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# FASTING TIPS FOR NEW MUSLIMS

**Make This Ramadan Your Best Ramadan Ever**



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## Introduction

Upon becoming Muslim, one must fast the month Ramadan, the second act of worship that Allah enjoins upon us, every year.

One must abstain from anything that breaks the fast; eating, drinking and sexual intercourse, from the time of fajr (dawn) until maghrib (sunset) as an act of obedience to Allah.

Like the Prayer, this act of worship has been part of the Shari`ahs given by all the Prophets. Their followers fasted as we do. Allah (Exalted be He) says:



**O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become from the pious. (Al-Baqarah 2:183)**

However, the rules, the number of days, and the periods prescribed for fasting have varied from one Shari`ah to another. Today, although fasting remains a part of most religions in some form or other, people have often changed its original form by accretions of their own. In this e-book, we will try to help you to make this Ramadan your best Ramadan ever.



## Why We Fast

The objective of fasting is not that one merely abstain from the material and physical things which break one's fast, but rather, one must also refrain from those intangible things which wipe (the reward) of one's fast, such as lying, backbiting, tale-bearing, cheating, deception, false talk, and other offensive behavior.

He should keep in mind that it is obligatory upon him to abstain from these offensive acts outside of Ramadan, but more so in this month, due to the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

*"Whoever does not refrain from false speech and deeds, Allah had no need for him to leave his food and drink."  
(Al-Bukhari)*





There are many reasons and great wisdoms why the siyam has been prescribed. From them may be the following:

- 1- It is spiritual exercise for the believer, for his soul is making jihad –here means striving- against his wants and desires.
- 2- Keeping the Muslim's soul above all offensive speech and deeds. The Prophet said:  
*"When one of you is fasting, he should not speak evil, nor should he yell and shout, and if someone were to curse or fight him, let him say, 'Indeed I am a fasting person.'"* (Al-Bukhari)
- 3- Through fasting, one realizes how his needy brothers feel, and this encourages him to fulfill their rights, ask about their welfare, and look into their needs.



## Conditions of a Valid Fast

Fasting is a requirement after puberty for all able-bodied Muslims of sound mind and good health, but there are concessions for those who are on a journey or who are ill, as well as for women during menstruation, pregnancy or breastfeeding.

In the whole year there is only one month of obligatory fasting. If you are travelling or ill you can omit it and observe it at some other convenient time of the year.

Women are exempted from fasting when they are pregnant and during their menstrual or suckling periods. Therefore, it is not allowed for a women experiencing menstruation or postpartum bleeding to fast until her bleeding stops. Once it does, she must perform a complete bath (ghusl) and make up the fasts she missed.



The fast should end at the appointed time and any delay is disapproved of.

Permission is given to eat and drink from sunset to dawn.

If one is ill or traveling, it is permissible for him not to fast, but those days should be made up at a later time. One must make up the fasts before the arrival of the following Ramadan.

A charitable contribution as compensation can serve as an alternative to keeping the fast later.





## Where Are the Results?

You are now probably saying to yourselves: We do observe the Fasting and perform the Prayers but the promised results are nowhere to be seen. One reason for this situation I have explained earlier. After snapping the vital links between various parts of Islam and injecting into it many new things, you cannot expect the same results as from the whole.

A second reason is that the way you look at *`ibadah* has changed. You believe that mere abstention from food and drink, from morning till evening, amounts to *`ibadah*; once you do all these things you have worshipped Allah. Ninety nine per cent or even more among you are unmindful of the real spirit of *`ibadah* which should permeate all your actions.

That is why the acts of *`ibadah* do not produce their full benefit. For everything in Islam depends on intention and understanding.







## From Individual to Collective

The month of Ramadan is earmarked for all Muslims to fast together, to ensure similar results. This measure turns individual `ibadah into collective `ibadah. Just as the number one, when multiplied by thousands, becomes a formidable number, so the moral and spiritual benefits accruing from the Fasting by one person alone are increased a million fold if a million people fast together.

The month of Ramadan suffuses the whole environment with a spirit of righteousness, virtue and piety. As flowers blossom in spring, so does taqwa (piety and fear of Allah) in Ramadan.

Everyone tries extra hard to avoid sin and, if they lapse, they know they can count on the help of their many



other brothers who are fasting with them. The desire automatically arises in every heart to do good works, to feed the poor, to clothe the naked, to help those in distress, to participate in any good work being done anywhere, and to prevent evil.

Just as plants have their season of flowering, so Ramadan is the time of year for the growth and flourishing of good and righteousness.

For this reason the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, said:

*Every good deed of a man is granted manifold increase, ten to seven hundred times. But says Allah: Fasting is an exception; it is exclusively for Me, and I reward for it as much as I wish. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)*



## True Spirit of Worship

The Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) has in various ways pointed out the real spirit of fasting and has explained that to go hungry and thirsty while ignoring the spirit carries no value in the sight of God.

Abstention from Falsehood

**Once, he said:**

*"If one does not give up speaking falsehood and acting by it, God does not require him to give up eating and drinking." (Al-Bukhari)*

**On another occasion, he said:**

*"Many are the people who fast but who gain nothing from their fast except hunger and thirst; and many are those who stand praying all night but gain nothing except sleeplessness." (Ad-Darimi)*



The lessons are clear and unequivocal: merely being hungry and thirsty is not by itself worship, but a means for performing real worship.

