

In truth, fasting the month of Ramadan is one of the greatest acts of worship a believer can perform. It is an act that cleanses one's mind, body, and soul from the spiritual and physical impurities of this world. It is an act that brings the hearts of Muslims together on a world-wide level as they endeavor to practice the virtue of self-discipline in unison. And it is an act that satiates the hungry soul for its eagerness to please the Lord of the Worlds.

The act of fasting was also practiced by previous religious communities. Likewise, it has been ordained for the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace). Allah All-Mighty says in the Quran, "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed onto you as it was prescribed onto those before you, that perhaps ye may (learn) self-restraint." [Surat Al-Baqara, v. 183]

What is Fasting?

Linguistically, the word fasting in the Arabic language means unconditional 'restraint' (imsak) from any action or speech during any time.

According to the Sacred Law, fasting is the act of:

1. refraining from engaging in sexual activity, and
2. refraining from entering anything into the body cavity,
3. whether deliberately or accidentally,
4. from the time the sun begins to rise to the time the sun sets
5. accompanied with the intention of fasting
6. from individuals who are permitted to fast.

'Refraining from engaging in sexual activity' includes actual sexual intercourse and ejaculation caused by foreplay.

'Refraining from entering anything into the body cavity' refers to the acts of entering food, drink, or medicine into the body cavity, regardless of whether this is a typical item one would enter into the body cavity or not. Entering any of these substances inside the body cavity means that the substance enters into the throat, the intestines, the stomach, or the brain by way of the nose, the throat, the private parts, or open wounds.

'Whether deliberately or accidentally' excludes forgetful acts of eating, drinking, or sexual activity.

'From the time the sun begins to rise to the time the sun sets' refers to the true entering of the Fajr time to the entering of the Maghrib time.

'Accompanied with the intention of fasting' means that one must intend to fast in order to distinguish if one is really performing an act of worship or not when one refrains from eating, drinking, or having sexual intercourse. For example, if one were to merely stay away from food, drink, or sexual activity without an intention to fast, then this fast is not valid and does not count.

'From individuals who are permitted to fast' means that one must be free from a situation that would prevent the validity of one's fast, such as menstruation or lochia (post-natal bleeding).

[Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya; Shurunbulali Imdad al-Fattah]

When Does Fasting Become Obligatory?

Fasting the month of Ramadan is obligatory upon every Muslim, male and female, who is sane and pubescent. This ruling also applies to making up any unperformed Ramadan fasts whether due to an excuse or one's own remissness. Therefore, a person is obliged to makeup missed Ramadan fasts. [Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah]

A male child becomes pubescent when he experiences a wet dream or ejaculation. A female child becomes pubescent when she experiences a wet dream or her first menstruation. If by the age of 15 lunar years neither male nor female has undergone these experiences, then they are considered legally pubescent and are obliged to fast.

Fasting the current month of Ramadan is obligatory upon the aforementioned individuals if they are physically able to fast, free from menstruation and lochia (post-natal bleeding), and resident.

[ibid]

Who Is Excused From Fasting the Month of Ramadan?

Fasting the month of Ramadan is not obligatory upon a menstruating woman or a woman in the state of lochia (post-natal bleeding) because fasting is not permitted while they are in this state. [Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah]

Sick people and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are obliged to fast. However, illness can excuse a person from fasting if one reasonably fears that the act of fasting would increase the sickness or slow the recovery process. The same ruling applies to a woman who is pregnant or breastfeeding and reasonably fears that fasting will harm her or her baby. Reasonable fear is known by: 1) manifest signs, 2) a relevant past experience, or 3) the notification of an upright, Muslim doctor/expert. [Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah]

A traveler is also excused from fasting if he initiates his journey before the time of Fajr enters. However, it is better that he fasts providing that this does not cause undue hardship. If a person begins fasting a day of Ramadan and then travels, he is obliged to complete his fast. [ibid]

All of the aforementioned individuals are obliged to make up their missed fasts once Ramadan has ended in a time that they are able. There is no expiation for a person who delays making up their missed fasts, though it is superior to make them up immediately if they are able. [ibid]

What are the Different Types of Fasts?

