



By **Gina Goldstein**
Co-founder of The Shabbat Project

Shabbat

GUIDE

YOUR GUIDE TO KEEPING SHABBAT

SHABBOS IS A GIFT

BE PRESENT



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1 | INTRODUCTION

The inspiring gift that is Shabbat – both for us and our families – emerges only when we live Shabbat practically, in a real and experiential way. For those unfamiliar with them, the laws of Shabbat can seem complicated, overwhelming, and daunting. The purpose of this guide is to ensure keeping Shabbat is as easy as possible. We have set out to clarify, simplify, and demystify everything you need to know.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide is aimed primarily at first-time Shabbat-keepers, but can also be a useful resource for others who wish to brush up on their knowledge, double-check certain practices, or prepare better. It will prepare you, step-by-step, for a powerful, life-changing family experience when Shabbat arrives.

If you only pick up this booklet a bit late, don't worry, keeping Shabbat for the first time is still doable with just a few days to prepare!

Learning how to keep Shabbat may feel like you're facing a mountain; in fact it's a lot easier than it seems.

You will find in these pages the best and simplest way possible to keep Shabbat. Absorb the basic Shabbat facts, follow the straightforward guidelines, read our tips, and you will be empowered to keep Shabbat on the big day!

Of course, this guide isn't exhaustive; there are many intricate details for keeping Shabbat that are beyond the scope of this booklet. Here, we are concerned only with the main things you need to know to keep Shabbat.

Also, in addition to this "how to" guide to keeping Shabbat, we have created a series of cards with practical guidelines and simple "how to" steps for the various Shabbat practices.

"Your Shabbat table toolkit" includes easy-to-read text of all the blessings and prayers and is there to guide us through the rhythm of the day, adding meaning to our experiences.

You can access it [here](#).

WHAT DOES "NOT WORKING" ON SHABBAT MEAN?

In the Ten Commandments and elsewhere in the Torah, G-d asks us "to remember and keep the Shabbat", "to keep it holy", and "to rest and to refrain from all work (on the seventh day)."

The Oral Torah, a tradition passed down through the generations from Sinai, explains that this "work" (*melacha* in Hebrew) comprises the 39 creative actions dedicated to the building of the Mishkan – the Sanctuary that housed the Altar, Menorah, and Holy Ark.

This is derived from the fact that the same word, *melacha* (mistranslated – or at least oversimplified – as "work"), appears in the Torah verses that discuss G-d "resting" on the seventh day, and again in the verses that describe the building of the Mishkan preceded by an explicit mention of Shabbat itself.

There are numerous philosophical and mystical writings, ancient and contemporary, exploring some of the deeper elements of this rather mysterious connection between the building of the Mishkan and Shabbat observance, and those with an interest in this subject are encouraged to look more deeply into it.

For the purposes of this guide, however, it is enough to know that the many laws pertaining to Shabbat emerge from this definition of "work," and from the 39 root categories, leaving us a comprehensive legal system for Shabbat observance. What these 39 activities have in common is that they are all physically creative and constructive, and exercise control or dominion over one's environment; therefore, it is these sorts of activities we abstain from during Shabbat.



In every generation, these 39 eternal principles are applied to the particular local conditions, circumstances, and technology of the time. Today, on a very practical level, we refrain from activating electrical appliances and electronic devices. It means that Shabbat is a day without driving or using computers, phones, Kindles, iPads, TVs. Shabbat is a gadget-free day. It's a distraction-free day. Shabbat is a holiday from our demanding world. Shabbat is about accepting that we cannot do it all, have it all, and be it all.

There are numerous restrictions – no electronic devices, (so no emails, no Facebook), no cooking, no driving, no smoking, no hot water from the geyser, no make-up or creams, no gardening, no laundry, no writing, no shopping, no business, and more. But it is important to remember that it is the things we cannot do on Shabbat that free us up to do the things we can.

Indeed, through the gift of Shabbat, the Torah has given us a framework for our week. We are to use our creative energies for six days and then dedicate one day for developing our spiritual and emotional self by refraining from work.

On Shabbat, we try to engage and connect – with our friends, family, and community, and with ourselves and our Creator. Shabbat gives us the gift of time: time to forget our stresses, time to suspend our worries for 25 hours. After Shabbat on Saturday night, we can pick up everyday life where we left off (and we can then worry, stress, and work all the way through to next Friday evening...).

