

THE RAMADAN FIRST-TIMER'S MANUAL



A Practical & Spiritual Guide for the Month of Mercy

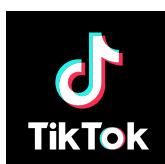
Compiled by Morne Ebersohn



Background & Purpose

I am Morne Ebersohn and I observed my first Ramadan in 2025. I am not Muslim. I took part in Ramadan in support of a friend, but it turned out that I gained a lot from Ramadan. My emotional health was not great before or at the start of Ramadan. Within the first 4-days of Ramadan I started to feel different. The daily routine of getting up early to eat, planning your day spiritually, emotionally and physically combined with daily Salah got me to a happy place.

I have compiled this First-Timer's manual. It has taken a lot of reading and online research, but I hope that this can benefit somebody who is planning their first Ramadan.



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What is Islam?

Islam is built upon five pillars: Faith (Shahadah), Prayer (Salah), Charity (Zakat), Fasting (Sawm), and Pilgrimage (Hajj).

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is a significant period that marks the revelation of the Qur'an.

It is considered important for several spiritual and physical reasons:

- The Goal of Taqwa:**

The primary purpose of Ramadan is to achieve Taqwa, or God-consciousness.

- Spiritual Detox:**

It serves as a "spiritual detox" for the soul, body, and character.

- Self-Discipline:**

It is a time for choosing to fast to grow closer to God and to practice self-discipline.

- The Pillar of Sawm:**

Fasting (Sawm) is one of the five fundamental pillars upon which Islam is built.

- Personal Growth:**

For many, including those observing it for the first time, the daily routine and spiritual planning lead to improved emotional health and a sense of peace.

Taqwa

The Goal:

To achieve **Taqwa** (God-consciousness). It is a "spiritual detox" for the soul, body, and character.

Zakat

Zakat is an obligatory charity due from every Muslim whose total possessions (cash, gold, silver, shares) meet or exceed the nisab threshold on a yearly basis.



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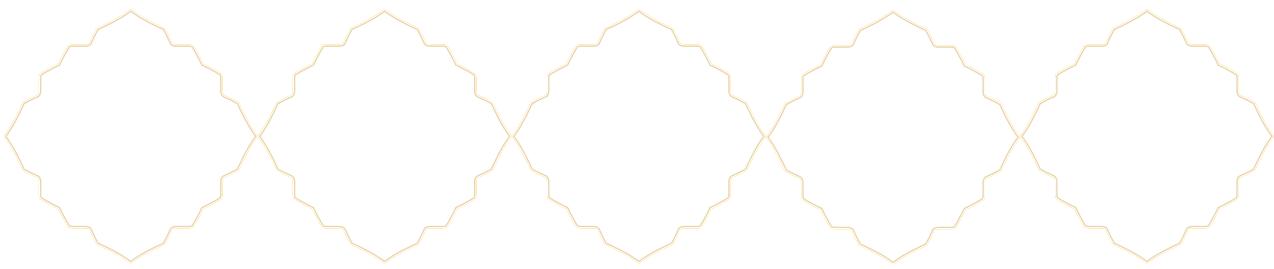
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Pre-Ramadan Mental Prep: Getting Your Head in the Game

Fasting is as much a mental exercise as it is a physical one. Use the weeks leading up to Ramadan to "warm up" your mind so the first day isn't a total shock to your system.

a. Define Your "Why" (Niyyah)

In Islam, intention (Niyyah) is everything.

b. The Shift:

Don't tell yourself "I'm not allowed to eat." Tell yourself "I am choosing to fast to grow closer to God and practice self-discipline."

c. Action:

Write down three personal reasons why you want to do this. Keep this note near your bed or on your phone for when the "3:00 PM slump" hits.

d. The "1% Rule" for Goals

A common mistake for first-timers is trying to do everything at once (fasting, praying all night, reading the whole Quran). This leads to burnout by day five.

e. Be Realistic:

Choose one small, consistent spiritual habit to start now.

Example: If you don't usually pray five times a day, try to get consistent with just one or two before Ramadan starts.

f. "Dopamine Detox" & Distraction Control

Ramadan is a time for stillness. The constant "noise" of social media can make the quiet hours of fasting feel restless.

The Prep: Start reducing your screen time 30 minutes before bed starting today.

g. Declutter your space:

A tidy room often leads to a tidy mind. Use the week before to clear your physical environment so you can focus on your inner environment.

h. Practice "Mental Patience"

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "If someone insults you or argues with you, say: 'I am fasting.'"

The Drill:

Start practicing this response now. When you get cut off in traffic or a coworker is annoying, take a breath and tell yourself, "I am practicing my patience for Ramadan." This builds the "patience muscle" before you actually need it.

i. Tackle the "Caffeine & Sugar" Wall

The "Ramadan Headache" is real, and it's usually just caffeine withdrawal.

The Taper: Start pushing your morning coffee an hour later each day, or switch to half-decaf. Reducing your dependence now will prevent a massive mental fog during the first week.



The Ritual of Purity: Wudu

Before any prayer (Salah), you must perform Wudu.