There are essentially 9 types of fasts:

1. Specified* Obligatory (fard) fasts: the current month of Ramadan
2. Non-Specified Obligatory (fard) fasts: make up fasts from a past Ramadan
3. Specified Necessary (wajib) fasts: specified vowed fasts
4. Non-Specified Necessary (wajib) fasts:
 1. non-specified vowed fasts
 2. expiation fasts
 3. make up fasts for any vowed, sunna, nafl, or expiation fast that one vitiated
4. Emphasized Sunna fast:

1. the 9th of Dhul al-Hijjah (the day of Arafat)
2. the 10th of Muharram (the day of 'Ashura) along with either the ninth or the eleventh day

3. Recommended fasts:
 1. 13th, 14th, 15th days of each lunar month (full moon days)
 2. every Monday and Thursday of each month
 3. 6 days of the month of Shawwal; it is best to perform them consecutively
 4. any other fast established by a request or promise of reward from the sunna, like the fast of Dawud (fasting every other day), which is said to be the most beloved fast to Allah

5. Voluntary (nafl) fasts: any fast other than the aforementioned as long as it is not disliked
6. Slightly Disliked (makruh tanzih) fasts:
 1. only fasting 10th of Muharram without the ninth or eleventh day
 2. singling out Friday if one specifically thinks that there is reward in it, otherwise there is no dislikedness
 3. singling out Saturday, though there is no dislikedness if it coincides with another type of fast
 4. continuously fasting without breaking one's fast in the evening (wisal)

5. Prohibitively disliked (makruh tahrimi), sinful fasts:
 1. the day of Eid al-Fitr
 2. the day of Eid al-Adha and the three days that follow (al-Ayyam al-Tashriq) [Shurunbulali, Maraqqi al-Falah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya; Shurunbulali Imdad al-Fattah; Tahtawi, Hashiyya al-Tahtawi]

* Specified fast means that there is a specific time designated for performing this fast. [Radd al-Muhtar] As such, one is obliged to fast this day, and one cannot intend to fast a different type of fast.

Non-Specified fast means that there is not a specific time designated for performing this fast. Therefore, it is possible to choose when to fast it. The distinction between specified and non-specified also returns to rulings related to the intention which is forthcoming.

What are the Stipulations For a Valid Fast?

The stipulations for a valid fast are: 1) the intention, 2) to be free from menstruation and lochia,

and 3) to be free from anything else that would break the fast. [Shurunbulali, Nur al-Iyadah]

It is not a condition for the validity of the fast that a person be free from the state of major ritual impurity (janaba). The mother of the believers, Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) said, "Fajr would enter during the month of Ramadan and the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) would be in a state of major ritual purity from other than a sexual dream (i.e. because of sexual relations). He would perform the purificatory bath and fast (that day)." [Muslim]

Likewise, if one intended to fast during the night and woke up within Fajr time in a state of major ritual impurity, then one must perform the purificatory bath (ghusl) for the sake of the validity of one's prayers, fast this day, and the fast is considered valid. [Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah]

What Is the Intention?

The intention is needed for each day one fasts, even in the month of Ramadan. [Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya]

The intention is the determination one feels in the heart to do something. [Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya] A way to envision this point is if a person was to ask one what they are doing, one would affirm that they are fasting. Practically-speaking, it is nearly impossible to not have the intention in the Hanafi madhhab. One does not have to verbally state the intention, though it is better. [ibid]

When Does One Make the Intention?

The time of the intention depends on the type of fast.

Category A: For the specified obligatory, specified necessary, emphasized sunna, recommended, and nafl fasts, the following rulings apply to the intention:

1. One must make the intention in the appropriate time in order for the fast to count.
2. The time of the intention is from Maghrib of the previous night to before the Islamic midday (see definition below) of the following day. This is providing that one did nothing that

would invalidate the fast from the start of Fajr time.

3. Scholars confirm that it is superior for one to make the intention the night before one fasts (i.e. any time from Maghrib to the entering of Fajr) due to the difference of opinion from other schools on this point.

4. It is sufficient to intend to fast without specifying if the fast is obligatory, necessary, sunna, recommended, or nafl.

[Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya; al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya]

Category B: For non-specified obligatory and non-specified necessary fasts, the following rulings apply to the intention:

1. One must make the intention in the appropriate time in order for the fast to count.
2. The time for the intention is from Maghrib of the previous night to the entering of Fajr on the day one desires to fast.
3. One must also specify the type of fast when intending.
4. If one made the intention after the entering of Fajr to before the Islamic midday (see definition below), then this fast counts as a voluntary (nafl) fast instead.

[Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya]

When Is the Islamic Midday?

The Islamic midday (al-Dahwa al-Kubra) is the half-way point between the entering of Fajr time to the entering of Maghrib time. It does not mean noon, nor does it mean the zawal. [Mulla Khusru, Durar al-Hikam Sharh Ghurar al-Ahkam; ibn Abidin, Radd al-Muhtar]

For example, if Fajr entered at 5 am and Maghrib entered at 5 pm, then the Islamic midday would be the half-way point between this 12 hour time span, which is 11 am. Thus, in this example, a person would have from the entering of Maghrib of the previous night to before 11 am of the next day to make the intention if he is performing a fast from category A.

The intention must be made 'before' the Islamic midday because one needs to fast with the intention for the majority of the day. According to the Sacred Law, this would be akin to fasting

the entire day. [Mulla Khusru, Durar al-Hikam Sharh Ghurar al-Ahkam; ibn Abidin, Radd al-Muhtar]

What Happens If One Decides Not to Fast?

It is a condition that the intention to fast remains with one.

If during the night one decides to not fast the next day after previously intending to fast it, then one is not considered to be fasting for that day. If one renewed the intention, however, then one is considered to be fasting.

[Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya]

What Are Some Recommended Acts While Fasting?

- To eat the pre-dawn meal (suhur) before Fajr time enters
- To delay the pre-dawn meal closer to the time before Fajr enters
- To hasten to break one's fast at the entering of Maghrib

[Shurunbulali, Nur al-IyDAH]

What Are Some Duas to Read When Breaking the Fast?

Allahumma laka sumtu wa bika aamantu wa 'alayka tawakkaltu wa 'ala rizqika aftartu wa sawm al-ghad min shahr Ramadan nawaytu faghfir li ma qaddamtu wa ma akh-khartu

"Oh Allah, for You I fasted, and in You I believe, and on You I place my reliance, and on Your provision I break my fast. And I intend the fasting of tomorrow for the month of Ramadan. Forgive me for what I did before and what I do after."

Allahumma laka sumtu wa 'ala rizqika aftartu

"Oh Allah for You I fasted and upon Your provision I break my fast."

Allahumma laka sumna wa 'ala rizqika aftarna fataqabbal minna innaka Anta al-Sami' al-'Alim

"Oh Allah for You we fasted, and upon Your provision we break our fasts. Accept this from us. Verily, You are All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

[Nawawi, al-Adhkar; Tahtawi, Hashiyya al-Tahtawi]

What Does a Woman Do If Her Period Starts In Ramadan?

If her menstruation starts in Ramadan during the night (i.e. any time from the entering of Maghrib to before the entering of Fajr), then she refrains from fasting the following day and for the duration that she is menstruating. [Hedaya Hartford, Birgivi's Manual Interpreted]

If her menstruation starts in Ramadan during the day (i.e. any time from the entering of Fajr to the entering of Maghrib), then her fast is vitiated and it does not count. She must make up this day after Ramadan has ended in a time when she is able. She must refrain from fasting for the duration that she is menstruating. [Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah; Tahtawi, Hashiyya al-Tahtawi]

A menstruating woman can eat and drink during the day in Ramadan. If she believes that it is unlawful for her to eat or drink, then it is necessary for her to do so as refraining from food or drink with the intention of fasting is unlawful for her. [Tahtawi, Hashiyya al-Tahtawi; Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah]

A menstruating woman should record the number of days she missed while fasting and make them up after Ramadan ends in a time when she is able.

The same rulings apply to a woman in a state of lochia (post-natal bleeding).

What Does a Woman Do If her Period Ends In Ramadan?

If her menstruation stops in Ramadan during the night (i.e. any time from the entering of Maghrib to before the entering of Fajr), then she performs a purificatory bath (ghusl), begins her obligatory worship, and she is obliged to fast the following day and the remainder of Ramadan. [Hedaya Hartford, Birgivi's Manual Interpreted]

Note: There are details to this point if her menstruation ends before the menstrual maximum of 10 complete days and the ghusl time finishes within the Fajr time. Please refer to Hedaya Hartford's 'Birgivi's Manual Interpreted.'

