The Articles of Faith

The six Articles of Faith (God, angels, books, prophets, predestination and the Last Day) and the meanings of jihad, with what Muslims believe and why each matters.

The six Articles of Faith (Iman)

Iman means faith. The six articles of belief are accepted by Sunni Muslims; Shi'a Muslims hold them within their own framework (see the note at the end).

Article	In short
1. God (Allah)	One God, creator and sustainer
2. Angels (*mala'ikah*)	Spiritual beings who serve God
3. Books (*kutub*)	The scriptures revealed by God
4. Prophets (*anbiya'/rusul*)	Human messengers chosen by God
5. Predestination (*qadar*)	God's knowledge and decree
6. Resurrection and the Last Day (*akhirah*)	Judgement and the life to come

1. Belief in God (Tawhid)

- **Oneness (*Tawhid*).** There is **one God**, with **no partner, son or equal** (Sura 112). Worshipping anything beside God is **shirk**, the greatest sin.
- **Creator and sustainer** of everything, who is **all-knowing, all-powerful and ever-living**, and who **hears and sees all**.
- **Merciful and just.** Every sura but one begins with "In the name of God, the **Gracious, the Merciful**".
- **The Ninety-Nine Names** (*Asma' al-Husna*) describe his qualities, such as *ar-Rahman* (the Gracious), *ar-Rahim* (the Merciful), *al-Khaliq* (the Creator), *al-Malik* (the King), *al-Ghafur* (the Forgiving), *al-Adl* (the Just).
- **Beyond comparison:** "nothing is like him" (Sura 42:11); he cannot be seen or pictured, so Islam forbids images of God.
- **Significance.** Belief in one God gives Muslims **purpose**, **hope** and **trust**, makes all people **equal** before the Creator, and is the basis of worship.

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Tawhid in more detail

Pakistani students learn the **Iman Mufassal**: "I believe in God, his angels, his books, his messengers, the Last Day, that all good and bad are decided by God, and in life after death." Faith is incomplete without it.

Three aspects of tawhid:

1. **God's Lordship.** He alone created, owns, sustains and rules the universe. The order of the sun, moon and night and day (36:40) shows this, and the Qur'an asks who provides from the sky and earth and the idolaters answer "God" (10:31). He alone is the lawgiver and judge.
2. **God alone is worshipped.** Worship in heart, body and wealth belongs only to him (2:163). Every messenger brought this message (21:25).
3. **His names and attributes are unique.** Nothing is like him (42:11), his names are the most beautiful (7:180), and no created thing may be given his qualities.

Shirk (setting up partners with God) has three forms:

Form	Meaning
In God's Lordship	Believing in another creator or ruler of the universe; saying God has children (112:3); denying God altogether, like **Pharaoh** (79:24)
In worship	Praying to, asking help from or sacrificing for anyone but God, including praying to the dead or to saints
In attributes	Giving a human the powers only God has (creating, knowing the unseen), or **depicting God** as a person or image (42:11)

Shirk is the one sin God does not forgive unless a person repents before death (4:48); it makes all good deeds worthless (39:65), and the Qur'an calls it a "tremendous wrong" (31:13).

How does tawhid help a Muslim in daily life? It frees him from fear of anyone but God and from servility to any person or thing; gives self-respect, courage and peace of mind; makes a person humble because everything is God's gift; keeps him honest because God sees everything; unites people as equal servants of one Lord; and gives life a purpose (51:56).

Why is it said that there is no faith without tawhid? It is the first article, and every act of worship (prayer, fasting, zakat, Hajj) is done for the one God. Without it, they would have no point.

2. Belief in angels

- Angels (*mala'ikah*) are **created from light**, **obey God completely**, have **no free will to disobey**, and are **unseen**.
- **Duties and well-known angels:**
  - **Jibril (Gabriel):** brought **revelation** to the prophets.

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- **Mika'il (Michael):** in charge of **rain and sustenance**.
- **Israfil:** will **blow the trumpet** on the Last Day.
- **Azra'il (the Angel of Death):** takes souls at death.
- **Raqib and Atid** (the **Kiraman Katibin**, "noble recorders"): one on each shoulder, **recording a person's good and bad deeds**.
- **Munkar and Nakir:** question people in the grave.
- **Ridwan** (keeper of paradise) and **Malik** (keeper of hell).
- Others **guard** and **support** believers.

- **Significance.** Belief in angels reminds Muslims that their actions are **recorded**, which encourages **honesty**, and that **God's help** is always present.

Angels in more detail

- Angels are made of **light**, do not eat or sleep, are not tired, have **no free will to disobey** (7:206), and are neither God's daughters nor objects of worship.
- They are messengers sent only with God's permission (97:4). They announced a son to Ibrahim, Zakariyyah and Maryam, and helped the Muslims at **Badr**.
- Some tasks: they **record deeds** (82:10–12), question people in the grave (**Munkar and Nakir**), and take souls (the **angel of death**). Another task, according to Hadith, is writing down the main facts of a life when the soul enters the unborn child.
- **Jibril** is the highest in importance because he brought the revelation to every prophet, announced Isa's birth to Maryam, brought the Qur'an to Muhammad and guided him on the Night Journey. The Qur'an calls him the "Holy Spirit".
- **Belief in angels** helps a Muslim to feel watched by good observers, which encourages honesty, and to feel God's help.

