

# Ramadan

The holy month of Ramadan is a time when Muslims ask forgiveness for past sins, pray for guidance, and seek to purify themselves through self-restraint and good deeds. Ramadan traditionally begins with the sighting of the new moon which marks the start of the ninth month in the Islamic calendar and lasts for the whole month. Eid al-Fitr, Arabic for “Festival of the Breaking of the Fast,” marks the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the next month and is traditionally celebrated after a confirmed sighting of the following new moon. (Note: because the new moon may be sighted earlier or later in specific locations, it can be difficult to decisively pinpoint the dates of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr based on U.S. calendars.)

Muslim holidays are based on a lunar calendar, called the Hijri calendar, which is shorter than the solar calendar by 11 days. This causes Ramadan (and any other Islamic holidays) to migrate through the seasons. Managers should therefore be alert and check its dates each year. In 2023, Ramadan is expected to begin on **March 22<sup>nd</sup>** or **March 23<sup>rd</sup>** and is expected to end on **April 20<sup>th</sup>** or **April 21<sup>st</sup>**.

It is important to keep in mind that Muslim employees may outwardly increase the practice of their faith during Ramadan. Many Muslims use Ramadan as a time to refocus their faith, practice, restraint, and self-discipline. Many also reflect both on God and on those who experience poverty and starvation year-round. In addition to fasting, traditionally Muslims avoid participating in negative activities like lying or eavesdropping.

## Fasting

Fasting is one of the most important practices when observing Ramadan. Each day during Ramadan, the fast begins just before dawn and ends at sunset. During that period, neither food nor drink is consumed. The time when the fast ends is known as *Iftar*. If a Muslim employee is observing Ramadan and scheduled to work through sunset, it is important to be aware of his or her need for a break to end the fast. When Ramadan falls in the summer months, both the daylight hours and the fast are longer than in the shorter days of winter.

## Scheduling

It is critically important to take fasting into account when scheduling business-related luncheons or office parties. As with all holidays, it is important to remember that there are many ways to observe Ramadan and that it is up to each individual as to what their observance looks like. Invite your employees to share how they prefer to be accommodated during Ramadan. Depending on how they answer, you may wish to consider letting them shift their hours.

## Prayer

Muslims believe that prayer should be performed five times daily. The month of Ramadan is a time when many Muslims decide to improve and excel in meeting their prayer obligations. Therefore, Muslim employees may need additional breaks throughout the day. It is important to invite your employees to communicate their needs prior to the start of Ramadan.

## Eid-Al-Fitr

The holiday of Eid-al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan. It is important to note that the duration of the Eid celebrations can vary by location. For instance, many Muslims in the U.S. celebrate Eid for one day, this year beginning on the evening of **April 21** to the evening of **April 22nd**. In many Muslim-majority countries, the celebration lasts for three days, and government offices and schools may be closed. Muslims may request some time off to celebrate Eid-al-Fitr and break their month of daily fasting with family and friends. It is important to be aware of each year's Eid dates so that you can anticipate your employees' scheduling needs and empower your employees to reach out to you with their preferences

## Greetings

If you would like to recognize Ramadan with your colleagues and friends who are observing, you can greet them by saying "*Ramadan Mubarak*," meaning "blessed Ramadan" or "happy Ramadan," or "*Ramadan Kareem*," which means "generous Ramadan." To recognize Eid al-Fitr, you can say, "*Eid Mubarak*," which means "blessed Eid."

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