A SPECIAL NOTE ON SAVING A LIFE

The *halacha* regards saving a life as one of the highest values of all. The laws of Shabbat are suspended to save someone whose life is in danger. This is known in the *halacha* as a situation of **PIKUACH NEFESH**. It is a mitzvah not to hesitate even if you are uncertain whether someone's life is in danger or not; you must take whatever action is necessary to save them, regardless of the fact that it is Shabbat. Anyone who hesitates when there is a situation of *pikuach nefesh* has committed the serious transgression of endangering a life.



2 | PREPARATION IN ADVANCE

The more you prepare, the easier and more relaxed will be your experience on the day...

USEFUL TO HAVE

There are various appliances and equipment that can make Shabbat more convenient. **Remember that you do not have to buy all these things** in order to keep Shabbat (after all, we seemed to survive pretty well for thousands of years without them), but if you feel that they will make the experience more comfortable for you, now is the time to get them.

■ Slow cooker

For a hot, thick, vegetable-laden stew (otherwise known as cholent) for Shabbat lunch, you may wish to invest in a slow cooker. Make sure to have your stew in and cooking well before Shabbat begins. If you do not wish to purchase a slow cooker, you can make cholent on the stove using a *blech* – a barrier between the fire and the cooking food. A *blech* need not be expensive; one can use an upturned roaster or a metal sheet – anything substantial that prevents the food receptacle from being directly on the heat.

■ NB

Any food going on the warmer / slow cooker / *blech* on or over Shabbat must be already cooked before Shabbat comes in.

** See “Warming food on Shabbat” (“Preparation on erev Shabbat” section) for further directives about heating food on Shabbat.*

■ Hot tray

You may want a hot tray for keeping your Shabbat dinner hot until you sit down to eat, and for heating up your Shabbat lunch. You may also want to use it with a time-switch at the plug, so that it is not on all night. You will not be able to turn it on or off, nor can you change the settings during Shabbat.

■ Urn

For hot drinks and baby bottles, the urn must be full and boiling before Shabbat, and keep water hot for the full duration of Shabbat, without you needing to adjust the settings in any way. A flask of hot water prepared before Shabbat may also do the trick.

■ Shabbat lamps (where available)

Halachically compliant bedside lamps can be left on for the duration of Shabbat and covered when necessary. While very useful and convenient, they are not essential for Shabbat observance. Your regular bedside lamp will do nicely – as long as it is set to turn on and off automatically with a time-switch, so that you aren't bothered by it when you want to go to sleep.

■ Time-switch

Plug-in:

Pre-set lamps and hot trays to go on/off when you want.

Digital:

You can also install a digital time-switch that controls your house lights from your electricity board. Program all your non-essential lights to go off at bedtime and on again late Shabbat afternoon. You will need an electrician to install one of these.

MEALS

It's a special mitzvah to eat good food on Shabbat. Delicious meat, chicken, and fish dishes for dinner and lunch are classic favorites. Special food brings an added dimension of honor and joy to your Shabbat experience. Shabbat meals give you precious, uninterrupted time with your family and friends to connect with one another, and to teach, learn, and grow together.

It is a good idea to start thinking about your Shabbat meals, and what you are going to serve, in advance. If you don't want to cook, an easier option may be to order in all your Shabbat meals.

It's great to spend Shabbat with family and friends – and newfound friends! Welcoming guests into our homes is a wonderful thing to do on Shabbat. Maybe spend some time thinking about who you are going to invite.

LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

It is great to have good reading material ready and prepared for Shabbat. Remember, no TV, tablets, PlayStations, smart phones for 25 hours! Find time to put together what you like: books, magazines, games – anything to add to the enjoyment of this precious, quiet downtime. Prepare for Shabbat afternoon. Invite your children's friends over. Unpack those games you have not used for years! Find out whether your local synagogue or Jewish community center is running special activities for youth.



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WALKING ROUTE

Plan your walking route to shul. Whether you live close by or far from a shul, start planning your Shabbat walk now. Drive it a couple of times or use Google Maps to find the quickest and most pleasant Shabbat walk. If you will be visiting friends, find the best walking route to their house. An *eruv* is a demarcated area within which we may carry or transport objects on Shabbat. If you live in an area that does not have an *eruv*, you will not be able to carry or transport any items on Shabbat, including pushing a pram.

