



A GUIDE TO ISLAMIC MARRIAGE

The Nikah, Step by Step

The Islamic marriage, from start to finish — a step-by-step guide following the Shari'ah and the practice in Malaysia

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً
وَرَحمةً ...

One journey, from intention to sakinah

Marriage in Islam is an act of worship and half of one's faith. But between a sincere intention and a valid akad there are steps to take — some required by the Shari'ah, some required by Malaysian law, and some good custom.

This small book sets them out in the real order: choosing a spouse, merisik (the informal inquiry), the proposal, the pre-marriage course, applying at the religious office, the pillars of a valid marriage, the akad, then the walimah and married life. The aim is simple — so you know what to do, when, and why.

Rulings here follow the practice in Malaysia (Shafi'i school). Because every state has its own enactment, forms, rates and fees, this book names no figures — for current details, refer to your State Religious Office or Syariah Court. May Allah make your affair easy.

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The chapters follow the real order a couple goes through — intention, merisik and the proposal, the pre-marriage course and registration at the religious office, the akad, then the walimah and married life. Printable checklists are in the Appendix. Further reference at mypolygyny.com.

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CHAPTER 1

Intention & Getting Ready

Correct the intention; be ready in knowledge, self and finances.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا
زَوْجَهَا ... ﴿١﴾

"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate."

An-Nisa' 4:1

Marry for the sake of Allah

Marriage in Islam is not merely a ceremony but worship and responsibility. The Prophet ﷺ urged the young who are **able** to marry, for it guards the gaze and chastity.

Being 'able' does not mean being wealthy, but being **ready** — mature enough, willing to carry the responsibility, and able to provide maintenance at a reasonable level.

- Intend marriage to guard yourself and build a family obedient to Allah
- Be ready in three ways: basic religious knowledge, personal maturity, and finances
- Seek Allah's guidance with the istikharah prayer before deciding

Ready? A self-check

- ☒ I understand the purpose and duties of marriage
- ☒ I can keep up prayer and basic religious duties
- ☒ I am willing to give/receive maintenance and care for a spouse
- ☒ I have spoken with my family
- ☒ I have sought Allah's guidance (istikharah)

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CHAPTER 2

Choosing a Spouse

Put religion and character first — that is the ground of a peaceful home.

أَلْحَبِثْتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ وَالْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ
لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ أُولَئِكَ مَبْرُؤُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ ... ﴿٢٦﴾

"Good women are for good men, and good men are for good women."

An-Nur 24:26

Choose on the basis of religion

The Prophet ﷺ said people usually choose a spouse for four things — wealth, lineage, beauty and religion — then advised: **choose the religious one**, and you will prosper.

Sound religion and good character are the foundation that lasts when the rest changes. This does not rule out mutual liking; it simply sets the priority right.

Priorities when choosing

Put first

- ✓ Religion and obedience to Allah
- ✓ Character and manners
- ✓ Trustworthiness & responsibility
- ✓ Understanding and courtesy

Don't make the main measure

- ✗ Wealth alone
- ✗ Rank or lineage alone
- ✗ Looks without religion
- ✗ Pressure of trends or others

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CHAPTER 3

Merisik — The Informal Inquiry

The family's first step — asking with good manners before the proposal.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ

﴿٦﴾ ...

"O you who believe, if a sinful person brings you news, verify it."

Al-Hujurat 49:6

What is merisik?

Merisik is a good Malay custom: a representative of the man's family quietly asks whether the woman is still free (not yet committed) and looks into the background and religion of both sides.

It is done courteously and honestly. Its aim is to avoid misunderstanding and to confirm there is no **Shar'i impediment** — such as an existing proposal from someone else, or a mahram relationship.

- Confirm the candidate is not already bound by another's proposal
- Ask about religion, character and health with tact
- Guard the privacy and honour of both parties

Quick Q&A

Is merisik obligatory?

No, it is not required by the Shari'ah — it is a good custom to get acquainted and avoid misunderstanding before the proposal.

May I meet the candidate during merisik?

You may look at the candidate (nazar) with the intention of marriage, within the limits of the Shari'ah and accompanied by a mahram — not in private seclusion.