3. Belief in the revealed books

- God sent **scriptures** to guide people: the **Suhuf (scrolls) of Ibrahim**, the **Tawrat (Torah)** to Musa, the **Zabur (Psalms)** to Dawud and the **Injil (Gospel)** to Isa, and the **Qur'an** to Muhammad (pbuh).
- Muslims believe the **original messages were the same** (belief in one God) but that the earlier books were **changed or lost** over time. The **Qur'an is the final book**, **preserved** word for word, which confirms and completes the earlier messages.
- **Contents and purpose.** Guidance on **belief, worship, morality and law**, and a warning and good news about the **Hereafter**.
- **Significance.** Muslims respect the earlier scriptures, and the **Qur'an** is the **final authority** in Muslim life.

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Books in more detail

- All the books taught the same basic message: one God, prophets, the Last Day, reward and punishment, and justice. The earlier ones were given to particular peoples for a time.
- Muslims believe the earlier books were **changed or lost** (5:13): the *Suhuf* of Ibrahim are lost; the Tawrat, Zabur and Injil exist only in changed form. The Qur'an says Isa told his followers of a messenger to come named **Ahmad** (61:6).
- The Qur'an is the **only book kept in its original form** (15:9), written in a living language, for **all humanity** and **all time**, and **complete** (5:3).
- Muslims are told "we make no distinction between any of the messengers" (2:136).

4. Belief in the prophets

- God sent **prophets** (*anbiya'*) to every people, and **messengers** (*rusul*) who brought **new scripture or law**. The Qur'an names **25** (for example **Adam, Idris, Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim, Isma'il, Ishaq, Ya'qub, Yusuf, Ayyub, Musa, Harun, Dawud, Sulayman, Yunus, Zakariyya, Yahya, Isa** and **Muhammad**), and Muslims believe there were many more.
- **Character and function.** Prophets are **human** (not divine), **honest, trustworthy, protected from major sin** and **chosen by God**. Their task is to **teach Tawhid, warn people, give good news, set an example, and lead them in justice**.
- **Muhammad (pbuh) is the Seal of the Prophets**, the last and the example for all (see chapter 6). The five "**Ulu'l-'Azm**" (resolute) prophets are Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and Muhammad.
- **Significance.** Muslims honour **all prophets** equally and make no distinction between them, which gives common ground with Jews and Christians.

Prophets in more detail

- By tradition there were about **124,000** prophets; the Qur'an names **25**. Each was a human man, chosen by God, honest and trustworthy (said by Muslims to be protected from serious wrongdoing), and brought God's message (4:64).
- They were sent to particular peoples (Musa and Isa to the Israelites) until Muhammad, who was sent to **all humanity** (33:40, 34:28). Some were given miracles by God's leave (Musa's staff, Isa healing the sick).
- Muslims honour all prophets equally (2:285). The Qur'an teaches that Isa is a prophet and not God's son.
- **How does the prophets' message matter today?** It gives Muslims common ground with other believers, teaches tawhid, good conduct and accountability, and shows Islam as the completion of the earlier faiths.

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5. Belief in predestination (qadar, also al-qada' wa'l-qadar)

- **Meaning.** God has **knowledge of everything** (past, present and future) and has **decreed** its measure. Nothing happens **outside his knowledge and will**.
- **Human responsibility.** Humans have **free will** and **choose** how to act, and they will be **judged** on their choices. Divine knowledge does not remove responsibility.
- **Views.** There has been debate over the balance of divine decree and free will; the most common view is that God **knows** what people will choose but **does not force** them.
- **Significance.** It helps Muslims to **accept hardship patiently** (*sabr*), to **be grateful** in success, to **work hard and trust God** (*tawakkul*) and not give up, and to avoid **pride** and **despair**.

Predestination in more detail

- *Qadar* comes from a word meaning "measure". It shares its root with **al-Qadir** ("the All-Powerful"). God has created everything in measure (54:49), knows past, present and future, and has recorded it all in the **Preserved Tablet** (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*).
- Examples: the birth of Isa (19:19–21) and the Muslim victory at Badr were decreed, and so is the Day of Judgement.
- **Free will:** humans can choose right or wrong and **will be asked** about their choices. God does not burden a soul beyond what it can bear (2:286). Ali smiled when he found his stolen saddle being sold: the thief had made lawful money unlawful by his own choice.
- **How does belief in qadar affect daily life?** A person works hard but accepts the result with patience; success does not lead to pride, loss does not lead to despair; he trusts God and finds peace of mind.

