living honestly and caring for others. Sikhs believe in the cycle of birth and rebirth and the only way out of this cycle is to attain a total knowledge of and union with God. Empty religious rituals and superstitions have no value. Sikhs believe in the equality of all human beings and respect all other faiths. All Sikhs are expected to be initiated into the Sikh religion or to be working towards initiation at some point in their lives. The initiate is instructed in the following:

- That they should not remove any body hair
- That dress should be simple and modest
- That they should never steal
- That they should never gamble
- That they should not consume alcohol or use tobacco
- That Muslim halal meat is prohibited
- That adultery is wrong

That they should wear the 5Ks the symbols of the Khalsa and follow the Khalsa code of conduct. Initiation can take several years culminating in Baptism.

Belonging to the Khalsa involves taking amrit (nectar) and wearing the five articles of faith which distinguish individual men and women as members of the Khalsa, commonly known as 'the five Ks' because the Punjabi word for each begins with the sound of 'K'. The five Ks date from the creation of the Khalsa Panth by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. Upon initiation males take the name Singh (Lion) and females take the name Kaur (Princess).



Sikhism

The five Ks

Kachha - short trousers symbolising sexual restraint.

Kara - A steel bracelet - to show God is one.

Kirpan - A short dagger - to remind Sikhs of their duty to fight evil.

Kangha - A small wooden comb - a symbol of cleanliness and orderliness.

Kesh - Uncut hair that is a symbol of spirituality.

A Sikh initiated into the Khalsa Panth (Brotherhood) believes in Guru Granth Sahib and in one God and always wears the Five Ks.

Keshdhari is the name given to Sikhs who do not cut any of their body hair and wear a turban whether or not they have taken Amrit. Those who believe in Sikhism but have not yet been initiated or who have let their practice lapse are sometimes known as 'sahagdhari' (literally, slow adopters). A Sikh will rise early, bathe then say morning set prayers, whilst evening prayers are said before sleep. These prayers may be said privately, or with the family. The Khanda, is the emblem of the Sikhs. The circle means 'eternal God', the double-edged sword symbolises the fight for truth, and the sword blades stand for spiritual and worldly power.

Dress

The basis of the Sikh dress code is the 5 Ks (see previous) for both men and women. All initiated men are expected to wear a turban. Sikh women usually cover their heads and may cover their shoulders as well. Both men and women traditionally have worn a shalwar- kameez (baggy trousers and a long shirt). Many men and women choose western clothing styles, but men will wear a turban and women will almost invariably cover their head. Women are increasingly choosing turbans as their head covering to emphasise Sikh gender equality and identity. It is vital to remember that removal of any of the 5Ks or the turban/head covering is a cause of immense disrespect towards the Sikh faith and Sikh individuals.

Language

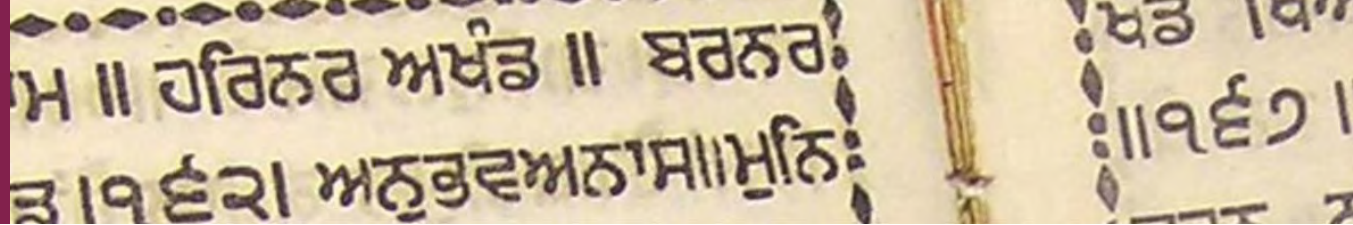
Punjabi is the language of the Sikhs. Punjabi language classes are offered by Gurdwaras. Sikh scriptures are written in 'Gurmukhi', a type of poetic Punjabi.

Diet

Initiated Sikhs are vegetarians. Sikhs are forbidden to eat ritually killed meat (halal or kosher meat). Alcohol, tobacco or drugs of any sort are forbidden.

Visits in the Home

It is most respectful to remove shoes when entering a Sikh home. Many homes have pictures of the Gurus. There may also be pictures of the Golden Temple in Amritsar in the Punjab which is the most important place of Sikh worship. Some homes may have a copy of the scriptures and the Guru Granth Sahib, this is generally kept in a separate room. If you enter this room you should cover your head and remove shoes. If you are offered refreshments, it is polite to accept and to try a little food. A Sikh woman may feel more comfortable if spoken to in the presence of other members of the family.



Sikhism

Visits in the Place of Worship

When visiting a place of worship, it is advisable to dress modestly and to wear loose fitting clothing. Before entering the building, you should remove your shoes and cover your head. Visitors are expected to wash their hands and feet, as Sikhs customarily do before prayer. Sikhs will approach the Guru Granth Sahib, take a bow and make a small offering of money then say a short prayer and back away from the Guru Granth Sahib. Men and women sit separately on the floor. It is usual to sit with legs crossed. It is disrespectful to point feet towards the Guru Granth Sahib.

At the end of worship, 'Karah parshad' (blessed food) - a sweet made of semolina, sugar and butter is distributed to everyone. Afterwards, people eat in the langar hall, the communal dining room which offers free meals

to anyone who wishes to visit. Head coverings should be maintained in the langar hall and all food asked for should be eaten rather than left. All food should be eaten with the right hand. Main services are held on a Sunday. Some Gurdwaras are open 24 hours a day and serve meals 24 hours a day. You are not expected to pay for food but a voluntary donation to the Gurdwara would be appreciated.



Names

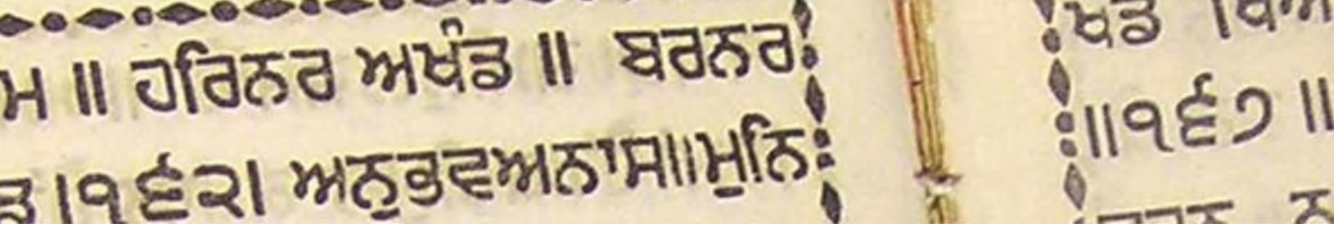
Sikhs generally have three names: their personal name which has a spiritual meaning, e.g. Ajit meaning unconquered or invincible, a Khalsa title Singh for a man or Kaur for a woman and finally a family name e.g. Thandi-Ajit Singh Thandi. Women do not change their family name upon marriage emphasizing gender equality in Sikhism. Where names are required for records it is best to ask what people use as a surname and as a personal name.

Birth

As soon as the baby is born, a member of the family will whisper a prayer in the baby's ear the Mul Mantra, which is the foundational belief about the nature of God and God's power introducing this power into the baby's life. The naming ceremony takes place several weeks later at the Gurdwara. The child's name is chosen by opening at random the Guru Granth Sahib, the first letter of the hymn on the left hand page will be the first letter of the child's personal (first) name. The baby is then given a little 'Amrit', special blessed sweet water.

Marriage

Arranged marriages are the norm are monogamous and are expected to last for life. The marriage ceremony or Anand Karaj (Blissful or Joyful Union) is generally carried out at the Gurdwara, it can be carried out in any home where the Sri Suru Granth Sahib has been respectfully installed but the religious ceremony cannot be carried out in a hotel or banquet hall. The bride usually wears red. The reader of the book, the Granthi (priest), performs the ceremony. The couple walk around the holy book four times in a clockwise direction. After the ceremony a prayer of thanks is given, when they have completed this they are then married. In the East a



Sikhism

wedding can last for three days whilst in the West it normally lasts one-two days. Since marriage is sacred divorce is not straightforward and is difficult to achieve however, divorcees are permitted to re-marry in the Gurdwara as are widows and widowers.

Medical

There are no religious objections to post-mortem, organ transplant or blood transfusion. For illness, in general, home remedies may be preferred in the first instance. For illness involving a hospital stay, women would prefer to be examined by a female member of staff. During medical treatment respect should be observed for a Sikh's desire to have all five symbols of the faith within reach if unable to be worn. The Kachha (shorts) should on no account be changed or removed other than by the individual concerned.

