



How to Facilitate a Tallit Workshop in Your Community

A Program Guide by Sarah Gluck with Debra Siroka

With thanks to:

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OVERVIEW

For teens, B-Mitzvah is a day of great exhilaration and possibly some trepidation. For parents, and perhaps even more so for grandparents, it is a day of religious, spiritual, and cultural connection — a moment in time to nurture Jewish identity and connect our intergenerational families to one another and to our communities. And then, just like that, the moment is gone. How can we make it last?



The Jewish Grandparents Network (JGN) believes that grandparents — essential influencers in multigenerational families — can play a valuable and deeply meaningful role in developing and sustaining these connections.

This guide offers a road map for synagogues, temples, and other educational and religious institutions to use tallit-making as an opportunity to achieve these goals. In the project, the tallit becomes more than a piece of cloth with fringes; it is a way for the B-Mitzvah to personalize their relationship with Judaism and for the family to join in a process of meaning-making that links the generations.

We invite you — the creative rabbi, cantor, educator, and organizational leader — to be our partners in creating B-Mitzvah opportunities for all members of today's intergenerational Jewish family.

In this three-hour family education program, sixth and/or seventh graders preparing for B-Mitzvah and their family members learn about the meaning and significance of the tallit in Jewish tradition, find creative inspiration, and together make a uniquely personal tallit for the teen's B-Mitzvah and beyond.

This program is designed to be led by a facilitator and one or more assistants (depending on the size of the group).



ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

Judaism places a strong value on transmitting Jewish knowledge, customs, and family traditions *l'dor vador*, from generation to generation. Parents and grandparents bestow this gift on their children and grandchildren when they engage in Jewish conversation and activity at every stage of the Jewish life cycle. Creating something together — in this case, a tallit — is a tangible way to transmit learning, memory, and meaning during the extended period of preparation for becoming B-Mitzvah.

GOALS

- Deepen Jewish experience and family bonds by bringing teens, parents, and grandparents together to create the teen's tallit.
- Foster a sense of Jewish and family continuity by sharing memories and stories while working on the project.
- Provide the B-Mitzvah teen an opportunity to create and connect personally to the tallit as a ritual object and feel a sense of ownership and pride at B-Mitzvah and beyond.
- Enrich the broader B-Mitzvah experience for all generations.
- Have fun!

WORKSHOP PLANNING

The Tallit Workshop is a comprehensive, hands-on program that requires several months of advance planning and gathering of materials. Don't be deterred by the time and effort — this is a deeply meaningful and rewarding program that will remain with families for years to come!

Be expansive in thinking about who to include. Suggest families invite grandparents of a different faith to join to show their support of their precious teen grandchild. Encourage the participation of grandparents who live at a distance through FaceTime, WhatsApp video, Zoom, etc.

Suggested Timeline

Spring

- Set the workshop date when creating the Religious School calendar for the coming year and publicize the program in school registration materials and on the synagogue calendar and website.

- Schedule the workshop for before the first sixth or seventh grader becomes B-Mitzvah, so that everyone in the class has an opportunity to participate.
- Confirm the availability of the workshop room and custodial support with the building administrator.
- If you are bringing in an outside facilitator, confirm the date(s) now.
- Determine how you want to handle the workshop fee (on account, other online methods, mailing a check, etc.).

Early Summer

- If you have done the workshop previously, inventory any leftover *tallitot* and *tzitzit*.
- Order enough *tallitot* and *tzitzit* bundles for the expected number of participants, plus a few extras, just in case. If knotting the *tzitzit* seems too daunting, purchase plain (undecorated) *tallitot* that already have *tzitzit* attached.
- Check that all kits are complete and in good condition. If there are tears or stains on any of the *tallitot* or tallit bags, contact your vendor for replacements. Explore Torah Aura Productions <https://torahaura.com/tallit> and local Judaica shops.
- Inventory the fabric markers and test them to be sure they have not dried out. Order new markers if needed.
- Inventory all other materials and supplies and order as needed. (See the Materials list below.)



6 Weeks Out

- *Optional:* Mail a print flier via USPS.
- Send Family Email A, located at the end of this document.

3-4 Weeks Out

- Check in with your workshop facilitator.
- Check in with the building administrator.
- Iron the *tallitot*. This is a time-consuming task, and you may not want to do it all at once. Press out all creases when ironing, leaving the width-wise center fold visible.

- Fold the ironed *tallitot* on the center fold and hang them on a special blanket or tablecloth hanger (heavy-duty, extra-wide). Cover with a dry cleaner bag or similar.
- Iron the tallit bags and store flat.

Tip: Consider doing the ironing at home. Or gather a team of volunteers who will bring irons and ironing boards, and have an on-site ironing party.

- Open the *tzitzit* bundles. If you have decided to tie *tzitzit* together, separate each bundle into four smaller bundles of three short strands and one long strand.
- Once you have separated each *tzitzit* bundle into four smaller bundles, even up the strings of each bundle at one end and fold in half at the center. Secure each small bundle with a twist tie, then twist all four together. Comb out any tangles with your fingers, carefully wind the *tzitzit* around your hand, and place them in a small Ziploc bag.

