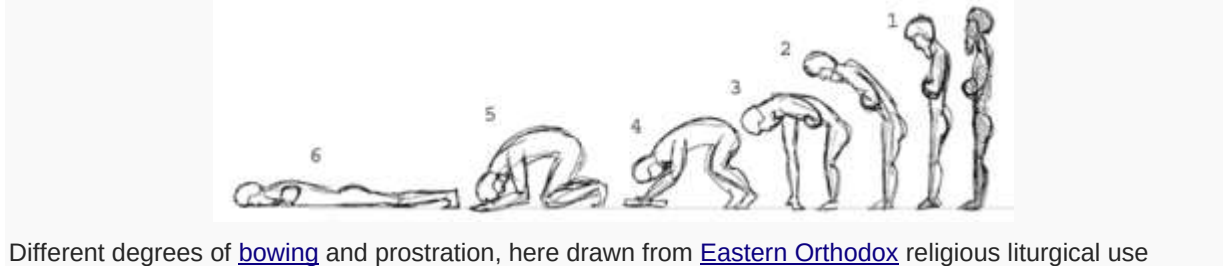


Prostration

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For the medical condition of heat prostration, see [hyperthermia](#).

Not to be confused with [prostate](#).



Different degrees of [bowing](#) and prostration, here drawn from [Eastern Orthodox](#) religious liturgical use

Prostration is the placement of the body in a [reverentially](#) or [submissively prone](#) position as [a gesture](#). Typically prostration is distinguished from the lesser acts of [bowing](#) or [kneeling](#) by involving a part of the body above the knee touching the ground, especially the hands. Major world [religions](#) employ prostration as an act of submissiveness or [worship](#) to a [supreme being](#) or other worshiped entities (i.e. God or the gods), as in the [sajdah](#) of the [Islamic prayer](#), [salat](#), or to show reverence to persons or other elements of the religion. In various cultures and traditions, prostrations are similarly used to show respect to rulers, civil authorities and social elders or superiors, as in the [Chinese kowtow](#) or [Ancient Persian proskynesis](#). The act has often traditionally been an important part of religious, civil and traditional rituals and ceremonies, and remains in use in many cultures.

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[Traditional religious practices](#)[\[edit\]](#)



[Buddhist pilgrims](#) prostrating at the [Jokhang](#).

Many religious institutions (listed alphabetically below) use prostrations to embody the lowering, submitting or relinquishing of the individual ego before a greater spiritual power or presence.

Baha'i Faith[\[edit\]](#)

In the [Bahá'í Faith](#), prostrations are performed as a part of one of the alternatives of obligatory prayer (the "Long" one)^[1] and in the case of traveling, a prostration is performed in place of each missed [obligatory prayer](#) in addition to saying "Glorified be God, the Lord of Might and Majesty, of Grace and Bounty". However, if unable to do so, saying "Glorified be God" is sufficient.^[2] There are specifics about where the prostration can take place including, "God hath granted you leave to prostrate yourselves on any surface that is clean..." (note #10) and "He also condemns such practices as prostrating oneself before another person and other forms of behaviour that abase one individual in relation to another". (note #57)

Buddhism[\[edit\]](#)

Main article: [Prostration \(Buddhism\)](#)

In [Buddhism](#), prostrations are commonly used and the various stages of the physical movement are traditionally counted in threes and related to the [Triple Gem](#), consisting of:

- the Awakened One ([Sanskrit/Pali: Buddha](#)) (in this meaning, to own potential)
- his teaching (Sanskrit: [Dharma](#); Pali: *Dhamma*)
- his community ([Sangha](#)) of noble disciples (*ariya-savaka*).^[3]



White-clad [deacon](#) candidates prostrate before the altar of the [Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels](#) in [Los Angeles](#) during a diaconate ordination [liturgy](#).

In addition, different schools within Buddhism use prostrations in various ways, such as the [Tibetan tantric](#) preliminary practice of a 100,000 prostrations as a means of overcoming pride (see [Ngöndro](#)).^[4] Tibetan pilgrims often progress by prostrating themselves fully at each step, then moving forward as they get up, in such a way that they have lain on their face on each part of their route. Each three paces involves a full prostration; the number three is taken to refer to the Triple Gem. This is often done round a [stupa](#), and in an extremely arduous pilgrimage, [Mount Kailash](#) is circumnavigated entirely by this method, which takes about four weeks to complete the 52 kilometre route. It is also not unusual to see pilgrims prostrating all the way from their home to Lhasa, sometimes a distance of over 2000 km, the process taking up to two years to complete.



[Eastern Orthodox pilgrims](#) making prostrations at [Golgotha](#) in the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#), [Jerusalem](#).