Funerals

Immediately after death, the body may be handled by a non-Sikh but wearing disposable gloves to avoid direct contact with the body is essential. It is essential to make sure the five Sikh symbols are in place. The body is washed, dressed and wrapped in a white sheet of cloth by relatives of the same gender. The funeral ceremony will be very simple, no memorials allowed and a deliberate outward show of grief is forbidden. White dress is customarily worn by mourners. Sikhs are usually cremated as soon as possible after death. After the ceremony the ashes can be taken back to the Punjab or scattered over flowing water.

The Sikh Calendar

Sikhs follow the Indian lunar calendar to work out the dates of festivals. Each lunar month is the time between two new moons. The lunar calendar is divided into 12 months and as the lunar year is shorter than the solar year, an extra month is added every third year. The first month is called 'Chaiter' in Punjabi. It falls somewhere between March and April. The Sikh New Year begins on the first day of Vaisakhi, the second month of the Indian lunar calendar. Except for Vaisakhi festival which has a fixed date of 13 April (on rare occasions 14th April), the dates of all other festivals vary from one year to another.

Festivals

Gurpurbs - These are festivals that are associated with the lives of the Gurus. They are happy occasions which are celebrated most enthusiastically by Sikhs.

The most important Gurpurbs are:

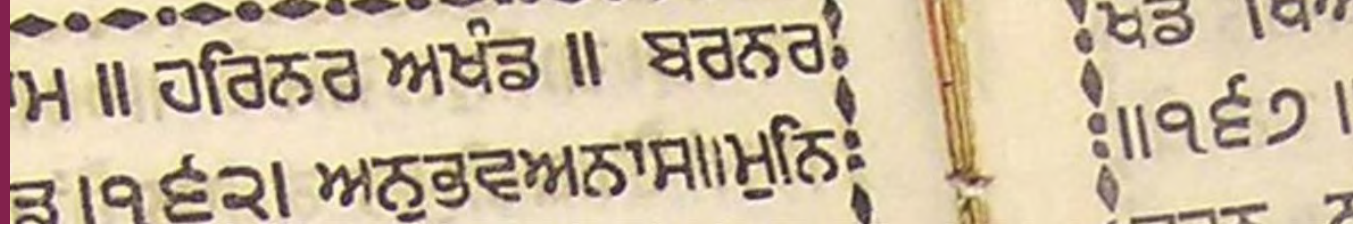
The birthday of Guru Gobind Singh - Founder of the Khalsa

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur

The birthday of Guru Nanak - Founder of Sikhism

The first Guru, who preached worship of one God and the equality of humanity. The Sikh communal free kitchen 'langar' where all could eat together, whatever their status in society, was his idea.



Sikhism

Other festivals celebrated:

Vaisakhi (Birth of Sikh Nation - Khalsa) Commemorates the birth of the Khalsa, also known as Baisakhi. Processions and feasting follow the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Diwali

For Sikhs, this is a time to light up Gurdwaras as a reminder of the spiritual victory of Guru Hargobind who saved 52 Hindu kings from imprisonment. Highlights of the festival are lights, fireworks and firecrackers.

Hola Mohalla

The word Hola Mahala means 'mock fight' and is a three-day organised celebration which involves a procession or mock battle accompanied by war drums and followed by music and poetry competitions.





This section gives broad facts on many of the religions and beliefs to raise awareness of standard protocol although practices may vary.

Quick Facts: Baha'i Faith

Faith

The Baha'i faith is one of the youngest world religions and was founded in Iran by Baha'u'llah in 1844. Baha'i beliefs promote gender and race equality, freedom of expression and world peace and believe that everyone should work together for the benefit of humanity. Baha'i believe in one God but recognise the validity of all religions and they do not believe that their faith contains the final or complete truth. The rights of Baha'i continue to be restricted in many Islamic countries with persecution and executions still occurring as recently as the 1980's in Iran and in Egypt.

Dress

There are no special requirements other than moderation and modesty.

Language

The main language of Baha'i people in the UK is English but elderly people mainly from Iran may not have English as their first language. Of the estimated 6000 Baha'i in the UK an estimated 40% are of Iranian descent.

Diet

Alcohol is prohibited in the Baha'i faith although it can be taken as an ingredient in medicine. Tobacco is discouraged. The emphasis in the Baha'i diet is on the links between a healthy body and holistic spiritual physical and psychological health and well-being. Eating healthy and wholesome foods which promote this holistic approach is the Baha'i way. Baha'i fast for one month (19 days) from sunrise to sunset on 2nd to the 20th March immediately preceding the New Year.

Visits

The affairs of faith are in the hands of elected administrative assemblies known as Spiritual Assemblies as there are no clergy. Baha'i Houses of Worship function as the centre of the community's life. They are exclusively reserved for worship, sermons are prohibited, and only scriptural texts are permitted to be read. These temples are open to members of the public. Most Baha'i meetings take place in local Baha'i centres or in people's homes. There are no specific rules regarding attending Baha'i meetings, but modest dress and courtesy and respect should be the norm.

Names

There are no obligatory religious names in the Baha'i faith and no obligatory naming ceremonies. However, if the family wish to they can bring the child to the community for welcome and prayer and blessing and this can be followed by sharing sweet meats and refreshments.

Birth

Baha'i have no particular birthing customs.

Marriage

Marriage is monogamous and should be for life. In Baha'i marriage each partner must freely choose the other and have the consent of the living parents of both parties. Interreligious and interracial marriage is permitted. Divorce is discouraged and is a source of sadness but is permitted.

Medical

Blood transfusions, organ donations, the administration of prescription drugs and the like are all perfectly acceptable. Baha'i believe in the healing power of modern medicine for both physical and mental illness.

Physical contact

There is no objection to being touched or treated by members of the opposite sex.

6,000 Baha'i in the UK - 7 million worldwide



Death customs

The body is carefully washed and wrapped in white silk or cotton. A special burial ring, with a specific inscription should be placed on the finger of a Baha'í aged 15 or over. The body is not cremated but is buried in a coffin within an hour's travelling time from the place of death. Normally the funeral service is held 2-3 days after death and the Prayer for the Dead is ordained to be said before the interment. This Prayer is an obligatory Prayer which should be recited in congregation by one believer whilst all present stand in silence. The body must be placed in the grave in such a position that the feet point towards Akka.

Festivals

Naw-Ruz – Baha'í New Year

Ridvan Festival – Marks Baha'u'llah's time in the garden of Ridvan

Declaration of the Bab – The Bab prepared the world for Baha'u'llah (the founder of the Baha'í faith) and declared the coming of Baha'u'llah

Ascension of Baha'u'llah – Anniversary of the death of Baha'u'llah in 1892

Martyrdom of the Bab – Anniversary of the Bab's execution in 1850

Birth of the Bab

Birth of Baha'u'llah

Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha – Marks the death of the son of Baha'u'llah





Quick Facts: Buddhism

Dress

Clothing reflects background diversity. Most Buddhist dress will conform to local dress codes. Monks and nuns normally wear robes and normally would not wish to be alone with a person of another gender. Only Buddhist monks and nuns shave their heads.

Language

Generally speak the language according to the country of residence but may speak Burmese, Cantonese, Hakka, Japanese, Lao, Sinhalese, Thai and Tibetan.

Diet

Western Buddhists are mainly vegetarian but may eat fish and eggs. The requirement to be vegetarian or not varies from tradition to tradition and region to region.

Visits in the Home

Dressing modestly is a sign of respect. Respectful to remove shoes on entering the home. Homes may have a small shrine for meditation but do not enter it unless invited to do so and never wear shoes in a shrine room. Do not turn your back on the shrine.

Place of Worship

Dress modestly and remove shoes. Never point at a shrine with your feet. Offerings of food, flowers and incense are welcomed. A quiet place for meditation. Each region has its own customs regarding offerings and checking out what these are before visiting is advisable but not compulsory. Women must never be left alone with or touch a monk.

Names

Ask for surname and personal name.

Alcohol

Alcohol, drugs and tobacco are prohibited for monks and nuns. For lay people there is no blanket prohibition although abstinence is preferred, restraint is strongly advised. Lay people should not become intoxicated and lose self-control through consumption of drugs alcohol or tobacco.

There are no universal birth marriage or death ceremonies. These ceremonies vary in country, culture and according to sect and family tradition. However, in many places Buddhist monks or Buddhist priests will take part in ceremonies, offering prayers, blessings or giving a sermon.

Birth

No specific ceremony is carried out, but a child may be blessed at the temple by the monks.

