



CAIR
PHILADELPHIA

RAMADAN ESSENTIALS GUIDE



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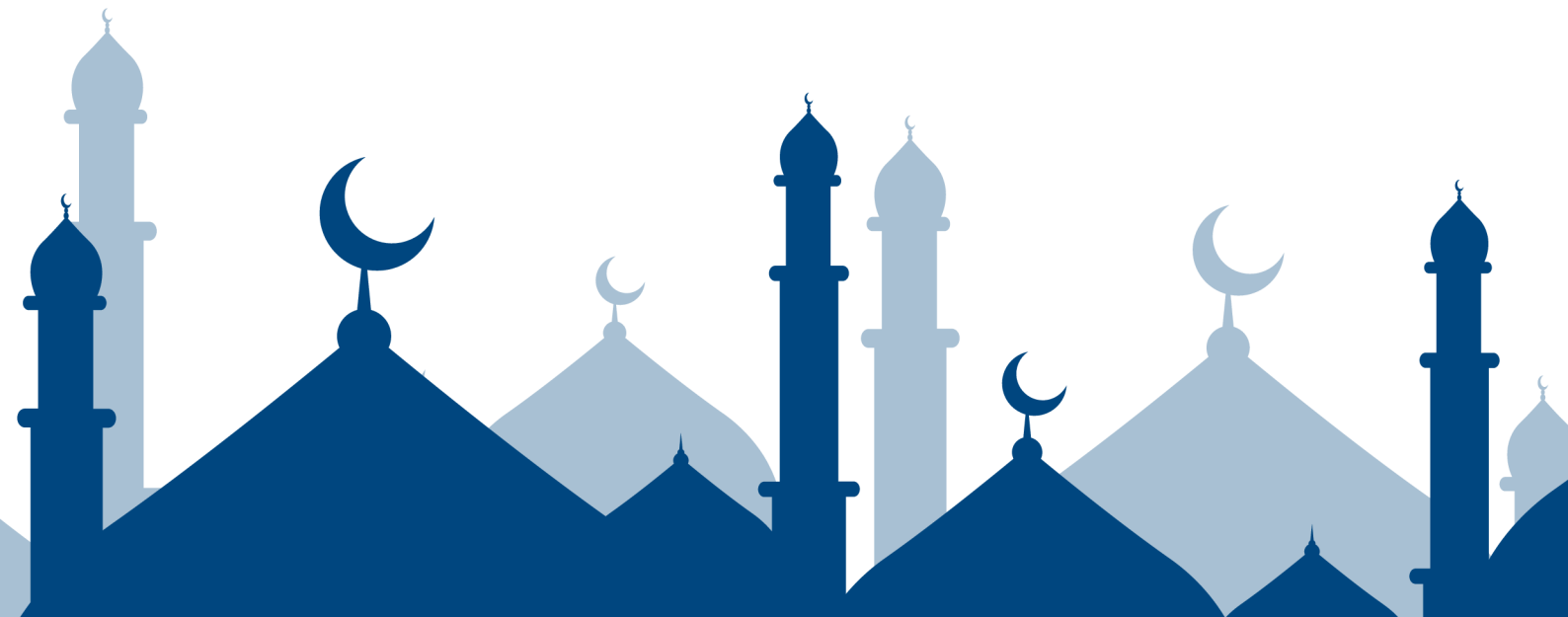
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INTRODUCTION TO RAMADAN ESSENTIALS GUIDE

At CAIR-Philadelphia, part of our mission is to enhance understanding of Islam and empower American Muslims. This booklet is designed to provide essential basic information about Ramadan, its significance, and how individuals, educators, and employers can create a supportive and inclusive environment for Muslims.

As many Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, they may encounter changes in their daily routines that can affect their work, study, and overall well-being. This guide aims to offer clear and practical information to help individuals, educators, and employers understand these needs and navigate potential challenges.

In addition to explaining the customs of Ramadan, this guide outlines best practices for requesting accommodations during this time. By fostering understanding and providing appropriate support, we can ensure that Muslims feel valued, respected, and able to fully participate in both their religious observance and their professional or academic responsibilities.

We hope this guide will serve as a helpful tool for everyone looking to create a more inclusive environment during Ramadan, enhancing mutual understanding, and strengthening relationships across communities.

INTRODUCTION TO RAMADAN

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is one of the holiest months for Muslims worldwide. It is a time of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. This sacred month commemorates the revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In 2025, Ramadan is expected to begin around March 1st (+/- 1 day) and conclude with Eid al-Fitr, a joyous celebration marking the end of fasting, on March 30th (+/- 1 day).