Christianity^{[\[edit\]](#)}

In [Christianity](#), the [Eastern Orthodox](#), [Roman Catholic](#) and [Anglican](#) churches use full prostrations, lying flat on the floor face down, during the imposition of [Holy Orders](#), [Religious Profession](#) and the [Consecration of Virgins](#). Additionally, in the Roman Catholic Church at the beginning of the Good Friday Liturgy, the priest and his assistance prostrate in front of the [altar](#). Dominican practice on Good Friday services in priory churches includes prostration by all friars in the aisle of the church. In the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, partial prostrations ("profound bows") can be used in place of [genuflections](#) for those who are unable to genuflect. The prostration is always performed before God, and in the case of holy orders, profession or consecration the candidates prostrate themselves in front of the altar which is a symbol of Christ.

Lesser prostrations, lit., "low bows" (*zemnoy poklon*) involving kneeling and touching the floor with the hands, but with the torso off the floor, are common in Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic rites worship, and are used in conjunction with the [sign of the cross](#), at specific moments during the services and when [venerating relics](#) or [icons](#). However, the use of prostrations is traditionally discouraged on the [Lord's Day](#) (Sunday), during [Paschaltide](#) (Easter season) and on [Great Feasts](#) of the Lord. During [Great Lent](#), and [Holy Week](#), prostrations are especially encouraged in all the Eastern Churches (see [Prayer of St. Ephraim](#)). Orthodox Christian will also make prostrations in front of people (though in this case without the Sign of the Cross, as it is not an act of veneration or [divine worship](#)), such as the [bishop](#), one's [spiritual father](#) or one another when asking [forgiveness](#) (in particular at the [Vespers](#) service which begins [Great Lent](#) on the afternoon of the [Sunday of Forgiveness](#).) Those who are physically unable to make full prostrations may instead substitute *metanias* (bows at the waist). [Oriental Orthodox](#) also prostrate during daily prayers. [Syrian Orthodox](#) Christians should prostrate during all daily prayers, except on days which the [Holy Liturgy](#) is celebrated. Oriental Catholic rites also use prostrations in a similar way as the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Hinduism^{[\[edit\]](#)}

In [Hinduism](#), eight-limbed (*ashtanga pranama*) and five-limbed (*panchanga pranama*) prostrations are included in the religious ritual of [puja](#). Worship in Hinduism involves invoking higher forces to assist in spiritual and material progress and is simultaneously both a science and an art. A sense of bhakti or devotional love is generally invoked. This term is probably a central one in Hinduism. A direct translation from the Sanskrit to English is problematic. Worship takes a multitude of forms depending on community groups, geography and language. There is a flavour of loving and being in love with whatever object or focus of devotion. Worship is not confined to any place of worship, it also incorporates personal reflection, art forms and group. People usually perform worship to achieve some specific end or to integrate the body, the mind and the spirit in order to help the performer evolve into a higher being.^[8]

Islam^{[\[edit\]](#)}

Main article: [Sujud](#)



In Islam, *sajadat* (prostrations) occupy a quintessential position in the five obligatory (wajib) daily [ritual prayers](#).



Sujud in Islam individually

In [Islam](#), prostrations (*sajadat*, plural of *sujud* or *sajda*) are used to praise, glorify and humble oneself in front of [Allah](#), and are a vital part of the five obligatory [prayers](#) performed daily; this is deemed obligatory for every [Muslim](#) whether the prayers are being performed individually or in congregation.^{[5][6][7]} Additionally, the thirty-second chapter (*sura*) of the [Qur'an](#) is titled [As-Sajdah](#) ("The Prostration": see [32:1](#) ^(Translated by Yusuf Ali)), while the [Arabic](#) word *sujud* (also meaning prostration) appears about 90 times in the Qur'an, a fact which many Muslim scholars claim to be another example of its significance in Islam.^[7] In addition to the prescribed prayers in Sajda, with the exception of the [Ahmadiyya](#) thought, many schools of jurisprudence disallow individuals to beseech God as they please in their own language.^[8]

According to a traditional account of the [words and deeds](#) of [Muhammad](#) as contained in the collection of [hadith](#) of [Ibn Majah](#), Muhammad is reported to have said that "The prayer [salah] is a cure for many diseases". In another hadith he is also said to have advised people to perform prostration calmly and to get up only when the body has come to ease.^[6]

It is also important to note that in Islam, prostration to any one but [Allah](#) is absolutely forbidden. Muhammad strictly prohibited Muslims from prostrating before him, because prostration should only be performed to Allah, not to creatures. Regardless of the circumstances, no Muslim should request, or even accept, it from others.^[citation needed]

Jainism^{[[edit](#)]}

In [Jainism](#), there is a great importance placed on prostration, especially when a devotee is in the temples or in front of high souls.^[*clarification needed*] It represents the surrendering of [ego](#).

Judaism^{[[edit](#)]}

In [Judaism](#), the [Tanakh](#) and [Talmudic](#) texts as well as writings of [Gaonim](#) and [Rishonim](#) indicate that prostration was very common among Jewish communities until some point during the Middle Ages. In [Mishneh Torah](#), [Maimonides](#) states full prostration (with one's body pressed flat to the earth) should be practiced at the end of the Amidah, recited thrice daily. Members of the [Karaite](#) denomination practice full prostrations during prayers.

