

# Ramaḍān



## Information and advice for schools

Ramaḍān is the ninth month of the Islāmic calendar – the month of fasting. It is a special time for all Muslims. Its completion is celebrated on the day of ‘Eid ul Fiṭr.

Muslims fast from daybreak to sunset (about 6.30am to 3.55pm in December in London). This means no eating or drinking during these hours.

Fasting is compulsory once a child has reached the age of puberty. Those who are ill or on a journey are excused, as are women during their monthly period; missed days are made up for later in the year.

Swimming should be avoided, because of the likelihood of accidentally swallowing water.

### Medication

Sometimes illness prevents fasting. A mild cold or headache probably won’t be a problem, but if someone is too ill to fast then they should stop fasting until they recover sufficiently.

It is important that essential medication is taken when required. For example, asthmatics should use their inhaler if necessary. Young Muslims might try to ‘tough it out’, but they should not risk their health for fasting. Teachers who are concerned should consult parents, and may get further advice from local Muslim contacts or national Muslim organisations (see overleaf).

### Encouragement

Fasting in Ramaḍān is the fourth ‘pillar’ of Islām, an act of worship of great importance. During this month Muslims should be more spiritual, more caring and considerate, they should control their temper and refrain from using bad language. Encouragement from teachers can give a real boost to young people learning to fast. When necessary, teachers can also remind pupils that bad behaviour and fasting don’t go together!

“O you who have believed,  
decreed upon you is fasting,  
as it was decreed upon those before you,  
that you may become righteous.”  
{Qur’ān, 2:183}

“The month of Ramaḍān  
[is that] in which was revealed the Qur’ān,  
a guidance for the people  
and clear proofs of guidance  
and criterion.  
So whoever sights  
[the new moon of] the month,  
let him fast it;  
and whoever is ill or on a journey,  
then an equal number of other days.  
God intends for you ease  
and does not intend for you hardship  
and [wants] for you  
to complete the period  
and to magnify God  
for that [to] which He has guided you;  
and perhaps you will be grateful.”  
{Qur’ān, 2:185}

### Starting out

Children practice fasting from a young age, depending on their development and the wishes of parents. They may begin by ‘fasting’ for a half day, until lunchtime, and then move on to the occasional full day. Some children may want to fast before their parents feel they are ready for it! Teachers, especially in primary schools, should try to find out *from parents* which children are fasting and when.

### PE

When it comes to exercise and physical exertion the basic rule is – don’t overdo it! Young people inexperienced in fasting may not make sufficient allowance for this. During the month of Ramaḍān, children can take part in PE provided that they are not expected to over-exert themselves.

## Tarāwih

Every night in Ramaḍān there are special, extra prayers called Tarāwih. These are performed in congregation at the mosque or at home. Because of this extra commitment, it is helpful if teachers bear it in mind when deciding how much homework to set.

## Lailatul Qadr

There is a very special night in the last ten days of Ramaḍān called Lailatul Qadr (The Night of Power or Decrees). It is not known for sure exactly which day it is on, so Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ has recommended that Muslims increase their efforts for all of the last ten days. This is the night when the Qur'ān was first revealed, and God describes it as better than a thousand months. So for the last ten days many Muslims do extra prayers during the night.

## 'Eid ul Fiṭr

The completion of the fasting month of Ramaḍān is celebrated on 'Eid ul Fiṭr, the first day after Ramaḍān (see box below). The day starts with a light meal, then special congregational prayers that the

## Typical day

5.45am	Light breakfast	←	or a big breakfast – or nothing if you oversleep!
6.30am	Fajr (morning) prayer  Read Qur'ān		
1.15pm	Zuḥr (midday) prayer		no lunch!
2.45pm	'Aṣr (afternoon) prayer		
4.00pm	Break fast (Iftār) ← Maghrib (evening) prayer ← Dinner ←		dates and other sweets then a big, big dinner.
7.30pm	'Ishā' (night) prayer Tarāwih prayer ←		our special prayer for Ramaḍān.
	Supper		

whole family can go to. Muslims usually spend the rest of the day visiting relatives or friends, and eating special food. Children are given present or new clothes.

It is important to remember that Muslims come from many different cultures. Each has its own types of foods, its own style of dress, and its own way of celebrating.

## Contacts

Good communication with parents and the local Muslim

community are always important for schools. If you need further information you can contact:

Muslim Educational Trust  
020 7272 8502

## When exactly is 'Eid?

Planning can be difficult when you don't know the exact date for a festival. The Islāmic calendar is a lunar calendar. It has twelve lunar months, each month beginning with the new moon and lasting for 29 or 30 days. A month will last for 30 days if, after 29 days, the new moon is not seen. 'Eid ul Fiṭr, the 'Eid after Ramaḍān, is on the first day of the next month (Shawwāl), so usually it could fall on one of two days. Because this depends on the sighting of the new moon, Muslims only know exactly when 'Eid will be a day or two beforehand.

These are the approximate dates of Islāmic events for the next few academic years:

Academic year	Ramaḍān starts	'Eid ul Fiṭr	'Eid ul Aḍḥā
1998-1999	20 December 1998	18 January 1999	28 March 1999
1999-2000	9 December 1999	8 January 2000	16 March 2000
2000-2001	27 November 2000	26 December 2000	6 March 2001
2001-2002	16 November 2001	16 December 2001	22 February 2002
2002-2003	6 November 2002	5 December 2002	11 February 2003
2003-2004	26 October 2003	25 November 2003	1 February 2004