

Candle Lighting for Shabbat

Must I light Shabbat candles?

The obligation to light Shabbat candles, while technically incumbent upon each member of a given household, is fulfilled collectively when one member of the household lights. This is generally considered to be a *mitzvah mideRabbannan*. There are two factors that obligate one to light: 1. a personal obligation to light Shabbat candles, required just like any other *mitzvah mideRabbannan*, and 2. an obligation to make sure that there is sufficient light by which to see in the room(s) where one will be living during Shabbat. It is generally assumed that unmarried students can rely upon their parents' lighting at home to cover their personal obligation. If, therefore, one has no need for candle light in one's room because nobody will be eating there, or because there is another source of light (from electrical lights, for example), one is not obligated to light candles.

What if my practice is to light candles in my apartment even if I am away from home, but I am not eating in my apartment on Friday night?

One should light candles and either wait a little while (after dark) in order to benefit from them before leaving, or ensure that they will still be burning at the time one returns home. One person can light for an entire apartment.

I live in the dorm where I am not allowed to light candles. What should I do?

One may perform the *mitzvah* by turning on an **incandescent** bulb in one's private room; one would recite the *berachah* in this case just as one does when lighting candles. This may be done even if the light is in a closet or in the bathroom; if, however, one uses the light in the bathroom, the *berachah* should be made outside the bathroom.

How do I tell if the bulb is incandescent?

Ask your friend who is majoring in electrical engineering. As a rule of thumb, the twisty white bulbs are **fluorescent**, while the circular yellow ones are incandescent.

What if I don't have an incandescent bulb in my room?

One option is to buy a plug-in nightlight that uses an incandescent bulb. Note, though, that one should do this only if that light will serve some purpose to somebody in the room on Shabbat. Those eating in the Hillel may light there, but no *berachah* should be said.

When should I light?

One should light candles at least 18 minutes before sunset on Friday afternoon.

What is the proper procedure for lighting?

The Ashkenazic practice is to say the *berachah* of *Hadlakat Nerot* after lighting the Shabbat candles. A woman who is lighting should thus light the candles and then make the *berachah*, but while covering her eyes or the flame so as not to benefit from the light until after reciting the *berachah*. A man who is lighting should have the match ready in hand, make the *berachah*, and then light the candles.

According to many Sephardic authorities, one should say the *berachah* before lighting; however, some rule that those Sephardim who have the practice of saying it after lighting should continue their practice. If one doesn't have an established practice, one should say the *berachah* before lighting.