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CHAPTER 4

The Proposal (Khitbah)

A formal proposal — with its manners and its prohibitions.

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَاءِ أَوْ أَكْتَنْتُمْ فِي ...

﴿٢٣٥﴾

"There is no blame on you for hinting at a proposal to such women, or keeping it to yourselves."

Al-Baqarah 2:235

A courteous proposal

The khitbah is a formal request for marriage, usually made through the family. It **does not** yet make the pair husband and wife — the limits of interaction remain as between non-mahrams.

It is forbidden to propose to a woman **already proposed to** by another, so long as that proposal has not been declined or withdrawn. This guards the hearts and honour of fellow Muslims.

Manners of proposing



Honest & clear

State the intention sincerely,
without misrepresenting yourself



Respect the turn

Do not propose over an unresolved
proposal



Keep the limits

Engagement is not lawful intimacy —
avoid seclusion and touch

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CHAPTER 5

The Engagement

The waiting period — guard the intention, guard the limits.

وَلَيْسَتَّعَفِّفِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ
يَبْتَغُونَ الْأَكْتَبَ ... ﴿٣٣﴾

“And let those who find not the means to marry keep themselves chaste until Allah enriches them.”

An-Nur 24:33

Engagement is a promise, not the marriage bond

Engagement is an agreement to marry later. It may be marked with a gathering and an exchange of gifts within one's means — without extravagance or waste.

The key thing to understand: engagement **makes nothing lawful**. The pair are still non-mahram, so the limits of interaction and covering (aurah) remain until the akad.

-
- Avoid private seclusion (khalwat) and touch
 - Gifts within one's means — not for show
 - If the engagement is called off, return gifts graciously per custom/agreement

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CHAPTER 6

The Pre-Marriage Course

The marriage-course certificate — knowledge before becoming spouses.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْجِبَارَةُ ...



"O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire."

At-Tahrim 66:6

Why the course?

In Malaysia, Muslim couples must attend a recognised **pre-marriage course** and obtain the certificate before they can marry. It teaches the basics of marriage fiqh, the duties of spouses, money management and family communication.

This certificate is one of the documents required when applying at the religious office. Register early, as places and dates are limited.

- Choose a course module recognised by JAKIM/JAIN
- Keep the certificate — it is needed for the marriage application
- Attend seriously; the knowledge is for life

How to register for the course

1

Find a recognised provider

The religious office, a mosque, or a provider approved by the state JAIN

2

Register & attend

Pick a date, pay the set fee, attend in full

3

Obtain the certificate

Keep it to attach to your marriage application

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CHAPTER 7

Application & Registration

The official process — forms, documents and marriage permission.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَوفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ ... ﴿١﴾ ج

"O you who believe, fulfil your contracts."

Al-Ma'idah 5:1

Apply for marriage permission

Before the akad, the marriage must be registered through the **District Religious Office**. The couple fill the application form, submit documents, and obtain marriage permission from the religious authority.

If the akad is to be done in another state or country, there is extra permission to arrange. Begin the process **well before** the date of the ceremony to avoid a rush.

Steps at the religious office

1

Get & fill the form

The marriage application form at the district religious office

2

Submit documents & screening

Course certificate, ID, screening result, consent letters if needed

3

Receive permission & set the date

Get the approval and the registrar/place of the akad

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CHAPTER 8

Documents, Screening & Requirements

Prepare complete documents — and do the health screening.

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ ... ﴾



"Indeed Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge, to judge with justice."

An-Nisa' 4:58

Documents & the HIV screening

Common documents include the identity card, the marriage-course certificate, photos, and consent letters as the case requires (for example a widow/divorcee, those under age, or government/army personnel).

Muslim couples also undergo an **HIV screening** before marriage. It is not to bar anyone, but so that both are informed and can plan the family's health.

Checklist before the religious office

✓ Identity card (original + copy) for both

✓ Pre-marriage course certificate

✓ HIV screening result

✓ Relevant consent/declaration letters

✓ Photos and the set fees

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CHAPTER 9

Pillars & Conditions of a Valid Nikah

Five pillars — without any one of them, the marriage is invalid.