The Islamic calendar is lunar and in order to determine the start of the new month, there must be a sighting of the crescent moon; thus, the start and end date for Ramadan can only be determined on the day of. Ramadan's dates shift annually by 10-11 days and the month lasts 29-30 days. During this time, fasting Muslims abstain from food, drink, and other physical needs from sunrise to sunset. Fasting hours vary by location, ranging from 12-18 hours during longer spring and summer days.

Beyond the physical fast, Ramadan is a deeply spiritual experience. Muslims strengthen their connection with Allah through extra prayers, Quran recitation, and nightly Taraweeh prayers in congregation. Additionally during this time, many Muslims choose to become more observant to other aspects of the religion, such as increased charity, observing modesty or head coverings, choosing to eat halal, and trying to be a better person.

WHY DO MUSLIMS FAST DURING RAMADAN?

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam, essential acts of worship all Muslims must follow. Fasting furthers spiritual growth, self-discipline, and empathy for those in need. By abstaining from food, drink, and other physical needs, Muslims cultivate mindfulness and gratitude for their blessings. Exceptions to fasting include children, the elderly, the sick (both physically and mentally), travelers, pregnant or nursing women, and those menstruating.

WHAT DOES FASTING INVOLVE?

The fast begins at dawn and ends at sunset. During daylight hours, Muslims abstain from eating and drinking (including water) and smoking. Fasting also includes abstaining from immoral acts and behaviors, staying away from foul words and bad gestures.

- **Suhoor**

- The pre-dawn meal, eaten before sunrise around 5 am, provides nourishment and hydration for the fasting day.

- **Iftar:**

- The evening meal breaks the fast at sunset around 6 to 7 pm, traditionally starting with dates and water, followed by a larger meal shared with family and friends.

EID AL-FITR: CELEBRATING THE END OF RAMADAN

Eid al-Fitr (Festival of Breaking Fast) marks the end of Ramadan with communal prayers, festive meals, and gift-giving. It is a time of gratitude to Allah for the strength to complete the fast and a celebration of community and faith.

There are two holidays in the Islamic calendar, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. The latter of the Eids, Eid al-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice) is the commemoration of Prophet Abraham's sacrifice and is approximately 70 days after the end of Ramadan.

WHAT IS HALAL?

Halal means "permissible" in Arabic and often refers to food and drinks that follow Islamic guidelines. In order for meat products to be considered halal:

- No Pork or Alcohol: These are always avoided. Be mindful of pork by-products such as lard or gelatin.
- Special Preparation for Meat: Animals must be treated well and slaughtered in a humane way, by a Muslim, with a blessing said in the name of Allah.

If you're sharing a meal with someone observing Ramadan, here are some easy tips:

- Ask About Preferences: If unsure, just ask what they can or cannot eat.
- Check for Halal Labels on Meat Products: Many stores sell halal-certified products.
- Avoid Cross-Contamination: Use clean utensils and surfaces when preparing halal food.
- Offer Vegetarian Options: These are often a safe choice.

WHAT ARE PRAYERS?

Muslims are required to pray five times a day, each at specific times. These prayers are a way to remember Allah, seek guidance, and express gratitude. The five prayers are:

1. Fajr: The pre-dawn prayer, performed before sunrise. Suhoor is eaten prior to the Fajr prayer.
2. Dhuhr: The midday prayer, performed after the sun passes its highest point.
3. Asr: The afternoon prayer, performed in the late afternoon.
4. Maghrib: The evening prayer, performed just after sunset. It is often the time when Muslims break their fast during Ramadan.
5. Isha: The night prayer, performed after the twilight has disappeared.
6. During Ramadan, Taraweeh are optional but highly encouraged prayers performed at night after the Isha prayer. Over the course of Ramadan, the entire Quran is often completed in these Taraweeh prayers.

DO SCHOOLS HAVE TO PROVIDE RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS DURING RAMADAN?

Public schools must permit students to express and practice their religion as long as it does not “materially and substantially” interfere with the operations of the school, which often requires schools to provide accommodations. Students always have the right to read Qur’an and say silent prayers during non-instructional time. If students are permitted to use school rooms and resources for secular activities during non-instructional time, then students must be permitted to use school rooms and resources for religious purposes during non-instructional time. Public schools are likely required to provide prayer space for students to use during non-instructional time, in addition to other accommodations that will allow students to express their religious beliefs.

ARE PRIVATE K-12 SCHOOLS SUBJECT TO SAME ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS AS PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Private K-12 schools do not have the same legal obligations to provide religious accommodations. With this said, students should still make a request to the school in hopes of receiving the desired religious accommodation. Additionally, no school official should ever forcibly remove a student’s religious head covering or devalue their religious beliefs. In recent cases, we observe an erroneous attempt at framing providing religious accommodations as promotion of a particular religion. This is not the case for either a charter or a denominational school setting. We caution private religious schools to be mindful of not harming inter religious respect through careless statements and steps.

