[Preparation for Ramadan](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/07/preparation-for-ramadan.html)

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Allah Almighty says, **The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong).]** (Al-Baqarah 2: 185)

Every Muslim should prepare himself to welcome the blessed month of Ramadan by strengthening his relationship with the Qur’an, busing himself with the spirit of fasting, and recharging his spiritual battery to prepare himself to make the whole blessed month of Ramadan a real occasion of sincere obedience.

Ramadan is an event that occurs in the life of the faithful, as individuals and as an Ummah, once a year. It is intended by Allah to help us to recharge our spiritual batteries and thus prepare us for the great mission of realizing His will on earth. Therefore, in order to benefit from Ramadan, we may do well to prepare for it by opening our hearts and minds to embrace it. Let me offer a few tips:

**1.** We should empower ourselves by learning as much as we can about the precise laws as well as the benefits of fasting.

**2.** We should ensure that we gain true benefits from our fasting, let us make sure to realize the spirit of fasting: this can only be done by abstaining, not only from food, drink, and sex, but also by strictly restraining our minds, hearts as well as our eyes, ears, hands, tongue, and so on.

**3.**We must embrace the spirit of fasting as stressed in Hadith: to be charitable and compassionate as much as we can.

**4.** We should strengthen our relationship with the Qur’an; for Ramadan is the month of the Qur’an.

**5.** We should engage in *dhikr* and condition ourselves to make it second nature.

**6.** Last but not least, we should build up our community through acts of charity and compassion and extending help to those in need as much as we can.

Let us pray that we come out of Ramadan with our faith recharged, gaining strength in our faith and commitment and relationship with Allah.

[Are you Ready for Ramadan?](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/07/are-you-ready-for-ramadan.html)

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Before embarking on a journey, most travelers will prepare for it either physically or mentally. Since Ramadan is just around the corner, here is a quick checklist to better prepare ourselves for this journey of test.....Let's start from head to toe:

**1. Head (Brain) -**Are our minds clear on what are we expected or required to do and why?

a. YES. (it's the third pillar of ISLAM and to seek ALLAH's mercy and love).

b. NO.. (check again..!! This is not a joke!).

**2. Eyes -**Are we ready to even lower our gazes further?..

a. YES.. (Hopefully, our eyes will be "shut" to anything "haram" even more than our normal days)...

b. NO... (please get hold of a blindfold!)..

**3. Ears -**Are we ready not to listen to anything but only good such AL QURAN recital, religious speeches etc.?

a. YES.. (All radio and television programs are tuned to ISLAMIC channels).

b. NO... (Earplug anybody?).

**4. Mouth -**Are we going to blabber unnecessarily?

a. YES.. (Silence is golden applied here).

b. NO... (Alhumdulilah, only Qur'anic verses will come out from the mouth this Ramadan!..SURE?..TRY no harm trying, Insha'Allah).

[How to boost up your spirits for this Ramdan](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/how-to-boost-up-your-spirits-for-this.html)

[15 ways to make Ramadan special for your Kids](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/15-ways-to-make-ramadan-special-for.html)

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Here are a few ideas to help make it special this year Insha-Allah.

**1. Hold a family meeting about Ramadan**

A week before Ramadan, hold a family meeting to explain what Ramadan is, that the sighting of the moon indicates its beginning, what Muslims do and how the family’s schedule will change. Also ask for suggestions of what everyone would like to do during the month. For instance, would they like to take a trip somewhere, eat a specific type of food, etc.

**2. Welcome the month with balloons, banners and more**

Say “Ramadan Mubarak” with the standard party fare: balloons, a great banner and decorations galore. Get the kids to help decorate the place and ask for their ideas and suggestions so they feel included.

**3. Tell a Ramadan story during bedtime every night**

Don’t just rely on children’s books about Ramadan to share stories. Describe what Ramadan was like when you were a kid. You can also make some tales up with your child as the main character in a Ramadan adventure!

**4. Let them fast even a quarter of the day and celebrate**

Kids often want to fast as they see their parents and older siblings do. This year, let them fast for a couple of hours. Prepare a special “Iftar” for them when they break fast with a couple of their favorite foods.

**5. Make Ramadan loot bags for their class**

Get their teacher’s permission to make loot bags with Ramadan Mubarak written on them for the class. Fill it with candy, small toys and a little card explaining in two or three short sentences what Ramadan is. Have your child distribute the bags to their classmates.

**6. Make a presentation about Ramadan in their class**

**7. Make Ramadan arts and crafts at home**

Art is a great way to learn more about Ramadan. Have the kids make the different shapes of the moon and show which one indicates the beginning of the month, which one the middle and which one the end; make a collage of some of their favorite foods for Iftar; have them make special Ramadan place-mats for the dinner table.

**8. Make a family trip out of sighting the moon**

Once the kids are dressed in their pajamas, herd them into the car and take them to where other Muslims in the city are gathering to sight the Ramadan moon. Do the same at the end of the month. Bring a telescope or binoculars.

**9. Invite their friends over for a kids-only Iftar**

Let your kids come up with the guest list and menu. Also, have them make some of the food. You can pick some kid-friendly recipes or they can help with preparing the parts of Iftar that don’t require using a stove or cutting with knives.

**10. Invite grandparents or elder community members over for Iftar**

After everyone’s eaten, hold a storytelling session where the guests describe what Ramadan was like when they were growing up. Ask them to be descriptive. How was Iftar time announced? In some countries, they use a drum. In other places a verbal announcement on a loudspeaker is made. What kind of food did they eat? What games did they play during Ramadan?

**11. Make a Ramadan 2010 scrapbook**

Take plenty of photos of everyone during Suhur (now that’s entertaining!) and Iftar time, as well as while they are fasting and pieces of decorations used, interesting stickers, etc. to make a scrapbook about this Ramadan. Each child should bring three mementos he or she would like to include.

**12. Remember the poor**

Arrange with the kids to volunteer at a soup kitchen for a few hours on a Saturday or Sunday. If possible, try to find one that has children as its clients so they see that not only adults, but kids like themselves also suffer from hunger.

**13. Make and send homemade Ramadan cards**

Before the month starts, have an arts and crafts session to make Ramadan Mubarak cards for siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Send the cards soon though, time’s running out!

**14. Play Ramadan halaal songs/Nasheeds**

When the kids are playing or involved in some leisure activity, turn off the usual fare and put on some beautiful Ramadan songs in English and your own language if available. Maybe you can ask the kids to memorize one song by the end of Ramadan or compose one of their own.

**15. Take them to Tarawih prayer so they feel they’re part of a community**

Nothing teaches community spirit like congregational prayer. Take the kids with you to the mosque for Tarawih prayer on Friday and Saturday nights when homework isn’t an issue. Also, ask them to bring some of their allowance to give in charity while they’re there.

[How to boost up your spirits for this Ramdan](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/how-to-boost-up-your-spirits-for-this.html)

[15 ways to make Ramadan special for your Kids](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/15-ways-to-make-ramadan-special-for.html), [Seven Strategies to Train Kids this Ramadan](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/seven-strategies-to-train-kids-this.html)

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**The Prophet Muhammad**

“No father has given a greater gift to his children than good moral training.” (Tirmidhi), peace and blessings of God be upon the Prophet.

The many aspects of Ramadan–fasting, prayers, moral values, charity, Quran, family, Eid– provide a valuable opportunity to train kids. Whether they are your own kids or kids you teach, education or training isn’t an automatic or easy process. Children don’t bring empty minds and fill them with what we say. Training requires effort, energy and a few techniques to take off.

Here are some training tips and techniques to transform your children’s minds and memories this Ramadan:

Let them get their Hands Dirty

“The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action.”

Children learn by “doing”. On average, students retain 75 percent of a lesson when they learn through hands-on activities compared to five percent through a lecture or 10 percent through reading (Brunmer, Jerome, “The Process of Learning”).

If, for example, you want to teach your kids the concept of Zakat, get them to help you calculate your Zakat, decide where to send the money, and mail the envelopes. Action and implementation can occur while children learn, not necessarily after!

The Prophet used to take his daughter Fatima with him when he went for prayer at the Kaba in Makkah. Later, in Madinah, he would bring his grandchildren, Hassan and Hussain, to the Masjid as toddlers before they knew how to pray.

A concept becomes real and important to children when they experience it rather than simply read about it.

They’ll remember how to do it years later when you may catch them telling their friends,

“I’ve been calculating Zakat since I was a kid!”   
  