Traditionally, [OrthodoxAshkenazi Jews](#) prostrated during [Rosh Hashana](#) and [Yom Kippur](#), as did [Yemenite Jews](#) during the [Tachanun](#) part of daily Jewish prayer. [Ethiopian Jews](#) traditionally prostrated during a holiday specific to their community known as [Sigd](#). *Sigd* comes from a [root word](#) meaning prostration in [Ge'ez](#), [Aramaic](#), and [Arabic](#). There is a movement among [Talmide haRambam](#) to revive prostration as a regular part of daily Jewish worship.

Sikhism^{[[edit](#)]}

[Sikhs](#) prostrate in front of [Guru Granth Sahib](#), the holy scripture of the Sikhs. Sikhs consider Guru Granth Sahib as their living [Guru](#) and the unchanging word of [God](#): thus, by prostrating, Sikhs present their head to their Guru, awaiting command, which is taken in the form of a *hukamnama*, or a random opening of Guru Granth Sahib to reveal an edict for the individual or congregation (similar to the ancient Roman practice of *sortes sanctorum*, a form of [bibliomancy](#)). Sikhs call the prostration *mutha tekna* ("lowering the forehead"). Whenever and however many times a Sikh is in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib he will prostrate, usually upon the initial sight of Guru Granth Sahib and again upon leaving the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Sikhs, in their personal worship (morning [Nitnem](#) and evening [Rehras](#)), will prostrate upon the completion of prayers and the [ardaas](#). The direction of prostration is not important as Sikhs place emphasis on the [omnipresence](#) of God: however, if it is possible, Sikhs tend to prostrate in the direction in which *bani* (books containing the word of God, such as the Gutka Sahib or Pothe Sahib) are kept. Other prostrations practiced by Sikhs from an Indian culture are touching of the feet to show respect and great humility (generally done to grandparents and other family elders). Full prostration is reserved for Guru Granth Sahib, as prostration is considered to be the ultimate act of physical humility and veneration.

Other contexts^{[[edit](#)]}

Outside of traditional religious institutions, prostrations are used to show deference to worldly power, in the pursuit general spiritual advancement and as part of a physical-health regimen.

Hawaii^{[[edit](#)]}

In [ancient Hawaii](#), a form of prostration known as *kapu moe* required all to prostrate in the presence of a *nīʻaupiʻo* or a *piʻo* chief on the pain of death. The only people exempt from this were chiefs of the next grade the *naha* and *wohi* chiefs who were required to sit in their presence. Other Polynesian groups are known to practice this.

Imperial China^{[[edit](#)]}

In [Imperial China](#), a form of prostration known as a [kowitz](#) or *kētou* was used as a sign of respect and submission.

Japan^{[[edit](#)]}

Actors prostrating in dogeza. *The Actors, Ichikawa Ebizo III and Ichikawa Shinnosuke*, woodblock color print by [Toyokuni](#) c. 1800.

Main article: [Dogeza](#)

In [Japan](#), a common form of prostration is called [dogeza](#), which was used as a sign of deep respect and submission for the elders of a family, guests, [samurai](#), [daimyo](#) and the Emperor. In modern times, it is generally used only in extreme circumstances, such as when apologizing for very serious transgressions or begging for an incredible favor.

To perform dogeza, a person first enters the sitting/kneeling position known as [seiza](#), and then proceeds to touch the head to the ground. This practice may be related to rites of the [Shinto](#) religion and [culture of Japan](#) dating back centuries.

Martial arts[\[edit\]](#)

Shugyo in [martial arts](#), particularly in the [Shotokai](#) and [Kyokushin](#) styles of [Karate](#), it is a form of extreme [spiritual discipline](#).

Yoga[\[edit\]](#)

Main article: [Surya Namaskara](#)

In modern [yoga](#) practice, "sun salutations" (*sūrya namaskāra*) are a regular part of practitioners' routines. Such a practice may be used for both maintaining physical well-being and [spiritual attainment](#).

Yoruba "Doba'le"/"Ikun'le"[\[edit\]](#)

In traditional and contemporary [Yoruba](#) culture, younger male family and community members greet elders by assuming a position called "doba'le". The traditional, full Yoruba prostration involves the prostrator lying down almost prone with his feet extended behind his torso while the rest of his weight is propped up on both hands. This traditional form is being replaced by a more informal bow and touching the fingertips to the floor in front of an elder with one hand, while bending slightly at the knee. The female form of the greeting is the "ikun'le", a form of kneeling where the younger party bows to one or both knees in front of an elder relative or community member. Both gestures are widely practiced; to not perform them would be considered ill-mannered.

Modified versions of both greetings are also common in traditional Yoruba religious and cultural contexts in the [African Diaspora](#), particularly in Brazil and Cuba.