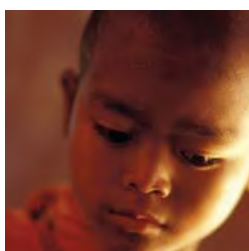
Marriage

Sometimes arranged by parents. Not a religious ceremony. Can take place anywhere.

Medical

Home remedies may be followed. There are no religious objections to blood transfusions or organ transplants.

**247,000 Buddhists in the UK –
376 million worldwide**





Physical contact

Home remedies may be followed. Buddhist monks and nuns may prefer to be treated by medical staff of the same sex but generally Buddhists may be touched by a person of either sex.

Death customs

Buddhists may be buried or cremated although they are normally cremated. Funerals vary from culture to culture and the family tradition is particularly significant and important.

Festivals

See main Faith section on Buddhism.



Quick Facts: Chinese Religions

(Astrology, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism)

Confucianism K'ung Fu-Tzu (Confucius) is regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of ancient times. Confucianism can best be described as a system of moral, social, political and ethical values rather than a religion which promotes honesty, benevolence towards others, loyalty and trustworthiness for the benefit of the community. Confucianism celebrates four key stages in life birth, maturity, marriage and death. Confucianism was adopted as the official philosophical school in the 2nd century C.E.

Astrology Traditionally the 12 signs of the Chinese Zodiac were an important facet of Chinese culture. It dates back thousands of years (first known 5th century B.C.E.) and is part of the ancient religious traditions of China. The signs are a way of dating years in a 12-year cycle in the Chinese calendar. The signs are all animal signs, and each has one of 5 elements (metal, water, wood, fire, earth) attributed to it depending upon the year, giving 60 different combinations. Further complexities are built in to building up an equation of when and how life decisions should be made and the compatibility of potential marriage partners or business partners etc. The importance of astrology in modern day decision making is a matter of debate but the cultural celebratory aspect of it remains important in Chinese culture.

Taoism Tao (pronounced 'dow') means path or way and Taoism was founded by Lao-Tse who was a contemporary of Confucius. Taoism is an ancient tradition of philosophy and religious belief which embodies the harmony of opposites seen in the well-known Taoist symbol Yin and Yang. Yin represents the dark side and Yang represents the light side and this balance is sometimes upset by human intervention in nature. Taoists believe that people are good by nature and that everyone should be kind to one another as this will be reciprocated.

Dress Men and women prefer shirt/blouse and trousers/slacks. Most people have adopted western style clothing and business suits are the dress code for professional men and women.

Language - Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, Hokkien, English.

Diet Southern Chinese: seafood, fish, pork, poultry, green vegetables, soup, rice, rice noodles and fresh fruit. Northern Chinese: bread, wheat dumplings, meat dumplings, noodles, pork, lamb, chicken, cabbage, green vegetables. Beef and cheese are least preferred food. Drink: soya milk is preferred to cow's milk as some Chinese are allergic to cow's milk. China tea without milk or sugar. Classical Taoist teaching recommends abstaining from alcohol and meat.

Visits The place of worship or prayer will depend on the individual's faith. The Chinese community (like many other communities) can have varying faiths including Atheism, Agnosticism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism.

Names Chinese names start with the family name first, followed by the generation name and the personal name. Chinese Christians usually have Christian names in addition.

Birth There are five events in the first 100 days of the new baby's life the first one being the child's first bath at three days old, friends and family are invited to the event and everything must be performed in a specific way. The ceremonial handing over of clothes by the maternal grandmother also happens on this day as part of a further ceremonial tradition. The 30-day celebrations when prayers, blessings and family members bring gifts for the child is the biggest of the five events. The hundredth day is also a big celebratory event with friends and family getting together and presents being given to the child. The naming of the child is traditionally a complex process because names carry significance regarding the future fortune and character of the baby. Naming usually occurs within the 30-day period.



Quick Facts: Chinese Religions

(Astrology, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism)

Marriage There are many variations depending on whether the ceremony is celebrated traditionally or more conventionally. Traditional Chinese weddings are a cause for great celebration involving the distribution of bridal cakes to friends and relatives, a tea ceremony in the households of both the bride and the groom as a sign of respect and firecrackers set off during the wedding celebration, to keep evil spirits away. The bride will wear a red dress and a red veil over her face.

Medical Traditional Chinese medicine is based upon very different philosophical and practical methodologies. Very different medicines and treatments are utilised. In modern China both Western and traditional Chinese medicines are used by millions of Chinese people, in the treatment of illness. In the UK aspects of traditional medicine are used by the Chinese population as well as the full range of Western medicines and treatments.

Physical contact Although there is no gender barrier, women prefer to be medically examined by women health professionals.

Death customs Arrangements regarding the funeral of the deceased are made in accordance with the age, occupation and marital status of the individual as well as the manner of death. It is very important to observe all the protocols and procedures fully. Burial traditionally has been the norm, but increasingly cremation is the most common and whichever is chosen should be carried out within a week after the person has died.

Friends and relatives visit the bereaved family prior to the funeral when gifts of money or flowers are given and help offered. If the deceased is the head of the family, all children and their families are expected to observe a period of mourning of about a month.

Festivals

- Chinese New Year
- Lantern Festival
- Ching Ming
- Mid-Autumn Festival
- Dragon Boat Festival





Quick Facts: Christianity

Dress

No specific dress code except for modesty.

Language

Generally speak language of country lived in. Christians in the UK may be from any ethnic group.

Diet

No special requirements but fasting at specific times. See main section on Christianity for details.

Visits in the Home

A prayer or blessing is said before meals. 'Grace' or 'let it be said'.

Place of Worship

Normally a church or chapel.

Names

Family or surname is preceded by a 'Christian' name.

Birth

Birth of a child is normally followed by a Baptism Christening or a blessing if infant Baptism is not the norm e.g. as in Baptist churches.

Marriage

Takes place at a church or chapel.

Medical

There are no religious objections to organ donation, blood transfusions and transplants as these are an individual and family matter.

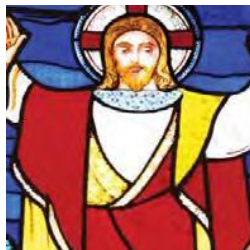
Death Customs

Burial or cremation.

Festivals

See main Faith section on Christianity.

**33.253 million Christians in the UK –
2.1 billion worldwide**





Quick Facts: Christian Scientist

Christian Science is a system of spiritual and prayer-based healing which was founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1866. In 1875 she published the book *Science with Health with Key to the Scriptures* which explains a means of spiritual care and asserts that disease, sin and death may be overcome by understanding and applying the divine principles of healing based on the Bible.

Dress

No specific dress code.

Language

People of many diverse cultures and languages practice Christian Science and Christian Scientists consequently speak the language of their country of origin/country they live in.

Diet

Individuals make their own decisions regarding diet.

Visits

The church has no ordained ministers. Worship/meetings normally take place twice a week. Generally Sunday mornings in church, where each week set readings from the Bible, as well as "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" are given. Throughout the world Christian Scientists will all read that week's text when they gather. There is usually a Wednesday testimony service of and for the local congregation where insights and experiences of healing are shared by members of the congregation.

Names

No specific naming customs.

Birth

No specific birthing customs.

There are no Baptism ceremonies, no visible elements in the communion and there are no formal marriage or burial ceremonies conducted by the church because they are not licensed to carry them out. Legal, lawful and monogamous marriage is the exception in line with Christian tradition.

Marriage

Individuals will often opt for a civil ceremony, but it is up to personal choice.

Medical

In the very recent past the founding beliefs of the Christian Science movement included the refusal of the need for medical/healthcare including mental health care. This has begun to change in the last 10-15 years with personal choice of treatment being left up to the individual. Christian Science Practitioners are still used to help people through illness, but individuals are now permitted conventional medical treatments as well.

Physical contact

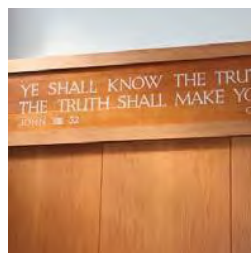
Individual choice in questions of healthcare is paramount to Christian Scientists as they rely on their own prayer for healing of adverse health conditions.

Death customs

Questions relating to care of the body should be answered by the individual's partner/family.

Festivals

Whilst the Church of Christian Science recognises the main Christian festivals it does not celebrate them in the same way, although the message of Christmas and Easter are held equally important as they are in the mainstream of Christian churches.





