

Sikh Style Guide

1. *Sikh* means student. Sikhs are students and followers of *Guru* Nanak and the nine *Gurus* who succeeded him.
2. Sikhism is a distinct, revealed religion. It is neither an amalgamation of, nor a derivative of other religions.
3. Sikhism is one of the youngest organized religions and the fifth largest in the world today, with over 25 million adherents. There are approximately 500,000 Sikhs in the United States.
4. *Guru* in Sikhism means divinely inspired prophet-teacher. Due to the unique meaning and significance of the word *Guru* in Sikhism, always italicize and capitalize *Guru* irrespective of its use. EXAMPLE: *Guru* Nanak was the first Sikh *Guru*.
5. *Khalsa* literally means “belonging only to the divine” though it is frequently also translated as “pure.” *Khalsa* refers to the collective body of Sikhs who partake in *Amrit* (initiation) ceremony, vowing to lead a life of spiritual discipline and uphold the highest ideals of Sikh principles.
6. The *Kirpan* is a religious sword. It is neither a weapon nor a dagger. The *Kirpan* represents a Sikh’s duty to uphold justice. It is commonly worn on body under clothing (not to conceal, but as a personal form of discipline and expression of commitment to leading the Sikh way of life).
7. The Sikh turban is mandatory for men, optional for women. The vast majority of people wearing turbans in the United States are Sikhs.
8. The Sikh congregational place of worship is called a *Gurdwara*. There are over 300 *gurdwaras* in the United States.
9. Sikh holidays are referred to as a *Gurpurab*. It is a celebration of the birth or death of a Sikh *Guru* and also the appointment of the *Granth Sahib* (Sikh Holy Scripture) as the eternal *Guru*.
10. Italicize all first occurrences of Sikh and Sikhism related words. EXAMPLE: *Guru*, *Gurdwara*, *Khalsa*, *Amrit*, etc.
11. For each first occurrence of a Sikh related word follow it by its English translation in parentheses. EXAMPLE: *Gurdwara* (Sikh place of worship)
12. Only if required and appropriate, include a transliteration and pronunciation tip for a Sikh word. EXAMPLE: *Amrit* (Am-rit)
13. Be consistent with the spelling of Sikh words. EXAMPLE: *Gurdwara* or *Gurudwara*.
14. Be knowledgeable about the Sikh faith. Journalists may refer to the resources about Sikhism on the SALDEF website available at: <http://www.saldef.org/learn-about-sikhs/>