**Involve their Emotions**

**When children get emotionally involved in an activity, they rarely want to leave it. Video games and TV shows target children’s emotions. As parents and educators, we can use the same technique for training.**

**Stories, songs, skits, crafts and games grab children’s emotions. Once a child is interested and excited, she is more likely to stay attentive till the end and get the message you want to give. Just as we remember events in our lives that were emotionally significant, children remember concepts learned through activities that were “fun”, “funny”, “exciting” or “different”.**

**Don’t be afraid to stir some fun into your training—you don’t have to lose any content. Write a song about Eid, create a Hadith treasure box, organize a Ramadan trivia night, or read a story about Ramadan in Madinah. If they enjoy it, the kids will come back for more!**

**Reveal the Purpose**

We often hear students complain, “Why do we have to do this?” or “This math exercise is pointless”. Unfortunately, we often hear responses like, “Because I’m telling you to,” “Because you have to”, or worse, “You’ll get a new CD player if you finish the book”.

Like us, if children don’t see the purpose or importance of an action, they won’t have the motivation to complete it. To avoid getting similar comments from your kids about prayer or fasting, make sure they understand the purpose. Before you begin any lesson, whether it’s a story about the Companions of the Prophet or an Eid craft, explain exactly why you are the doing the activity and what benefits the children will gain from it.

Remind your children that they are doing acts of worship to please Allah, not you. Explain why we need to please Allah and how every action, including washing dishes or math homework, will help us achieve that goal. If children are praying only to please you, when you leave, their motivation and prayers will disappear.

If children are motivated to fast Ramadan or complete the Quran for a material incentive (like a CD player), they may never develop a love of Allah or an intrinsic desire to perform the action. They may, instead, learn to value material rewards and when the rewards disappear, the actions may disappear with them.

Help your children understand that, for Muslims, rewards don’t necessarily come in this life. They may have to wait for the bigger and better rewards of the hereafter.

**Highlight the Big Ideas**

“Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school.”

Albert Einstein

Ask yourself how many equations or formulas you remember from your Grade 12 Math textbook. It may be five or two or none. Let’s be honest – most of us retained very little of the details we learned.

Children will not retain all the Fiqh rulings of Zakat or Wudu or SalahÉ.and they won’t need to! Make sure the little that they retain is exactly what you want them to remember. Focus on the big ideas, such as the awareness that Allah is watching us, that we get our rulings from the Quran and the Sunnah, that prayer is a means of self-purification, etc. Repeat these ideas every day in different ways. While your children instill these principles in their minds, show them how to learn the rest on their own, when they need it.

Help your kids learn “how to learn”. Teach them where to find the Fiqh information they need or how to do research on a topic and who to ask for information. They will be better prepared if they master the basics and know how to get the specifics. Memorizing every ruling will be a waste of their time and yours.

**Let them Lead!**

Children often take responsibilities more seriously than adults. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, appointed young adults like Ali, Anas and Usamah ibn Zaid, young adults, for important assignments that sometimes required them to lead even older and more experienced Companions.

Give children leadership over important tasks and step out of the picture. Assign one child to wake up all his siblings for Suhur. Let someone else be in charge of updating the Iftar time every evening. Allow the children to plan, budget and buy Eid gifts for all the relatives. Let them choose which task they want to “be in charge of”.

Allow children to make mistakes and realize on their own what they should have done. Experience often trains better than instruction. Once a child goes out into the cold without a jacket, he’ll remember, before you can remind him, to put on his jacket next time.

**Train kids to be responsible for their own learning. If a child asks,**

“Does brushing teeth break my fast?” a simple “yes” or “no” may give her the answer, but won’t provide any long-term training.

Ask her instead, “Where can you look to find that answer? Let’s do some research.”

Begin the month of Ramadan by asking your children to do a research project on what breaks the fast and what does not. If they find the information themselves, they are likely to remember it and know exactly where to get it again next year.

“The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change.” Carl Rogers

**Get Excited!**

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

W. B. Yeats

Kids catch on to your enthusiasm. Show some excitement and passion about the topic you’re teaching.

**Show your kids that you “can’t wait” for Ramadan to begin.**

**Be cheerful at prayer times.**

**Decorate the house in anticipation of Eid.**

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, taught by example. His character and actions motivated people to love and emulate him. Be the example you want your kids to be. Make a genuine effort to love the activities you want your kids to love.

**Combine Love with Learning**

Abu Huraira reported that al-Aqra’ b. Habis saw the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, kissing Hasan (his grandson). He said: I have ten children, but I have never kissed any one of them, whereupon Allah’s Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said: He who does not show mercy, no mercy would be shown to him. (Muslim)

Show children that you love them, regardless of how they perform. Allow each child to progress at his own pace. Saying, “look at your cousin Aminah—she’s already finished the fifteenth juz“, will only lower your child’s self-esteem and discourage what she’s already accomplishing.

Excessive competition and comparison can often result in helplessness and lack of motivation for children who learn in different ways or at a slower pace. Allow children to judge their own progress and compare themselves to their former level rather than that of others.

Make this Ramadan the beginning of a memorable and long-lasting training experience for you and your children!

[How to boost up your spirits for this Ramdan](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/how-to-boost-up-your-spirits-for-this.html)

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**1. Dua**

Ask Allah to make this the most awesome, spiritually uplifting Ramadan you’ve ever had. Only He can make it happen and relying on Him completely is one step in boosting our spirits.

**2. Quiet your mind**

Turn off the TV, internet, radio, cell phone, pager, iPod, etc. No, not all day, but for at least 10 minutes a day. Find a quiet place, close your eyes and connect with God. At first, your mind will swirl with the useless and not-so-useless info in your head. But force it to think of three things in these few minutes:

Allah your purpose in life

Are you living your life on purpose?

Do this every day of Ramadan if you can. If that’s not possible, try it at least three times a week.

**3. Learn about great Muslims**

Read about or listen to the story of a Companion daily. This is a wonderful way to see how other Muslims retained their strength of faith against incredible odds. A sure-fire spirituality booster.

**4. Connect to the Qur'an**

The Quran is God’s way of talking to us. It’s one of the most important keys to spiritual upliftment. This Ramadan, connect to the Quran in a new way. If you already read Quran regularly, perhaps you can choose a new theme to focus on or select a Surah you haven’t read in a while. If you don’t read Quran regularly, maybe you can read just two minutes of Quran a day, reading only from the first page you encounter when you open up the Book.

In addition, try to keep a Qur'anic journal to record your reflections, questions, thoughts, etc. about what you’ve read.

**5. Take care of others**

Whether it’s someone who’s away from their family, a person who’s having problems with a spouse or their kids or a fellow student struggling with their grades, make an extra effort this Ramadan to help others out. The spiritual boost you get in return is well worth it.

**6. Feed the hungry**

While your stomach shrieks in protest, give that panhandler some change, volunteer at a soup kitchen, get involved with your local food pantry or make a couple of bag lunches to give to the hungry you meet on your way to school or work.

**7. Give up one lifelong bad habit**

Ask yourself what some of your defining traits are. Then decide which is the worst of them. Is it a hot temper? Apathy? Laziness? Impatience? Whatever it is, use this Ramadan to put an end to it. Practice the opposite of your bad habit every day until the end of the month. By then Insha Allah, you’ll look back and be amazed at what a change you’ve made for the better.

**8. Use those Nights of Power**

The last ten nights or Ramadan aren’t called the Nights of Power for nothing. Use these precious times for deep, heartfelt Dua (supplication), self-analysis, reflection and serious thought.

[Secrets of Fasting](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/07/secrets-of-fasting.html)

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_iGO9Q79AkT8/TEhMhIbaR3I/AAAAAAAADbA/6GXiVhsD9ew/s200/left_menu_design.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_iGO9Q79AkT8/TEhMhIbaR3I/AAAAAAAADbA/6GXiVhsD9ew/s1600/left_menu_design.jpg)

**The Inner Secrets of Fasting**   
  
Know, that in the fast (Sawm) is a special quality that is not found in anything else. And that is its close connection to Allah, such that He says: “The fast (Sawm) is for Me and I will reward it.” [Saheeh al-Bukhaaree and Muslim]

This connection is enough to show the high status of fasting. Similarly, the Ka`bah is highly dignified due to its close connection to Him, as occurs in His statement:

“And sanctify My House.” [Surah al-Hajj:26]

Indeed, the fast is only virtuous due to two significant concepts:

The first: It is a secret and hidden action thus, no one from the creation is able to see it. Therefore riyaa’ (showing off) cannot enter into it.