Quick Facts: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon)

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were nicknamed 'Mormons' because of their belief in *The Book of Mormon* which is a volume of sacred writings comparable to the Bible. Joseph Smith was the founding prophet of The Church of Latter-day Saints in New York in 1830. It does not believe in certain Christian fundamental concepts and core beliefs including crucially the Trinity and the nature of the soul. Mormons believe that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are 3 distinct beings not 'One God in 3 persons.' Furthermore, it teaches that the intelligence dwelling in each human being is coeternal with God, that the soul existed before birth and exists after death eternally. Some Mormons also believe in the existence of other Gods.

From the foundation of the Mormons they have been a missionary faith and that missionary tradition continues today. Young unmarried men between the ages of 18-25 are expected to serve 2 years as proselytising missionaries and are expected to self-fund this. Young women can serve for 18 months but there is no requirement to. Older couples who are retired can volunteer as overseas aid workers but are not required to. Everyone is however expected to serve in supportive community/humanitarian work according to their means and ability.

Dress

Mormons are usually always soberly dressed.

Language

Usually English.

Diet

Alcohol, tobacco and other addictive drugs are prohibited in Mormon doctrine.

Visits

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints attend chapels and temples.

Names

No specific naming customs.

Birth

A blessing or naming ceremony is usual according to the Doctrine and Covenant of the Church and the child can be baptised after the age of eight after an understanding about basic facts and responsibilities have been understood and accepted. It must be performed by an ordained minister.

Marriage

Marriage takes place in a chapel and a 'sealing ceremony' can take place in a holy temple to make the commitment and belonging last for eternity. The Mormon Church does not condone polygamous marriage.

Medical

There are no religious objections to organ donation, blood transfusions and transplants as these are an individual and family matter.

Physical contact

No particular customs.

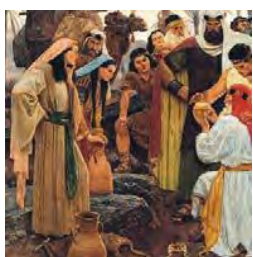
Death customs

Burial rather than cremation is recommended by the Church, but the final decision is left for the family of the deceased. Funerals should take place within 1 week of the death, either in the church, the home of the deceased, or at the graveside in the event of a burial.

Festivals

Mormons only celebrate Easter and Christmas. See main Faith section on Christianity.

**190,000 Mormons in the UK –
13 million worldwide**





Quick Facts: Hinduism

Dress

Men - Dhoti - loose trousers. Women - Saris or trousers and long top (shalwar & khameez). Both may adopt western dress.

Language

May speak other languages other than English - Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi & Tamil.

Diet

Do not eat beef. Many are vegetarian. Usually do not drink alcohol or smoke.

Visits in the Home

Separate shrine room - remove shoes. Polite to accept refreshments or food if offered. Women may feel uncomfortable if alone with a man who is not a member of the family.

Visits in the Place of Worship

Remove shoes. Disrespectful to point feet towards sacred area at front of temple (Mandir).

Names

Always ask for surname and personal name.

Marriage

Arranged marriages. Bride wears red or deep pink. Bindi on bride's forehead.

Medical

Women prefer to be treated by female member of staff.

Physical contact

No particular customs.

Death Customs

Family member to handle the body. White is colour of mourning. Generally cremated but personal choice.

Festivals

See main Faith section on Hinduism.

819,000 Hindus in the UK - 900 million worldwide





Quick Facts: Humanism

Belief

Humanism is an approach to life based on humanity and reason. Humanists believe that moral values are properly founded on human nature and experience alone. Humanists' decisions are based on the available evidence and their assessment of the outcomes of their actions, not on any dogma or sacred text. Humanism encompasses atheism and agnosticism, it is an active and ethical philosophy.

Humanists believe in individual rights and freedoms, but also believe that individual responsibility, social co-operation and mutual respect are just as important. Humanists believe that people can and will continue to find solutions to the world's problems, so that quality of life can be improved for everyone. Humanists are positive and gain inspiration from our lives, art and culture and a rich natural world.

Humanists believe that we have only one life and that it is our responsibility to make it a good life and to live it to the full.

Dress, diet, ritual

Humanists do not follow any rituals, diet or dress code.

Meetings

Humanists do not have to attend any meetings or make contact with one another. Some Humanists belong to the British Humanist Association (BHA) and may attend local group meetings to discuss aspects of Humanism and topical issues.

Some Humanists represent the BHA in local government and support national campaigns to reduce the influence of religion in society.

Ceremonies

The BHA has a network of celebrants who are qualified to conduct Humanist ceremonies.

Baby Naming

Choosing a name and introducing this new person to the circle of family and friends are important, but christenings and other religious rituals are not the only ways of celebrating the new birth. For parents who do not believe in any god, it is possible to organise their own welcoming ceremony or to plan one with a Humanist celebrant. Guiding parents rather than god parents can be appointed by the parents and can take part in the welcoming ceremony.

Humanist weddings/Civil partnerships

Humanist weddings/Civil partnerships can be as formal or informal as the couple would like, and can take place anywhere. The couple are invited to choose the ceremony and their promises for themselves. Humanist weddings are legally registered in Scotland but not yet in the rest of the UK where a civil ceremony is also required.

Funerals

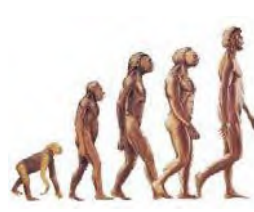
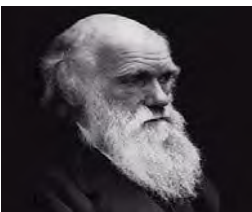
At a Humanist funeral there is no suggestion that the person has gone on to another life. It is the life that was lived that is celebrated and the person who is talked about and said goodbye to.

Medical

Humanists do not require any particular medical treatment as a result of their beliefs. Some NHS trusts provide Humanist chaplains.

Celebrations

World Humanist Day - Celebrated on 21st June





Quick Facts: Islam

Dress

Muslim women in the West are increasingly expressing their religious and cultural identity through which clothes they wear and the extent and nature of their veiling. The act of veiling is called hijab. Many Muslim women in the UK wear head and shoulder covering which has become known as the hijab although there are various kinds of head and neck covering. Very small numbers of women wear a face covering called the Niqab as well as other traditional clothing. An even smaller number of women wear full body and face covering called the Burka. Hijab is an expression of modesty and women who wish to veil do so in public or at home in the presence of any male outside their immediate family.

Modest dressing in Islam applies to men also. Some Muslim men wear traditional dress in the UK although many Muslim men adopt western style clothing.

Language

May speak several languages other than English including Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, Arabic and Turkish. Knowledge of Arabic to read the Quran.

Diet

No pork or pork products. Only Halal meat is permitted. Alcohol in any form is forbidden. Food is eaten with the right hand only.

Visits in the Home

Pictures of Mecca/copy of Quran. Five daily prayers. Polite to accept refreshments if offered.

Visits to a Mosque

Remove shoes. Friday afternoon customary for prayers. Women must cover head, arms and legs. There are separate spaces for men and women to worship in the Mosque and this should not be breached.

Names

Muslim names include a religious name, a personal name and an hereditary name. The polite way to address a Muslim is by his personal and religious name.

Birth

Boys circumcised. Baby's hair is shaved off at a ceremony called 'Aqiqah'.

Marriage

Arranged marriages are the norm. Bride usually wears red or deep pink.

Medical and physical contact

Men/women prefer to be treated by same sex members of staff.

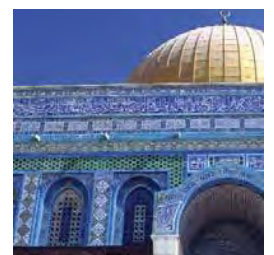
Death customs

Cremation is not permitted and burials should take place within 24hrs of death if possible. Donations of flowers not appropriate.

Festivals

See main Faith section on Islam.

**2.7 million Muslims in the UK –
1.3 billion worldwide**





Quick Facts: Jainism

25,000 Jains in the UK –
4.2 million worldwide

Jainism is an ancient religion from India where most Jains live and contains similar elements to Hinduism and Buddhism. Jainism is a religion of self-help in which there are no gods or spiritual beings just three guiding principles (called the 'three jewels') which are right belief, right knowledge and right conduct. Jains believe that animals and plants, as well as human beings contain living souls and all souls should be treated with respect. Jains believe that through non-violence and calmness that they can achieve liberation from mundane life. Mahavira who was born in 550 BCE is the man who gave Jainism its present day form. Jains believe that Salvation is achieved through the attainment of perfection lived through successive lives.

Dress

Jain males have adapted the western dress code for everyday use whereas females may be orthodox or modern. The elderly usually wear Indian dresses such as saris and kurta-pyjama, whilst the younger generation wear a variety of dress.

