

Ramadan is the Muslim holy month. Read all about how it is celebrated and what it means for people.

Before listening

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises to check your understanding.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–j) with the vocabulary (1–10).

Vocabulary

1. to give up
2. charity
3. the crescent moon
4. dawn
5. an exception
6. to go about your day
7. to break a fast
8. dates
9. to observe (a festival)
10. your loved ones

Definition

- a. the time of day when the sun begins to appear in the sky
- b. the people you love, especially members of your family
- c. to do your typical daily activities
- d. to stop doing something that is a habit
- e. to celebrate or participate in
- f. someone or something that is not included in the rule or the expectation
- g. the sweet fruits from various types of palm tree
- h. help, especially money, given to people who need it
- i. the shape of the moon when more than half of it is not visible; a symbol of Islam
- j. to eat after a period of not eating anything

Ramadan

What is Ramadan?

For Muslims, Ramadan is a holy month of fasting and prayer. During Ramadan people give up bad habits and try to be model human beings. Many people give money to charity during Ramadan. For many, Ramadan is a chance to think and reflect. It is also a time of prayer and people coming together, especially to share *Iftar*, the evening meal just after sunset.

Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam – the five essential practices for all Muslims.

When is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and the start date is based on the appearance of the crescent moon. As the Islamic calendar is slightly shorter than the Western

calendar, Ramadan comes earlier and earlier every year. This means that Muslims experience Ramadan in different seasons during their lives.

Fasting

Fasting means not eating or drinking anything for a certain period of time. During Ramadan, Muslims fast while it is light outside. That means they don't eat or drink anything from dawn (the moment the sun rises) to sunset. All adult Muslims are expected to fast. However, there are special exceptions for people who are ill, elderly, pregnant or travelling. Young people normally start fasting when they are teenagers. However, as children get older, their families might train them by gradually introducing a little bit of fasting, without expecting them to do the whole thing.

What's a day like during Ramadan?

During Ramadan, Muslims wake up early to eat the first meal of the day before dawn. This meal has to keep people going until sunset, so they try to have nutritious food, including protein and plenty of water. At dawn, it's time for morning prayer.

Muslims don't avoid normal obligations like work and school just because they're fasting. Usually, they just go about their day as normal. Once the sun goes down, families meet to break the day's fast with a meal called an *iftar*. Dates are a traditional food, accompanied by water or milk. The main meal may include stew, rice, soup, lentils, meat, fish, rice and more, depending on what is popular in the country.

What's the meaning of Ramadan?

Hundreds of millions of Muslims all around the world observe Ramadan. It's a time for spiritual reflection, extra prayer, increased generosity and thinking about other people. Fasting reminds people to be thankful and to think about how fortunate they are. Ramadan is also a time of joy and celebration that people enjoy spending with their loved ones.

What happens at the end of Ramadan?

At the end of Ramadan, there is a festival called Eid al-Fitr (the 'festival of breaking the fast').

The celebrations often include wearing new clothes, visiting family and friends, giving presents and enjoying special meals. Eid al-Fitr is a way for Muslims to give thanks to Allah after reflecting and fasting during Ramadan. To make sure all Muslims can participate in Eid al-Fitr, Muslims pay *zakat*, which is money given to people in need.

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
	True	False
1. Ramadan lasts for three days.	True	False
2. Ramadan can be in spring, summer, autumn or winter.	True	False
3. During Ramadan, Muslims can only drink water during daylight hours.	True	False
4. Some people have a special reason why they don't have to fast during Ramadan.	True	False
5. During Ramadan, people who are fasting are not expected to work or study.	True	False
6. Fasting during Ramadan helps people reflect on what they have and feel grateful.	True	False
7. Eid al-Fitr is a festival that marks the end of Ramadan.	True	False
8. People often exchange gifts as part of the Eid al-Fitr celebrations.	True	False

Task 2

Choose the best answer.

about	at	down	in
on	to	until	up

1. Ramadan is a holy month of fasting, prayer and giving things that are bad for you.
2. The start date for Ramadan is based the appearance of the crescent moon.
3. All adult Muslims are expected fast, unless they have a special reason not to.
4. The first meal of the day, before dawn, has to keep people going sunset.
5. Once the sun goes, families meet to break the day's fast.
6. Muslims don't avoid normal obligations during Ramadan – they go their day as usual.
7. There is a festival called Eid al-Fitr the end of Ramadan.
8. *Zakat* is money paid to people need.

Discussion

Do you celebrate Ramadan? Tell us about it!

Answers

Preparation task

1. d
2. h
3. i
4. a
5. f
6. c
7. j
8. g
9. e
10. b

Task 1

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. True
8. True

Task 2

1. up
2. on
3. to
4. until
5. down
6. about
7. at
8. in