The second: It is a means of subjugating the enemies of Allah. This is because the road that the enemies (of Allah) embark upon (in order to misguide the Son of Aadam) is that of desires. And eating and drinking strengthens the desires.

There are many reports that indicate the merits of fasting, and they are all well known.

The recommended acts of fasting:

The pre-dawn meal (suhoor) and delaying in taking it are preferable, as well as hastening to break the fast and doing so with dates.

Generosity in giving is also recommended during Ramadaan, as well as doing good deeds and increasing in charity. This is in accordance with the way of the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam).

It is also recommended to study the Qur’aan and perform I`tikaaf during Ramadaan, especially in the last ten days, as well as increasing upon the exertion (towards doing good deeds) in it.

In the two Saheehs, `Aa’ishah said:

“When the (last) ten days (of Ramadaan) would come, the Prophet would tighten his waist-wrapper (izaar), spend the night in worship, and wake his family up (for prayer).” [Saheeh al-Bukhaaree and Muslim]

The scholars have mentioned two views concerning the meaning of “tighten his waist-wrapper (izaar)”:

The first: It means the turning away from women.

The second: It is an expression denoting his (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) eagerness and diligence in doing good deeds.

They also say that the reason for his (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) exertion in the last ten days of Ramadaan was due to his (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) seeking of the Night of Al-Qadr (Lailatul-Qadr).

An explanation of the inner secrets of fasting and its characteristics:

There are three levels of fasting: The general fast, the specific fast, and the more specific fast.

As for the general fast, then it is the refraining of the stomach and the private parts from fulfilling their desires.

The specific fast is the refraining of ones gaze, tongue, hands, feet, hearing and eyes, as well as the rest of his body parts from committing sinful acts.

As for the more specific fast, then it is the heart’s abstention from its yearning after the worldly affairs and the thoughts which distance one away from Allah, as well as its (the heart’s) abstention from all the things that Allah has placed on the same level.

From the characteristics of the specific fast is that one lowers his gaze and safeguards his tongue from the repulsive speech that is forbidden, disliked, or which has no benefit, as well as controlling the rest of his body parts.

In a hadeeth reported by Al-Bukhaaree:

“Whosoever does not abandon false speech and the acting upon it, Allah is not in need of him leaving off his food and drink.” [Saheeh al-Bukhaaree, Abu Dawood, at-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maajah]

Another characteristic of the specific fast is that one does not overfill himself with food during the night. Instead, he eats in due measure, for indeed, the son of Aadam does not fill a vessel more evil than his stomach.

If he were to eat his fill during the first part of the night, he would not make good use of himself for the remainder of the night. In the same way, if he eats to his fill for suhoor, he does not make good use of himself until the afternoon. This is because excessive eating breeds laziness and lethargy. Therefore, the objective of fasting disappears due to one’s excessiveness in eating, for what is intended by the fast, is that one savors the taste of hunger and becomes an abandoner of desires.

Recommended Fasts: As for the recommended fasts, then know that preference for fasting is established in certain virtuous days. Some of these virtuous days occur every year, such as fasting the first six days of the month of Shawaal after Ramadaan, fasting the day of `Arafah, the day of `Aashooraa, and the ten days of Dhul-Hijjah and Muharram.

Some of them occur every month, such as the first part of the month, the middle part of it, and the last part of it. So whoever fasts the first part of the month, the middle part of it, and the last part of it, then he has done well.

Some fasts occur every week, and they are every Monday and Thursday.

The most virtuous of the recommended fasts is the fast of Dawood (`alayhis salaam). He would fast one day and break his fast the next day. This achieves the following three objectives:

The soul is given its share on the day the fast is broken. And on the day of fasting, it completes its worship in full.

The day of eating is the day of giving thanks and the day of fasting is the day of having patience. And Faith (Eemaan) is divided into two halves – that of thankfulness and that of patience. [Note: the hadeeth with a similar statement is unauthentic, see adh-Dha`eefah: 625]

It is the most difficult struggle for the soul. This is because every time the soul gets accustomed to a certain condition, it transfers itself to that.

As for fasting every day, then it has been reported by Muslim, from the hadeeth of Abu Qataadah, that `Umar (radhiallahu `anhu) asked the Prophet (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam): ‘What is the case if one were to fast every day?’ So he (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: “He did not fast nor did he break his fast – or – he did not fast and he did not break his fast.” [Saheeh Muslim]

This is concerning the one who fasts continuously, even during the days in which fasting is forbidden.

Characteristics of the most specific fast:

Know that the one who has been given intellect, knows the objective behind fasting. Therefore, he burdens himself to the extent that he will not be unable to do that which is more beneficial than it.

Ibn Mas`ood would fast very little and it is reported that he used to say: “When I fast, I grow weak in my prayer. And I prefer the prayer over the (optional) fast.

Some of them (the Sahaabah) would weaken in their recitation of the Qur’aan while fasting. Thus, they would exceed in breaking their fast (i.e. by observing less optional fasts), until they were able to balance their recitation. Every individual is knowledgeable of his condition and of what will rectify it.

**\*\*\*\*\***

[Rewards of Fasting](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/rewards-of-fasting.html)

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_iGO9Q79AkT8/TFni0vdgCDI/AAAAAAAADeA/pWGhTe0UTCg/s200/left_menu_design.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_iGO9Q79AkT8/TFni0vdgCDI/AAAAAAAADeA/pWGhTe0UTCg/s1600/left_menu_design.jpg)

Every act of goodness is rewarded. Rewards are given based on the sincerity of the intention. Fasting is the only worship about which Allah has said that He Himself is the reward for it. This means that one develops such a close relationship with Allah that Allah Himself becomes the helper.

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said: **“Allah, the Lord of Honor and glory says: All other deeds of man are for himself, but his fasting is purely for Me and I shall reward him for it. The fast is a shield. When any of you is fasting he should abstain from loose talk and noisy exchanges. Should anyone revile him or seek to pick a quarrel with him, he should respond with: I am observing a fast. By Him in Whose hands is the life of Muhammad, the breath of one who is fasting is purer in the sight of Allah than the fragrance of musk. One who fasts experiences two joys: he is joyful when he breaks his fast, and he is joyful by virtue of his fast when he meets his Lord” (Bukhari and Muslim).**

Sa’ad ibn Sahl relates that the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “There is a gate of Paradise called Rayyan through which only those will enter on the Day of Judgment who are regular in observing the fast and no one else. A call will go forth: Where are those who observed the fast regularly? And they will step forth and no one beside them will enter through that gate. After they shall have entered, the gate will be closed and no one else will enter thereby” (Bukhari and Muslim).

Abu Sa’id Khudri relates that the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said:**“When a servant of Allah observes the fast for a day for the sake of Allah, He thereby repels the Fire from him a distance of seventy years of journeying” (Bukhari and Muslim).**

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said: **“He who observes the fast during Ramadan out of sincerity of faith and in hope of earning merit will have his past sins forgiven him” (Bukhari and Muslim).**

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said: **“When Ramadan arrives the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of hell are locked up and satans are put in chains” (Bukhari and Muslim).**

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Fasting is the fourth pillar of Islam. The word “Sawm ” (meaning to stop or abstain) is used in Arabic for fasting. A fast then means that one refrains from eating, drinking and other physical things (all those things that are otherwise allowed) from dawn to sunset. This month comes every year to spread the blessings and mercy of Allah. We are thankful to Allah for providing physical forms of divine worship such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage to improve our moral and spiritual condition.

**Welcoming the Month of Ramadan:**The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has said: “The month of Ramadan comes to you. This is a blessed month” (Kitab-ul-Saum). The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has declared this month as the “month of Allah” because one abandons all otherwise “lawful” things in the way of Allah. He has also declared this month as the “Chief of the months.” Worship during this month gains more blessings so one should fast with sincere intentions and worship should be performed to win Allah’s pleasure.

**Ramadan – Anniversary of the Holy Quran:**Ramadan is that blessed month in which the Holy Quran was first revealed to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). In this regard this month celebrates the birthday of the Holy Quran. To render our dues we should recite the Holy Quran as much as possible. During this month, at night, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) use to recite the Holy Quran in its entirety with the Angel Gabriel (Jibraeel).

**Opening the doors to heaven:**Hazrat Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) has narrated that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “When the month of Ramadan starts, the doors of heaven are opened, the doors of the hell are closed, and Satan is put into chains” (Sahih Muslim Kitab-ulSaum). In this saying the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has promised a high place in heaven for one who observes the fast because a believer is enjoined to perform such deeds that please Allah and stay away from bad things.

