

Religions and Rituals

What is a Ritual?

A **ritual** often includes certain things:

- repetition of actions or words
- special objects used in a particular way
- a special order in which things are done a focus or theme, perhaps praying to God

Rituals are used by people in religion to help them remember things, to help them focus on God (or an important idea from their religion) and as part of praying to, or worshipping, their god.



Salat

Prayer (**salat**) is an important part of the Islamic faith. **Salat** should be performed five times every day. These times are at dawn, midday, late in the afternoon, after sunset and in the dark of the night. **Salat** is often performed in a **mosque** but it can be done anywhere. Muslims may use a prayer mat. Muslims make sure that they are facing **Mecca** when they are praying. When Muslims pray, they perform sets of movements and **gestures**.



Holy Communion

Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They believe he came to earth and lived as a real human being. Christians believe that Jesus died on a cross and that his death meant that all the bad things (sins) that humans did could be forgiven. They believe that he knew he was going to die. Before he died, he had a last meal with his closest friends, who were called his disciples. It was called the Last Supper. During this meal, he shared bread and wine with his closest followers. He said the bread was his body and the wine was his blood. During services, Christians may perform a ritual known as the **Holy Communion**. They eat a small piece of bread and take a sip of wine or grape juice. Prayers are read out during **Holy Communion**.

Puja

Hindu worship is called **puja**. It can be performed at home or in a Hindu temple. It is often performed at a **shrine**. Before performing the **ritual** prayer of **puja**, Hindus remove their shoes to show respect for God. They chant prayers (mantras) and they give offerings to the **murtis** such as fruit, water and flowers. This is to show their love and respect for the gods, just as a host would want to offer food and drink to a visitor. When the **puja** has finished, Hindus share and eat the food. A diva lamp is lit and the **murtis** are offered a drink of water from a spoon. Hindus believe that they feel closer to their gods when they speak to them using all of their senses. All the senses are used during the **ritual** of **puja**.

Key vocabulary:

Ritual	A ritual is similar to a ceremony. In a ritual, a series of things is done in a special order. Rituals are sometimes done every week, or every day, or at special times. They often have religious or spiritual significance.
Salat	One of the Five Pillars of Islam (the 'rules' that Muslims follow to live a good life). It is a type of prayer that should be performed five times every day.
Mosque	A Muslim place of worship.
Mecca	A holy city in Saudi Arabia.
Gesture	A movement of the body. A gesture could involve moving any part of your body including your hands or head. It is a way of communicating without talking.
Puja	A type of worship (used in Hinduism) featuring prayer to a god.
Shrine	A holy space for worshipping. It often includes a picture of the thing being worshipped.
Holy Communion	A ritual that some Christians take part in to remember Jesus, his death and how it meant that Christians were saved from sin.

