



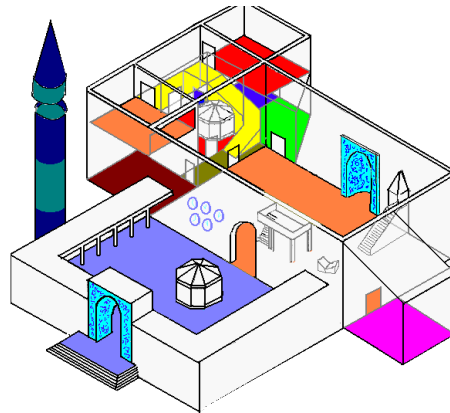
# The Role of the Mosque



Islam is one of the biggest religions in the world today. There are Muslims in most countries and Britain is no exception. There are around 2 million British Muslims. When Muslims meet, they greet each other by saying, As-Salāmu `Alaykum, this is a traditional Muslim greeting, often translated as Peace be upon you. The Islamic word for a mosque is 'masjid'. There are many different kinds of mosques – from small and modest, to large lavishly decorated landmarks.

## Key Vocabulary

Islam	Qibla	Qu'ran
Mosque	Wudu	Prayer mat
Masjid	Minbar	Calligraphy
Mecca	Minaret	Jumu'ah
Ka'aba	Hussainia	Geometric
Prophet	Adhan	Dome



## Main Features

**The Dome** - The Dome, which is positioned above the prayer hall, symbolises Heaven arching above the worshippers. But Mosques also have domes for very practical reasons: It helps the Imam's voice to resonate around the prayer hall, so everyone can hear him, it also helps people to identify the building as a mosque.

**The Minaret** - The tall tower attached to the mosque is called a minaret and it has two main uses: It helps people to find the mosque, since it is often the tallest structure in the town and it is used for the call to prayer. A man called a muezzin has the job of climbing to the top and singing the Adhan. This is the call to prayer, and it reminds everyone that it is time to come to the mosque.

**Wash Room** - Before Muslims pray, they must perform a special wash called wudhu (or wudu) in which they wash their hands, feet and face three times. This is done to symbolize purity and to highlight that prayer is important. There will separate wash rooms for men and women.

**Prayer Hall** - The main prayer hall is usually just a large empty hall with the dome above it. There are no chairs (apart from maybe a few for the disabled or elderly) because everyone sits on the carpet. During prayer Muslims will kneel and prostrate with their foreheads to the floor as a sign of obedience to God, so chairs would only get in the way. Men and women sit separately so that their minds are on their prayers and not on each other.

**Mihrab** - When Muslims pray they must face the direction of the Ka'ba, which is a cube-shaped holy building in the centre of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. This direction is called the qibla. The mihrab is an archway set into the wall at the front of the prayer hall, and if you are facing the mihrab, you know that you are facing the qibla.

## More than just a place of worship!

The Mosque has more than just a prayer hall; it has a library and schoolroom so that it can be used to educate the young and older members of the community and a sense of 'learning' is a large part of the religion.

- The Mosque also has community space where the community of Muslims can gather and hold other functions this helps unite the community in other ways than worship
- The Mosque is seen as a focal point for the community; the Imam can act as both a spiritual leader and councillor in everyday life.