**Ramadan’s Special relationship with Tahajjud Prayers:**Hazrat Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “A person who gets up at night for Prayer and fulfills all requirements of his faith with an intention of receiving blessing during the Month of Ramadan, is forgiven all his past sins.”

**Charity during Ramadan:**Ibn Abbas relates that the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, was the most generous of men and he was at his most bountiful during Ramadan when Gabriel visited him every night and recited the Quran to him. During this period the bounty of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, waxed faster than the rain-bearing breeze (Bukhari and Muslim).

**Prayers:**Allah forgives all previous sins of a person who sincerely worships Allah during the month of Ramadan. During this month Allah’s mercy and blessings are at their peak. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has said that during Ramadan: “Allah says: ‘Is there anyone who calls on me so that I can accept his prayers? Is there anyone who asks for anything so that I can fulfill his desires? Is there anyone who asks for forgiveness so that I can forgive” (Sahih Bukhafi – Kitab-ul-Tauheed).

**Last Ten days of Ramadan:**Hazrat Ayesha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrates that, during the month of Ramadan, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to develop a new vigor, staying awake all night and also waking members of his family for worship” (Sahih Bukhail, Kitab-ul-Saum). During the month of Ramadan worship reaches its peak in the form of I’tikaaf (retirement for Allah’s worship). The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to retire to the Mosque in the last ten days of the Ramadan. He would go to a corner in the Masjid-e-Nabwee (Prophet’s Mosque) to worship Allah in seclusion.

**Ramadan and Lailatul Qadr (Night of Decree):**Hazrat Ayesha (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “O Allah’s Prophet, if I know which night is the Lailatul Qadr then what should I pray? He replied: ‘you should pray: ‘O Allah, you are very forgiving and love those who forgive others. So bestow your blessings on me and forgive me”‘ (Jamiah Tirmidhi, Kitab-Al-Dawat). Lailatul Qadr is such a night that the Holy Quran has declared it to be better than a thousand months. May Allah enable us to be the recipients of Lailatul Qadr that we truly benefit from the coming month of Ramadan. May Allah accept our prayers. Ameen.

[Fasting - A gift from your creator!](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/fasting-gift-from-your-creator.html)

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Fasting is one of the pillars of Islam. It is a gift from our Creator. It has been an integral part of all major religions. The Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) fasted for forty days before he was called to prophethood (Matthew 4:2). Similarly Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) fasted for forty days and nights before he was given the Law (Exodus 24:18).

Controlling Desires….

Fasting in Ramadan is a part of the broader program that Islam prescribes for man to fulfill his moral and spiritual destiny in this world and in the Hereafter. It is the special worship designed to develop in man the ability to exercise self-restraint and patience for the pleasure of Allah, man’s Creator, Lord and Nourisher. Its objective is to give man the power to keep in check his unruly desires and tendencies that make him prone to greed, revenge, anger, provocation and fear; that make him commit various sins, acts of aggression, cruelty and oppression. It seeks to free the human soul and lends it the moral and spiritual strength to promote beauty, harmony, kindness, peace, compassion and justice.

The Qur’an says:

**” We sent Our Messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice.” (57:25)**

Fasting for Taqwa….

Prescribing fasting the Qur’an says:

**“O you who believe, fasting is prescribed to you as it was to those before you, that you may (learn) self-restraint.” (2:183)**

The original Arabic word translated here as self-restraint is taqwa, which has a much broader significance. It symbolizes that basic mortal quality that demarcates the line between morality and amorality, and distinguishes humans from animals as moral beings. It represents love of good with an eagerness to respond to it, and a strong desire to keep away from what is evil and harmful. Those who are neutral or immune to questions of good and bad, justice and injustice, compassion and cruelty, loyalty and treachery are in the words of the Qur’an like the blind, deaf, and dumb cattle, whose only concern in life is to fill their stomachs.”They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not.”

Developing Taqwa….

This moral quality is nourished and can be developed only by controlling and keeping in check one’s desires, impulses, and emotions and that is precisely what fasting is prescribed to achieve. The Arabic word for fasting used in the above verse is siyam which means to leave something or to avoid it. In the light of this, Islamic fasting may be defined as the worship in which man willingly forsakes his quite legitimate needs like eating, drinking and other lawful pleasures in compliance with the commandment of god, every day for a whole month, Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. Thus Islamic fasting is not merely leaving all that is evil. The Prophet Muhammad(pbuh) said:**“When one of you is fasting and someone abuses him or fights with him, he should tell him `I cannot respond to you for I am fasting.’” On another occasion he said “He who does not leave evil only gets thirst and hunger from fasting.”**

Through fasting we seek closeness to God by obeying him sincerely and carrying out his will in our daily life, our actions and thoughts, till our days and nights bear witness that He is dearer to us than anything else. Look at the time schedule of a believer during this month; getting up early before dawn for a light snack, stopping all eating and drinking all day, being anxious to devote himself to prayers and adoration of God, eagerness to do good and eschew evil, and during the nights of this month to stand in prayer for hours, sacrificing sleep and comfort, offering special extra prayers: more or less like one of a soldier under rigorous training. The only difference here is that it is not just one physical battle he is training for, but an all-comprehensive and continuous war against evil, both from within and without.

Special Rewards…..

It is well known that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) regularly observed fasting in other parts of the year besides Ramadan, and he always exhorted his followers to do the same. But it is in the month of Ramadan when the entire Muslim community all over the world observes fasting that a special meaning emerges. It transforms fasting into an institution that elevates the human soul to unprecedented heights. The Prophet (PBUH) said: **“Every good deed is rewarded from ten to seven hundred times over, but God says fasting is the exception; it is for Me, and My servant forgoes his eating and drinking for my sake, so I Myself will reward My servant for it.”**

Gift of Qur’an……

Association of fasting with the month of Ramadan reminds us that it was during this month that Allah perfected His blessing upon mankind by giving us His last book, the Qur’an.

**“Ramadan is the month in which was sent down the Qur’an as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So everyone of you who is present (at home) during that month should spend it in fasting.” (The Qur’an, 2:185)**

Fasting in the month of Ramadan thus takes on a new spiritual and moral significance. It is the month in which we celebrate the praises of our Lord God for the great gift of the Qur’an. We glorify Him and extol His holiness by fasting during this month. The Qur’an not only shows man the right path, but also guides human reason and lays down a clear criterion between right and wrong, good and evil. It is not just a book of do’s and don’ts, but is the repository of infinite wisdom, and a guidance to the highest moral and spiritual excellence as well as to material and temporal success. The Qur’an regards human reason as the greatest single gift of God to man, and addresses its message to it, but it can function properly only if it is free and objective in its outlook. Fasting helps free human reason from the tyranny of unruly lusts and appetites, whims and caprices, individual and social, which often overwhelm and enslave it. Fasting puts human reason back in the driving seat by restraining, not suppressing or destroying three dominant human desires: desire for comfort, desire for food, and desire for procreation of his species. The Qur’an liberates human reason from the clutches of blind but powerful and unbridled emotion and sentiment.

THE STRAIGHT PATH…………

Following the path of good is often unpalatable, and involves struggle against one’s own desires and interests. It may also sometimes mean doing or saying what one considers true but is not popular and hence risking the anger and displeasure of others, sometimes of those most dear and near. To stand firm under these circumstances steadfastly following the right path requires a great deal of inner strength and self-restraint – a prime moral and human quality – to choose what is right and then abide by it notwithstanding the difficulties and sacrifices. “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there are that follow it,” whereas “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life, and few are they who find it.” (Matthew 6:13-14)

Islam seeks to guide man onto the path to eternal life and prepares him for it through worship, prayers, charity and fasting. All these are meant to enable man to exercise control over his own life and have the moral courage to take the path of truth, justice and compassion. It wants reason to take charge of the ship of life and steer it wisely and safely through the stormy and dangerous seas of this life under the guidance of Divine Revelation.

**That is the message of Ramadan. Let us heed the message and proclaim: ” God is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is the way that is straight.” (The Qur’an 3:51)**

[10 Very Important Points for Fasting](http://muslimcommunityblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/10-very-important-points-for-fasting.html)

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There are important points to understand while fasting the month of Ramadan in order to take the maximum benefit from the wisdom and teachings we gain in this blessed month, in which Allah sent down His last revelation, the Quran.

Consider first an important statement of our prophet Muhammad, (peace be upon him), when he said,

**“Don’t let the day of fasting be the same as the day you don’t fast.”**He was talking about our behavior and attitude being the same whether we are fasting or not fasting and not having an effect on us. Let us keep this in mind while we consider the following ten points of fasting Ramadan, Insha’Allah.

