




Shahādah means to testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allāh and that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is the Messenger of Allāh. The actual word itself means to declare, to bear witness to something, to testify to something.

 **What does ‘testify’ mean?**

It means to declare something very firmly and sincerely without any doubt, in front of witnesses. You make your declaration in the knowledge that what you are saying is what you believe to be true and that if you are lying, you will have to bear the consequences of that lie.

 **Is this similar to a witness testifying in a court of law?**

Yes. If you hold your hand up in a court of law and you testify that you saw such and such person rob the local bank, then you are telling the court that your words are true. If you are lying, the court can punish you for the crime of perjury.


 **So, you sincerely believe your words to be true?**

Yes. When you utter the words of *shahādah* you do so absolutely in the knowledge, without question, that there is no god worthy of worship but Allāh and that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is the Messenger of Allāh.

 **How does a person declare the *shahādah*?**

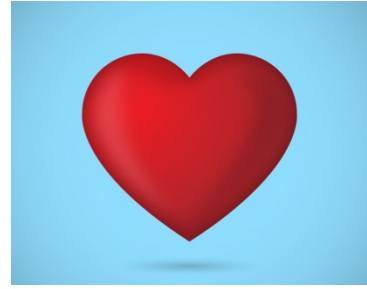
Shahādah is demonstrated in three ways:

1. By belief in the heart
2. By utterance with the mouth
3. By actions

 **I see. Let’s start with ‘belief in the heart.’ How do we confirm our *belief* in *shahādah*?**

There must be a firm belief in your heart and a clear acceptance of four things:

1. That Allāh is One, being alone worthy of all worship, and that that worship cannot be shared with any partners or associates whatsoever. This is *Tawhīd al Ulūhiyah*.
2. That Allāh is the sole Creator and Sustainer of everything in the heavens and the earth. He is the sole Lord of all creation. This is *Tawhīd al Rubūbiyah*.
3. That Allāh possesses certain Names and Attributes, which describe Him and cannot be ignored, changed or reinterpreted. This is *Tawhīd al Asma wa as-Sifāt*.
4. That Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is the messenger of Allāh. He is a slave and servant of Allāh سبحانه سيجانه. He is the final Prophet. No prophet will come after him. Allāh tells us in the Qur'ān, ¹ وتعالى



مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Muhammad is not the father of (any) one of your men but (he is) the Messenger of Allāh and the Seal of the Prophets². And ever is Allāh of all things knowing.
Sūrah al Ahzāb, 33:40

After Allāh, it is Muhammad's صلى الله عليه وسلم words and actions that are to be obeyed and followed.

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ طَّغْيَانٍ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

Say, "Obey Allāh and the Messenger. But if you turn away - then indeed, Allāh does not like the disbelievers."
Sūrah Āli 'Imrān, 3:32



So, by accepting the *shahādah*, you are accepting of all the four points mentioned above?

Yes, at the very least. Accepting the *shahādah* implies that you have made a firm declaration and a covenant (promise) with Allāh to believe all the four matters mentioned above.



Tell me about *shahādah* by utterance?

Muslims must demonstrate their acceptance of the *shahādah* in 'reality', by clearly speaking specific words.



What are those specific words?

In its most basic form, the *shahādah* reads as follows:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

ašhadu 'an lā 'ilāha 'illa -llāhu, wa-'ašhadu 'anna muḥammadar-rasūlu-llāh

I testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allāh and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh



The utterance of the *shahādah* is a critical part also of being a Muslim. Just as an analogy, it is obvious that in your heart you love your parents. However, sometimes it is good to clearly tell them so. The teacher in a

¹ *Subhān wa ta'āla* (The Glorious and Most High)

² *Khātim an Nabīyan*, i.e. the last of the prophets

classroom can see that you are there, but still it is an act of obedience and courtesy to verbally declare that you are 'PRESENT.' These two declarations reinforce two of the most fundamental aspects of the faith.³



I learnt the *shahādah* when I was much younger, but I can't recall ever having to speak it by words again after that?

Yes, you have, without even realising it. You say it everyday when you perform *salāh*. After every *rakātain* (two units of prayer), whilst in the sitting position at the end, you declare the *shahādah*.



Yes, that's true actually. Are there any other well-known times when the *shahādah* is spoken?

Yes, when a person enters Islām. After a non-Muslim comes to firmly believe in *lā 'ilāha 'illa -llāhu, muḥammadar rasūlu-llāh*, the next thing he must do is declare that very same belief in words. His mere belief is not sufficient. He must express that belief by uttering the *shahādah*, ideally publically, before a group of witnesses.



So, if a non-Muslim were to express to me a firm desire to embrace Islām, I should encourage him to utter the *shahādah*?

Yes. *Allāh hu 'Ālim* (Allāh Knows Best), our deaths could have been ordained for any of us at any time. This man may die before he can declare his faith. If he is sure of his resolve to become a Muslim, then it is best not to waste anytime. He must first purify himself with *ghusl* (a bath). Thereafter, you should endeavour to bring some witnesses together, and, before them, he should declare the *shahādah*.



Do there need to be witnesses?

Did you notice, I used the words *ideally* earlier. If it is not possible to have witnesses present, the *shahādah* is still acceptable. For example, it may be that that person is in a remote area with no one at all around them, available to witness. Or maybe they *are* amongst people but want to keep the *shahādah* private for some reason. Maybe they fear being harassed, ridiculed, excommunicated or persecuted by their community if it should become known that they have become Muslim.