If her menstruation stops in Ramadan during the day (i.e. any time after the entering of Fajr up to the entering of Maghrib), then she performs a purificatory bath (ghusl), begins her obligatory worship and she acts like a fasting person until the Maghrib time enters due to the sacredness of the month of Ramadan. [Hedaya Hartford, Birgivi's Manual Interpreted] It is necessary for her to abstain from eating and drinking for the remainder of the day. [Shurunbulali, Maraqqi al-Falah; Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah] She is sinful if she does not do so. However, this day of acting like a fasting person does not count as a fast. She must make up this day after Ramadan has ended in a time when she is able. [ibid] She is obliged to fast the following day and the remainder of Ramadan.

A menstruating woman should record the number of days she missed while fasting and make them up after Ramadan ends in a time when she is able.

The same rulings apply to a woman in a state of lochia (post-natal bleeding).

Are There Actions That Can Vitate the Fast?

Yes, there are actions that can vitiate the fast. These actions fall under two categories: 1) that which vitiates the fast and requires a makeup along with expiation and 2) that which vitiates the fast and requires makeup only. [ibn Abdin, Radd al-Muhtar]

For the first category, the principle returns to deliberately performing an act that vitiates the fast by one's own free will and without a valid reason. Deliberately means that one remembers that

one is fasting and purposely performs an action that breaks the fast. [ibid] These actions are outlined below in the section 'category 1.'

For the second category, the principle returns to accidentally performing an act that vitiates the fast. It also includes acts performed by force of a third party. Accidentally means that one remembers that one is fasting but broke the fast by one's own doing without the intention to purposely break the fast. [Tahtawi, Hashiyya al-Tahtawi; Related in Radd al-Muhtar] These actions are outlined below in the section 'category 2.'

If any of the actions from category 1 are performed forgetfully, then they do not vitiate the fast. Forgetfully means that one does not have the presence of mind that one is fasting when performing the action. [Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah] The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, "Whoever forgets that he is fasting and eats or drinks, then he still completes his fast. It is only Allah who fed him and gave him drink." [Bukhari] In another narration, the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, "If a fasting person eats forgetfully, it is only provision Allah put forth to him and there is no makeup upon him." [Bukhari]

Category 1: Acts That Vitate the Fast & Require Makeup & Expiation

Acts that invalidate the fast and require a makeup along with expiation only relate to the current Ramadan fasts. Otherwise, if one performs any of the following actions while performing a fast outside of the current month of Ramadan, such as a make-up fast, then the fast is vitiated and only a makeup is required. One does not owe the expiation.

If done deliberately, by one's own free will, and without a valid reason while fasting a current Ramadan fast, the following acts invalidate the fast and require a makeup along with expiation:

1. eating or drinking something that humans would normally consume and this consummation nourishes, medicates, or pleases the body in some way
2. actual sexual intercourse, in the front or rear private part*, regardless if one ejaculated or not
3. swallowing the saliva of one's spouse

[Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya]

*It is impermissible and a grave crime to engage in sexual intercourse from the rear private part. The Sacred Law unconditionally prohibits this type of sexual activity whether during or not during the month of Ramadan.

What is the Expiation?

The expiation is to fast sixty consecutive days in the year without any interruption. One must choose a time where one can fast these sixty days without the days of Eid or the three days after Eid al-Adha (al-Ayyam al-Tashriq) interrupting the fasts because of the prohibition of fasting on these days. [Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah] If one does not fast them consecutively, then one must restart the 60 day period each time the continuity of the fasts is broken. [Tahtawi, Hashiyya al-Tahtawi]

The only exceptions to this rule are if one is menstruating or in a state of lochia (post-natal bleeding). A menstruating woman must continue to fast after she becomes pure, and she cannot delay the completion of the expiation. If she does delay fasting after becoming pure, then she must restart the 60 days of fasting. [Tahtawi, Hashiyya al-Tahtawi] The same ruling applies to a woman in the state of lochia.