One of our beloved teachers of Islam, Dr. Tamimi, a student of knowledge of Madinah and Dr. Jafar Idris, produced interesting and beneficial lectures about the importance and rewards of fasting Ramadan. The following is based on some of this excellent knowledge:

POINT 1: Gaining Taqwa

Allah legislated fasting for gaining taqwa,

**“O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it has been prescribed for those before you, so that you may attain taqwa.” [Noble Quran 2:183]**

Taqwa in this case means to make a shield between oneself and Allah’s anger and Hellfire. So we should ask ourselves, when we break our fasts, ‘Has this fasting day made us fear Allah more? Has it resulted that we want to protect ourselves from the hellfire or not?

POINT 2: Drawing closer to Allah

This is achieved by reciting and reflecting on Al-Quran during night and day, attending the taraweeh prayers, remembering Allah, sitting in circles of knowledge and, for those who can, making ‘umrah. Also for those who can, making I’tikaf (seclusion) in the last ten nights of Ramadan, so as to leave all worldly pursuits and seclude oneself in a masjid just thinking of Allah, so as to bring oneself closer to Allah. When one sins, one feels distant from Allah. That is why one might find it heard to read the Quran and come to the masjid. However, the obedient worshipper feels closer to Allah and wants to worship Allah more, because he is not shy from his sins.

POINT 3: Acquiring patience and strong will

Allah has mentioned patience more than seventy times in the Quran and has commanded patience in more than sixteen ways in His Book. So when one fasts, and gives up one’s food and drink, and one’s marital sexual relations for those hours, one learns restraint and patience. This Ummah needs men and women that are strong willed, who can stand upon the Sunnah and the Book of Allah and not waver in front of the enemies of Allah. We do not need emotional people, who just raise slogans and shout, but when the time comes to stand upon something firm, they cannot do so, they waver.

POINT 4: Striving for Ihsan (righteousness and sincerity) and staying away from riya (showing off)

Ihsan means to worship Allah as if one seeks Him, and even though one does not see Him, He sees all. Hasan al-Basri said, “By Allah, in the last twenty years, I have not said a word or taken something with my hand or refrained to take something with my hand or stepped forth or stepped back, except that I have thought before I have done any action, ‘Does Allah love this action? Is Allah pleased with this action?’ So when one is fasting, one should gain this quality of watching oneself and also staying away from riya (showing off). That is why Allah said in a hadith qudsi, “Fasting is for Me and I reward it.” (al-Bukhari) Allah singles out fasting from all other types of worship saying, “Fasting is for Me”, because no one knows whether you are fasting or not, except Allah. For example, when one is praying or giving charity or making tawaf, one can be seen by the people, so one might do the action seeking the praise of the people. Sufyan ath-Thawri used to spend the nights and the days crying and the people used to ask him, “Why do you cry, is it due to the fear of Allah? He said, ‘No.’ They said, “Is it due to the fear of the Hellfire?” He said, ‘No. It is not the fear of Hellfire that makes me cry, what makes me cry is that I have been worshipping Allah all these years and doing scholarly teaching, and I am not certain that my intentions are purely for Allah.’”

POINT 5: Refinement of manners, especially those related to truthfulness and discharging trusts.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Whoever does not abandon falsehood in word and action, then Allah has no need that he should heave his food and drink.” (al-Bukhari) What we learn from this, is that we must pay attention to the purification of our manners. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “was sent to perfect good manners.” (Malik) So we must check ourselves, are we following the behavior of the Prophet (peace be upon him)? For example: Do we give salam to those we don’t know and those we do know? Do we follow the manners of Islam, by telling the truth and only telling the truth? Are we sincere? Are we merciful to the creation?

POINT 6: Recognizing that one can change for the better

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, **“Every son of Adam sins and the best of the sinners are those who repent.”**(Ibn Majah) Allah provides many opportunities to repent to Him and seek His forgiveness. If one was disobedient they can become obedient.

POINT 7: Being more charitable

Ibn ‘Abbas said, **“The Prophet (peace be upon him) was the most charitable amongst the people, and he used to be more so in the month of Ramadan when Jibril (angel Gabriel) used to meet him on every night of Ramadan till the end of the month…” (al-Bukhari) The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “He who gives food for a fasting person to break his fast, he will receive the same reward as him, without nothing being reduced from the fasting person’s reward.”**[At-Tirmidhi]

POINT 8: Sensing the unity of the Muslims

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, **“…Those of you who will live after me will see many differences. Then you must cling to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly guided khalifahs (leaders). Hold fast to it and stick to it.”**[Abu Dawud]

In this month we sense that there is a possibility for unity, because we all fast together, we break fast together, we all worship Allah together, and we pray Salatul-`Eid together. Therefore we sense that the unity of Muslims is possible. It is possible for Muslims to be a single body, but this will only be achieved when obedience is only to Allah and His Messenger.

POINT 9: Learning discipline

The Prophet (may Allah send His blessing and peace upon him) made us adhere to discipline and strictness, strictness that does not lead to fanaticism or going outside the bounds that Allah has laid down. One cannot knowingly break the fast before the sunset, as this will not be accepted by Allah. Muslims should learn to be very strict in their lives, because they are people of an important message, which they mold their lives around.

POINT 10: Teaching the young to worship Allah

It was the practice of the people of Madinah, that during the fast of ‘Ashura (which is now a recommended fast of one day) to get their children to fast with them. When the children would cry of hunger and thirst, their parents would distract their attention by giving them some sort of toy to play with. The children would break their fast with their parents. (as mentioned in al-Bukhari).

So the young should be brought to the masjid and they should pray with their parents, so that they are able to get into the habit of becoming worshippers of Allah. If one does not encourage children to fast when they are young, they will find it very difficult to fast for thirty days at the age of puberty. This is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, **“Command your children to pray at the age of seven and beat them at the age of ten (if they do not pray.” (Hakim)**

There is yet another consideration for the fasters of Ramadan, although this is not something we usually consider as the motivation for following Allah’s command, and that is the physical and medical advantages usually associated with fasting.

We are ordered to take care of our health and provide our body with its rights over us. Our prophet, (peace be upon him), told us our body has rights on us and in one hadith he said,

**“The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, and there is good in everyone.“ Sahih Muslim**

Make du’a for us while you are fasting –please, Insha’Allah. May Allah accept your fasting and put you in His Jannah, ameen

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The fast of Ramadan is rigorous during the best of times. During long and hot summer days, it may be required observe the fast for as many as sixteen or more hours at a time. To ensure adequate nutrition and continued good health, follow these tips:

• Prior to Ramadan, a Muslim should always consult with a doctor about the safety of fasting in individual health circumstances.

• Even if you are generally healthy, recognize that Ramadan will take a toll. Plan your schedule and meals ahead of time in order to make sure you get the nutrients, hydration, and rest that you need.

• Eat suhoor just prior to dawn. Yes, it's hard to get up at that hour, which is why it has many benefits and rewards. It will help you to wake up for the Fajr prayer. The suhoor meal is Sunnah. And this morning meal is generally recognized as the single most important meal of the day. Do not overeat, though. Focus on taking in foods that are rich in complex carbohydrates and protein, fruits or vegetables, and plenty of water. For example: an egg on whole-grain toast, a few crackers with peanut butter, some orange slices, and two glasses of water.

• During the hottest part of the day, stay in cool areas (indoors or in shade) and limit your physical activity. Rest if possible.

• Avoid gorging yourself when breaking the fast at sunset. Follow the Sunnah: break your fast with dates and either milk, water, or fruit juice. After the maghrib prayer, continue with a light starter such as soup and crackers. After a long period of fasting, you need to bring your fluids and blood sugar level up without overdoing it.

• During the early evening (after maghrib), have a healthy and balanced dinner. Do not overeat, and be sure to drink a few more glasses of fluids.

• During the evening hours, resist the temptation to drink tea, coffee, and soda. When visiting friends or family, ask for glasses of water.

• Serve yourself, your family, and guests a "dessert" of fresh fruit and nuts. There are lovely choices available in this season, and they are much more healthy than chocolates and candy.

• Sip on water throughout the evening. Aim for 8 glasses by bedtime. To help you keep track, fill and refill a water bottle with a measured amount of water, and be sure to finish it.

• Light exercise, such as walking for 15-20 minutes, is best done in the evening hours.

• Avoid fried and spicy foods as they may cause heartburn or indigestion.

• Speak to your doctor about an appropriate multi-vitamin.

• Continue to brush and floss your teeth several times a day.