Language

Apart from some of the elderly, the majority of Jains speak and understand English. The majority in the UK are Gujarati but a minority speak Hindi, Rajasthani, Tamil or Punjabi.

Diet

The underpinning philosophy of Jainism includes minimising the use of the world's resources and this is an important feature of Jain diet. Jains are pure vegetarians and do not consume meat, fish, seafood, poultry or eggs. Jains do not consume alcohol.

Visits

Pilgrimage is an important part of Jain life to temples and holy sites such as Shatrunjaya in Gujarat but there are no compulsory pilgrimages like the Hajj is to Islam.

Names

All names are made up of 3 or 4 words in a definite

sequence, the person's given name comes first and the surname or family name is last with the middle name usually the father's first name.

Birth

The mother or parents usually take the baby for blessings and the naming ceremony (Nama Karan) to the temple 42 days after the birth. There are no other rituals or customs.

Marriage

A Jain wedding is a sacred and grand affair. It is a joyful event where family and friends spend several days together to enjoy a whole range of activities. The majority of Jain marriages are arranged marriages and there are few interreligious marriages.

Medical

Medication for the purpose of saving life is usually accepted without question. Blood transfusions and organ transplants are acceptable if these are not obtained at the expense of another life. Autopsy is permitted in the Jain religion but is a matter of personal choice for the family members of the deceased

Physical contact

Ideally same-sex contact but there is no taboo where medical or emergency personnel are involved.

Death customs

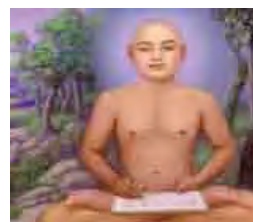
Family members must prepare the body of the deceased who must be dressed in new clothes by family members. Bodies are always cremated and never buried except for infants. Respect is the underlying principle that determines the code of physical contact in Jainism.

Festivals

Mahavira Jayanti – celebrates the day of Mahavira's birth.

Paryushana – eight days of fasting to reflect and repent.

Divali – see main Faith section on Hinduism.





Quick Facts: Japanese Shinto

Whilst Shinto is Japan's indigenous religion it is more a way of life than a religion and is derived from the Chinese words 'shin tao' which means 'the way of the Gods'. Shinto has happily co-existed with Buddhism for centuries. Shinto has no founder or written scriptures and focuses on 'Kami' which are spirits concerned with human beings. Kami can relate to beings or to a quality which beings possess. These spirits may take any form such as wind, rain, mountains, trees, oceans and storms. There are four affirmations in Shinto:

- Tradition and family
- Love of nature
- Physical cleanliness
- Matsuri – worship given to Kami and ancestral spirits.

Dress

Mainly Western dress but it is not acceptable to display any area of the upper body.

Language

Generally Shintoists in the UK speak Japanese and English as a second language.

Diet

No special requirements.

Visits

Shinto places of worship are called Shinto shrines. There are no Shinto prayers, but as in Buddhism, meditation forms an important part of the religion. Shrines are normally out of doors so there is no need to remove shoes. However, if the shrine is in a building or is part of a Buddhist building shoes must be removed. Shoes must be removed when visiting a Japanese home.

Names

Japanese people have two names, first the family name and the second the name they have been given.

Shinto – 4 million worldwide

Birth

Birth and marriage are the main celebrations in the Shinto religion. Shinto believe that all human beings are born pure. The family is seen as the method of preserving tradition. Shrines are visited to give thanks, to ask for protection for the child and to pray for prosperity for the child's future.

Marriage

Marriages will usually involve the bride wearing a white kimono to signify purity. Instead of a veil the bride wears a 'tsuno kakushi' headress to veil her 'horns of jealousy, ego, selfishness' and become a good wife. Visits to a significant shrine to pray and give thanks are normal parts of the marriage ceremony. Marriage vows in traditional Shinto ceremonies are exchanged in front of the Shinto priest and the Shinto priest performs the formal ceremony where close family and a small number of guests attend. The ceremony is very formal and must be conducted in a highly specified manner including the exchange of nuptial cups.

Medical

There are no religious objections to blood transfusions but organ donation is not supported by Shinto tradition. Shinto oppose taking organs from people who have just died.

Physical contact

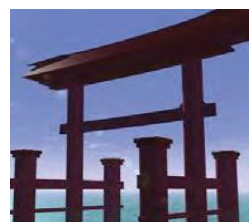
It is best to ask the individual or family in the case of someone unable to give consent what contact is preferred as most Japanese people do not like physical contact with strangers and take numerous precautions to avoid it.

Death customs

Japanese usually prefer cremation to burial and may follow Buddhist rites. Shinto emphasises its focus on this life not the next and death is seen as impure so cemeteries are never built near Shinto shrines.

Festivals

Shinto festivals combine
Shogatsu – Japanese New Year
Setsubun
Hina-matsuri
Shubun-sai





Quick Facts: Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses were founded in the 1870s by Charles Taze Russell under the name Bible Students and adopted the name Jehovah's Witnesses in 1931 under Joseph Franklin Rutherford who obtained many of his doctrines from Seventh-Day Adventists. They are known for their extensive preaching and publishing activities to spread their beliefs throughout the world with *The Watch Tower* and *Awake!* being their most well-known. Jehovah's Witnesses are Christians who proclaim that Jehovah is a loving and just God. Jehovah's witnesses however, do not believe that Jesus is God, which is a significant departure from traditional orthodox (in the wider sense of this word) Christian belief. In addition, they believe that after death people cease to exist until they are resurrected when the present world order ceases to be as ordained by God.

Dress

No particular dress code.

Language

Usually English.

Diet

Although Jehovah's Witnesses are required to abstain from blood there are no religious restrictions on what they can eat. Jehovah's Witnesses should however, avoid eating the flesh of animals which have not been properly bled. Moderation in the use of alcohol is encouraged although abstinence is the preferred option the choice is left with the individual. Smoking and drug taking are considered wrong and both habits should be avoided.

Visits

Jehovah's Witnesses are organised into congregations and meetings are held in local Kingdom Halls or private homes. Daily bible readings are usual and Witnesses address one another as 'Brother' or 'Sister' often followed by the first or last name of the individual. Jehovah's Witnesses do not use religious symbols such as the cross in their worship.

Names

No particular tradition.

Birth

Adult baptism is the norm for Jehovah's Witnesses and there are therefore no baptisms or Christenings. However, cards may be sent to welcome the baby and to congratulate the couple on the baby's arrival.

Marriage

Jehovah's Witnesses view marriage as a serious, lifelong commitment. They look to the Bible for guidance in resolving marital problems in a respectful way. Marriage should be between two believers and divorce is only permitted under very strict circumstances

Medical

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the Bible prohibits the consumption, storage and transfusion of blood however, there is a network of Hospital Liaison Committees throughout the UK who practice 'bloodless surgery' for Witness patients. Abortion is viewed as the wilful taking of human life. Organ transplant or organ donation is a personal decision.

Physical contact

No particular customs.

Death customs

There are no special rituals to perform for those who are dying. The dead may be buried or cremated depending on personal family preferences. Funerals should be simple and modest affairs which express the Faith in the service content.

Festivals

Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate the Memorial of Christ's death but do not celebrate traditional Christian festivals, nor do they celebrate birthdays.





Quick Facts: Judaism

Dress

Orthodox men wear skull caps. Women may cover their head with a hat in public. Hasidic Jews wear distinctive black long coats, hats, side locks of hair and beards. The Reformed traditions of Judaism wear Western clothes except in ceremonial circumstances.

Language

Main language is English. Hebrew used in religious services. Yiddish or Ladino is also spoken.

Diet

Pork forbidden. Only eat food which is Kosher.

Visits in the Home

Small box near the door - mezuzah. Jews touch this as a sign of respect. Sabbath is dusk on Friday to dusk on Saturday. All work, including driving, is forbidden on the Sabbath.

Visits to a Synagogue

Visits must be pre-arranged. Men must cover heads. May have separate seating for men and women.

Names

Ask for surname then any other names. Names are usually from biblical sources.

Birth

Male Jews circumcised 8 days after birth - Brit Milah.

Marriage

Can take place anywhere. Ceremony takes place under a canopy called a huppah. Marriage is normally same faith marriage.

Funerals

Should take place before sunset on the day of death. Period of mourning for family members lasts seven days. Traditionally cremation is forbidden. For Orthodox Jews it remains forbidden but for Non-Orthodox/Reformed Jews cremations do occur, but burial remains the norm.

Medical

Orthodox Jews/Jewesses would prefer to be treated by member of the same sex.

Festivals

See main Faith section on Judaism.

