

What breaks the fast

Three things break a fast. Much of what people worry about does not. Know the line before you reach it.



★ The three that break it

Food, drink and sexual intercourse, taken deliberately between true dawn and sunset. Deliberately is the word carrying the weight.

Qur'an 2:187 · Sahih al-Bukhari 1936

★ Where the day begins and ends

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ

“And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread of night.” Then complete the fast until sunset.

Qur'an 2:187

★ If you eat by mistake

“If somebody eats or drinks forgetfully, let him complete his fast — what he ate or drank was given to him by Allah.”

Sahih al-Bukhari 1933, 6669

★ Intercourse, and what it costs

A man who broke his fast this way was told: free a slave; if not, fast two months in succession; if not, feed sixty poor people.

- Shafi'i: the day itself is made up as well

Sahih al-Bukhari 1936, 1937

★ A kiss does not break it

‘A’ishah said the Prophet ﷺ would kiss and embrace while fasting — and he had more power to control his desire than any of us.

- Keep back from what you cannot stop

Sahih al-Bukhari 1927, 1928

★ Cupping does not break it

The Prophet ﷺ was cupped while fasting. Anas, asked whether a fasting person should dislike it, said no — only if it leaves him weak.

Sahih al-Bukhari 1938, 1939, 1940

★ Waking in janabah

He ﷺ would reach the morning in janabah after being with his wives, then bathe and fast the day. A late ghusl does not cancel a fast.

Sahih al-Bukhari 1925, 1931

★ Vomiting

Being sick without meaning to does not break the fast. Bringing it up deliberately does, and that day is made up.

Sunan Abi Dawud, Kitab al-Sawm · hasan

★ The intention, made at night

Deeds are by intention. For a Ramadan fast the Shafi'is require it formed before dawn; a voluntary fast may be begun in the morning.

Sahih al-Bukhari 1 · Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Siyam · an-Nawawi, al-Majmu'