Tip: Like ironing the *tallitot*, separating and making the four smaller *tzitzit* bundles is a time-consuming task. It is most easily done by more than one person.

2 Weeks Out

- Send Family Email B, located at the end of this document.

1 Week Out

- Purchase snacks, prepare door signs, create sign-in sheets if you wish, and have an envelope for last-minute cash or check payments.

1 or 2 Days Before the Workshop

- Bring all materials and supplies to the workshop room.
- Set up the room (see below).

Tip: To expedite the next setup(s) if you are doing more than one workshop, pre-cut the total pieces of butcher paper you will need and store them in a handy spot.

- Place signage on the building entrance and interior door(s) to the room in which the workshop is taking place.
 - Set out water, snacks, plates, and napkins on a table off to the side.
 - Set out an extra-large trash can with extra bags and a recycling container nearby.
- Send Family Email C, located at the end of this document.

Morning of the Workshop

- Double-check that everything is in order. Welcome your families and enjoy the day!

Day After the Workshop

- Keep the positive vibe and momentum going by sending Family Email D, located at the end of this document, and attaching group photos.

MATERIALS

A grandparent's, parent's, or friend's tallit (for the introductory Tallit Show-and-Tell) — PARTICIPANTS BRING

A charged device (cell phone, tablet, laptop — for connecting with family members participating from a distance, and for taking photos) — PARTICIPANTS BRING

A sampling of different styles of *tallitot* and/or samples of *tallitot* made at a program like this — or photos. These will provide creative inspiration and help participants understand better what they're aiming for.

A tallit kit for each participant (includes 1 tallit, 1 tallit bag, and 1 bundle of *tzitzit*)

Blanket or tablecloth hanger(s) (for hanging and transporting pre-ironed *tallitot*)

A bag of twist ties

Printed designs (11" x 17", 8.5" x 11", borders — for families to place under the tallit and trace)

Printed instructions on how to tie *tzitzit* — 1 per family

8.5" x 11" sheets of paper, printed portrait view, with the numerals 7, 8, 11, and 13, respectively, and taped together vertically (for hanging on the walls — this is a quick reference if you will be tying *tzitzit* during the workshop)

Butcher paper (for covering the tables) and masking tape or painter's tape (1 roll/table)

Pencils (sharpened and with erasers — 1 or 2/table), scissors (1 pair/table), and yardsticks (1/table)

Fabric markers, bold-tip and fine-tip, in a wide assortment of colors

Box or bin for discarding used-up markers

2-gallon Ziploc bags (for the completed tallit and bag — to be handed out at the end)

2 large clear-plastic storage bins (1 for storing stencils, 1 for storing markers)

2 medium-sized clear-plastic bins (one for storing tape, pencils, and scissors; one for extra *tallitot*, bags, *tzitzit*, and printouts of instructions on how to tie *tzitzit*)

Different-sized Ziploc bags (for storing markers)

Snacks and drinks (water and seltzer—nothing messy; pretzels, granola bars, etc.)

Name tags and Sharpies

Sheets of blank paper for practicing freehand designs

Tables, chairs, garbage cans, recycling containers (see below)

SUGGESTED ROOM SETUP

This guide provides highly specific recommendations for setup. Please adapt it for your own environment.

Materials/Display Tables

Five long or large round display tables, four of which should be set up at the front of the room and one of which goes at the back or on the side.

- On the first table, lay out the designs in categories; for example, borders, geometric, floral, Judaic.
- On the second table, lay out the blessings and prayer-phrase designs, separating those that are gender specific.
- On the third table, set up the fabric markers; a box or bin for markers that participants will likely use up and discard during the workshop; one box with different-sized Ziploc bags; and a box or bin for the *tzitzit* bundles and printed instructions on how to tie the *tzitzit* (you will give these out later). Leave room on this table for name tags and Sharpies.
- On the fourth table, which should be set a little apart from the other three, and allowing enough space in front of it for participants to stand comfortably, fold sample *tallitot* (your own, the synagogue's, borrowed from your clergy, etc.) and arrange on the table for the "show-and-tell" part of the program.
- The fifth table is for snacks and drinks.



Participant Tables

- Long tables set up in even rows, one for every family, facing the front of the room. Allow space between tables for the participants and facilitator(s) to move about comfortably.
- Set 2 or 3 chairs at each table, facing the front of the room, with extra chairs off to the side, if needed.
- Set each participant table with:
 - Butcher paper affixed to the table with masking tape or painter's tape.

Tip: To avoid bubbles or creases while working on the tallit design and snagging or tearing as participants move about, smooth the paper from the center in all directions before taping the sides, then smooth again and secure the paper under the front and back of the table.

- 1 roll masking tape or painter's tape
- 8" x 8" piece of scrap fabric for testing markers (usually comes with the tallit kit; if not, order an extra kit and cut the tallit into squares with pinking shears).
- 1 yardstick
- 1 pair of scissors
- 1 or 2 sharpened pencils

In addition, make sure the room is set with 1 large trash can with extra bags and a recycling container. Place a few extra chairs off to the side as well.