**264,000 Jews in the UK –
14 million worldwide**





Quick Facts: Paganism

Pagans see Deity to be manifest within nature finding expression as Goddesses as well as Gods. Pagans believe that they are part of nature and not separate from it, or superior to it, honouring the earth and the greater universe within their spirituality, which is why many are actively concerned about environmental issues. The path of paganism is a path of celebration, challenge and personal growth. It is not one governed by fear, duty or external rules. Pagans accept that all actions are the personal responsibility of the individual and that they are therefore responsible for the consequences of them. There is a rich diversity of Pagan tradition.

Dress

No specific form of dress in everyday life. Ritual jewellery is however very common and symbolises the person's adherence to Paganism. The removal of symbolic jewellery may cause distress.

Language

Mainly English.

Diet

For ethical reasons, most Pagans have strong preference for foods derived from organic farming and free range livestock rearing, while many are vegetarian or vegan, most limit their meat intake.

Visits

Pagans have no public buildings specifically for worship and most religious ceremonies are held outside in parks, fields, woodlands or anywhere that promotes a connection with nature.

Names

The naming of the child is important, and many Pagans will have a naming ceremony for their child. It is at this time that parents acknowledge their child is no longer a part of the mother, or an extension of themselves, but a separate individual with it's own name and identity.

Pagans therefore take time to find the correct name, believing that a name can influence the way people behave towards you and think about you.

Birth

Some neo-Pagans appear to be re-introducing specific birth practices from very much older times. Other pagan traditions have no specific birthing customs, but babies will normally be blessed in all traditions.

Marriage

Pagan wedding ceremonies are called handfastings and mark the coming together of two people in a formal, loving and equal sexual partnership.

Medical

The majority of Pagans are supportive of both blood transfusion and organ donation, although they will whenever possible use natural remedies.

Physical contact

No restraints on types of physical contact.

Death customs

There are many different beliefs amongst Pagans and between different traditions so there is no single format. Most Pagans believe in some form of afterlife viewing a death as transition within a continuing process of existence. Pagans may be cremated or buried, and the accompanying ceremonies generally take the form of a celebration of the life of the deceased rather than a mournful ritual. The ceremony is often followed by a wake, (a gathering of friends and relatives in sadness, laughter and love to honour the deceased). Most Pagan traditions hold memorial services some after the actual funeral service.

Festivals

Imbolc
Spring Equinox
Beltane
Summer Solstice
Lughasadh

Autumn Equinox
Samhain
Winter Solstice





Quick Facts: Rastafarianism

Some Rastafarians believe Rastafarianism is a way of life whilst others believe that it is a religion. It looks to Haile Selassie I, (formerly known as Ras Tafari and the former Emperor of Ethiopia) as having been a messiah for black people everywhere. The Rastafari movement, which originated in Jamaica in the 1930s, rose from the teachings of Marcus Garvey who spent much of his life fighting for the rights of black people. The Rastafari faith is derived from the Christian bible especially the Old Testament and the Book of Revelations in the New Testament.

Dress

Mainly Western dress although men (brethren) wear a Tam (head covering) and women (sistrens) wear a head cloth or scarf. The hair is worn in dreadlocks which symbolises a lion's mane. The cutting of hair is prohibited. Red, gold and green are the significant colours worn which represent the Ethiopian flag.

Language

Distinctive way of speech called Iyarc. The vocabulary is largely that of the Jamaican patois of English. There is ongoing controversy within the Jamaican communities regarding their languages, for example what does or does not constitute Jamaican as opposed to Rastafarian language.

Diet

Primarily vegetarian. Sacred food is called 'ital' or organic vegetarian food. Do not drink alcohol, tea and coffee.

Visits

Rastafarians do not have a specific religious building for worship. Music, chanting and drumming often used during worship.

Birth

Only women are permitted to attend the women in childbirth. New born children are blessed by elders and offered up to Jah (God). They will be encouraged to follow the 'livity' (way of life) of Rasta.

Marriage

No formal ceremony. A man and woman who co-habit are viewed as husband and wife. Commitment to one another is very strong and children are very important within the family. Family life and community itself is at the heart of Rastafarianism.

Medical

Some orthodox Rastafarians may refuse medical treatment of blood transfusions, although more liberal Rastas may take all forms of treatment. Important to remain healthy both in body and mind at all times.

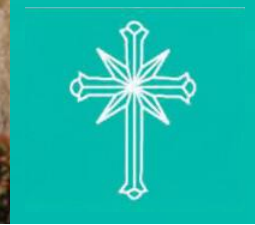
Death customs

Dead and death are considered negative words and are rarely used. 'Passed' or 'Passing' is more appropriate, reinforcing the Rasta belief that life is eternal. No particular rituals are observed.

Festivals

Ethiopian Christmas Day
Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I
Birthday of Marcus Garvey
Ethiopian New Year
Anniversary of the Coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I





Quick Facts: Scientology

The first Church of Scientology was founded in Los Angeles in 1954 and the first in the UK was in London in 1955. Scientology derives from Latin and Greek words combined to mean 'knowing how to know' and provides principles and solutions to improve spiritual awareness, self-confidence, intelligence and ability. Scientology principles can be found in various books written by author and humanitarian L.Ron Hubbard, including *Dianetics - the Modern Science of Mental Health* and *Scientology: Fundamentals of Thought*. L.Ron Hubbard dedicated his life to researching the humanities and developed much of Scientology in the UK, first in London and later in East Grinstead, where he set up his home and the worldwide Scientology headquarters in 1959. Scientology has been recognised as a bona fide religion in many countries around the world, including by various UK government bodies, such as HM Revenue, the Independent Television Commission and the Ministry of Defence. Scientologists believe in the intrinsic goodness of being. They are permitted to profess beliefs in other religions. Scientologists also believe that humans are immortal beings, resident in a physical body and have had numerous past lives including lives in extra-terrestrial cultures.

Dress

Western dress (or local dress in other countries).

Language

Mainly English. Scientology is now present in over 160 countries, so many of the Scientology scriptures have been translated in 15 major languages and some are available in over 60 languages.

Diet

No dietary laws and no restrictions regarding smoking or drinking. Smoking is forbidden in course rooms and alcohol is banned during and 24 hours prior to an auditing session which is one of the core activities in Scientology designed to clear out past negative experiences and help progress individual spiritual growth.

Marriage

Scientology regards the family as the building block of any society and marriage is an essential component of a stable family life. Marriages are performed by Scientology Ministers and are consecrated using 1 of 5 ceremonies. Marriage does not require that both parties are Scientologists.

Visits

Churches are sometimes called 'orgs' (short for organisations). Scientology fully recognises the existence of a Supreme Being and respects the great spiritual leaders of the ages, including Buddha, Lao-tse, Krishna, Christ and Mohammed. Scientology is all denominational and respects all religions. The writings and spoken word of L.Ron Hubbard on the subject of Scientology are known as the scriptures.

Names

Scientology has its own formal naming ceremonies.

Birth

Hubbard has stated that the delivery room during birth should be as silent as possible as early birth trauma may affect the individual in later life. He also recommended that the mother use as little anaesthetic as possible during birth, though a mother's birth plan is very much her own choice.

Medical

Parishioners are encouraged to seek medical treatment for the physical aspects of any injury or illness. Scientology is opposed to any practices within psychiatry and psychology that involve physically damaging, or otherwise harmful interventions – such as electroconvulsive treatment or lobotomies. Treatment and medication is up to the individual but vitamins and exercise are encouraged to help maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Physical contact

No preferences or rituals.

Death customs

Scientologists believe in human immortality and therefore death is not the end of life. Scientology has its own funeral services, which are conducted by ordained ministers of the Church.

Festivals

Birthday of L.Ron Hubbard on 13th March.
Formation of the International Association of Scientologists on 7th October 1984 (celebrated with an international event at Saint Hill, usually third weekend in October).
Sea Org Day August 12th- when rank and promotion ceremonies take place.
Auditors Day September 2nd – A day of special recognition for Auditors (see above re auditing).
New Years Eve.



Quick Facts: Seventh-Day Adventism

Seventh-Day Adventism was formally established in 1863 by amongst others Ellen G. White. They believe literally in a six-day creation. Seventh-Day Adventists also believe in the imminent second coming of Christ. Seventh-Day Adventists share many basic Christian beliefs but one difference is that they celebrate Saturday as the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. Seventh-Day Adventists have a special interest in healthy lifestyles as they see their body as a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Dress

No special dress.

Language

Usually English although there are a number of different language groups within the Adventist Church in the UK, including Filipino, Ghanaian, Russian, Bulgarian, Portuguese etc.

Diet

Seventh-Day Adventists do not smoke, drink alcohol or use non-medicinal drugs.

Many are vegetarian but those who do eat meat will avoid food considered 'unclean' such as pork and shellfish. A healthy lifestyle.