• Wash your hands regularly, and avoid those who cough or sneeze. This is important to prevent the spread of viruses (such as seasonal flu and H1N1) and bacteria which may cause illness.

• Quit smoking! • Organize your schedule so that you get proper sleep and proper worshiping time.

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Here are ten reasons why you should plan for Ramadan:

**Reason # 1: To be in “Ramadan mode”**

By planning for Ramadan before it arrives, you put your mind in “Ramadan mode”. If you plan, you will mentally prepare for it, and it will force you to see it as the special month it is outside of your regular routine the rest of the year.

**Reason # 2: To adjust your schedule**

By planning in advance, you can adjust your work, sleep and meal schedules in such a way as to make time for Suhoor, Iftar, etc. That means, for instance, that if you normally go to bed at midnight, in Ramadan you would sleep earlier in order to get up early for Suhoor. Or if you usually study late, you can instead sleep earlier and start studying after Suhoor in the early morning hours. Planning in advance allows you the luxury to make time for the change in schedule that Ramadan brings.

**Reason # 3: You can plan Ramadan family time**

Is dinnertime usually an individual affair in your home, as opposed to a time the whole family eats together? Are Friday evenings the time every family member goes off to his/her own social activities? Planning in advance can change this at least in Ramadan. Calling a family meeting about a month in advance, explaining the importance of Ramadan, its implications for the family and the need to eat Iftar together when possible as well as to attend Tarawih prayers, for example, will allow all family members to adjust their work and school schedules accordingly. That will, Insha Allah, make Ramadan a blessing not just to every person in the family, but to the family as a whole.

**Reason # 4: To make the menu**

While Ramadan may mean extra Ibadah to some of the brothers, it usually means extra cooking for most of the sisters. Ramadan’s blessings are for men and women. Making a Ramadan menu for Iftar and meals, and working out when you want to invite relatives, neighbors and friends for Iftar will give sisters the opportunity to catch Tarawih and various other advantageous Ibadat instead of spending Ramadan’s 29 or 30 days stuck in the kitchen. (And by the way, brothers, helping out with cooking or cleaning was a practice of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him-maybe this is a way you can increase your Sawab [rewards] this month).

**Reason # 5 : You can plan a Iftar at your home**

You may have eaten fantastic Iftars at friends’ homes last year. This year, open your doors. There is blessing in feeding a fasting person other than yourself and your family. Planning in advance gives you the luxury of calling friends over the month before and setting a date, so you can “grab” them before others get an opportunity to. Muchos Sawab, Insha Allah!

**Reason # 6: To make a travel schedule**

Do you know a fellow Muslim in your neighborhood who wants to get to the mosque for Tarawih every night but doesn’t have a car? Or do you look at your work schedule and realize you have to work overtime near the end of Ramadan, so your family will miss out on Tarawih at the mosque the last ten nights of Ramadan? Planning in advance helps you work out your daily or weekly travel schedule to attend Tarawih prayers at the mosque, or even a trip for Iftar at a friend’s place who may life farther away. It also helps ease the burden of transportation in winter. Maybe you can start a car pool? Since you have the time before Ramadan begins, you can work this out with neighbors and friends.

**Reason # 7: To do good at high Sawab times**

Being generous is definitely an Islamic merit, but being generous in Ramadan is even more highly rewarded. Match Ibadat with specific times that carry more reward. Prepare to do Itifkaf, increase asking Allah for forgiveness in the last ten nights of Ramadan. Plan to give increased Sadaqa this month. Plan to visit that relative you may have not seen for months, if not years. Thinking about and arranging to do these things and finding other ways of gaining the pleasure of Allah in Ramadan will Insha Allah help you benefit more from it.

**Reason # 8: You can squeeze in Eid shopping**

Planning in advance helps you think about all of those things you wanted to do in time for the end of Ramadan or Eid last year but couldn’t. Maybe you wanted to go Eid shopping for gifts for family and friends in the last week of Ramadan but were too busy with the last ten nights of Ramadan. No problem. This year, you decide to go in the third week of Ramadan instead.

**Reason # 9: You can plan Dawa activities during Ramadan**

Some Muslims have gone to soup kitchens and made meals during Ramadan, while they were fasting. Not only will, Insha Allah, they be rewarded, but this is a great Dawa opportunity to explain what Ramadan and Islam are about. Planning in advance for such an activity gives you the time to call up a soup kitchen in your area, explain what you want to do, and get your act together. You can also plan school Dawa activities in Ramadan by planning in advance, by meeting with the principal or teacher beforehand.

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10 great goals to set for Ramadan

**1. Eat, drink and be moderate**

Almost all of us do it – once Iftar time hits, we just keep plowing food and drink into our mouths till it’s hard to move afterward. And those of us who do it know this is totally contrary to the spirit of Ramadan, through which we’re supposed to learn self-control not self-indulgence. Let’s try to stick to the Prophetic rule on eating: fill our stomachs with one-third food, one-third water and one-third breathing space, even in Ramadan.

**2. Give a dollar a day in charity…or five or ten**

The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was always generous but even more so in Ramadan. Let’s open our hearts and dig a little deeper in our wallets this year. Even less than a dollar a day adds up. Whatever you can give, it’s the intention that counts.

**3. Memorize 4 new Surahs**

Memorizing the Quran often seems like a daunting task. But the key is doing it in small bites. Since there are four weeks in Ramadan, try to memorize one new Surah a week. Start off with a short, easy one. Once you’ve started, you’ll build momentum and may even want to memorize a longer one the following week.

**4. Go to Tarawih prayers**

Post-Iftar, the first urge is to sleep after an exhausting day. But try your best to head out to the mosque for Tarawih prayers. Praying alone is wonderful, but doing it in congregation is fantastic. The community spirit is part of Ramadan’s blessings. Don’t miss it this year. If going every day is not possible, try going at least one week.

**5. Attend the Tarawih prayer in which the recitation of the Quran will be finished**

Call the local mosque and find out which day the Imam will be finishing the recitation of the Quran in prayer. Attend to not only hear part of the Quran’s recitation in prayer, but also participate in the heart-rending Duas that follow it.

**6. Stop swearing and/or backbiting – with a special box**

It’s hard not to shoot our mouths off when someone’s upset us. Whether we utter those four-letter words or backbite about someone to our family and friends, we know this isn’t the God-approved way of letting off steam. In Ramadan, when we want to build our spirituality, we’ve got to wage Jihad against our bad habits.

Try this: get a box and every time you catch yourself swearing or backbiting put some money in it. It could be a buck or less. The point is to choose an amount that makes it feel like punishment.

At the end of the month send the money to a charity or buy a gift for the person whom you’ve backbitten the most against.

**7. Call/email your relatives**

You’d think that given the easy access to email, competitive long-distance calling rates, phone cards, etc. these days, we’d keep in touch with family and friends more often. But the opposite seems to be the case, as we get caught up in life’s “busyness.”

Strengthening ties with family members and keeping in touch with friends is part of our way of life and an act Allah is very pleased with. This Ramadan, call family and friends or at least email them a Ramadan card and ask them how their fasting is going.

**8. Go on a technology diet**

Even if you work in the IT industry, you can do this. Avoid checking personal email and surfing the web during your fast. After Iftar, instead of plopping yourself in front of the screen, go to Tarawih. The same goes for the television. The point is to try to give our full attention to spiritual elevation this month.

**9. Read 5 minutes of Quran a day…just five, not more, not less**

Even if you feel you’ve got absolutely no time, set a timer or the alarm on your cell phone and find a relatively quiet place. You can read the first page of the Quran you open or follow a sequence. The choice is yours. The point is simply to connect with God through His revelation in the month of the Quran.

**10. Forgive everyone who has hurt you**

Still got a festering wound from the fight with your friend last year? Still upset about something your spouse said during a heated argument? Or are you still bitter about the way your parents sometimes treated you as a kid? Let go of the anger and pain this Ramadan and forgive those who have hurt you. Forgiving someone is not only good for the body, but it’s also great for the soul.

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• **Focusing on food;**to the extent that people begin to worry about eating more then actually fasting. This also goes along with spending tons of money on Iftaars even though a person does not need to eat that much food.

• **Making Suhoor way before Fajr.**Some people eat Suhoor a few hours after Taraweeh or Isha Salah, this is wrong. It should be eaten closer to the time of Fajr.

• **People don’t make Niyyah (intentions) to fast for Ramadan.**This is something in the heart and does not need to be verbal. Also it only needs to be done once, at the beginning of Ramadan and not every single day.

• **If you find out late that Ramadan started,**you should stop eating and fast for that day, making that day up after Ramadan/Eid ends.