6. Belief in the Resurrection and the Last Day (Akhirah)

Main events

1. **Death and the grave (barzakh).** At death the soul leaves the body; in the grave Munkar and Nakir ask about **one's Lord, religion and Prophet**. The soul stays in **barzakh** (the stage between death and resurrection).
2. **The signs of the Last Hour.** Events such as the coming of the **Dajjal** (the false messiah), the return of **Isa** and the appearance of **Gog and Magog**.
3. **The blowing of the trumpet** by Israfil: all creation dies, and then a second blast **raises everyone**.
4. **Resurrection and gathering.** All people are **raised** and gathered before God.
5. **The Judgement.** Each person is given a **record of deeds** (in the right or the left hand), **deeds are weighed** on the **scale (*mizan*)**, and people cross the **bridge (*sirat*)**.
6. **Paradise (*Jannah*) and Hell (*Jahannam*).** The righteous enter **paradise** (gardens, peace, and the greatest reward, to see God's pleasure); the unrepentant wrongdoers face **hell**, but **God's mercy is**

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wide and Muslims hope for **forgiveness and intercession**.

Significance. The Last Day teaches **accountability**: every action matters, so Muslims strive for **honesty, justice and kindness**, and it gives hope that **injustice will be put right**.

The Last Day in more detail

- **Barzakh.** After death the soul stays in a state between this world and the next (23:100). In the grave the angels question the person about his Lord, religion and Prophet, and the grave becomes a garden of paradise or a pit of hell.
- **The destruction.** On the day appointed for the end, the first trumpet sounds: the sun is folded up, the stars fall, the mountains are blown like wool (101:4–5) and everyone flees from family (80:33–37). All living things die.
- **The resurrection.** The second trumpet raises all humanity, together with angels and jinn (39:68). The Day of Judgement (*Qiyamah*) follows.
- **The judgement.** People are brought before God with their **record of deeds** (18:49); the righteous receive it in the right hand and the wrongdoers in the left (17:71, 69:25). Deeds are weighed on the **scale** (101:6–9). The **sirat** is a bridge over hell, which the Prophet will cross first with his community.
- **Paradise and hell** are described in this world's terms (gardens, rivers, fire) to give an idea of their reality.
- **Why does the belief matter in daily life?** It gives life a purpose (this life is a preparation), keeps a person from wrongdoing because every deed is recorded, and gives hope that justice will be done for those who suffered.

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Shi'a Muslims accept these beliefs, but organise their faith in **five "roots"** (*Usul ad-Din*): **Tawhid** (oneness), **Adl** (God's justice), **Nubuwwah** (prophethood), **Imamah** (the leadership of the twelve Imams) and **Ma'ad** (the Hereafter). Differences should be described **fairly and briefly** in answers.

Jihad

Jihad means "**striving**" or "struggling" in the cause of God. It has a **range of meanings**:

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Kind	Meaning
Spiritual (the "greater jihad")	The inner struggle against **selfishness, pride and temptation**, to be a better Muslim. The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have called it the **greater jihad**
Mental / intellectual	Striving to **learn and teach**, to think and to **speak the truth** (as in the Hadith "the best jihad is a word of truth before an unjust ruler")
Physical (including defence)	**Fighting in defence** of the faith, life and the community, which is allowed **only for just reasons, under legitimate authority** and with **rules**: no harm to **non-combatants, women, children, the old, religious people or crops**; accepting **peace** when offered
By wealth and deeds	Giving **money** and effort to good causes, and **honest work** to support one's family (see Hadiths 7 and 10)

The meanings of jihad in more detail

- **Jihad of the self** (*jihad an-nafs*): the struggle against one's own desires and Satan's whispering; it is called greater because it never stops and it is hard to win.
- **Jihad of the tongue** (*lisan*): speaking the truth and inviting people to the right way with wisdom (16:125). "The best jihad is a word of truth before an unjust ruler."
- **Jihad of the pen** (*qalam*): defending and explaining Islam by writing and research. The Prophet said that the ink of the scholar is more valuable than the blood of the martyr.
- **Jihad of the hand** (*yad*): action through charity, helping those in need, honest work and good deeds.
- **Jihad of the sword** (*qital*): fighting, which is allowed only as a **last resort**, to defend the community or those who are oppressed (4:75), and ends when the enemy asks for peace (8:61).

The Prophet's rules for war: do not strike first (2:190); do not harm civilians (women, children, the old, monks); do not cut fruit trees or kill animals needlessly; do not destroy places of worship; protect those who ask for safety (9:6); feed and treat prisoners well; do not mutilate the dead; keep treaties; do not harm envoys.

When does it become compulsory? When the Muslim land, lives or faith are attacked, jihad becomes a duty of the people attacked; if they cannot manage, neighbouring Muslims must help. It ends when the fighting stops (2:190–193).

Why is jihad of the self "greater"? It is a daily struggle that affects all actions, and the other kinds of jihad are meaningless without it.

> **Jihad is not the same as "holy war". The Qur'an forbids aggression (Sura 2:190) and says "there is no compulsion in religion" (Sura 2:256). In answers, give the range of meanings and**

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an example of each.

TRY IT

Explain what Muslims believe about the Last Day and why this belief is important to them.

Outline. Death, barzakh, the signs of the Hour, the trumpet, resurrection, judgement (record of deeds, scales, the sirat), paradise and hell. *Importance:* accountability for every action, encourages honesty and justice, comfort for those who suffer injustice, hope for God's mercy, and a goal beyond this world.

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