

# Why I Wear a Head Scarf

Soha, 16, is one of 3.4 million Muslim people in the United States. She chooses to wear a head scarf to honor her religion. Here's what that means.

BY SOHA MANZOOR, AS TOLD TO JESSICA PRESS

## PROUD TO BE MUSLIM

Soha has been wearing a hijab since sixth grade. "It has made me more confident," she says.

## VOCABULARY

**hijab:** traditional covering for the hair and neck that is worn by Muslim women

**Muslim:** connected to the religion of Islam

**modesty:** way of behaving and dressing that does not draw attention

**prejudice:** unfair feeling of dislike for a person because of the group they belong to

**specific:** limited to a certain time or place

DEANNE FITZMAURICE/GETTY IMAGES (SOHA)

**I**n many ways, I'm a typical American teen. I play tennis for my school team. I love reading Harry Potter books and seeing Marvel movies. I wear makeup, watch Netflix, listen to music, and study—just like other girls my age.

But unlike most girls, I do it all in a **hijab** (hee-JAHB). That's another name for the head scarf I choose to wear every day.

My hijab is always with

me. I wear it to school and on weekends. I wear it to Starbucks and to tennis practice. The only time I don't wear it is at home.

Why do I wear a head scarf all year—especially when I live in sunny California? People ask me that question all the time.

The short answer is that my hijab is just a part of who I am. The long answer has to do with my religion. ➔

## Deep Connection

My family practices Islam, which is one of the world's largest religions. Another way of saying that is that we are **Muslim**. Like all religions, Islam has many beautiful traditions. They make my religion special to me.

I love going to the mosque, which is the Muslim place of worship. I like the spicy foods we eat when we're together, like dumplings and chicken dishes. And I enjoy learning about my religion at my religious classes twice a week.

In class, we use a book called the Koran (kuh-RAN). It's the holy book for Muslims.

We study it—just as Christian people study the Bible or Jewish people study the Torah.

My religion has taught me many important lessons—ones that really aren't that different from most other religions. For example, Muslims believe that all people are equal. We also believe we should help each other however we can.

## A Proud Decision

I decided to start wearing a hijab in sixth grade. In Islam, the hijab is a way to show **modesty**. No one *has* to do it. Wearing a hijab is a choice any woman can make for herself. For me, it was a way to show the world that I'm Muslim and proud.

I still remember the night before I wore a hijab to school for the first time. I felt really nervous. I messaged my friends ahead of time because I didn't want them to be surprised.

Luckily, the next day at school wasn't so bad. Sure, people asked me why I was wearing the hijab—but I'm really glad they did. *Not* asking questions is what leads to **prejudice**.

### HANGING OUT

1. Soha poses with friends on a camping trip.
2. Soha and her best friend take a break from tennis.



Many people think that Islam teaches violence. They also think that Muslims don't treat women equally. That's not true at all! I love that wearing a hijab has given me so many chances to educate people about my religion.

## Part of Me

I've been wearing the hijab for five years now. Putting it on in the morning is a totally normal thing, like doing my hair. When I get home, I take it off. It's just a part of who I am.

Praying is also a part of who I am. Muslims do five daily prayers at very **specific** times. Sometimes that means I have to stop my tennis match to pray. I've also prayed in restaurants and on the sidewalk outside of school.

Once, my friends and I were at an arcade. When I stopped to pray, a woman started making weird faces at me. My friends told her to leave me alone.

None of my closest friends are Muslim. But they support me and my religion. They even try the spicy foods! I'm lucky to have them in my life.

Making friends with people who seem different is so important. Sticking by them is too. It makes *all* of us stronger. •

## Action Activity

**You've just read** "Why I Wear a Head Scarf." Now it's time to do this activity.

**WHAT TO DO:** A **cause** is what makes an event happen. An **effect** is what happens as a result. In the chart below, fill in the missing causes and effects.



**FAMILY FIRST** Soha lives in California with her two sisters, her dad, and her mom (not pictured).

CAUSE Why did something happen?	EFFECT What happened?
1. Soha wanted to show the world that she was Muslim and proud.	<b>Hint:</b> What did Soha decide to do in sixth grade?
2.  <b>Hint:</b> How did Soha feel about wearing a hijab to school for the first time?	Soha messaged her friends ahead of time to let them know.
3. Each day, Soha prays at five very specific times.	<b>Hint:</b> In what places has Soha had to stop and pray?
4.  <b>Hint:</b> What happened to Soha at the arcade?	Soha's friends told the woman to leave her alone.

COURTESY OF FAMILY (3)

Answers are in the Teacher's Guide.

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