

# HS/ADULT PRESENTATION

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## Who are the Sikhs?



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Slide 1: Every person you saw in the video is a Sikh. We are going to learn a little bit about the Sikhs today. Our religion is called Sikhism.

## Common Misconception



***Fiction:*** *Sikhs are Muslim because they wear a turban and have a beard.*

**Fact:** Turbans are worn in many countries as a cultural dress. However, the turban is required to be worn by a Sikh, and it is a religious article of faith.

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Slide 2: These are some common misconceptions about Sikhs. Can I get a volunteer to read the first sentence? (Volunteer will read, 'Sikhs are Muslim because they wear a turban and have a beard.') Thank you. This is a common misconception that many people have. Sikhs and some Muslims do wear a turban and beard. We will go over the differences in the turban style a little later. The main thing to point out here is that Sikhs are required to wear a turban over their uncut hair, Muslims are not. In addition, 99% of the people that wear turbans in the U.S. are Sikhs.

## Common Misconception



***Fiction:*** *Sikhism is a blend of Hinduism and Islam.*

**Fact:** Sikhism is not a blend of Hinduism and Islam. It has its own scriptures, gurus, and houses of worship. Sikhism is a separate faith, and is not a branch of any other religion.

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Slide 3: Can someone volunteer to read the first sentence please? (Volunteer will read, 'Sikhism is a blend of Hinduism and Islam.') Thank you. Several people have the misconception that Sikhism is a blend of Hinduism and Islam. This is not the case. Sikhism is a completely separate religion. Sikhism has its own scriptures, spiritual guides and houses of worship.

For example, Muslims and Hindus are encouraged to take pilgrimages and observe fasting. Sikhism forbids pilgrimages and fasting because these do not lead to realization of God and purification of self, according to Sikh Gurus. This is just one example of the differences.

## Sikhs came to America more than 100 years ago



- West Coast and later in New York
- Farming & Lumber Industry
- Pioneers
  - Immigration Policy
  - Citizenship Reform
  - Representation in Federal Government

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Slide 4: We have been a part of this country for more than a hundred years. We helped build the railroads that connect the east and west coast. Sikhs also worked as manual laborers, in sawmills, and as farmers.

We were the first and most successful farmers on the west coast. Since many Sikhs in Punjab were farmers when they immigrated to the U.S. the land and weather conditions were similar to what they experienced in Punjab. So, they became farmers here, as well.

Sikhs and other immigrant groups became extremely successful as farmers. As a result, California passed the Alien Land Act in 1913 which banned non-citizens from owning land. As a result, Sikhs tried to obtain U.S. citizenship.

Bhagat Singh Thind applied for citizenship when he was an enlisted member of the US Army in 1918. His citizenship was rescinded in 1923 because of his “non-Caucasian” status. After battling for over a decade, Thind was finally given citizenship not based on merit but because he was a World War I veteran. Sikhs have fought in every major war on the side of the United States.

The first Asian American congressman was of Sikh heritage. (Try to emphasize that he was not the first Indian American or Sikh American, but Asian American to be a member of Congress.)

Fun Fact: The largest peach, raisin, okra, and pistachio farms are owned by Sikh Americans.

## Sikhism in Brief



Sikhism is the fifth largest world religion.

1. Christianity – 2.2 billion
2. Islam – 1.4 billion
3. Hinduism – 900 million
4. Buddhism – 396 million
5. Sikhism – 23 million
6. Judaism – 15 million



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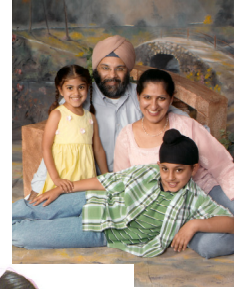
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Slide 5: Sikhism is the fifth largest world religion. Can you guess what the 1st largest is? (Repeat until you get to the 5th largest, and then reveal what the 6th largest religion is.) This may be surprising for some of you. Sikhism has more followers than Judaism. However, I would venture to say that if you stopped the average American on the street, and asked them what they knew about the Sikh religion versus the Jewish faith, I would guess that they know more about the Jewish faith. Which is great! People should know about each other's beliefs, customs, etc. I think it's just interesting to note that there are at least 8 million more Sikhs in the world than Jews, and the average American would know little to no information about Sikhs.

# Core Sikh Beliefs



- **One God**
  - Loves and sustains all humanity
- **All are equal in the eyes of God**
  - Respect for all genders, religions, races, etc.
- **Earning an Honest Living**
  - Sikhs are supposed to work and live honestly
- **Share with Others**
  - Share your time, money, etc. with others
- **Remember God**
  - Throughout one's day
- **Sikhs do not believe in the following:**
  - Fasting, superstitions, ritualism, caste system
- **Sikhism prohibits:**
  - Smoking, drinking alcohol, or taking any intoxicants



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Slide 6: Sikhs believe in 1 God. This is one God for all people irrespective of your religion. Because we believe there is 1 God for everyone, Sikhs believe that everyone is equal in the eyes of God. No one is better or worse than anyone else because they are different. This goes across gender, ethnicity, race, language, etc. Everyone should be loved and treated with respect, no matter who you are.

