

SHABBAT: CANDLES: WHEN TO LIGHT

Shabbat: Candles: Earliest Time To Light

You may not light Shabbat (or Jewish festival) candles before plag ha'mincha. The candles must burn until at least dark (tzeit ha'kochavim) and someone must be there to see the light from the candles after dark.

SITUATION Mincha minyan begins at plag ha'mincha. You cannot light candles at home and still get to mincha minyan on time.

WHAT TO DO You must say mincha on your own (anytime from half an hour after mid-day until sunset). You will light candles after plag ha'mincha but before sunset and not join the mincha minyan.

Shabbat: Candles: Normal Lighting Times

In many countries, candle lighting time is 18 minutes before sunset.

NOTE In Jerusalem, many people have the custom of lighting candles 40 minutes before sunset.

Shabbat: Candles: Lighting with Delay until Sunset

Under extenuating circumstances, women may make a “condition” by saying “I am lighting Shabbat candles but not starting Shabbat until sunset” to delay Shabbat until sunset, when it will begin anyway.

NOTE Women should not routinely start Shabbat at sunset since the proper time for women to begin Shabbat is at candle lighting (typically 18 minutes before sunset).

REASON An opinion exists that Shabbat actually begins at 18 minutes before sunset; that is the origin of this time for women to begin Shabbat.

Shabbat: Candles: Latest Time To Light

You may not light after sunset (or after whatever time the entire community starts Shabbat if they start Shabbat before sunset).

NOTE If a woman lights candles after sunset, she not only violates Shabbat but she must light one extra candle on every subsequent Shabbat for the rest of her life.