(Note: Even if you live within an eruv, there is no need to take your handbag to the synagogue. Money, cell phones, make-up, and whatever else usually goes into a handbag are muktzeh and may not be used or handled on Shabbat.)

OTHER THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- You will need a box of tissues for each toilet in the home, because you may not tear toilet paper on Shabbat.
- Polish your candlesticks and silverware this week. Avoid the Friday rush! Set them out in preparation for Shabbat.
- Chat with your kids this week about The Shabbat Project and your commitment. Explore what they know, or are learning, about Shabbat. Talk through your expectations of the day. Build excitement about this new family experience together. Discuss the significance and magnitude of keeping Shabbat together around the world.
- Spend a little time on the internet this week to find something new and interesting that excites you and that you would love to share around the Shabbat table. Or think of an inspiring story, lesson, or meaningful Torah article you recently read. There are many great online resources, including: aish.com, chabad.org, ohr.edu, yutorah.org, rabbisacks.org, and of course chiefrabbi.co.za.
- It is an excellent idea to buy a Siddur and a Chumash – two staples of a Jewish household – if you don't already own them. You will also be able to access both a Siddur and Chumash at your local synagogue.
- On Shabbat, we don't use thick substances that are smeared on, so you'll not be able to use regular sunscreen and lipstick (because of their thick and creamy consistency). If important to you or your family, buy liquid-spray sunscreen and clear liquid roll-on gloss for Shabbat use. Soap and toothpaste must also be of the liquid variety in order to be used on Shabbat.



SHOPPING LIST

- Wine or grape juice for Kiddush and Havdalah
- Candles
- Matches
- Tissues
- Reading material
- Ingredients for all your cooking
- Shabbat treats for the kids
- Liquid soap and toothpaste
- Liquid sunscreen (if necessary)
- Lip gloss (if necessary)

3 | PREPARATION ON EREV SHABBT (THE FRIDAY)

It's erev Shabbat, the Thursday night and Friday before the big Shabbat! This is always a special time of the week. The magical excitement and anticipation for Shabbat is beginning to be felt. Preparing for Shabbat takes time, so if you are working on Friday, try to come home as early as possible.

THE MITZVAH OF ENJOYMENT

We have a mitzvah to honor and enjoy Shabbat. We pave the way for this by preparing our best food, setting aside our best clothes, entering Shabbat clean and well-groomed, and ensuring our homes are tidy, well-lit, and pleasant places to be on Shabbat. We fulfill the mitzvah itself by enjoying and relishing the simple pleasures of the day, such as eating, chatting, singing, sleeping, and learning.

FOOD PREP

Complete all baking and cooking for Shabbat dinner, lunch, and the third meal (*seudah shlishit*). Ensure that all food is cooked before Shabbat starts. (Remember to switch on your cholent early enough on Friday!) Put all your dinner food onto the stove or hot tray.

■ Challah

Early Friday morning is the best time to buy your challahs, if you aren't making your own. You will need two whole challahs for each meal: Friday night, Shabbat day, and the third meal. That may sound like a lot of bread! But you don't need to eat two whole challahs, you need them for hamotzi, and for each person to eat about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an ordinary slice of bread. Also, instead of a challah loaf, you can use challah rolls. The size of the challahs or challah rolls makes no difference, as long as they are whole.

■ Warming food during Shabbat

Food may not be placed in an oven or on a stove during Shabbat. Warming (not cooking appliances) may be used, if need be, as follows: the food that needs to be heated for lunch or the third meal must have no liquid and be completely cooked before Shabbat.

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■ Tea and coffee

Only instant coffee may be used on Shabbat. When making coffee, pour hot water from the urn into your cup first and then add the coffee. Tea is a little more complicated because the boiling water cooks the raw contents of a teabag. Since cooking may not be done on Shabbat, it's best to prepare tea essence before Shabbat, then add it to your cup of hot water. Tea essence is made by preparing very strong tea in a pot (before Shabbat). On Shabbat day, you can then add small amounts of the tea essence to the hot water in your cup.

You could also first reduce the temperature of the boiling water from the urn so that it is not considered cooking in a *halachic* sense. To do this, the water from the urn must be poured into a cup and from there into a second cup. To that second cup of water you can then add a teabag (be careful not to squeeze the tea back into the cup, as this would be considered using it as a sieve, also problematic on Shabbat).