Sikhs believe there are three things that you should do on a daily basis. Let's go over the first two first – Earning an honest living and sharing with others. I'm sure you've heard these two phrases again and again growing up – to be honest and to share with others. These aren't unique concepts. Sikhs believe that you are supposed to live and work in an honest way. There is also the concept in Sikhism that you should share of your time, money, compassion, etc. with others. By doing these things and by being a good person, Sikhs remember God and remember what kind of person they should be.

Sikhs do not believe in rituals, fasting, superstitions, or the caste system. (Depending on the amount of time you have, you can elaborate more on the caste system. -- The caste system was very prevalent at the time that Sikhism emerged in 1469. The caste system promotes the idea that people are broken into different classes or castes in society based on the family that they were born into. Your caste dictated your profession and the level of respect you would receive from people outside your caste. You could only interact and marry people within your caste. Sikhism rejected this idea. This goes against the very first two beliefs – there is 1 God for everyone and that everyone is considered equal in the eyes of God).

Sikhs also do not take any kind of intoxicants.



- **Khalsa – community of initiated Sikhs**
  - Commitment to this faith
  - Can be done at any time in one's life
- **What Does It Mean?**
  - Distinct external appearance
  - Keep Singh/Kaur as last name

Slide 7: Vaisakhi is one of the most important days of the year for Sikhs. On the first Vaisakhi in 1699, the Khalsa was created, which is a community of initiated Sikhs. The first initiation ceremony was held on this day. When you become a part of the Khalsa, it is a formal declaration that you are consciously choosing to follow this path, and not just that you were born Sikh. There is no particular time in one's life that this ceremony has to be done.

When you become a part of the Khalsa, you are keeping a distinct external appearance (which we will cover in the next slide.) On this day, all Sikh women were given the last name Kaur and Sikh men were given Singh to replace their last names. Why do you think this happened? (Possible responses: to get rid of their caste name, to represent that everyone is equal, etc.)

Note: If there is time, you can say that many major cities in the U.S. have parades on this day.

## The 5 “Ks”



*Iron Bracelet (Kara)*  
**GOOD DEEDS**



*Sword (Kirpan)*  
**PROTECTION**

*Long Underpants (Kachera)*  
**SELF DISCIPLINE**



*Uncut Hair (Kesh)*  
**SPIRITUALITY**



*Comb (Kanga)*  
**CLEANLINESS**

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Slide 8: We’ve been speaking so far on what a Sikh looks like on the inside, but this slide tells you a little bit about what a Sikh has on the outside. These are the 5 K’s because in our language, each of these start with the letter “K”. All initiated Sikhs must have these 5 Ks. However, many Sikhs that are not initiated keep some of these articles of faith as well.

There is the kara which is a bracelet (show your own at this point), and I wear this because it reminds me to do good deeds. The kirpan which is a sword that represents protection not only for yourself but for anyone facing injustice. Sikhs are supposed to help you or themselves in a time of need. Kachera are long underpants that remind Sikhs to have self-discipline. Kesh is uncut hair. In Sikhism, men and women are not supposed to cut their hair. Kesh represents spirituality and is a part of the Sikh’s external identity. The kanga is a wooden comb that reminds Sikhs to always be clean and hygienic.



## The Sikh Turban



- 99% of the people wearing a turban in the U.S. are Sikhs
- It is a religious obligation for Sikhs
- Can always be recognized and are duty bound to offer help
- Under no circumstances can the turban be forcibly removed



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Slide 9: Let's focus a little more on one of the K's – Kesh. Sikhs wear a turban over their uncut hair. Did you know that 99% of the time that you see someone wearing a turban next to you in the grocery store, on the bus, or at the store, they are Sikh? Now, raise your hand if you have seen someone wearing a turban on TV? (wait for them to raise their hand). I'm guessing that when you see someone on TV that's wearing a turban, 99% of the time, they will NOT be a Sikh. Do you see the difference? There is a huge disconnect between what people see in the media and what they see in their local community. That is why people associate the turban and beard with terrorists. But in this case, what you see is not what you get. Sikhs are not terrorists. Sikhs wear the turban because they WANT to stand out. Sikhs are identified as Sikh by their turban. As we saw in the video, it helps them stand out in a crowd or shows their commitment to their faith. Sikhs do this because they want to be recognized so that when you see a Sikh, you know that person is always going to tell the truth, and they believe everyone is equal, or that they will be there to protect you in case you need it. The turban cannot be forcibly removed.

# Turbans Illustrated

## Sikh Turban



Sikh Turban



Sikh Turban



Sikh Turban



Sikh Turban

## Non-Sikh Turban



Afghan Turban



Palestinian Turban



Indian Turban



Iranian Turban

Slide 10: These are some of the different types of Sikh turbans that you might see. Sometimes you see the more round style, like the man in the white turban. Or you can have the more pointed turban like the police officer. The boy wearing blue is wearing a smaller turban called a patka. Young Sikh boys wear a patka until they get older and feel more comfortable wearing a turban. Women can wear turbans, too. This woman is wearing a white turban.

