

## Sikhism - Issues for Sport & Physical Activity

Key Facts	
<b>Origins</b>	Sikhism was founded in India around 1500 CE and is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>The main issues relate to diet and dress. Sports organisations need to be aware of these as there have been a number of high profile cases recently involving young Sikhs and school uniform regulations.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Theism</b>	Sikhism is a monotheistic religion and believes in equality, rejecting the caste system. Adherents aspire to develop from self-centredness, or Manmukh, to God-centredness, or Gurmukh. God, or Waheguru, is formless, omnipresent and infinite.
<b>Major sects</b>	There are a number of different orders; Sikhs do not believe that one sect has the right to dismiss another. Nihang, or Akali Sikhs are a military order. Sanatan Singh Sabha is viewed as classical Sikhism.
<b>Place of worship</b>	Gurdwara ("doorway to God"). Sikhs worship in the Gurdwara where verses of the Guru Granth Sahib are read and sung to music. The langar a free community kitchen is also part of the Gurdwara.
<b>Sacred texts</b>	Adi Granth (Sri Guru Granth Sahib) and the Dasam Granth.
<b>Original language</b>	Gurmukhi. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>In the UK most Sikhs will speak Punjabi, Urdu or Hindi.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Spiritual leader</b>	There is no priesthood as such in the Sikh religion. The Granthi, is the keeper and reader of the Sikh scripture.
<b>Symbols</b>	<p>Khanda (double edged sword), chakkar (a circle representing God, with no beginning and no end) and the kirpan (shown as a pair of crossed daggers to represent spiritual authority and political power).</p> <p>Sikhs are required to carry the "5 Ks" on their person at all times:</p> <p>The 5 K's are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Kesh</b> – hair. Sikhs are not allowed to cut their hair. Sikh men and occasionally women wear a turban</li> <li>■ <b>Kangha</b> – a comb worn in the hair that symbolises orderly spirituality</li> <li>■ <b>Kara</b> – an iron or steel bangle</li> <li>■ <b>Kachhera</b> – knee length trousers that symbolise modesty and agility</li> <li>■ <b>Kirpan</b> – a curved sword symbolising dignity and self-respect.</li> </ul>



Sikhism and its followers	
<b>Worldwide adherents</b>	Sikhism is the world's fifth largest religion with 25.8 million followers.
<b>UK population</b>	The UK Census 2001 recorded 336,000 Sikhs resident in the UK.
Faith requirements and holy days	
<b>Diet</b>	Alcohol, tobacco and narcotics are strictly forbidden. The Sikh langar is a common refectory operated by the Gurdwara to provide free food to all who attend. Many Sikhs are vegetarian, and meat is only permitted if it is jhatka (the animal is killed with a single stroke). Sikhs do not eat halal meat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Vegetarian food should be made available if refreshments are offered.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Dress</b>	<b>Women</b> Sikh woman may also choose to wear a turban. The five Ks ( see above) will be worn on the person and some will be visible. The normal dress for women is shalwar, kameez. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Modesty issues relating to both men and women should be considered by allowing participants to wear either long trousers, or long shorts during sport.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Other modesty issues should also include the need for single sex provision for both men and women which allows people to participate without needing to associate with people of the opposite gender.</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Men</b> Sikh men are religiously required to wear turbans to cover their uncut hair. Young Sikh boys will wear their long hair tied in a topknot. The five Ks ( see above) will be worn on the person and some will be visible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Hair may be covered by wearing of a Patka (simple cloth head covering) to replace a turban.</i></li> <li>■ <i>United Sikhs an international non profit organisation has engaged an expert who is designing padding to fit over the sheath of the kirpan to make it safe to wear during sports for the wearer and others who may come in contact with the kirpan.</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Notes</b> The Kara is worn by both men and women as a religious observance and this may have an impact with contact sports. The Kirpan may be carried by some Sikh men. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>There may be some health and safety issues relating to the wearing of the 5' K's. Many Sikhs will be happy to not wear their Kara, Kangha or Kirpan during sport as these may cause injury to others.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Major festivals</b>	The main festivals include; <b>Hola Mohalla, Vaisakhi, Diwali, Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Birthdays of the Ten Gurus.</b> Sikhism follows a lunar calendar and the Nanakshahi calendar, so dates of religious celebrations vary from year to year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Events should be planned with the religious calendar in mind to allow for attendance at festivals.</i></li> </ul>

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