■ Complicated foods

When making cereal with milk, porridge, tuna mayo, egg mayo, or jelly on Shabbat, there are many complicated *halachic* principles involved. It is best to make these foods before Shabbat.

HOUSE PREP

Get your lounge and dining room clean and ready for Shabbat. Set the table.

Put away all gadgets that can't be used on Shabbat, including computers, tablets, pens, and pencils, TV remotes, and cell phones. In *halacha*, these items are called *muktzeh*, and we may not move them or handle them on Shabbat because their use is forbidden.

Wash, iron, and prepare all the clothes you will need for Shabbat. None of these activities can be done on Shabbat itself.

Ensure that all bedroom lights have been turned off, and whatever lights you will need are left on for the entire Shabbat. If you have a time-switch on your DB board, then activate it on Friday afternoon. If you have an urn, fill it, and switch it on.



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Modern fridges use complex automated technology, in terms of light switches, sensors, ice makers, etc. There are relatively simple Shabbos-friendly overrides – for example, a piece of Scotch tape over the switch or a magnet on some of the more hi-tech fridges.

Make sure to pre-tear any aluminum foil or food-wrap sheets that you may need, because we may not do so on Shabbat itself.

You may wish to record a cell phone voice message to say that you will only be able to retrieve messages on Saturday night. Or let family and friends know that you won't be answering your phone and will be offline for 25 hours.



PRE-SHABBAT CHECKLIST

- Lounge and dining room clean and ready
.....
- Clothes clean and ready
.....
- All bathing/showering completed
.....
- All cooking completed
.....
- Shabbat urn filled, switched on and boiling
.....
- Time-switch activated
.....
- Warmer/hot tray loaded and switched on
.....
- Lights in all rooms as you want them (on or off), and fridge light deactivated
.....
- Tissues for the bathroom/s
.....
- Cake/crackers for Shabbat morning
(if you will not be at the shul Kiddush/brocha)
.....
- Food for *seudah shlishit* prepared (if you will not be at the *seudah shlishit* at your synagogue)
.....
- Phone off (difficult but wonderfully liberating!)
.....
- Wake-up alarms deactivated/adjusted
.....
- Electronic remotes removed from the keys you will be using over Shabbat

Note: *It's a nice custom to bring home flowers or chocolates, or any other small gift for your spouse. And don't forget some treats for the kids!*

4 | SHABBAT

The preparation is finished. Cooking, cleaning, and shopping are done. Urns have been filled and warming trays pre-programmed. The lights you need are turned on and phones switched off. And now, as the sun slips below the horizon, everything stops. You enter the realm of holy time, surrendering to the realization that you can do no more. What's done is done. Shabbat is here.

LIGHTING CANDLES

Our sages instituted that in every Jewish home, Shabbat candles should be lit before sunset on Friday to honor the Shabbat meal and nurture “peace of the home.” Lighting candles creates a tranquil atmosphere in our home, conducive to really connecting with one another. In this way, Shabbat candles symbolize the light of love and attention. The pressures of the week place demands on our time and divert our attention from the people closest to us. The light of the candles helps us re-establish that intimate connection.

■ Who lights?

The candles are traditionally lit by a woman on behalf of the household (if present, the wife and/or mother of the home), but a man can also light.

■ The 18 minutes

If you are a little late to light candles, you may still light them, but only if it is safely within 18 minutes of candle-lighting time. That is your absolute deadline. Thereafter, if you’ve forgotten, or are running late, you may not light candles. There is a special mitzvah to bring in Shabbat well before the 18-minute deadline expires in order to add some time onto Shabbat.

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■ How to light

Light two candles, cover your eyes with your hands and recite the blessing below, then look at the light. Rather than extinguish the match, simply put it down on a fireproof surface. For candle-lighting times, check online or see your Jewish calendar.

Once you have covered your eyes, say the *bracha*:

Baruch Ata Adonuy Eloheinu
Melech HaOlam Asher Kideshanu
Bemitzvotav, Vetzivanu Lehadlik
Ner Shel Shabbat

ברוך אתה ה', א-להינו מלך העולם,
אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וצונו להדליק
נר של שבת.

Uncover your eyes.

From this moment on, until the stars are out on Saturday night, Shabbat is in.

■ Lighting early

If you need to light candles early and then still do preparation for Shabbat or perhaps drive to your synagogue, you may do so if, while you light, you have in mind that you will not be bringing in Shabbat with your lighting. In such a situation, say the *bracha* before lighting your candles.

