Islamic Inheritance Guide

A step-by-step walkthrough of how Faraid distribution actually works -- identifying heirs, fixed shares, blocking rules, and the adjustments that keep the numbers exact.

Step 1: Confirm the Estate Is Ready for Distribution

Faraid only applies to what's left of the estate after three things are settled, in order: funeral and burial costs, all outstanding debts (to people and to Allah), and any valid Wasiyyah -- a bequest capped at one-third of what remains, and only to someone who isn't already a Faraid heir.

Step 2: Identify the Deceased's Faraid Heirs

Faraid heirs are a fixed, Quran-defined group. They fall into two main categories: Ashab al-Furud (fixed-share heirs -- spouse, children, parents, and some grandparents and siblings under specific conditions) and Asabah (residuary heirs, who take whatever remains after fixed shares are paid). What a given heir receives depends heavily on who else survives -- see faraidhub.com/blog for the full detail on each relation.

Step 3: Apply the Blocking Rules (Hajb)

Hajb blocks a more distant relative when a closer one survives, or reduces (without eliminating) a share when a specific relative is present. Six heirs can never be fully blocked under any circumstance: the husband, wife, son, daughter, father, and mother.

Step 4: Assign the Fixed Quranic Shares

Each Ashab al-Furud heir is assigned their fixed fraction -- one of six fractions set out directly in Surah An-Nisa (1/2, 1/4, 1/8, 2/3, 1/3, or 1/6). Anything left over after every fixed share is paid passes to Asabah (residuary) heirs.

Step 5: Correct for Awl or Radd

Because the fixed fractions were each set independently, adding them up for a specific family doesn't always land on exactly 100% of the estate. Awl proportionally reduces every heir's share when the fractions add up to more than the whole estate. Radd returns the surplus proportionally to eligible heirs when the fractions add up to less and no Asabah heir exists to absorb the rest.

Step 6: Check for Distant Relatives and Special Cases

When there are no children and no parents (Kalalah), sibling shares change specifically. When there's no fixed-share heir and no residuary heir at all, more distant relatives (Dhawul Arham) become eligible. A small number of named cases -- Umariyyatayn, Mushtaraka and Akdariyyah -- also produce results outside the standard formula.

Step 7: Confirm Which Madhab Framework Applies

The Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools agree on the core Quranic fractions and the overall order of the estate process. They differ on specific details -- some Radd rules, how a grandfather is treated alongside siblings, and a handful of distant-relative cases.

Step 8: Account for Non-Standard Family Situations

A few real-world situations change the calculation: more than one wife surviving, daughters inheriting with no surviving sons, and whether a surviving spouse has the right to keep living in the family home rather than see it sold and split immediately.

Step 9: See It Worked Out With Real Numbers

See faraidhub.com/blog for a full worked-example article running through several complete scenarios by hand -- daughters only, no children at all, an Awl case, a Radd case, and multiple wives -- with every fraction and every number shown.

Step 10: Avoid the Most Common Mistakes

Most disputes don't come from disagreement about Faraid itself -- they come from distributing before debts are fully identified, treating an illiquid asset like a business as if it splits as cleanly as cash, and assuming Faraid alone satisfies your legal obligations where civil inheritance law also applies.

Step 11: Calculate Your Own Family's Shares

Use the free Inheritance Calculator at faraidhub.com/calculator.html to get each heir's exact Faraid share for your own estate value and family, with the reasoning shown for every figure, across all four madhabs.

Step 12: What Comes After Distribution

Faraid is the floor Islam sets, not the ceiling. Gifting during one's lifetime (Hibah) or a family endowment (Waqf) are separate, voluntary tools some families use afterward to direct wealth further or keep an asset intact across generations -- ideally arranged well before they're needed.

This guide explains standard Faraid principles and general practice across the four madhabs. For disputed debts, absent or estranged heirs, non-Muslim relatives, or estates involving property in more than one country, consult a qualified Islamic scholar and a licensed attorney before distributing the estate.

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