

Who must fast, and who is excused

Ramadan binds those able to bear it. Who is obliged, who is let off, and what each one owes afterwards.



Who it binds

Every Muslim who has reached puberty, is sane, resident and able to fast. The pen is lifted from the child, the sleeper and the insane.

Qur'an 2:183-185 · Sunan Abi Dawud, Kitab al-Hudud · sahih

Children

Not obliged until puberty, but trained towards it. The Companions had their young ones fast and handed them a wool toy when they cried.

Sahih al-Bukhari 1960

The sick and the traveller

وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

“And whoever is ill or on a journey — then an equal number of other days.” They repay the days one for one, later.

Qur'an 2:185 · 2:184

Haid and nifas

She does not fast and does not pray while the bleeding lasts. The fasts are made up afterwards; the prayers are not.

Sahih al-Bukhari 321 · Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Hayd

Pregnant and nursing

If fasting would harm her or the child she may break it and make the days up. Shafi'i: fearing for the child alone, she also feeds a poor person.

- The schools differ here — ask, do not assume

Qur'an 2:184 · an-Nawawi, al-Majmu'

Those who never can

The very old, and those with a lasting illness with no hope of recovery, do not make up days. For each day, they feed a poor person.

Qur'an 2:184

Before the next Ramadan

Missed days are repaid before the month comes round again. 'A'ishah used to clear hers in Sha'ban.

Sahih al-Bukhari 1950

If you forget

“If one of you eats or drinks forgetfully, let him complete his fast — it was Allah who fed him and gave him drink.”

Sahih al-Bukhari 1933

Breaking it deliberately

A man who had relations with his wife while fasting was told: free a slave, or fast two months, or feed sixty poor people.

Sahih al-Bukhari 1936