Visits

Normally a church.

Names

No particular tradition. However, surnames are more important than the first name in this tradition as it identifies the individual's family background and community.

Birth

A service of dedication is performed to bless new born children and teenage children may be baptised. Baptisms by full immersion and is only offered to older children and adults on the basis of their understanding of their responsibilities and commitment arising from Baptism as well as their belief in Baptism.

Marriage

Marriage is permanent and divorce only permitted on the grounds of adultery or physical violence.

Medical and Physical contact

There are no taboos on medical treatment or physical contact.

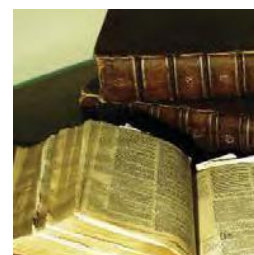
Death customs

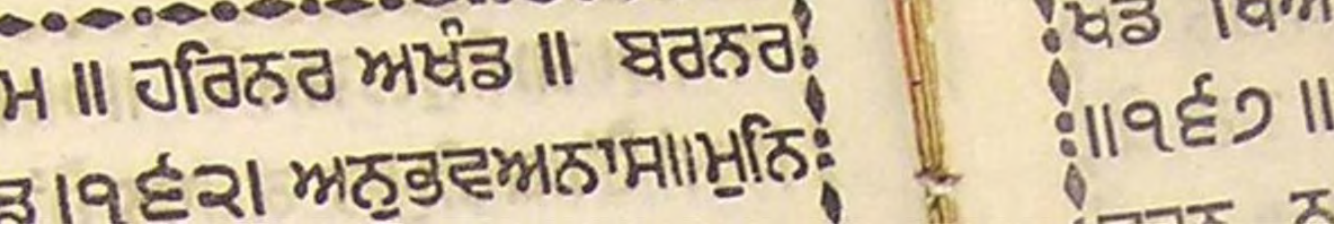
Cremation or burial is a matter of personal or family preference.

Festivals

Seventh-Day Adventists celebrate Christmas as a holiday but do not normally celebrate any of the Christian festivals. The weekly Sabbath Day celebration is considered sufficient to express faith and belief.

**19,000 Seventh-Day Adventists
in the UK**





Quick Facts: Sikhism

Dress

Initiated Sikhs wear the five Ks. Men wear turbans. Women wear trousers and long tops (shalwar and khameez) and may wear a long thin scarf to cover their head called a chunni. Both may wear western style dress.

Language

Punjabi and English languages are widely spoken and used.

Diet

Initiated Sikhs are vegetarian. Beef, halal, kosher are all forbidden. Tobacco and alcohol are also forbidden.

Visits in the home

Sikhs usually pray three times a day: at sunrise, sunset and before going to bed.

Separate room for worshipping, remove shoes, cover head. Polite to accept refreshments if offered. Women may feel uncomfortable if alone with a person of a different gender.

Visits at the Temple

There is no set day of collective worship, though in the UK this is usually on Sundays. Congregational Sikh worship takes place in a Gurdwara. Remove shoes, cover head. Polite to bow and make offering to holy book at the front of the room and altar.

420,000 Sikhs in the UK- 23 million worldwide

Names

Sikhs have 3 names in total including a personal name, a family name and their Khalsa name. The Khalsa name for men is Singh (Lion) and the Khalsa name for women is Kaur (Princess). Ask for the family name and the personal names for official purposes.

Birth

As soon as the baby is born a prayer (the Mul-mantra) should be said by a family member into the baby's ear. Naming ceremony takes place at the Gurdwara several days later.

Marriage

Bride usually wears red. Arranged marriages are the norm in the Sikh religion.

Medical

Women prefer to be examined by a female member of staff. The Kachha (shorts) should on no account be changed or removed other than by the individual. There are no specific medical requirements and no religious objections to blood transfusion and organ donation.

Death customs

The five Ks should be cleaned and left on the body and cremation is preferred to burial. White dress is usually worn for mourning.

Festivals

See main Faith section on Sikhism.





Quick Facts: Unitarianism

Unitarianism has its roots firmly in the Judeo-Christian religions. Its earliest known adherents were in Poland where it was founded in the 16th century. Unitarianism is an open-minded and individualistic approach to religion that gives scope for a very wide range of beliefs and doubts. Religious freedom for each individual is at the heart of Unitarianism. Everyone is free to search for meaning in life in a responsible way and to reach their own conclusions. In line with their approach to religious truth, Unitarians see diversity and pluralism as valuable rather than threatening. They want religion to be broad, inclusive and tolerant. Unitarianism can therefore include people who have Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Pagan, Atheist or other religious perspectives. Unitarians are opposed to the Trinitarian theology of Christianity, believing that Jesus did not claim to be God and was not God. They do however accept the moral authority of Jesus.

Dress

Unitarians do not have a particular dress code.

Language

Mainly English. There are Unitarian Universalist groups in at least 25 countries in six continents.

Diet

No particular dietary requirements. However, Unitarians are committed to Ethical Eating and in 2011 adopted a Statement of Conscience on Ethical Eating.

Visits

The place of worship is normally a church or a chapel or a special meeting house. Worship may be conducted by a Minister or a lay person who will usually lead the service. Worship takes place on a Sunday on a weekly basis.

170 Congregations in the UK
800,000 Unitarians worldwide

Names

The Unitarian ceremony of naming and dedication parallels similar observances found in other religions. Welcoming the child into the religious community and celebrating the safe arrival of the child with the parents and wider family is an important part of the celebrations.

Marriage

Rather than impose a standard form on weddings, Unitarians help couples plan their own service. Unitarians impose few preconditions on a couple other than that they be truly and seriously committed to their relationship as life-partners. The fact that one or both of them may have gone through a divorce is not, in itself, an obstacle. Unitarians think that people should have the chance to build anew, and to do so with the blessing of the religious community. A Minister or Celebrant can perform the marriage ceremony. Unitarianism supports same sex marriage.

Medical and Physical Contact

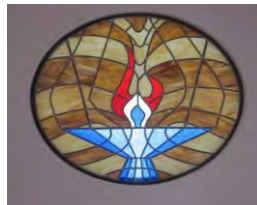
There are no taboos on medical treatment or physical contact.

Death Customs

A Unitarian ceremony to mark someone's death and celebrate his/her life should be true to that person and sensitive to the needs and feelings of the bereaved. Unitarians propound no particular view on whether the dead should be buried or cremated.

Festivals

Unitarians celebrate some Christian festivals, but they often have a different meaning as Unitarians vary quite a lot in how they see Jesus. Easter is celebrated as the return of Spring and not as the death through crucifixion of Christ and not as the resurrection. Unitarians do not believe that Jesus was God and they do not believe in the resurrection. Christmas is celebrated as the birth of a religious leader of seminal importance and not as the birth of Christ the messiah. It follows that many other Christian festivals will not be celebrated where they relate to the divinity of Christ and his message.





Quick Facts: Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions and was founded by the prophet Zoroaster (Zarathushtra) in ancient Iran about 3500 years ago. Zoroastrianism is centred in a dualistic cosmology of good and evil and the ultimate destruction of evil. Zoroastrians believe in a single supreme God, Ahura Mazda. Ahura means 'Lord' and Mazda means 'Wisdom'. Zoroastrians believe that everything he created is pure and should be treated with love and respect. Zoroastrianism is based on 'Good Thoughts, Good Deeds and Good Words'. The ideas of heaven and hell, the afterlife and the coming of a saviour all have roots in Zoroastrianism. The most important religious texts are the Avesta which includes the writings of Zoroaster called the Gathas.

Dress

Zoroastrians almost always wear western clothes. Most adult Zoroastrians wear a Sudra or shirt made of muslin and a Kusti or girdle worn around the waist. These garments are considered sacred and although changed daily should only be removed for medical reasons.

Language

Zoroastrians almost always speak English. Those from the Indian sub-continent speak Gujarati and Iranian Zoroastrians speak Persian or Farsi.

Diet

No particular dietary requirements.

Visits

Zoroaster was a family man and most worship happens in the family home however, many Zoroastrians pray at fire temples (Agiaries) as fire is seen as the symbol of purity. These sacred fires are never extinguished as they are a symbol of Ahura Mazda and represent the light and purity of God. Modest dress is required when visiting a Fire Temple.

Names

Each Zoroastrian has one first name. The father's name appears as the second name. The family name serves as the surname. Children are initiated into the faith with special ceremonies performed by a Zoroastrian Priest.