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيْمَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ^ج إِنْ يَكُونُوا

﴿٣٢﴾ ...

"And marry the unmarried among you and the righteous among your male and female slaves."

An-Nur 24:32

The five pillars of nikah

1

The groom

Muslim, specified, not a mahram, no impediment

2

The bride

Muslim, specified, not a mahram, not in 'iddah or ihram

3

The guardian (wali)

The bride's guardian who meets the conditions (Chapter 10)

4

Two witnesses

Two just Muslim men

5

Offer & acceptance

The wali's offer (ijab) and the groom's acceptance (kabul)

Conditions that support the pillars

Each pillar has conditions: the wali must be eligible, the witnesses must be just, and the offer and acceptance must be clear, connected and understood. The mahr is named as the wife's right (Chapter 11).

If any one pillar is missing, the marriage is **invalid**. That is why the matter is overseen by a licensed marriage registrar.

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CHAPTER 10

The Guardian (& Wali Hakim)

No marriage without a guardian — know the order and the role.

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا
تَرَضُوا بَيْنَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ... ﴿٢٣٢﴾

"Do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree between themselves in a fair manner."

Al-Baqarah 2:232

Who is the wali?

The wali is the one who gives the bride in marriage. In the Shafi'i school the wali is a **pillar** — the marriage is invalid without him. The order of the blood-guardians begins with the father, then the paternal grandfather, then brothers, and so on in sequence.

If the blood-guardian is **absent, refuses without Shar'i reason, or cannot be reached**, the marriage may be conducted by the **wali hakim** (the religious authority) following the state's procedure.

-
- The wali must be Muslim, male, of age, sane and just
 - The order of blood-guardians must be followed
 - Issues of a refusing/absent wali go to the religious office/Syariah Court for a wali hakim

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CHAPTER 11

Mahr & the Marriage Gift

The mahr is the wife's right and obligatory — the hantaran is custom.

وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً^ج فَإِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ... ﴿٤﴾

"And give the women their mahr as a free gift."

An-Nisa' 4:4

Mahr vs the marriage gift (hantaran)

Mahr (mas kahwin)

- ✓ Fully the wife's property
- ✓ Obligatory in the marriage
- ✓ Named during the akad
- ✓ Minimum rate set by the state

Hantaran (marriage gift)

- A custom/gift, not a condition of marriage
- Usually toward the feast
- Amount by family agreement
- Avoid burdening & waste

Do not make it an obstacle

Islam encourages the mahr and the gift to be made **easy**. Only the mahr is obligatory, and it becomes the wife's property — not her family's.

The minimum mahr is set by each state. For the current figure, refer to your State Religious Office.

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CHAPTER 12

The Solemnisation (Akad)

Offer & acceptance — the moment two become husband and wife.

وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا
غَلِيظًا ﴿٢١﴾

“And they (the wives) have taken from you a solemn covenant (mithaqan ghaliza).”

An-Nisa' 4:21

The binding words

The akad is the summit of all the preparation. The wali (or his proxy) pronounces the **offer (ijab)** — giving the bride — and the groom answers with **acceptance (kabul)**, naming the mahr.

The words must be clear, connected without interruption, and heard by the two witnesses. The ceremony is usually overseen by a licensed registrar at a mosque or home.

- Ensure the wali, two witnesses and the couple are present and eligible
- Listen to and understand the offer and acceptance
- Begin with a marriage sermon/advice and supplication

Pray for the couple

May Allah bless you, and send blessings upon you, and join you both in goodness.

Sunan Abi Dawud

Among the sunnah after the akad is to pray for the couple with this prayer of blessing.

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CHAPTER 13

Certificate & Official Registration

A record that protects rights — from akad to certificate.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَلْيَكْتُبَ
بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ مُّؤَمَّرٌ ... ﴿٢٨٢﴾

"O you who believe, when you contract a debt for a fixed term, write it down."

Al-Baqarah 2:282

Register the marriage

After the akad, the marriage is **recorded** by the registrar and registered with the religious authority. The couple receive an official **marriage certificate**.

Registration matters — it is valid proof protecting the rights of husband, wife and children in maintenance, inheritance and official matters. Keep the certificate safely.

