



# How to Lay Tefillin-A Beginners Guide



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Tefillin are leather boxes containing scrolls with passages from the Torah, used to fulfill the commandment to BIND the Torah to our hands and between our eyes (Shemot 13:9; Devarim 6:8; Devarim 11:18). This beginner's lesson is a tool to teach the very beginner (a right-hander) how to lay tefillin. We will be using the Ashkenazik lesson and instructions.

Tefillin should to be put on in preparatory for the morning (*Shakarit*) prayers, although the Torah does not specifically command us to only use them during the morning prayers. Tradition tells us they are not to be worn on Shabbat or Feast days as those are signs unto themselves, but again the Torah does not actually forbid their usage on these days.

When we lay tefillin, it is important that you have your tallit on FIRST (be sure to say the *brakah* for it). Remove your wristwatch and lay bare your left arm so the tefillin can lay upon your skin.

1. While standing locate your bicep (*kipporet*) and remove the *shel –yad* (hand tefillin) from the bag. Leave the *shel-rosh* in the bag at this time. Remove the cover from the *bayit*. It is proper *minhag* to kiss the tefillin.
2. Hold the hand tefillin in your right hand so the *bayit* faces upwards, the slot nearest the body. Pull the strap open and widen it to form a loop. Pass your arm through the loop. Slip the *shel yad* and let it come to rest on your bicep. Position it so it faces your heart.
3. Recite the blessing:
  - Baruk atah Yahweh, Eloheinu Melek haolam asher kide'shanu b'mitzvotav, ve-tzivanu le-hani'ach tefillin. Blessed are You Yahweh our Elohim, King of the universe, Who has set us apart by Your commandments and has commanded us to lay tefillin.
4. Tighten the strap tightly and begin winding the strap TOWARDS your body –once above the elbow and then SEVEN wraps around your forearm and wrist. Make the wraps tight so they will not loosen during prayer. Wind the excess around your palm and hold it till your have completed the next stage.
5. Take the *shel-rosh* (head tefillin) out of the bag-remove the cover from the *bayit* and kiss the *bayit*. Open the loop for the head and then recite the following blessing:
  - Baruk atah Yahweh Eloheinu Melek haolam asher kideshanu b'mitzvotav, ve-tzivanu al mitzvat tefillin. Blessed are you Yahweh our Elohim, King of the universe, Who has set us apart by Your commandments and Who has commanded us concerning tefillin.Then you recite:
  - Baruk Shem kavod malkuto le-olam va-ed. Blessed be Your Name and Your Kingdom is forever. After the blessing –lower the head tefillin onto your head.
6. Place the double knot on the base of your skull and the bayit between your eyes on the hairline. Do not place on the forehead-make sure it is on the hairline.

7. Make sure the blackened side of the straps are outwards around the head.
8. Now you are ready to make the sign on your hand. Hold your left hand out palm down. Bring the strap from the wrist over the top of the hand and pass between the space between your thumb and first finger. Bring the strap as far as the second finger (index) from the thumb. Wind around this finger three times—once beneath the lower joint and twice above it, crossing over to form an X. Bring the strap under the palm and around the third finger from the thumb and bind it to the index finger. Bring the strap back over the top of the hand to where the thumb joins the hand. Pass under the hand and bring strap over the top of the hand and back to the place where the thumb joins the hand. Wrap excess around the hand and tuck in palm.
9. You have now formed the *SHIN* שׁ on the back of your hand. You have a *SHIN* on your hand—the *DALET* ד on your head and the *YUD* י on the arm knot. It spells *SHADDAI*!
10. Recite:
  - Ve-eyrastikh li le-olam. Ve-eyrastikh li be-tzedek uve-mishpat uve-chesed uve rachamim. Ve-eyrastikh li be-emunah, ve-yada ET Yahweh. I shall betroth you to Me forever. I shall betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I shall betroth you to Me in faithfulness. And you shall know Yahweh.
11. You are now ready to *daven* (pray) wearing your tefillin.
12. To remove the tefillin—remove in the opposite order they were laid. Remove the sign on the hand FIRST, next move the head tefillin, and last the arm tefillin. Put the covers back on the tefillin and place in the bag (put the head tefillin in the bag first followed by the hand tefillin.) Be sure to wrap them neatly and treat them with respect.

Be sure to consult your local Rav concerning the custom (*minhag*) of your synagogue of laying tefillin. Also be sure to have your *SIDDUR* handy to consult for the blessings and Scripture readings before and after laying the tefillin.

Tefillin may be purchased from B'nai Avraham Judaica store [www.bnaiavraham.net](http://www.bnaiavraham.net)