Sometimes Sikhs match their turbans to their clothes. (You can include a personal story or joke here).

As you can see, Non-Sikh turbans look slightly different than Sikh turbans do. In any case, 99% of the time that you see someone wearing a turban in front of you (not on TV), they will be a Sikh.

# Gu Ru

- 10 Sikh Gurus
- Mission
  - Love for God
  - Social justice for humanity
  - Freedom from superstitions and rituals
- Their ideals and teachings were preserved through their writings and actions

Slide 11: Where do we understand the significance of the turban or the reason behind our major beliefs? The Sikh Gurus. I'm sure you've heard of the word 'Guru' before. Let's break this word down. 'Gu' means darkness, and 'Ru' means light. You can also interpret this as ignorance and enlightenment. So a Guru is someone that literally brings you from the dark to the light or from ignorance to enlightenment. For Sikhs, our Gurus were spiritual guides. There are ten Sikh Gurus. Their intent was to help people improve their lives so that they would become closer to God. They did this by sharing a message of love for God, social justice for humanity, and freedom from superstitions and rituals. We learn from this message when we understand what they did and read their writings.

## Guru – “Spiritual Guide”

The Guru Granth Sahib (holy scripture) and the Guru Panth (community of initiated Sikhs) are the present Guru

### Guru Granth Sahib

- 1430 pages written in poetry
- Considered the living Guru of the Sikhs
- teaches you how to be kind, tell the truth, love and respect everyone
- Sikh services consist of singing from the scripture



Slide 12: The tenth Guru did not choose a person as the successor but instead gave the Guru-ship to the Guru Granth Sahib which is our holy scripture and the Guru Panth which is the name given to the community of initiated Sikhs. The Guru Granth Sahib is 1430 pages and is written in poetry. It contains words of wisdom that teach you how to live your life as a good person.

Note: Time permitting, you can go into more detail on each of the bullets listed here.

- Place of learning and worship
- Everyone welcome
- Services typically held on Weekends
- Community Kitchen for all (Langar)



Slide 13: This is a gurdwara, a Sikh place to learn and pray. What are some other words for places where other faiths would gather to pray together? (they should respond church, mosque, synagogue, temple, masjid, etc.) This is the place where Sikhs gather together to pray and learn from each other. Everyone is welcome to visit a gurdwara. It doesn't matter what religion you are or what language you speak. You'll see that large amounts of people usually come to the gurdwara on a Sunday, and after services, everyone sits on the floor and eats together. Based on what you have learned about Sikhism so far, why do you think that everyone sits on the floor? (some of them should respond and suggest that it might be because Sikhism believes everyone is equal, and so they all sit on the floor together; you can also give them the analogy of a king and his subjects).

## Most Sikhs Speak Punjabi



- Over 80 million people speak Punjabi
- Punjabi is written from left to right
- The Punjabi alphabet contains 35 letters

ਹੈਲੋ

ੳ ਅ ਏ ਸ ਹ  
ਕ ਖ ਗ ਘ ਙ  
ਚ ਛ ਜ ਝ ਵ  
ਟ ਠ ਡ ਢ ਣ  
ਤ ਥ ਦ ਧ ਨ  
ਪ ਫ ਬ ਭ ਮ  
ਯ ਰ ਲ ਵ ਝ

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Slide 14: Most Sikhs speak Punjabi, and over 80 million people in the world speak Punjabi. This is what the Punjabi alphabet looks like. As you can see, it looks very different than English. But, just like English it is written from left to right. Punjabi also has more letters than English does. Punjabi has 35 letters, and English has 26.

The word written here in Punjabi is 'Hello'.

## Sikhs can be found in many different professions today!



**Artists**



**Actor**



**Basketball Player**



**Military**



**Scientist**

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Slide 15: Sikhs can be found in many different types of occupations.

Please Note: Time permitting, you can elaborate on any one of these individuals.

Artists – Singh Twins. Amrit and Rabindra Singh from England.

Actor – Waris Ahluwalia. Spike Lee's Inside Man, Darjeeling Limited, etc.

Basketball Player – Darshpreet Singh, Trinity University, San Antonio, TX.

Military – Col. Sekhon, military doctor

Scientist – Dr. Narinder Kapany, invented fiber optics



## Sikhs can be found in many different professions today!



**Doctor**



**Politician**



**Lawyer**



**Filmmaker**



**Farmer**

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Slide 16: Sikhs can be doctors, lawyers, filmmakers, and farmers. The Sikh pictured in the blue turban is Manmohan Singh, India's current prime minister.

Please Note: Time permitting, you can elaborate on any one of these individuals.

Doctor - Dr. Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi

Lawyer - Harsimran Kaur

Politician – Dr. Manmohan Singh

Filmmaker – Harpreet Kaur

Farmer – Sikh farmer from California





Slide 17: Sikhs are everywhere, and deeply embedded into the fabric of this country. I know we have covered many different aspects of the faith with you today. But, if there is one thing that you can take away from this presentation it's that we should appreciate and respect each other for our differences. We should celebrate these differences, not use them as weapons for hate.

Thank you for being such a great audience! At this time, I can answer any questions that you might have. Please raise your hand if you have a question.