-
- Check the details on the certificate are correct (names, date, mahr)
 - Keep a copy for official matters (children, EPF, immigration)
 - An unregistered marriage harms rights later — follow the state procedure
-

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CHAPTER 14

The Wedding Feast (Walimah)

A thanksgiving feast — a joyful sunnah.

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ ﴿١١﴾

“And as for the favour of your Lord, proclaim it (with gratitude).”

Ad-Duha 93:11

Celebrate with moderation

The walimah is a meal to announce the marriage. Holding it is a **sunnah**, and answering an invitation to a walimah is also encouraged, so long as there is no excuse or wrongdoing present.

Celebrate with gratitude and moderation — not for show, nor into debt and waste. Avoid anything that breaks the Shari'ah at the gathering.

-
- Announce the marriage so it is publicly known
-
- Invite and host guests well, including those in need
-
- Keep the limits of interaction and avoid waste
-

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CHAPTER 15

After Marriage: Rights & Duties

Garments for one another — build a home of sakinah.

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ
لَّهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ ... ﴿١٨٧﴾

"They (your wives) are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them."

Al-Baqarah 2:187

A new home begins

The akad is only the beginning. The husband is responsible for **maintenance** (housing, food, clothing) and treating his wife well; the wife obeys her husband in what is right and cares for the home.

Both are called to live together in kindness (bil-ma'ruf), to be patient, and to build a family that prays and has noble character — a home of **sakinah, mawaddah wa rahmah**.

Foundations of a home of sakinah



Religion together

Prayer, knowledge and worship kept together



Good communication

Discuss, forgive, avoid harshness



Maintenance & trust

The husband provides; both keep the trust



Love & patience

Gentle, grateful, and patient through tests

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CHAPTER 16

Where to Get Help

Ask the people of knowledge — and your religious authority.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِيْ اِلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَسْأَلُوْا ... ﴿٤٣﴾

"So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know."

An-Nahl 16:43

Where to refer

This book is a general guide. Because every state has its own enactment, forms, rates and procedures — and every situation is unique — refer to the proper authority for current details.

For polygamy (the wife's consent and the Syariah Court's permission), see the polygamy books in the mypolygyny.com e-book library.

-
- State/District Religious Office — forms, permission, rates, registration
 - Syariah Court — guardian issues, polygamy, and matters needing an order
 - State Mufti's Office — specific questions of ruling
 - Family counselling units — help for the home
-

Closing supplication

May Allah make every step easy for you, bless your marriage, and make your home a comfort to the eyes in this world and a path to Paradise in the next.
Amin.

Appendix A — Document checklist (the couple)

Confirm with your district religious office; requirements differ by state and status.

Document	Note
Identity card (original + copy)	Both parties
Pre-marriage course certificate	A module recognised by JAKIM/JAIN
Marriage application form	Obtained/completed at the religious office
HIV screening result	Compulsory for Muslim couples
Consent/declaration letters (if applicable)	E.g. widow/divorcee, under age, guardian, govt/army staff
Photos & the set fees	Rates vary by state

The actual list, forms and fees vary by state — confirm with your Religious Office.

Appendix B — The short order, 'start to finish'

Stage	Action
1. Intention & readiness	Correct the intention; be ready in knowledge, self and finances
2. Choosing & merisik	Screen candidates by religion; the family makes the informal inquiry
3. The proposal	Khitbah; exchange a token if you wish
4. Pre-marriage course	Register a recognised module; obtain the certificate
5. Apply at the religious office	Fill the form, submit documents, do the screening
6. The akad	Guardian, two witnesses, offer & acceptance
7. Register & certify	The marriage is recorded; receive the certificate
8. Walimah	A thanksgiving feast; married life begins

CLOSING

A prayer for a new home

May Allah bless this union, keep its blessing, and join you both in goodness — as the Prophet ﷺ taught newly-weds to be prayed for.

Begin married life with knowledge, patience and love. For any question, ask the people of knowledge and your state religious authority.

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ﴿٧٤﴾

"Our Lord, grant us from our spouses and offspring comfort to our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous."

Al-Furqan 25:74

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