If one is genuinely unable to perform the sixty consecutive fasts based on reasonable surety, then one must either:

1. feed the same sixty, poor people to their fill for two meals, or
 2. feed one poor person to his fill for two meals a day for sixty days, or
 3. give sixty poor people half a sa'* of wheat (or similar food grains) or its monetary value, or
 4. give sixty poor people a sa'* of dates (or similar food grains) or its monetary value, or
- e. give one poor person either c or d for sixty days.

It is important to note that one does not have a choice between fasting sixty days and feeding sixty poor people. Rather, one is obliged to fast sixty days, unless one is genuinely unable to

perform all of these fasts based on reasonable surety.

Reasonable surety is known by: 1) manifest signs, 2) a relevant past experience, or 3) the notification of an upright, Muslim doctor/expert.

One expiation suffices for all previous violations performed, even if they occurred in separate Ramadans. However, if one performed a future violation after the performance of the expiation, then a new expiation is owed.

[Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya; Shurunbulali Imdad al-Fattah]

* Half a sa' is approximately 2 kilos (4.5 pounds). A full sa' is approximately 4 kilos (9 pounds).

Category 2: Acts That Vitate the Fast & Require Make Up But Do Not Require Expiation

This category includes any act that vitiates the fast if done accidentally (see aforementioned definition) or by force of another.

It also includes any makeup fast one vitiates while trying to make it up.

The Mouth & Throat:

- eating or drinking accidentally
- eating or drinking because one thought Maghrib entered but Maghrib did not enter
- eating or drinking because one doubted that Fajr entered but Fajr really did enter
- eating or drinking forgetfully and thereafter thinking that the fast is broken, to deliberately eat and drink again
- swallowing what is between the teeth, on the condition that it is the size of a chickpea or

bigger

- swallowing a pebble or other items that people wouldn't typically eat
- swallowing water by accident when gargling for wudu or ghusl (with the exception of water that remains in the mouth—see next category)
- swallowing blood that exits from the gums and preponderates over the saliva
- swallowing toothpaste or mouthwash
- deliberately swallowing vomit that reaches a mouthful
- deliberately vomiting a mouthful, regardless if one swallows it or not
- vomiting and thereafter thinking that the fast is broken, to deliberately vomit again
- smoke that enters the throat by one's doing, on the condition one's body doesn't benefit

from it

- kissing that causes one to ejaculate, on the condition one did not swallow the other's saliva

The Private Parts:

- engaging in sexual intercourse because one still thinks Fajr has not entered but it really has
- engaging in sexual intercourse forgetfully and thereafter thinking that the fast is broken, to deliberately have sexual intercourse again
- entering a suppository into the anus
- entering something dry into the anus and it completely disappears inside the body
- entering something wet or oiled into the anus, even if it does not completely disappear inside of the body
- entering a wet tissue or a wet piece of cotton into the vagina, even if it does not completely disappear inside of the body
- entering a dry tissue or a dry piece of cotton into the vagina and it is completely inserted inside of the body without any part remaining outside
- pouring water or oil into the anus and it reaches the distance of the mihqana*
- pouring water or oil into the vagina and it reaches the distance of the mihqana

* The mihqana, or huqna in other relations, is a device used to insert medicine into the body by way of the anus (medical term: enema). In our day, a mihqana is similar to a rectal syringe or a clyster-pipe. The distance that breaks the fast is determined by when the top of mihqana reaches the place where medicine is released from it to the intestines. [Radd al-Muhtar]

The Nose:

- water used to clean the nose for wudu or ghusl reaches the throat or the brain
- inhaling medicine into the nostrils
- inhaling smoke by one's doing, on the condition one's body doesn't benefit from it

The Body, in General:

- touching that causes one to ejaculate (this includes masturbation)
- applying medicine to an open abdominal or head wound and it reaches the stomach or the brain

[Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya; Shurunbulali Imdad al-Fattah]

What are the Acts That Do Not Break the Fast?