RAMADAN IN SCHOOLS: SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND STAFF

To foster inclusivity, consider these accommodations for Muslim students:

- **Quiet Spaces:** Provide a quiet area for fasting students during lunch.
- **Energy Awareness:** Be mindful of lower energy levels, especially in the afternoon.
- **Avoid Major Events:** Schedule exams or activities earlier in the day.
- **Adjust Physical Education:** Offer lighter activities to prevent dehydration.
- **Eid Observance:** Avoid scheduling significant assignments or events on Eid al-Fitr.
- **Be Mindful:** An additional number of students may choose to observe head covering or pray daily prayers during the month of Ramadan.

HOW CAN NON-MUSLIMS SUPPORT THEIR MUSLIM FRIENDS?

Greetings: Use phrases like “Ramadan Mubarak” (Blessed Ramadan) or “Ramadan Kareem” (Generous Ramadan).

- **Avoid Dismissive Comments:** Refrain from saying, “It must be hard to fast.”
- **Celebrate Together:** Join Iftar meals or express appreciation for their dedication.
- **Fasting Friends:** Plan a fasting day with a Muslim friend.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

- **Cultural Awareness:** Host workshops or share resources about Ramadan.
- **Decorate Thoughtfully:** Adorn the space with lanterns or Ramadan-themed decor.
- **Organize Iftar Gatherings:** Foster community by breaking fast together.
- **Encourage Open Dialogue:** Create a safe space for students/employees to discuss their needs.

DOES MY EMPLOYER HAVE TO PROVIDE RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS DURING RAMADAN?

In most instances, the answer is yes. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects against religious discrimination, particularly as it relates to employment. Employers are required to accommodate an employee's "sincerely held religious beliefs," which includes making a religious accommodation for the employee as long as the accommodation does not impose an "undue hardship." The law defines an undue hardship as more than a "minimal burden" to the business' operation. This applies to employers with 15 or more employees and the federal government as an employer.

This means, among many things, that employers may not require the removal of religious head coverings and may not require the shaving of religious beards. Employers are obligated to provide religious accommodations that do not create an undue hardship on the employer.

RAMADAN IN THE WORKPLACE: A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

Federal and state laws protect employees' rights to religious observance. Employers can support Muslim staff by:

- Educating Staff: Ensure supervisors understand Ramadan and fasting.
- Flexible Scheduling: Allow adjusted work hours or remote work options.
- Avoid Food-Centric Events: Reschedule networking/potluck lunches.
- Provide Prayer Space: Designate a quiet area for prayer breaks.
- Be Mindful of Deadlines: Offer flexibility for tasks and meetings.
- Celebrate Eid: Accommodate time-off requests for Eid al-Fitr.

EMPLOYEE ACCOMMODATION LETTER

For years, CAIR has collaborated with employers nationwide to ensure that Muslim employees are afforded reasonable religious accommodations, in accordance with both federal and state laws. This document serves as a vital tool for Muslim employees to effectively communicate their accommodation needs during the holy month of Ramadan. With a commitment to fostering inclusive workplaces, this letter empowers individuals to advocate for their rights and uphold their religious practices with dignity and respect. Visit pa.cair.com/eid-letter for editable template letters.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION LETTERS

CAIR has long been committed to supporting Muslim students in accessing necessary religious accommodations within educational settings, in alignment with federal and state laws. Our letter templates are a valuable resource for parents of students to effectively communicate their accommodation needs during the sacred month of Ramadan. As part of our ongoing efforts to promote equality and inclusivity in schools, CAIR has provided guides and toolkits to educators and administrators, offering insights into Islamic religious practices and facilitating the creation of equitable learning environments for all students. Visit pa.cair.com/eid-letter for editable template letters.

RAMADAN & EID RESOLUTION AND LETTER

In the United States, the onset of Ramadan is often recognized by lawmakers in Congress, state legislatures, and cities nationwide through the introduction of resolutions honoring this sacred month. These resolutions, alongside welcoming statements, videos, and social media posts, serve to acknowledge and celebrate the significance of Ramadan within our diverse communities. CAIR is proud to offer this template letter as a resource for Muslim community members to engage with local and state officials, encouraging the introduction of resolutions that reflect the importance of Ramadan and promote inclusivity and understanding.

Visit pa.cair.com/officials-ramadan-eid for a template letter to your elected officials.



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