Real worship means desisting from violating the law of God out of this fear and this love of God, pursuing activities that please Him, and refraining from the indiscriminate satisfaction of physical desires. If you fast while ignoring this essence of the fasting, you are simply causing unnecessary inconvenience to your stomachs.



## Fasting & Faith

What prayers seek to do five times a day, fasting in the month of Ramadan (the ninth month of the lunar year) does once a year. During this period we eat not a grain of food nor drink a drop of water from dawn to dusk, no matter how delicious the dish or how hungry or thirsty we feel.

What is it that makes us voluntarily undergo such rigours? It is nothing but faith in God and the fear of Him and the Day of Judgment. Each and every moment during our fast we suppress our passions and desires and proclaim, by so doing, the supremacy of the law of God.



This consciousness of duty and spirit of patience that incessant fasting for a whole month inculcates in us help us strengthen our faith. Rigour and discipline during this month bring us face to face with the realities of life and help us make our life, during the rest of the year, a life of true subservience to His Will.



## Fasting & Society

From yet another point of view fasting has an immense impact on society, for all the Muslims irrespective of their status must fast during the same month. This emphasizes the essential equality of men and thus goes a long way towards creating in them sentiments of love and brotherhood. During Ramadan evil conceals itself while good comes to the fore and the whole atmosphere is filled with piety and purity.

This discipline has been imposed on us for our own advantage. Those who do not fulfill this primary duty cannot be relied on to discharge their other duties. But the worst are those who during this holy month do not hesitate to eat or drink in public. They show by their conduct that they care nothing for the commands of



Allah in Whom they profess their belief as Creator and Sustainer.

Not only this, they also show that they are not loyal members of the Muslim community - rather, they have nothing to do with it. Only the worst can be expected of such hypocrites.



## Fasting & Health

The Muslim fast during the month of Ramadan provides an opportunity to improve health and promote healthy lifestyle; diet and smoking cessation.

Since the month of Ramadan is an important time across the community, many patients will endeavor to keep their fasts during this time. With some conditions, this can clearly be harmful. The concessions exist specifically to ensure that people do not fast where it would be detrimental to their health, and this is very reasonable advice to give to patients.

Fasting is a physical and spiritual experience requiring a great deal of preparation. If you are physically unwell or not sure of your state of health, it is advisable that you speak to your doctor before the fasting commences. Discuss your medical conditions and explore possible



changes to your medication or any other alternatives that doctors may suggest to suit your needs.

What and how much we eat affects our health directly, and refraining from food can help improve self-discipline and restraint if done appropriately. It is an opportunity to make healthy lifestyle choices and give up some of those bad habits.

Being mindful of how you fast and how you break your fast can help to improve your overall health, both physical and mental. So, maximize on your gain from fasting and minimize health problems.



## Suggestions and Useful Tips

For every important event in our life it is useful to plan ahead and make needed preparations so that this occasion becomes an unforgettable event.

Days are passing quickly as we are fast approaching the month of Ramadan.

If you ask most Muslims about last Ramadan, they would tell you it feels very close, like only a few weeks or months ago.

Are you waiting for Ramadan and looking forward to its start?

Are you happy that Ramadan is nearly here, or are you worried about fasting in the summer?



Have you prepared yet your plan and program for the best month of the year?

The month of Ramadan is one of those important occasions that we witness once a year. It is a gift from God. It is a golden opportunity for Muslims to get closer to God by increasing good deeds.

Ramadan is the month in which Muslims observe the obligatory fast which has been prescribed by God on those who believe in Him as it was prescribed on previous nations.

**O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may attain piety. (Al-Baqarah 2:183)**



The above verse explains the main purpose of fasting. It is to attain taqwa (God-consciousness) which means that every Muslim must be watchful of everything. He must watch out every word he utters and every action he does.

The literal manifestation of fasting is to abstain from food, drink and intimate relations from dawn to sunset. But the real meaning of fasting goes far beyond that. It is about avoiding gossip, backbiting, evil and idle talks, arrogance, lying, breaking promises, dishonesty, severing social ties, etc.



Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said:

*“Whoever fails to leave off ruinous speech, and acting on it [during Ramadan], God does not need him to leave off eating and drinking.” (Al-Bukhari)*

Fasting is an excellent training opportunity on self-restraint as the fast teaches patience and perseverance. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

*“Fasting the month of patience and three days every month is equivalent to fasting the whole year.” (Ahmad)*

The Prophet describes the month of fasting as the month of patience because fasting teaches how to control one’s inner self and its desires.



Every new Muslim should do his best to make the coming month of Ramadan a landmark event this year. Put a target for yourself, like for example having all your sins forgiven by God and that you will be saved from Hellfire.

Ask yourself are you pleased with what you did last Ramadan? Will this Ramadan be the same as last year? Let this Ramadan be the beginning of real change. Make this Ramadan different from previous ones. Start to practice an act of worship that you never did before, or increase the acts of worship that you used to do before.