Marriage

There are two stages to a Zoroastrian wedding, the first being the signing of the marriage contract and the second stage is the service followed by feasts and celebrations which last for many days. Marriage with other faiths is forbidden in traditional Zoroastrianism as is conversion from or into the Faith. However, as with almost all other religions there are Reform Movements and the Reformers within Zoroastrianism disagree strongly with those marriage prohibitions and conversion prohibitions.

Medical and Physical contact

There are no taboos on medical treatment or physical contact.

Death customs

In the UK, Zoroastrians are usually cremated as they see decaying matter such as a corpse contaminating the elements as sacrilege.

Festivals

Jamshedi Noruz - Zoroastrian New Year's Day in the Fasil calendar.

Khordad Sal - The birthday of Zoroaster celebrated in the Fasil and Shenshai calendars.

Farvandigan - Fasil calendar.

Zartusht-no-Diso - Shenshai calendar.

Gahanbars - These are obligatory feasts held throughout the year.

**4000 Zoroastrians in the UK -
2.6 million worldwide**



Glossary

Agnosticism - Agnosticism is derived from the Greek word 'a' meaning 'without' and 'gnosis' meaning 'knowledge'. The definition of agnosticism is therefore 'without knowledge'. Agnosticism is not a religion but a belief related to the existence or non-existence of god. A 'weak agnostic' is unsure whether god exists whereas a 'strong agnostic' believes it is impossible to know whether god exists.

Animism - Animism is considered to be the original human religion and can be defined as the belief in the existence of spiritual beings. It is the earliest form of religious belief and can be practiced by anyone who believes in spirituality but does not follow any specific organised religion.

Atheism - Atheism can be defined differently in two broad ways:

- the absence of belief in the existence of a god or gods; or
- the belief that there are no gods, the denial of the existence of a god or gods.

Community Cohesion - A cohesive community is a community that is in a state of well-being, harmony and stability. It is about respecting one another, valuing diversity and celebrating differences of age, religion, faith, ability, culture and other differences. Cohesive communities are where all members feel a sense of place and belonging.

Culture - Culture can be defined as a set of beliefs, values, behaviours, habits, attitudes, traditions, customs, skills, arts, rituals and material objects that constitute or characterise a peoples' way of life.

Ethnicity - Ethnic is derived from the Greek word 'ethnos' meaning 'people' or 'nation' and an ethnic group can be described as a community of people who share a common culture, language, values, religion, history and ancestry. Ethnicity is, therefore, a word which represents groups with a shared history, sense of identity, geography and cultural roots.

Ethnocentrism - Ethnocentrism can be defined as the tendency to look at the world from the perspective of one's own ethnic culture. Ethnocentrism is common among all cultures and sometimes involves the belief that one's own race or ethnic group is more important than or superior to those of other groups. Sometimes ethnocentrism is unwitting or unintended and often involves ethnic stereotypes.

Faith - The term faith has many meanings. Faith can mean a strong belief in something as true without using reason.

Humanism - Humanism is the belief that people can live good lives without religious beliefs. Humanists make sense of the world using reason, experience and shared human values. They seek to make the best of the one life we have by creating meaning and purpose for themselves. They take responsibility for their actions and work with others for the common good.

Islamophobia - Islamophobia is the irrational fear and/or hatred of Islam. This manifests as prejudice towards, or discrimination against, Islam or Muslims.

Religion - Religion can be defined as a group of beliefs concerning the supernatural, sacred or divine and the moral codes, practices, values, institutions and rituals associated with such belief.

Secularism - Secularism is the belief that religion should not have a privileged position in relation to the laws or the governance arrangements of the State. Secularism asserts that all citizens are equal before the law regardless of religion, race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation. Furthermore, secularism asserts that Foundational Laws and policies should not be determined by religious beliefs.

Xenophobia - Xenophobia is derived from the Greek words 'xenos' meaning 'foreigner', 'stranger' and 'phobos' meaning 'fear'. It is the irrational fear and/or hatred of other countries/cultures and the people from those countries/cultures.



Community Fire Safety

Cigarettes

- Put out cigarettes properly
- Always use a proper ashtray
- Never smoke in bed
- Do not leave cigarettes burning when you leave the room
- Do not empty ashtrays straight into a rubbish bin
- Always keep matches and lighters out of reach of children
- Do not leave disposable lighters in sunlight or near heat sources

Cooking

- Take special care when cooking
- Never leave cooking unattended
- Do not fill a deep frying pan more than one third full
- Dry food before putting it in the oil
- If there are flames, never throw water over the pan. It will explode
- Turn off the power or gas, close the kitchen door, leave the building and call 999
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean. A build-up of fat and grease can easily catch fire
- Do not hang tea towels or cloths on or over the cooker

Candles

- Keep candles away from draughts and anything that can easily catch fire like furniture or curtains
- Never leave candles unattended
- Always place candles in an appropriate candle holder (that will not fall over). Night lights and tea lights can melt plastic surfaces like TV tops and bathtubs.
- Do not lean across candles! You could set fire to your clothes or hair.
- Do not put candles under shelves
- Do not let anything fall into the hot wax, like matchsticks
- Keep candles out of reach of children and pets
- Always make sure that candles are properly extinguished, especially before going to bed

Electrical

- Always turn off electrical appliances, that do not need to be left on, at the mains socket
- Keep electrical leads from trailing over or going near the cooker
- Keep electrical leads away from water
- Do not put pot plants or anything wet on top of an electrical appliance
- Do not overload sockets – one plug per socket
- Ensure that electrical appliances are serviced regularly
- Do not leave cables where they can be tripped over
- Do not trail cables over hot or wet surfaces
- Fully uncoil extension leads

Fireworks

- Only buy fireworks from a legitimate retailer
- Read the instructions in daylight
- Do not drink alcohol if setting off fireworks
- Stand well back and keep others back
- Do not fool with fireworks – they are explosives not toys
- Check the fireworks you buy are suitable for the size of garden and conform to British Standard (BS 7114)
- Store fireworks in a metal box



- Keep pets indoors
- Never go back to a lit firework
- Have a bucket of water to hand, to extinguish sparklers and for very minor burns

Children

- Always keep matches and lighters safely out of reach of children
- Never leave children alone in the home
- Always place hot drinks out of reach of children
- Keep the handles of pots and pans turned away from the edges of cookers and work surfaces
- Never assume toddlers or infants are incapable of lighting a match or lighter
- Teach your children to 'STOP', 'DROP' and 'ROLL' if their clothes should catch fire

Clothes

Fireworks, bonfires, candles, cigarettes and cooking may lead to clothes catching fire but should be treated as follows:

- Do not run around as you will fan the flames and make them burn faster
- Lie down as this makes it harder for the fire to spread and helps to stop you inhaling smoke
- Smother the flames with a heavy material like a coat or blanket as this will block the fire's supply of oxygen
- Roll around as this smothers the flames
- Tie back loose clothing when cooking

Bonfires

- Bonfires should be at least 18 metres (60ft) away from houses, trees, hedges, fences or sheds
- Never use petrol, paraffin or other flammable liquids
- Ensure the bonfire is built safely
- Make sure the bonfire is extinguished safely and thoroughly
- Do not burn aerosols, batteries, bottles, foam-filled furniture and tins of paint as they give off toxic fumes or may explode
- Avoid using tyres as they give off black smoke when burnt, they may also roll out of the fire when alight
- Keep your garden hose laid out and at the ready, so you can douse the flames should the bonfire start to spread

Escape plan

- Plan your escape route with everyone especially children, the elderly and disabled
- Ensure everyone knows where to find the door or window keys in a hurry
- Keep the route clear of obstructions
- Do not delay leaving by collecting valuables and coats or stopping to investigate the fire

Smoke Alarms

A smoke alarm is the easiest way to alert you to the danger of fire, giving you precious time to escape.

- Fit a smoke alarm on every floor of your home
- Test the smoke alarm weekly
- Twice a year gently vacuum around the outside to clean the alarm
- Every ten years replace the alarm
- Do not fit alarms in the kitchen or bathroom, where they can easily be set off accidentally by steam or smoke from your cooking.

Your local Fire & Rescue Service personnel would like to make an appointment to visit your home and discuss fire safety issues that are specific to you. They will also ensure that you have working smoke alarm(s) within your home and where you do not, they will supply and fit 10 year smoke alarm(s).

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Who Cares?



DO you care for someone?
you may recognise their special needs, but can
YOU offer specialist advice and equipment?
If you **REALLY CARE**, why not contact your
local Fire Service for a free Home Fire Risk
Assessment

References

We are glad to acknowledge information obtained from the following websites:

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[south-lakeland-equality-and-diversity-partnership/](http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity-partnership/)

For more information about faith communities and organisations in Britain please refer to the Inter Faith Network www.interfaith.org.uk

