

115676 - Can Women Play Sports in Islam?

the question

I am a fifteen-year-old girl, studying in the third year of preparatory school. As you know, in school, like every other subject, we have a course called “phys ed” (physical education). In this course, we play a number of sports: basketball, handball, volleyball, sprinting, and long jump. These are the sports that are available to us. My question is: can a Muslim girl play sports?

I also have another question to which I would like an answer: in our school, there is also a club for girls’ basketball, and I am a member of this club. A male teacher trains us, and in February we will play in a tournament: we will go to a city that is approximately 30 km away – myself, the girls and the male teacher, and another male teacher, as an assistant, as well as the driver, and sometimes there are males who play another sport, but we girls sit at the back and the boys sit at the front with the teachers, and of course the driver is at the front. Is it permissible for me to carry on in this club?

I hope that you can answer as soon as possible. Please note that I also want to adhere to the commandments of Islam, and I hope that Allah will reward you with the best of rewards for this truly brilliant website of yours.

Summary of answer

Women can play sports if they follow these guidelines: 1- Engaging in sport should be far removed from the eyes of men; 2- women should wear modest, covering clothing; 3- there should be no gambling or betting; 4- the sport should not lead to any argument or conflict; 5- There should be no playing of music during practice or games.

Detailed answer

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Benefits of sports

Sport brings health and psychological benefits, as is well known, but because sport nowadays has taken on its own special character, it is essential to set out some Shar'i guidelines on sport. Whoever adheres to these guidelines, her participation in sport will be permissible, but whoever goes against them, playing sport is haram in her case.

Guidelines of practicing sports in Islam

The guidelines of practicing sports in Islam include the following:

- Engaging in sport should be far removed from the eyes of men, whether they are trainers, teachers, students, administrators or spectators. In order to fulfil this condition, it is not permissible to take pictures of women's sport, so that they will not fall into the hands of men who will look at them, which would be contrary to the condition which makes it permissible for women to engage in that sport.

Hence what is most preferable, best, most prudent and most concealing for women is for them to engage in sport and exercise at home, not in clubs, gyms and schools, even if there is no mixing in those places, because there is no guarantee that a woman will not be photographed by one of those devils that look out for such opportunities, which would lead to bad consequences. If there is mixing in those places, then it is obvious that it is not allowed, as we have explained above.

- Women should engage in sport wearing modest, covering clothing. It is not permissible for a woman and those who are playing with her to wear short, see-through or tight clothing. This condition is general in application and includes what she wears in front of men and in front of women. But it is worth pointing out here, because of what happens of this condition not being met in many sports, in the case of

both women and men, as is well known with regard to the clothing worn for swimming, wrestling, football, volleyball, basketball, gymnastics, and so on. This condition applies to men and women equally, but how often it is broken and ignored by both genders.

- There should be no gambling or betting on the sport.
- The sport should not lead to any argument or conflict, as is often seen and is well known among nations and peoples that are not content merely to be divided by geography; even worse than that is when the people of a single country are divided, supporters and fans of one club engaging in disputes and fights with the supporters and fans of other clubs.
- The sport should be played only at certain times; it is not permissible for it to distract a woman from her religious and worldly duties.
- There should be no [playing of music during practice or games](#) .
- There should be no imitation of disbelieving women in their hairstyles, [clothing](#) or names, because we are forbidden to imitate the disbelievers in general terms, and because such things come under the heading of venerating those disbelievers.
- The game should not involve physical fighting where the face or head are struck, and it should not involve any rituals of disbelief such as [bowing](#) that is done by players in some sports before beginning a game or match.

If these conditions are met, then it is permissible for a woman to engage in sport. However we advise our sisters to protect themselves and take care of their time, and not waste it in such deeds, because protection of a woman is done by adhering to the commands of Allah, one of the most important of which is to stay in their houses, and not go out unnecessarily, in obedience to the words of Allah, may He be exalted (interpretation of the meaning):

“And stay in your houses” [al-Ahzab 33:33]

The Muslim woman can follow these guidelines and conditions if she engages in sport with her sisters in places that are just for them, where they will be safe from being seen by men or nosey evildoers

Practicing sports at schools

As for achieving that in schools, institutions and universities, that is not possible. Hence the introduction of “physical education (phys ed)” is one of the main causes of indecency, immorality, uncovering of `awrahs, and the death of modesty. Then the matter becomes even worse when there are male trainers or teachers, then when there are administrators, and so on, until matters end up as we see them now and as is well known in many Arab and Muslim countries, unfortunately.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karim al-Khudayr (may Allah preserve him) was asked:

With regard to the introduction of physical education in girls’ schools in such a way that it does not contradict Islamic teachings, what is the ruling on introducing this course into girls’ education?

He replied:

“Demanding the introduction of physical education in girls’ schools is following in the footsteps of the Shaytan, which Allah, may He be exalted, has forbidden to us in the verses in which He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O mankind! Eat of that which is lawful and good on the earth, and follow not the footsteps of Shaytan (Satan). Verily, he is to you an open enemy” [al-Baqarah 2:168]

“O you who believe! Enter perfectly in Islam (by obeying all the rules and regulations of the Islamic religion) and follow not the footsteps of Shaytan (Satan). Verily! He is to you a plain enemy” [al-Baqarah 2:208]

“And of the cattle (are some) for burden (like camels etc.) and (some are) small (unable to carry burden like sheep, goats etc. for food, meat, milk, wool etc.). Eat of what Allah has

provided for you, and follow not the footsteps of Shaytan (Satan). Surely he is to you an open enemy” [al-An‘am 6:142]

“O you who believe! Follow not the footsteps of Shaytan (Satan). And whosoever follows the footsteps of Shaytan (Satan), then, verily he commands Al-Fahsha (i.e. to commit indecency (illegal sexual intercourse, etc.)), and Al-Munkar (disbelief and polytheism (i.e. to do evil and wicked deeds; to speak or to do what is forbidden in Islam, etc.))” [an-Nur 24:21]

Allah has made it perfectly clear to us that the Shaytan is an enemy to us, and He has commanded us to take him as an enemy. The Shaytan is eager to lead the children of Adam astray, as he swore to do by the might of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, when he said – as Allah tells us – (interpretation of the meaning):

“By Your Might, then I will surely mislead them all” [Sad 38:82]

If we look at what the Shaytan did, as a result of this so-called sport, stirring up enmity and resentment, and barring people from remembering Allah – as is obvious to everyone – (then we will realize how serious the matter is).

It is sufficient for us to remember what happened to neighbouring countries when they ignored the commands of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and followed the footsteps of the Shaytan. The first step was playing sports in modest clothing, in women-only environments, then they gave up these conditions gradually, little by little, until it ended up with the situation that no caring and mature-thinking Muslim could approve of, let alone anyone who is religiously committed. If men are expected to prepare themselves and be physically strong, then women are expected to focus on their role by staying at home and raising the next generation with religious commitment, good morals, virtues and Islamic etiquette.

What I have no doubt about is that playing sports in school, for girls, is haram, because of the negative consequences that result from it, as is obvious to anyone who has a mind to

think. It is not permissible to demand it, let alone approve of it.” (Fatawa ash-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karim al-Khudayr, 1/21-22)

For more, please see these answers: [47554](#) , [8827](#) , [82392](#) , [1200](#) , and [79549](#)

And Allah knows best.