Earlier you quoted the *shahādah* in its 'basic form'. Can words be added to the *shahādah*?

The words عَبْدُهُ (*abdahu*) can also be added after Muhammad's صلى الله عليه وسلم name. This translates as *His servant* thereby reinforcing the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم status as a normal human being and a servant of Allāh, as well as His Messenger.

The same word is sometimes also preferred by scholars for when Jews and Christians enter Islām. For Christians, some additional words can be added specific to Isa عليه السلام⁴ (Jesus). These extra words are not mandatory, but if spoken, again, forcefully emphasise his human status, as a servant and messenger of Allāh,

Ubadah ibn al-Samit رضي الله عنه reported: The Messenger of Allāh, صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever testifies that there is no God but Allāh alone without any partners, and that Muhammad is his servant and his messenger, and that Jesus is the servant of Allāh, son of His maid-servant, His Word which He bestowed upon Mary and a spirit from Him, and that

³ The *shahādah* is also known as *shahādatain* (the two declarations). This is because within it are *two* powerful statements that are the very core components of faith in Islām.

⁴ *Alayhe salām/alayha salām/alayhum salām*. عليه السلام, عليها السلام, عليهم السلام: Peace be upon him/her/them: an honourific used for the Prophets of Islām, Angels and honourable women.

Paradise is the truth and Hellfire is the truth, then Allāh will admit him into any of the eight gates of Paradise he wishes.”
Bukhari and Muslim



Did Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم require the very first Muslims to utter the *shahādah*?

Yes. Anybody embracing Islām would make this testimony before witnesses, and often directly before the Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم himself.



So, utterance was a fundamental precondition to entering Islām?

An example that demonstrates how important utterance is, is that of Abu Tālib, the beloved uncle of our Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and a major figure in his life, acting as a resolute counsellor, guardian and protector.

When Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was orphaned at the aged of eight, it was Abu Tālib who immediately took him under his wing and guided him into adulthood. When Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم received the Prophethood from Allāh and faced persecution and vilification, it was Abu Tālib, still an unbeliever, who defended him. He continued to defend his nephew until his dying breath, even in the face of hostile opposition and possible excommunication.

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم loved Abu Tālib dearly and wanted him to die within Islām. As he lay dying, he asked Abu Tālib to utter the *shahādah*. He said to him:

My Uncle, you just make a profession that there is no true god but Allāh, and I will bear testimony before Allāh (of your being a believer).



Did Abu Tālib do so?

No. Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم even drew his ear up close to his uncle and asked him to say the above words to him alone in complete confidence. But he heard nothing. All the pleas of the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم were of no avail.

Shortly after the death of Abu Tālib, the following verses of the Qur’ān were revealed,

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

Indeed, (O Muhammad) you do not guide whom you like, but Allāh guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the (rightly) guided.
Sūrah al Qasās, 28:56

This story tells us that *Hidayah* (Guidance) is only from Allāh. However, it also demonstrates the importance of the verbal utterance of the *shahādah*.



Tell me about demonstrating the *shahādah* by ‘actions.’

OK, so you believe very firmly in Allāh and His messenger. You have even declared with your mouth that you believe! Now all you have to do is ACT! Every single part of your body should act in accordance with Allāh’s will. Everything your eyes see should be *halāl* (permissible), everything your ears hear should be *halāl*. Everything you do with your hands should be *halāl*. Everywhere your legs take you should be *halāl*. Allāh says,

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

That Day We will seal over their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will testify about what they used to earn.

Sūrah Yā Sin, 36:65



Your body parts will speak?

Yes. You have testified that you worship none but Allāh and follow His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, so it is only right that now, on *Yawm Al Qiyāmah* (the Day of Judgement), that they testify whether or not you indeed kept that pledge. Believe me, they will speak out and you will have no control. Likewise, if you performed good deeds, then, insha'Allāh (If Allāh Wills it), they will confirm that also.



Does Allāh reward us for believing in, declaring and acting in accordance with the *shahādah*?

Allāh loves those of His creation who make this declaration and live their lives by it. The following hadith is just one of many that describe the unbelievable rewards for declaring the *shahādah*.

Itban رضي الله عنه reported that Allāh's messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Indeed, Allāh has forbidden from Hell the person who testifies that none is worthy of worship except Allāh, seeking nothing by it but Allāh's countenance.

Bukhari

We will consider more of the fruits of the *shahādah* in the next chapter, Insha'Allāh.

The *Shahādah* [part a]

Questions

1. What does the word '*shahādah*' mean in English?
2. Name the three ways in which a person demonstrates acceptance of the *shahādah*?
3. With regard to 'belief' in the *shahādah*, what are the four facts you 'believe' to be true, when you declare the '*shahādah*'?
4. With regard to utterance of the *shahādah*, what is the actual wording in its simplest form?
5. Mention an instance in your daily life, where you utter the *shahādah*?
6. Non-Muslims who come to Islām have to utter the *Shahādah*, is that right?
7. If a non-Muslim were to express to you a firm desire to embrace Islām, what should you do at the outset?
8. Which people famously uttered the *shahādah* at the time of the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم?
9. Which person famously did not utter the *shahādah*, despite a heartfelt request from the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم?



Specialist dive, Mostar Bridge, Bosnia Herzegovina