The Mouth & Throat:

- eating or drinking something forgetfully (see aforementioned definition)
- eating what is between the teeth if it is less than the size of a chickpea
- tasting the leftover traces of medicine in the mouth or throat
- chewing on a sesame seed without swallowing it, if its taste doesn't reach the throat
- dust or smoke (including smoke from 'ud or incense) entering one's throat without one's doing
- a mosquito, fly, or any other object entering one's throat without one's doing
- swallowing the wetness that remains after washing one's mouth for wudu or ghusl
- swallowing one or two drops of sweat or tears that enter the mouth and mixes with one's saliva, on the condition that one cannot taste its saltiness
- swallowing one's own saliva
- swallowing one's own phlegm after clearing the throat
- swallowing vomit that emerges in the mouth without one's doing, even if it is a mouthful
- deliberately vomiting less than a mouthful, regardless if one swallows it or not
- using a miswak or toothbrush
- wetting one's lips with one's saliva while speaking and swallowing it
- swallowing blood that exits from the gums and does not preponderate over the saliva on the condition one cannot taste it
- pulling back saliva into one's mouth that flows to the chin like a string on the condition that it stays connected and does not break off
- backbiting

The Private Parts:

- performing sexual intercourse forgetfully
- the state of major ritual impurity (janaba) suddenly befalls one, such as from a wet dream
- ejaculation caused by looking or thinking
- entering a dry finger into the anus
- pouring water or oil into the male urethra
- entering tissue or a piece of cotton into the male urethra, even if it completely disappears inside the body
- entering a dry finger into the vagina
- entering a dry tissue or a dry piece of cotton into the vagina upon the condition that part of it remains outside of the body
- performing istinja with water, providing that the wetness doesn't reach the distance of the mihqana (see aforementioned definition)

The Nose:

- mucus descending from the nose
- sniffing up mucus that is in the nose and it descends to one's throat
- inhaling smoke, perfume, or incense without one's doing
- smelling an odor

The Eyes:

- applying kuhl in the eyes, even if one finds its taste in the throat or its color in the saliva or phlegm
- dripping eye drops or contact solution into the eyes
- wearing contact lenses

The Ears:

- water entering the ears from a bath
- scratching the inside of one's ear with a q-tip, even if dirt exits and one reinserts it into the ear

The Body, in General:

- rubbing oil or cream on the body or hair
- applying deodorant
- performing a bath and finding its coolness penetrating into one's body
- withdrawing blood, such as in a blood test
- blood cupping

The Mind:

- intending to break one's fast but not actually doing it

[Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya; Shurunbulali Imdad al-Fattah]

What are the Acts That Are Disliked While Fasting?

- tasting or chewing something without an excuse, provided that its flavor is not swallowed
- chewing flavorless gum
- kissing with desire in which one fears falling into sexual intercourse or ejaculation, on the condition one did not swallow the other's saliva
- gathering saliva in the mouth and then swallowing it
- to gargle excessively when making wudu or ghusl for fear of breaking the fast
- to sniff water excessively when cleaning the nose in wudu or ghusl for fear of breaking the fast
- doing things that would weaken one while fasting, like cupping or withdrawing blood
- brushing the teeth with toothpaste or using mouthwash, on the condition one does not swallow it

[Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya; Shurunbulali Imdad al-Fattah]

Can I Be Affectionate With My Spouse While Fasting?

There are different rulings related to this question due to the various ways one can be affectionate.

Physical Contact that Does Not Vitate the Fast:

- Non-passionate kissing in which one is free from swallowing the saliva of one's spouse and free from the fear of falling into sexual intercourse or ejaculation
- Non-passionate touching in which one is free from the fear of falling into sexual intercourse or ejaculation, such as hugging or holding hands
- Looking at one's spouse, even if one ejaculates

Physical Contact that Does Not Vitate the Fast But Is Prohibitively Disliked and Sinful:

- Kissing with desire in which one fears falling into sexual intercourse or ejaculation
- Touching with desire in which one fears falling into sexual intercourse or ejaculation
- Anything sexual that one fears will lead to sexual intercourse or ejaculation
- Physical Contact that Vitiates the Fast And Requires Makeup Only:
- Ejaculation from masturbation*
- Kissing and touching (i.e. no actual penetration took place) that causes ejaculation*
- Physical Contact that Vitiates the Fast and Requires Makeup and Expiation**:
- Deliberate passionate kissing that causes one to swallow the saliva of one's spouse*
- Deliberate sexual intercourse in one of the private parts with ejaculation*
- Deliberate sexual intercourse in one of the private parts without ejaculation*

* The person who involved himself in the above-mentioned situations should refrain from eating, drinking, and sexual activity for the remainder of that day, as well as repenting for the severity of the sin.