■ When is it in?

For men, Shabbat comes in before sunset with the Kabbalat Shabbat service of your synagogue, specifically when the psalm, *Mizmor Shir Leyom HaShabbat*, is recited. For women, Shabbat begins with candle-lighting. At sunset, Shabbat begins for everybody. Across the world, at this special moment in time, Jewish people are bringing in Shabbat together.

FRIDAY NIGHT

With the famous and beautiful words of Kiddush, we acknowledge the special holiness of Shabbat and give testimony to the fact that G-d created the universe and that He freed us from Egypt, declaring our loyalty to these truths and to our sacred mission that flows from them. The Divine origins of the universe and of the Jewish people are not just theoretical facts; they shape how we live, and determine our goals, priorities, and values. They give our lives meaning and purpose.

Many have the custom to bless their children, young and old, upon returning home from synagogue on Friday evening. The parent places their hands on the child's head and recites the appropriate blessing for a son or daughter, individually for each child.

THREE MEALS

Food is part of Shabbat joyfulness and celebration. Shabbat meals are pure quality time: singing, talking, eating, and sharing words of Torah. The Shabbat table is a centerpiece of the Shabbat experience. We eat three special meals – on Friday night, Shabbat day, and then in the late afternoon. So much of the Shabbat experience revolves around family, particularly these three festive meals. The three Shabbat meals are pure quality time; sacred moments to eat, sing, debate, discuss, and engage as a family. They are especially enjoyable being free from interruption and distraction.

We have three special meals on Shabbat. At each meal, the *bracha* must be recited over two challahs, and each person should eat at least 3/4 of an ordinary slice of bread. The three meals are Friday night dinner, lunch on Shabbat day, and a third meal called *seudah shlishit* or *shalosh seudos*. The latter is eaten late afternoon, before Shabbat ends. Each meal is structured differently. Please see the “Shabbat Table Toolkit” for detailed guidelines for each meal.

FUN FOR THE KIDS

You may want to have a “Shabbat afternoon party” for your kids. Let them play with their friends, enjoy Shabbat treats, and have fun all afternoon!

PARSHA OF THE WEEK

The weekly *parsha* (Torah portion) read on Shabbat morning creates a rhythm that unites Jewish communities around the world and throughout history. Wherever we go in the world, we are all reading the same *parsha*. Shabbat is the perfect opportunity to learn the Torah as we go through it *parsha by parsha*.

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LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Shabbat is the ideal day to learn Torah because we are free from the daily pressures of life. In fact, the free time to learn is one of the purposes of Shabbat. Most synagogues have Torah talks and discussion groups throughout Shabbat, and of course, the sermon during the service is also part of making it a day of learning.





5 | SHABBAT ENDS

WHEN IS IT OUT?

Shabbat ends when three medium-sized stars are easily visible in one glance (i.e. are relatively close to each other). Before doing anything on Saturday night that was prohibited on Shabbat, we say: *Baruch HaMavdil Bein Kodesh Lechol* – “Blessed is The One Who distinguishes between the holy and the regular.” We are declaring that Shabbat has ended.

HAVDALAH

In the same way that we welcome in Shabbat with Kiddush, we usher out Shabbat with Havdalah. Both these prayers declare the special holiness and spiritual energy of Shabbat, in contrast to the weekday. With the Friday night candles, we celebrate and reaffirm the character, perspectives, and happiness Shabbat brings into our lives. And when we light the Havdalah candle, we rededicate ourselves to infusing the days of the week with this spiritual light, these profound values.

Havdalah is recited over a full cup of wine. You will need the following: a glass of wine or grape juice, something with a strong and pleasant aroma (cinnamon or coffee granules will do), and a special Havdalah candle with at least two wicks that join the flames together to make a fire. If you don't have a special candle, hold two regular candles with their wicks together so that the flames join to make one flame. The pleasant aroma is there to lift our spirits after the loss of Shabbat. Smell is regarded as the most spiritual of our senses, and the aromatic spices are meant to replenish us after losing the extra spirituality imparted by Shabbat. The flame is there to signify that all weekday work can now resume. Shabbat is over.

CONGRATULATIONS – YOU'VE DONE IT!

**You have kept Shabbat – together with Jews from all
over the world, and from all walks of life!**