

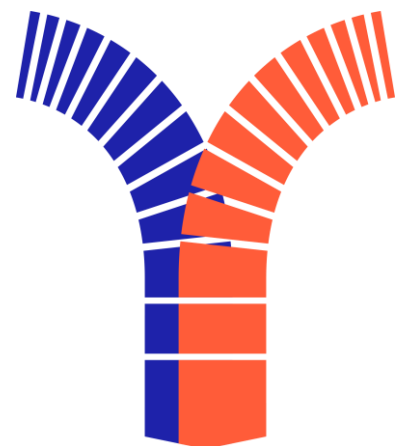
## Fasting in Ramadan as a student.

Ramadan is an extremely important month for me as a Muslim. Fasting allows us to develop self-discipline and spiritual awareness. Ramadan is a month that I look forward to every year, despite the thirst and hunger it is a month that helps the Muslim community become more connected and where charity is advised. It is a month of joy and ends with an exciting celebration, Eid. Therefore, Ramadan is an important part of my life as I get an increased sense of empathy towards those who are less fortunate, allowing me to be grateful for the blessings and privileges I have been given.

However, fasting does have an impact on my regular day-to-day activities, including my sleep schedule, mealtimes, and study patterns. Muslims are required to wake up before sunrise to have a light meal before beginning our fast and then perform the first prayer of the day. During the day we would often spend more time on prayer and reflection. Fasting impacts my ability to concentrate, meaning I study for shorter intervals with regular breaks in-between to ensure I'm engaged. Furthermore, as a Muslim who regularly takes part in physical activity, in Ramadan I try to reduce this a little, due to increased fatigue and thirst. My exercises would then consist of exceptionally light workouts to not overwork myself and affect my health.

On the first day of Ramadan this year, I had woken up at around ten past four in the morning, had a meal and prayed. After, like usual, I stayed awake until school started, finding it's easier to get work done then, while I am not hungry and can concentrate. The first couple of days are the hardest for me, as I always forget I'm not able to eat. It feels like I have more time on my hands, because I do spend quite a bit of my time eating my meals and snacking throughout the day, explaining the constant belly rumbling during the day! A couple of days in, it is challenging as I always overestimate how far I can physically push myself, not considering that I'm not able to have water or any source of energy to make up for this.

Of course, as the month goes on, I become more adapted to the mealtimes and regular schedules of the day. For example, as soon as I come home, after I freshen up, I love helping in the kitchen when help is needed and to pass time until sunset, when it is finally sunset, I break my fast and have my meal. Shortly after I would pray and sometimes go to the mosque to perform another prayer only given during Ramadan (Tarawih). This year it means that I would usually be free at around half past nine in the evening.



I know that many others and I, find school a little challenging, I often feel this as I usually feel tired from being awake so early or feel that I'm too hungry and can't pay attention to how Shakespeare has described Macbeth in the play. Sometimes I would really try to understand but simply cannot process the information given to me. The biggest hurdle of the day is lunchtime. Smelling and seeing food and water so close yet so far, is sometimes heart-breaking and hard for me to get over (but of course I remember it is all for a good cause and get over it)

Teachers understand that we are more tired and less focused than usual, therefore we get often breaks. For example, in PE, our teachers allow us to play a lighter and more engageable sport that many enjoy, such as benchball. Other times we would play some minigames but have rest periods. This really helps while fasting, allowing us to regain our energy and catch our breath, avoiding the need for water. In other lessons, our teachers understand that concepts may be more difficult to understand for us, therefore are extremely patient while explaining content. And would allow us to have often talks with our partners to stay engaged and not zone out.

I usually play badminton and exercise around 4 times a week, however in Ramadan I cut this down to 3 times a week again, all with light intensity workouts. My first badminton session this Ramadan was in the afternoon. As I arrived, my coach gave us a light pulse raiser and then sent us on court to warm up with the shuttles. I immediately found that fasting had affected my performance and was confused at first. I had felt that all the energy in my body had been flushed out and couldn't perform any high-power shots (smash) to my usual standard. This annoyed me because at first I had thought it was my technique, and when I had complained to my brother, he had shortly reminded me that because I'm fasting I may not have enough power and energy, I cut myself some slack from then on and had started doing shots that require less gross movement and raw power.

Overall, I love Ramadan and despite it being difficult, it comes with a lot of memories, and pure joy.

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