

## Laws of Shabbat

Shabbat commemorates the seventh day of creation when God rested. It is a day of rest and reflection, acknowledging our respect and appreciation for creation by refraining from typical work. The restrictions on Shabbat are based on the 39 Melachot (categories of prohibited labor) derived from activities performed in the construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). These laws provide a framework for spiritual rejuvenation, emphasizing mindfulness and connection over creative manipulation of the world.

### **The 39 Melachot of Shabbat**

The Melachot are categorized forms of labor prohibited on Shabbat. Below is a structured guide with brief descriptions:

1. **Carrying:** Transporting items between private and public domains or within a public domain without an Eruv.
2. **Burning:** Igniting or maintaining a fire.
3. **Extinguishing:** Putting out a flame or reducing its intensity.
4. **Finishing:** Completing the creation or repair of an item.
5. **Writing:** Creating symbols or letters, including typing and drawing.
6. **Erasing:** Removing writing to prepare for new writing.
7. **Cooking:** Applying heat to food or liquids (e.g., boiling, baking, frying).
8. **Washing:** Cleaning garments or removing stains.
9. **Sewing:** Permanently connecting two materials.
10. **Tearing:** Separating connected materials.
11. **Knotting:** Tying permanent or professional knots.
12. **Untying:** Loosening permanent knots.
13. **Shaping:** Cutting or molding materials into specific forms.
14. **Plowing:** Preparing soil for planting.
15. **Planting:** Encouraging plant growth (e.g., watering plants).
16. **Reaping:** Detaching plants from their growth source.

17. **Harvesting:** Gathering crops.
18. **Threshing:** Separating edible parts of plants (includes milking cows).
19. **Winnowing:** Using air to separate desirable materials from waste.
20. **Selecting:** Separating desirable items from undesirable ones by hand (allowed immediately before eating).
21. **Sifting:** Filtering materials through a sieve or strainer.
22. **Grinding:** Reducing substances to smaller particles (e.g., grating, milling).
23. **Kneading:** Mixing solids and liquids to form a dough or paste.
24. **Combing:** Preparing raw fibers for spinning.
25. **Spinning:** Creating thread or yarn from fibers.
26. **Dyeing:** Changing the color of an object (includes makeup application).
27. **Chainstitching:** Looping threads (e.g., weaving or crocheting).
28. **Warping:** Setting up threads on a loom.
29. **Weaving:** Interlacing threads to create fabric.
30. **Unraveling:** Taking apart woven or knitted materials.
31. **Building:** Assembling structures (includes setting up temporary shelters).
32. **Demolishing:** Taking apart structures.
33. **Trapping:** Capturing living creatures (e.g., insects).
34. **Shearing:** Removing hair, wool, or feathers.
35. **Slaughtering:** Killing any living creature.
36. **Skinning:** Removing an animal's hide.
37. **Tanning:** Treating hides to make leather.
38. **Smoothing:** Polishing surfaces.
39. **Marking:** Creating preparatory lines for cutting or writing.

## **Practical Applications**

## **Prohibitions and Allowances**

- **Carrying:** Prohibited in public areas without an Eruv, which combines domains into a private area.
- **Fire and Cooking:** Avoid igniting or extinguishing flames. Prepare food before Shabbat and keep it warm using permitted methods. Turning off a stove is allowed if it involves only removing the fuel.
- **Electricity:** Electricity is not equivalent to fire. Operating electric devices is not considered lighting a fire but may involve other rabbinical prohibitions.
- **Writing and Erasing:** Prohibited when it involves creating or removing significant markings.
- **Building and Demolishing:** Assembling or dismantling structures is not allowed. Folding chairs and tables are permitted as normal usage.
- **Cleaning and Sewing:** Washing clothes, sewing, or altering garments is prohibited.

### Common Questions

- **Bathing:** You may shower or bathe using water under 125°F but avoid using instant hot water boilers. Regular soaps, shampoos, and conditioners are permitted.
- **Muktzah:** Items exclusively for prohibited activities should not be moved unless necessary for their place (Tzorech Mekomo) or use (Tzorech Gufo).
- **Health and Safety:** All restrictions are waived for health or safety concerns. Observance should never risk well-being.
- **Sorting:** Take desired items and leave the undesired ones; avoid removing undesired items directly.
- **Squeezing:** Avoid juicing fruits except for adding lemon juice to food.

### Traditions and Customs

- **Kiddush:** Recite over wine or grape juice on Friday night and Saturday morning.
- **Meals:** Include two loaves of bread or their equivalent. Two slices of bread are acceptable.

- **Candles and Havdalah:** Traditional candles on Erev Shabbat are optional. Make the Blessing on electric lights if used. Havdalah requires wine or grape juice; candles and spices are customary but not mandatory.
- **Dress:** Clean, respectable clothing suffices; no specific attire is required.

### **Special Situations**

- **Elevators:** Use non-standard methods (e.g., wrist or elbow) to press buttons if necessary (Kilachar Yad).
- **Transportation:** Plan in advance. Using non-Jewish assistance for carrying or paying is permissible if required.

### **Philosophy of Shabbat**

Shabbat is a day of rest, family, and spiritual connection. It is not meant to be burdensome but a time for relaxation, Torah study, and mindfulness. Avoid excessive restrictions or unnecessary concerns. Observance should foster joy and rejuvenation.

For specific questions, feel free to ask online or via email.