



RAMADAN 2019 – Woodkirk Academy

Advice from a Sixth Former



From Monday, May 6 to Monday, June 4 this year, Muslims around the world will be observing Ramadan, a month of fasting and religious observance. In this period, Muslims go without food and water from dawn until sunset, which can be as long as 20 hours. If this already sounds like enough of a challenge, it's even trickier if you're a student revising and taking exams at the moment. I know this as I, was once in your position.

The Islamic months follow a lunar calendar, where each month begins by sighting the new crescent moon. Lunar months are shorter than solar months, so Ramadan is about ten days earlier every year.

It seems difficult, but in reality, we'll be prepared because the fasts have been getting steadily longer over the last few years. We're also pretty tough! After having sat my GCSE exams during Ramadan, I wondered what helped me and here I've listed all my tips.

This Ramadan brings new challenges for students when it coincides with exam seasons. If you're not Muslim, you might be wondering why we don't just stop fasting during exams. The thing is, observing Ramadan is a really important part of being a Muslim, but we still have to study, work and do all the things we normally do, just with a few exceptions (like if you're ill).

The key to getting through exams during Ramadan is to be prepared. With that in mind, here are some of my top tips to help you get organised:

Adjust your Routine:

Your revision routine is going to change once Ramadan begins, because you'll have between 2am and 9pm to alternate between rest and revision. When I did it, I'd sleep after *Suhur*, from 2am until midday, and then revise until 9pm. I'd then have *Iftar*, relax until *Tarawih* (which are extra nightly prayers performed in Ramadan) and then revise again until *Suhur*. And then the whole routine would begin again!

Here's the timetable I followed:

- 1:30am to 2:00am – *Suhur* (pre-fast meal)
- 2:00am to midday – Sleep
- Midday to 9:00pm – Revision (with breaks!)
- 9:00pm to 9:30pm – *Iftar* (evening meal)
- 9:30pm to 10:30pm – Rest
- 10:30pm to 11:30pm – *Tarawih* (extra nightly prayers performed in Ramadan)
- 11:30pm to 1:30am – Revision

This is one way to do it – you might prefer to structure your day differently. For instance, you could work in the morning and sleep in the afternoon. The important thing is to have a routine that factors in enough revision and rest time.

There may be other things to take into account when you're making your own timetable. Do you have lessons during the exam period? If so, you could rest after your classes and then start your revision. Do you have other responsibilities to consider? Work around them.

TIP: Congregational *Taraweeh* prayers in the mosque can be a drain on time and energy. One option is to pray *Isha*, the obligatory night-time prayer, in congregation in the mosque, then pray *Taraweeh* at home. Another option is to organise a small congregation of your own so you can recite shorter passages of the Quran.



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Revise differently:

Revising on an empty stomach can make it harder to concentrate, so it might not be the best idea to try and memorise from a text book, or read through dense notes. Condense essential information in a way that makes it easier to absorb, using revision cards or mind-maps. If possible, try and do the bulk of revision before fasting starts – write up your notes or start making your revision cards before you start to feel hungry.

If you find your mind wandering or you're feeling sleepy, you could try getting some fresh air. Another way is to plan your breaks around prayer times. Muslims have five daily prayers and we always wash before prayers, and you might find that splashing your face with water will wake you up if you're falling asleep!

Eat well:

It goes without saying that when you've been hungry all day, you'll want something tasty for dinner. In my community (I'm Middle Eastern / Pakistani) it's quite common to eat lots of fried foods to break the fast and we tend to have sweet desserts afterwards. These fatty and sugary foods will leave you feeling lethargic and lazy.

I'm not going to lecture you on healthy eating (there's enough of that going around!) but I'd recommend trying to choose foods that will fill you up and release energy slowly, like bananas, brown rice and porridge topped with raspberries. You'll need to fill up on water too, but if you're not a fan you could try making some juice instead. One of my favourite things after a hot day of fasting is ice-cold watermelon juice!

Check when your exams are:

A few exam boards have moved some exams to before Ramadan or rescheduled them for earlier in the day, when we're less hungry and more able to concentrate. Because of this, you should definitely double-check whether your exams have been rescheduled!

Once you've confirmed them, set some alarms in advance to make sure you can wake up and still get there on time. With your routine all out of sync, you don't want to sleep through your exams – I for one find it extremely tough to wake up during Ramadan!

However, personally, I find that sleeping for around nine hours is the key to concentration. You'll wake up feeling refreshed which will help a great lot.

Finally

You might feel like you're missing out on the spiritual benefits of Ramadan because you don't have time for extra prayers, Quran recitation or charity work. Don't forget that revising is spiritual too! Educating yourself is also an important part of religion.

Revise with good intentions: to increase your knowledge and to make your teachers and loved ones proud of you. And remember that sometimes small gestures are most valuable. Is there any better charity than helping out your friends and classmates during this stressful time?

EXTRA TIPS:

Sleep Well: Feeling refreshed helps quite a lot, you're able to think more clearly.

Motivation: Don't let fasting take an emotional toll on you.

If you're too stressed then don't fast, it's okay! – Fasting shouldn't be a burden on you therefore if you find yourself incapable of fasting then you don't need to.

Maybe even, LRC activities:

REVISION TIPS/TECHNIQUES HELP WITH EXAM STRESS

TIMETABLE HELP