** Outside the month of Ramadan, if one breaks a fast deliberately through these acts, then the expiation is not required.

[Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya]

What is the I'tikaf (Spiritual Retreat)?

The mother of the believers, Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) said, "The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) would always perform I'tikaf in the last ten days of Ramadan until Allah Most High took his soul (Allah bless him and give him peace)." [Bukhari]

The scholar al-Zahidi said, "It is strange how the people have left performing the I'tikaf. The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) performed some actions and left them, but he never left the I'tikaf—from the time he entered Medina to the moment he died (Allah bless him and give him peace)."

The I'tikaf is entering the masjid with the intention to remain there for worship. The masjid must be one where the group prayer is offered for the five obligatory prayers.

The I'tikaf is permissible if one is free from a state of major ritual impurity, menstruation, and lochia (post-natal bleeding).

The conditions for a valid vowed I'tikaf (see definition below) are 1) the intention, 2) to be Muslim, 3) sanity, and 4) to be free from menstruation and lochia (post-natal bleeding).

[Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya]

What Are the Types of I'tikaf?

1. Necessary (wajib): the vowed I'tikaf: The vowed I'tikaf is an oath to make I'tikaf for a specified time. It must be at least an entire day and night. One is obliged to fast during it in order for the vowed I'tikaf to count.

2. Emphasized sunna: the last ten days and nights of Ramadan: Performing I'tikaf in the last ten days and nights of Ramadan is a strongly emphasized communal sunna. It is blameworthy upon the community as a whole to not perform the I'tikaf. If some people perform the I'tikaf and others do not, then they raise the blameworthiness from the entire community. The scholars do not stipulate that one must fast during the emphasized sunna I'tikaf because it is performed during Ramadan and the assumption is that the person will be fasting anyway.

3. Recommended: any times other than the aforementioned: For the recommended I'tikaf, its minimum duration is a moment, even if it's when one passes through the mosque. Fasting is

not a condition for the recommended I'tikaf.

[Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya]

Can a Woman Perform I'tikaf?

- Yes, a woman can perform I'tikaf.
- A woman's I'tikaf is best performed in the prayer area of her house. The prayer area is the place where she has designated to pray her obligatory and nafl prayers.
- It is disliked for a woman to perform I'tikaf in the masjid.
- It is not valid for men to perform I'tikaf in other than the masjid.

[Ala al-Din Abidin, al-Hadiyya al-Alaiyya]

Can One Leave the Masjid During I'tikaf?

Leaving the masjid without an excuse ends the I'tikaf. This ruling also applies to a woman performing I'tikaf in the prayer area of her house. If one does leave because of an excuse, the excuse must be due to a shariah-compliant need, or to use the restroom if unable to use the masjid facilities, or out of necessity. [Shurunbulali, Imdad al-Fattah]

What Does a Person Do During I'tikaf?

One is encouraged to busy oneself with worship and anything beneficial, such as praying, reciting the Qur'an, making much dhikr, speaking of the good, and gaining beneficial knowledge.

A person performing I'tikaf can eat, drink, sleep, talk, and do everything that is normally permissible, except for sexual intercourse, kissing, and touching with desire. [Shurunbulali, Nur al-Iyadah]

Allah Most High says, "And do not approach your women while you are performing the spiritual retreat in the masjids." [al-Baqara, v. 187] Engaging in these acts end the I'tikaf whether inside or outside of the masjid. For example, if one left the masjid for a shariah-compliant need and fell into sexual intercourse with one's spouse, then this act ends the I'tikaf. Engaging in these actions end the I'tikaf, regardless of whether one did them during the day or the night.

[Shurunbulali, Maraqi al-Falah; Tahtawi, Hashiyya al-Tahtawi; Shurunbulali Imdad al-Fattah]

During the I'tikaf, it is disliked to believe that remaining silent is a form of worship. It is also disliked to engage in work or trade. [Shurunbulali, Nur al-Iydhah]

May Allah accept our fasts and any act of worship that we perform for His sake.