• **Many people don’t think you pray Taraweeh on the first night of Ramadan**They believe you pray it after the first day you actually fast. They forget that the Islamic calendar runs on the moon, maghrib is the start of the new day.

• **Many people believe if you eat or drink on accident this breaks your fast.**This is false, if you do this on accident then you continue fasting and do not need to make up the day.

• **Some people take the opinion that if they see someone eating or drinking they should not remind the person that he/she is fasting.**According to Sheikh Bin Baz (ra), this is incorrect and it is an order from Allah for us to ordain the good and forbid the evil. Thus we tell the person, because we are forbidding the evil this way.

• **Many sisters believe they cannot use Hennah while fasting.**This is incorrect, they are allowed to use it during Ramadan.

• **Some people believe when you are cooking you cannot taste the food to see if it has the right spices/flavors.**This is false, and allowed in Islam as long as the person cooking is not eating the food. Rather they can taste it to see if it needs salt, or more spices.

• **Many people think you cannot use a Miswak or toothbrush during Ramadan.**This is false, for the Prophet(saw) used to use a miswak during Ramadan.

• **Some people make the Fajr Adhan early.**They do this so people will stop eating before Fajr and not invalidate their fast. This is wrong and something we should not do.

• **Some people make the Maghrib Adhan late.**They do this so people will start eating late, just in case Maghrib has not come in yet. This too is wrong and we should not do this.

• **Many many people believe you cannot have intercourse with your spouse during the whole month of Ramadan.**This is false, you cannot do this only during the times when you are fasting. Between Maghrib and Fajr it is permissible to do.

• **Many women believe that if their period has just ended and they did not make ghusl, they cannot fast that day (considering their period ended at night, and they went to bed without Ghusl, waking up without having a chance to make it).**This is incorrect, if a women has not made Ghusl she can still fast.

• **Many men believe that if he has had intercourse with his wife and did not make ghusl (similar to the above) then he cannot fast the next morning.**This is also incorrect, for he can fast even if he has not made Ghusl.

• **Some people pray Dhur and Asr prayers together during Ramadan.**(mainly in Arab countries) This is incorrect and should be avoided.

• **Some people believe you cannot eat until the Muadthin is done calling the Maghrib Adthan.**This is incorrect, as soon as he starts a person can break their fast.

• **Many people don’t take advantage of making dua before they break their fast.**This is one of the three times when Allah accepts a person dua.

• **Many people make the mistake of spending the later part of Ramadan preparing for Eid, neglecting Ramadan.**This is incorrect and these people lose the concept of what Ramadan is about.

• **Many parents do not let their children fast during Ramadan (young children).**This is something counter productive to a child. By allowing him to fast he will grow up to know he must do this act.

• **Many people think Ramadan is just about not eating and forget about controlling their tempers and watching what they say.**In actuality we are supposed to control our tempers and mouths even more during Ramadan.

• **People often waste their time during Ramadan. They go to sleep during the day and get nothing done.**We should be taking advantage of this blessed month by doing extra Ibaadat.

• **Some people don’t go on trips or travel during Ramadan. They think they have to break their fast when traveling.**This is actually optional, if you want to break your fast while traveling you can (with making it up later), and if you don’t you can continue fasting.

• **Many people who are able don’t make Itikaaf at the masjid.**We should take advantage of our good health and spend lots of time at the Masjid, especially the last 10 days of Ramadan.

• **Some people believe they cannot cut their hair or nails during Ramadan.**This is also false.

• **Some people say you cannot swallow your spit during Ramadan.**This too is false. However you cannot swallow mucus that has entered your mouth.

• **Some people say you cannot use scented oils or perfumes during Ramadan.**This too is false.

• **Some people believe bleeding breaks the fast.**This is not true.

• **Some people believe if you throw up on accident it breaks your fast.**This is not true, however if you do it intentionally it does.

• **Some people think you cannot put water in your nose and mouth during wuduh in Ramadan.**This too is incorrect.

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**The Obligation**

Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is an act of obedience and submission to Allah’s commands through the highest degree of commitment, sincerity and faithfulness to seek Allah’s mercy, to atone for sins, errors, and mistakes and to avoid condemnation to Hell.

It is done out of deep love for God, with a genuine virtue of devotion, honest dedication and closeness to Allah, for Fasting is for Allah and Him alone.   
  
The fasting during Ramadan is obligatory on every adult, sane, and able Muslim.

Denial of the obligatory nature of fasting in the month of Ramadan amounts to disbelief.

One who avoids fasting without genuine reasons is a sinner and transgressor according to Islamic Shariah (Law).

**Time: When to fast**

Fasting in Islam involves abstinence from three primal physical needs of human beings- food, drink, and sexual intercourse from dawn (approximately one and a half hours before sunrise) to sunset during the entire month of Ramadan.

**Who is exempted from fasting**

1. Children under the age of puberty and discretion;

2. The insane people who are unaccountable for their deeds. People of these two categories are exempted from the duty of fasting and no compensation or any other substitute is enjoined on them;

3. Men and women who are too old and feeble to undertake the obligation of fasting and bear its hardships. Such people are exempted from this duty, but they must offer at least one needy poor Muslim an average full meal or its value per person day.

4. Sick people whose health is likely to be severely affected by fasting. They may postpone the fast, as long as they are sick, to a later date and makeup for it, a day for a day;

5. People expecting hardship. Such people may break the fast temporarily during their travel only and make up for it in later days, a day for a day. But it is better for them, the Quran says, to keep the fast if they can without causing extraordinary hardships;

6. Expectant women and women nursing their children may also break the fast, if its observance is likely to endanger their own health or that of their infants. But they must make up for the fast at a delayed time, a day for a day;

7. Women in periods of menstruation (of a maximum of ten days). They must postpone the fast till recovery and then make up for it, a day for day.

Reference from Hadith and Quran:

It is not allowed for the woman who has just had a baby and is impure from that nor the woman during her monthly period to fast until they become clean from that and then they are obliged to make up the fasts they missed.

The duty of fasting is not compulsory for those who are not mature. Ibn Abbas narrated, “Whoever becomes old and is not able to fast in Ramadan should donate for every day missed one mudd (which is 544 grams) of grain.” Ibn Umar said “If I become too weak to fast I feed (someone) one mudd for every day missed.” Anas narrated that he became weak one year before he died so he gave away one mudd every day.

If someone is not able to fast because he is sick and it can lead him to more sickness from which he cannot not recover, at that time he is allowed to miss his fast because that is a hardship.

**“He has chosen you and has not laid upon you in the deen any hardship.” (22:78)**

When he has recovered he is obliged to make up for those days missed

**“And if any of you is ill or has an ailment in his scalp (he should) in compensation either fast or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice.” (2:196)**

**“But if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later. For those who can do it (with hardship), is ransom the feeding of one that is indigent.” (2:184)**

**The How To’s of Fasting**

**Niyyah or Intention of Fast**

To observe the fast, the intention of fasting is essential (Wajib). The intention should be made daily, preferably before dawn of each day of fasting (in Ramadan).   
  
Provision is made if someone has forgotten to express his intention before dawn. In such a case one is allowed to express intention of fasting before noon to avoid the invalidation of the fast.   
  
The wording of Niyyah may be as follows:

“I intend to observe fast for today.”

**Suhoor**

Suhoor is a light, predawn meal, recommended before actually fasting. It is a blessing and hence recommended but not essential.   
  
Any consumption of food or drink should cease at least five to ten minutes before the onset of dawn.

**Iftar**

Iftar is an Arabic term meaning breaking the fast immediately after the sunset. Iftar is a light snack consisting of dates or desserts, along with liquids, such as water, juice or milk.   
  
This is eaten after making the following Dua (supplication) for breaking the fast:   
  
“Oh Allah! I fasted for your sake and I am breaking my fast from the sustenance You blessed me with, accept it from me.”

**What breaks the fast**

1. Intentional consumption of food, drink, medicine, or smoking during the fasting.

2. Any injection which has some nutritional value.

3. Beginning of menstruation or post natal birth bleeding (even in the last moment of sunset).

The conditions mentioned above invalidate fasting and require “Qada” (making up only the missed day or days). However, intentional intercourse during the hours of fasting invalidates fasting and not only requires “Qada” but also additional penalty (Kaffara-see the explanation of this below).

Reference from Hadiths:

• If anyone vomits deliberately then his fast is broken because it is narrated by Abu Hurairah that Muhammad (Pbuh) said, **“Whoever vomits deliberately has to make up for fast. And whoever vomits naturally does not have to make it up.”**The scholars understood from this hadith that whoever vomits intentionally should make up one day but whoever did so involuntarily should continue his fast so long as he did not swallow back any of the vomit.

