

## Orthodox vs Reform: What's the difference?

A basic guide to some key differences in ideology and practice between Orthodoxy, Classical Reform and today's Progressive movement

	<b>Orthodox</b>	<b>Classical Reform</b>	<b>Modern Progressive</b>
<b>God, faith and Torah</b>	Torah is the literal word of God, handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai, to be studied and obeyed.	Faith is an evolving tradition to which all may contribute. A belief in continuous revelation and spiritual improvement.	The Revelation at Sinai was recorded by scribes and sages over time, eventually redacted into Torah we use today.
<b>Keeping shabbat</b>	Required synagogue attendance for men, Shabbat home ritual. No driving, electricity, phoning, working, etc.	Synagogue attendance for men and women. Shabbat home ritual. Driving, phoning, or using electricity are tolerated.	Synagogue attendance, Shabbat home ritual. Greater encouragement not to drive or use electrical appliances such as phones, computers.
<b>Halacha (Jewish law)</b>	Strict observance of rabbinical codes of conduct, developed over the centuries, is central to Orthodox Judaism. A national Beit Din may change or adds to rules.	Non-halachic. An emphasis on ethical aspects of Judaism over ritual and ceremonial ones, inspired by the example of the prophets.	Progressive Halacha respectful of traditional texts, but open to contemporary interpretations. Halacha seen as evolving.
<b>Kashrut</b>	Compulsory. Follow rabbinical dietary rules with fastidiousness.	Voluntary. Question the basis of the rabbinical rules, consider them outdated.	Preferred. Favour eco-kashrut, including local produce, reducing consumption of plastic

			packaging, meat and factory farming.
<b>Two day festivals</b>	Two day festivals to ensure no mistakes about correct dates.	In our modern age of calendars and clocks, there are no longer errors about dates, therefore no need for second day.	Varies by congregation. Some keep one and some two days.
<b>Divorce and the 'Get'</b>	Only Jewish divorce recognised. A woman who cannot secure a 'get' (Jewish divorce) from her hostile estranged husband, may not remarry.	Civil divorce recognised. A woman whose hostile, estranged husband refuses a get, will be allowed to remarry.	Civil divorce recognised. A woman whose hostile, estranged husband refuses a get, will be allowed to remarry.
<b>Musical instruments</b>	No musical instruments in services: symbolic of mourning the destruction of the Temple.	Ancient Hebrews played musical instruments in Temple. Musical instruments encouraged, mainly organs and violins. Professional choirs.	No more organs – considered too 'church-like'. Guitars and drums favoured.
<b>Use of English</b>	Largely Hebrew, with English for sermons. Hebrew fluency is expected. Siddurim offer little or no English translation.	Half or more in English to make services intelligible to congregants. This follows a tradition: Jews were already using the vernacular in the Temple period.	Increasing use of Hebrew-only, but modern siddurim offer English translations and transliteration.
<b>Female equality</b>	Women do not make up a minyan, are segregated from the men, do not read Torah or receive aliyahs, do not participate in singing, should dress modestly.	Women sit with men, participate in singing and may read from Torah. No women rabbis yet. Batmitzvah or confirmation ceremonies, but lack the status of barmitzvahs.	Full gender equality. Barmitzvahs identical to Batmitzvahs. Women rabbis. Women wear tallit and teffilin. Prayers reworded to ensure non-gendered language.
<b>Evolution and science</b>	Reject modern scientific explanations for the origin of species and the universe in favour of the Genesis account: world is 5780 years old and humans are descended from Adam and Eve.	Accept modern scientific theories. Genesis accounts regarded as symbolic rather than literal.	Accept modern scientific theories. Genesis accounts regarded as symbolic rather than literal.

<b>Jewish history</b>	Jewish religious practice is believed not to have varied since the Temple days. Strict observance is what has preserved Judaism against adversity.	Jewish religious practice is believed to have evolved throughout history. Flexibility is what has preserved Judaism against adversity.	Jewish religious practice has evolved throughout history. Flexibility is what has preserved Judaism against adversity.
<b>LGBTQI</b>	Homosexuality and same-sex relations are abhorred.	Homosexuality is not condoned nor condemned.	Gender fluidity and diverse sexual orientation accepted and even celebrated at 'Pride Shabbat' ceremonies. Rabbis conduct same sex weddings.
<b>Conversion</b>	Conversion not encouraged, but permitted. Carefully chosen applicants undergo stringent initiation over several years. Compulsory shul attendance and monitored home observance for convert and spouse. Ritual immersion, circumcision required.	Conversion permitted in cases of 'marrying out' or a strong desire to become Jewish. Requirements less demanding than Orthodox. Compulsory shul attendance for convert and spouse.	More open attitude to 'Jews by Choice', but pre-screening and training standards made stricter. Compulsory shul attendance for convert and spouse. Ritual immersion, circumcision required.
<b>Non-Jewish partner</b>	Not condoned. A Jewish mother with a non-Jewish husband would have to demonstrate that her children are being brought up in an observant environment. A Jewish man with a non-Jewish partner may not receive aliyahs.	Not encouraged, but the children of a Jewish woman with a non-Jewish husband are considered Jewish.	Intermarriage is not promoted, but families are welcomed and children encouraged to be raised as Jewish and brought to synagogue.