How to go to Confession

After you enter the confessional, begin with the Sign of the Cross saying,
“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
Spirit. Amen.”

The priest may say aloud a prayer or a selection of scripture.
You say,
“Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been ______ (number
of weeks/months/years) since my last confession. These are my
sins…”

Confess your sins. Include the number of times you committed each sin or at
least its general frequency (e.g., about 3 times per week). For mortal sins,
number or frequency is always required.

When finished say,
“For these and all the sins of my past life, I am sorry.”

The priest gives you a penance and invites you to say an Act of Contrition:

An Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In
choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned
against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly
intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and
to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ
suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

The priest says the prayer of absolution. Listen especially for the words, “I
absolve you from your sins.”

(If the priest says, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,” you respond,
“His mercy endures forever.”)

The priest concludes, “...Go in peace.” You respond,
“Thanks be to God.”

Why go to confession?

Jesus gave us the sacrament of Confession (or Reconciliation) when he breathed
on the Apostles saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any,
they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn 20:22-23).
With these words, Jesus entrusted his chosen disciples with a share in his own
ministry of forgiving sins. This power to forgive sins has been passed on to the
priests of our own time through the sacrament of Holy Orders.

How do I make a good confession?

Contrition is necessary for a good confession. Contrition means being sorry for
our sins. Being truly sorry, though, is not about feelings; it is instead a choice
we make. Contrition means making the choice to turn away from the sins of our
past while also intending to avoid them in the future. To know our sins, it’s
important to examine our conscience before confession (see page 2). During
confession, we should state our sins humbly and honestly while avoiding any
unnecessary details.

What do I need to confess?

There are two types of sins: mortal sins and venial sins. Mortal sins are sins
serious enough to break our relationship with God. Venial sins are less serious
sins that hurt our relationship with God, but without breaking it. Mortal sins
are always required to be confessed. Even though venial sins are not strictly
required to be confessed, doing so helps us to grow closer to God.

When is a sin mortal?

For a sin to be mortal it must meet three conditions. First, it must be something
serious. Second, the one doing it must fully know it is something serious. And
third, it must be freely chosen with deliberate consent. As children become
teenagers, temptations to mortal sin begin to become more common. One
example of something serious enough that it could be a mortal sin is doing drugs.

Will the priest tell my sins to anyone?

The priest is never allowed to tell your sins, even if he has to go to jail for it.

Should I be nervous?

It’s okay if you are nervous, but there is no need to be. Confession is about
receiving God’s mercy and being freed from the sins weighing us down.
Examination of Conscience

Ask yourself these questions to prepare for confession.

I. I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange gods before me. Have I...
- Intentionally held back a mortal sin or lied in confession?
- Put other things ahead of God in my life? (Friends, popularity, sports, school, video games, money, etc.)
- Stopped believing in God or denied my Catholic faith?
- Not prayed every day? Only prayed when I needed something?
- Taken God’s forgiveness for granted? Believed my sins are too great for God’s mercy?
- Practiced or put faith in things incompatible with Christianity? (Horoscopes, Ouija boards, good luck charms, etc.)
- Hung around friends who lead me away from God?
- Watched movies/TV shows or listened to music harmful to my relationship with God?

II. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. Have I...
- Used the name of God or Jesus disrespectfully?
- Made jokes that disrespect God, the Church, or the Catholic faith?

III. Remember to keep holy the LORD'S Day. Have I...
- Missed Mass on Sunday or holy days of obligation? If so, have I asked my family to take me?
- Showed proper reverence during Mass? Chewed gum or eaten food during Mass? Dressed appropriately for Mass?
- Kept the one-hour fast before receiving Holy Communion?
- Let unnecessary work get in the way of Sunday being a day for faith, rest, and family?

IV. Honor your father and your mother. Have I...
- Obeyed my parents/guardians? Done something they wouldn’t approve of?
- Not showed my parents respect? Yelled, spoken rudely, or talked back to them?
- Obeyed my teachers and those in rightful authority?

V. You shall not kill. Have I...
- Hurt, bullied, or been cruel to another?
- Lost my temper?

VI. You shall not commit adultery. Have I...
- Not treated my body or another’s body with purity and respect?
- Looked at inappropriate pictures or videos on purpose?

VII. You shall not steal. Have I...
- Stolen, damaged, or vandalized another’s property?
- Wasted too much money on electronics or clothing?
- Wasted too much time on video games, TV, or the internet?

VIII. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Have I...
- Lied? Cheated?
- Judged another?
- Spread a false rumor?
- Gossiped about another’s negative qualities?
- Shared secrets that I shouldn’t have?
- Insulted another? Bragged?
- Failed to stand up for someone when I should have?

IX. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. Have I...
- Worn clothes that are immodest, revealing, or too tight?
- Been too concerned about my appearance?

X. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. Have I...
- Been envious (jealous) of another’s gifts, looks, or possessions?
- Cared too much about my popularity?
- Cared too little about those usually left out?