• If anyone eats intentionally, forgetting it is a day of Ramadan, he need not make up his day nor need he pay atonement (Kaffara). (This is the opinion of the Hanbali and Shafi schools. For the Maliki and Hanafi schools, whoever eats intentionally during Ramadan should make up the fast and pay kaffara). Abu Hurairah narrated that Muhammad (Pbuh) said, **“Whoever forgets and eats during the month of Ramadan, he does neither need to make up his fast nor is he required to pay kaffarah (atonement).”**

• (This is the opinion of the Hanbali and Shafi’i schools.) Whoever eats intentionally during Ramadan should make up the fast and pay kaffara). Bukhari also recorded **“Whoever forgets any fast and eats or drinks should continue his fast because Allah is the one who feeds him.” If a fasting man eats or did intercourse and thinks the dawn has not risen or he thinks the sunset is upon him when it was not, his fasting would not be counted and he would have to make it up.**

**What does not break the fast**

1. Eating or drinking by mistake, unmindful of the fast.

2. Unintentional vomiting.

3. Swallowing things which are not possible to avoid, such as one’s own saliva, street dust, smoke, etc.

4. Brushing the teeth.

5. Bathing: if water is swallowed unintentionally, it does not invalidate the fast. However, while fasting gargling should be avoided.

6. Injection or I/V (Intravenous) which is solely medicinal and not nutritional.

7. In some special circumstances if the food or drink is just tasted and immediately removed out of the mouth without allowing it to enter into the throat.

**Kaffara**

During the fasting period, if one deliberately breaks his or her fast, s/he must free one slave, or fast for sixty continuous days, or feed sixty needy persons, or spend in charity an amount equal to feeding sixty persons.

If one chooses to fast sixty days and the continuity is interrupted for any reason, except menstruation, one has to start the sixty day cycle all over again.

Breaking of the fast under exceptional conditions

Muslims are permitted to break their fast of Ramadan when there is a danger to their health.

In this situation a Muslim should make up his/her fast later. The missed fast(s) can be made up at any other time of the year, either continuously or intermittently, except on the day of Eid-ul-Fitr and the day of Eid-ul-Adha

**Tarawih**

These are special Sunnah prayers in the month of Ramadan. They follow the Isha prayers. A minimum of eight and a maximum of twenty Rakat are offered in pairs of two.

**Lailat al-Qadr**

Amongst the nights of Ramadan, there is one special night of Power (Qadr) which is highlighted in Surah al-Qadr (Surah 97 in the Quran).

It has the significance of being better than a thousand months (Quran 97:3).

This was the night when Quran was revealed to mankind. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) recommended Muslims search for this night of Power (Qadr) in the odd nights of the last ten

nights in Ramadan.

One should spend the night in Ibadah (worship), asking forgiveness of their sins and reciting the Quran

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Fasting in Ramadan is one of the pillars on which Islam is built. Allaah tells us that He has prescribed it for the believers of this ummah [nation], as He prescribed it for those who came before them. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**“O you who believe! Observing As-Sawm (the fasting) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqoon (the pious”) [al-Baqarah 2:183]**

**“The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur’aan, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan i.e. is present at his home), he must observe Sawm (fasts) that month, and whoever is ill or on a journey, the same number [of days which one did not observe Sawm (fasts) must be made up] from other days. Allaah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. (He wants that you) must complete the same number (of days), and that you must magnify Allaah [i.e. to say Takbeer (Allaahu Akbar: Allaah is the Most Great)] for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him” [al-Baqarah 2:185]**

Al-Bukhari (8) and Muslim (16) narrated that Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said:

**“Islam is built on five (pillars): the testimony that there is no god but Allaah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah; establishing prayer; paying zakaah; Hajj; and fasting Ramadan.”**

**Whoever does not fast has abandoned one of the pillars of Islam, and is committing a grave major sin. Indeed some of the salaf were of the view that he is a kaafir [disbeliever] and apostate – we seek refuge with Allaah from that.**

Abu Ya’la narrated in his Musnad from Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said:

**“The bonds of Islam and the bases of religion are three, on which Islam was founded. Whoever gives up one of them becomes a kaafir thereby and it is permissible to shed his blood: the testimony that there is no god but Allaah, the prescribed prayers and fasting Ramadan.”**

**by al-Dhahabi, and as hasan by al-Haythami in Majma’ al-Zawaa’id, 1/48, and by al-Mundhiri in al-Targheeb wa’l-Tarheeb, no. 805, 1486. Classed as da’eef by al-Albaani in al-Silsilah al-Da’eefah, no. 94. Al-Dhahabi said in al-Kabaa’ir, p. 64.**

Whoever does not fast in Ramadan without being sick or having any other excuse that allows him not to fast is more evil than the adulterer or drunkard, indeed they doubted his Islam and thought that this was heresy.

A saheeh report which warns against not fasting was narrated by Ibn Khuzaymah (1986) and Ibn Hibbaan (7491) from Abu Umaamah al-Baahili who said: I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say:

**“Whilst I was sleeping two men came to me and took my by the arm and brought me to a cragged mountain. They said, ‘Climb up.’ I said, ‘I cannot.’ They said, ‘We will make it easy for you.’ So I climbed up until I was at the top of the mountain. Then I heard loud voices. I said, ‘What are these voices?’ They said, ‘This is the howling of the people of Hell.” Then I was taken until I saw people hanging by their hamstrings, with the sides of their mouths torn and blood pouring from their mouths.’ I said, ‘Who are these?’ He said, ‘These are people who broke their fast before it was time.’” Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Mawaarid al-Zam’aan, no. 1509.**

Al-Albaani (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: This is the punishment of those who fasted then broke the fast deliberately before the time for breaking the fast came, so who about those who do not fast at all? We ask Allaah to keep us safe and sound in this world and in the Hereafter.

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The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Fasting is a shield – one who fasts does not use obscenities or act in an ignorant manner. If someone argues with you or insults you, say: 'I am fasting, I am fasting'." [Sahîh al-Bukhârî (1795)]When we fast this Ramadan, we should make the effects of our worship show up in our good conduct. As Muslims, we should always be well-mannered, respectful, modest, kind, and gentle. We should always show compassion to others. However, when we are fasting, we should be all the more conscious of our conduct and all the more ready to exercise self-restraint.

One of the most exemplary character traits that a person can have – in Ramadan and at other times – is that of clemency. We are sorely in need of this today. With all the problems in the world and in our daily lives, we often lose sight of the value of simply being nice to each other.

Clemency is our ability to retain our composure when we get upset or angry. It means that we hold back from avenging the wrongs and abuses that we suffer from others. If anger means our "blood boils", the clemency means that we keep things under control in the heat of the moment and use good sense.

Clemency is a beautiful and balanced mode of conduct, one that is neither anger nor self-effacement. A person who cannot inculcate clemency into his character will be in either one or another bad state. He will either be angry and temperamental, or sniveling and debased.

It is important to distinguish between true clemency – which shows strength of character – and the forbearance that comes from weakness, disgrace, and inability.

Balance and poise are among the hallmarks of the Islamic faith. Clemency is a trait that exemplifies balance and the triumph of reason over our passions. As human beings, we have a natural propensity to get angry. It is abnormal to never get angry. However, one whose anger is accompanied by clemency can come though his anger blameless and unscathed.

Indeed, some people have observed that without anger there is no meaning to clemency, since a person is only described as clement when people see how he conducts himself when he is angry.

A Muslim should endeavor to show this trait with everyone. The most noble of people are those who stand above tit-for-tat knavery. The person who responds to ignorance with kindness elevates himself above the other. This is not even the case when responding to kindness in kind, since that merely puts both parties on an equal footing.

This is why it is so important that a Muslim exhibits clemency with all people. If his heart is not strong enough to feel it, he should at least make an outward show of forbearance. This will, in time, grow into true, heartfelt magnanimity. Clemency is like any other character trait. A person is either naturally endowed with it, or he can learn it and make it part of his character with effort.

Ramadan is the ideal time for us to develop this quality. We need to translate the restraint we show regarding our desire to eat and drink in this month into the ability to restrain our tongues and our hands when we are abused. We must, indeed, to use our fast a shield, protecting us from bad behavior.

We need to say to one who looks to fall into a dispute with us – "I am fasting." We need to remind ourselves as well as the other party. Maybe this is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) specifically instructs us to say it twice.

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