If you used to read the Qur'an once during the month of Ramadan, this year read it twice. If you used to do



Tarawih (Night Prayers) alone, this year perform it in congregation. If you did not give charity, this year make it a daily habit to give to the needy what you can afford, even it is a small amount.

If you did not observe any voluntary fasting since last Ramadan, train yourself to observe fasting during the month of Sha`ban as the Prophet used to do.

I would like to also warn of negative preparations for Ramadan which some people do by storing too much food and drink, as if Ramadan is the month for eating not a month for abstaining from food and drink from dawn to sunset.

Fasting was prescribed two months before the obligation to fight to gain the rights of the oppressed. Those who are





able to control their inner selves and their desires become stronger in the face of those who wrong them until they get back their rights.

Early Muslims used to read the Qur'an a lot in Sha`ban in preparation for Ramadan. They also used to give out in charity in Sha`ban to help the poor and the needy observe fasting during Ramadan. They also used to pray to God to bless the months of Rajab, Sha`ban, and Ramadan. This means that every Muslim should make du`aa' a strong tool in making the best of Ramadan. Du`aa should be recited before Ramadan that you witness this month, during Ramadan that God will accept your du`aa' for yourself and for others, and after Ramadan that God will accept your fasting and reward you abundantly for it.



It is said that: "Rajab is the month of planting seeds, Sha`ban is the month of watering the seeds, and Ramadan is the harvest season". Therefore, think of what you want to harvest in Ramadan and start planting it and taking care of it in Rajab and Sha`ban.

**A famous du`aa' of Prophet Muhammad:**

"Oh Allah give us the blessings of the month of Rajab and Sha`ban and allow us to reach Ramadan." (Ahmad)

During Sha`ban remind yourself and your family of the virtues of fasting. Have at least a weekly session with your wife/husband and kids to talk about the significance of fasting. Get a booklet on fasting and read it with your children to make them love fasting. Focus on the virtues



of Ramadan, that it is the month during which the Quran was revealed and that this month has the Night of Power which is better than a thousand months.

Always remember that in Ramadan rewards are multiplied, the gates of heaven are opened, the gates of hell are shut, and sins are forgiven. Be sure of God's mercy on Muslims who observe fasting faithfully and avoid committing sins completely.

To make Ramadan the best month of the year, remember the following:

- Strengthen your faith during this month by confirming your belief in the unity of God.
- Have the intention of pleasing God with all your acts of worship.



- Keep away from the things that nullify your faith.
- Follow the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad.
- Feed the poor and the needy. Feel the gift of giving in Ramadan.
- Before going out for `Eid prayer, make sure to pay Zakat Al-Fitr.
- Perform the daily prayers at their fixed times and in congregation as much as you can. Attend the Tarawih prayers constantly and perform extra prayers. Rediscover the power of prayer in Ramadan and concentrate much while praying. Leave this worldly life behind your back once you raise your hands and say Allahu Akbar (God is the greatest).



- Visit your family members and relatives.
- Observe i`tikaf (retreat in the mosque) during the last ten days of Ramadan, if you can.
- Make the Qur`an your companion in Ramadan and have the intention to finish reading it at least once.
- Have the intention to offer sincere repentance to God.
- Have the intention to refine your manners and the way you treat others.
- Make any da`wah effort during Ramadan if you can, like distributing Ramadan-related da`wah materials (CDs, booklets, videos, PDF files, etc.).
- If you have the financial means, make iftar for new



Muslims in your community to help them integrate with their fellow Muslims. You can also invite non-Muslims to such events to get to know them and introduce Islam to them through fasting.

- Make iftar meals and gifts for orphans and marginalized children to make Ramadan a happy occasion for them.
- Prepare your du`aa'(supplication) list. Write down the du`aa' (supplication) that you want to recite throughout the month. You can ask God for anything and everything. Choose the proper times and occasions of offering the du`aa'. The best supplication is during prostration, while offering the late night prayer, in the last days of Ramadan, and during Laylat Al-Qadr (the Night of Power).



Prioritize your list of supplications. Observe the etiquette of making supplication. Start your supplication with praising God and sending peace and blessings to the Prophet Muhammad. Face the qiblah (direction) and raise your hands. Be sure that God will never let your hands empty when you pray to Him. Do not forget the oppressed people, the people of Syria, and Muslims in Burma (Myanmar).

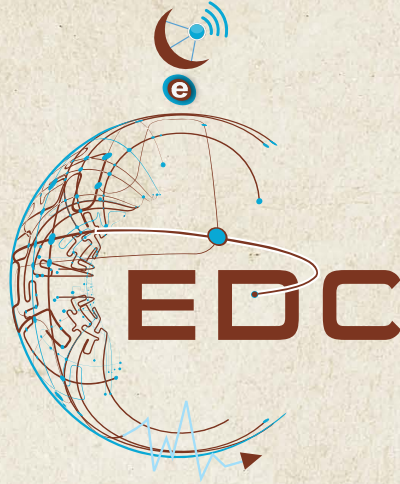
We pray to God to allow us to live till next Ramadan, and make it the best Ramadan ever.

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