- Niyyah: Start with the intention in your heart. Say: Bismillah (In the name of Allah).
- Hands: Wash to the wrists (3x).
- Mouth & Nose: Rinse both (3x).
- Face: Wash from hairline to chin and ear to ear (3x).
- Arms: Wash right then left, from elbow to fingertips (3x).
- Head: Wipe damp hands from the front of the head to the back.
- Feet: Wipe/wash right then left, up to the ankles.

I have found these YouTube videos helpful.

<https://youtu.be/P29LMOHhpjE?si=3M5Nh99vCjZCMH2j>

The Prayer Words (Salah)

These are the specific recitations for the five daily prayers. Each prayer consists of units called Raka'ah. If you would like to learn more, you can watch this video: <https://youtu.be/2ZEmsdEOpbk?si=-fyuJbEXTzYEcqZ4>

The Opening

Takbeer: Raise hands and say: Allahu akbar (God is the Greatest).

Subhanaka: Subhanaka Allahuma wa bihamdika, wa tabarak asmuka, wa ta'ala jaduka, wa la ilaha ghairuk. (Purity belongs to You, O God. Blessed is Your Name, Exalted is Your Majesty).

Seeking Refuge: Audhu billahi minash shaitanir rajeem. (I seek refuge with Allah from Satan).

The Standing (Fateha)

Bismillahi rahmani rahim

Alhamdu lillahi rabbil alamin (Praise be to Allah, Lord of all worlds)

Ar-rahmanir rahim (The Beneficent, the Merciful)

Maliki yaumi din (Lord of the Day of Judgment)

Iyaka na'budu wa iyaka nastain (You alone we worship, You alone we ask for help)

Ihdina siratal mustaqim (Guide us to the straight path)

Siratal lazina an amta alaihim, Ghairil maghdubi alaihim wa lad-dallin. Ameen.

The Bowing & Prostrating

Rukoo (Bowing): Say 3x: Subhana Rabbiyal Azeem (Glory be to my Lord, the Supreme).

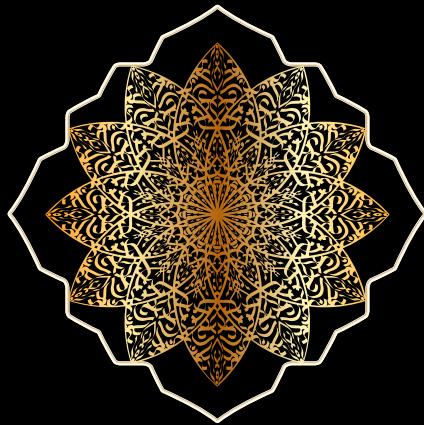
Rising: Sami Allahu liman hamidah. Rabbana lakal hamd.

Sujood (Prostration): Say 3x: Subhana Rabbiyal A'la (Glory be to my Lord, the Most High).

The Sitting (Tashahhud & Salawat)

Tashahhud: Attahiyyaatu lilaahi wassalawaatu wattayyibaatu. As salamu alaika ayuhan nabi wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu. As salamu alaina wa ala ibadil lahis salihin. Ash hadu an la ilaha ilallah wa ash hadu anna muhamadan abduhu wa rasuluh.

Salawat: Allahuma sali ala muhamadin wa ala ali muhammad... Inaka hamidun majid. (My God, honour Muhammad and his family as You honoured Abraham).



The Ramadan Daily Practical Checklist

Time Phase Action & Words

04:30 AM Suhoor Eat slow-energy foods. Drink water.

05:00 **AM Fajr** 2 Units. Recite aloud. Use Sooratul Ikhlaas: Qul huwal-laahu ahad. Allaahussamad. Lam yalid walam yoolad. Walam yakullahu kufuhan ahad.

Midday Dhuhr 4 Units. Recited silently. Focus on patience at work.

Afternoon Asr 4 Units. Silent. If someone angers you, say: “Inni sa’im” (I am fasting).

Sunset Iftar Break fast with dates. Dua: Allahumma laka sumtu wa ‘ala rizqika aftartu (O Allah, for You I fasted and with Your provision I break my fast).

Sunset+ Maghrib 3 Units. 1st two aloud.

Night Isha 4 Units. 1st two aloud. Follow with Taraweeh (extra prayers).

Practical "First-Timer" Tips

Prepare Yourself: Prepare yourself both physically as well as mentally. I found the first 3-4 days extremely difficult. Here is what I did:

o Suhoor: I don't have much an appetite in the morning. Let alone before sunrise. One of my followers suggested dates. This was the best advice. I started making high-protein smoothies which was easier to take in.

o Mental Preparation: Fasting is difficult and observing Ramadan is more than just focusing on food. I found that if I prepared myself for difficult or challenging tasks (standing in a que, a challenging meeting, etc.) in the morning, and asked for strength for my day in my dua, it made a remarkable difference.

o Pre-Iftar Crash: It is quite normal that people get hangry. I found that people were a bit more direct and impatient before Iftar. This improves as you start focusing on inner peace.

Commitment: If you are observing Ramadan for the first time, you must commit. This is a valuable journey, and you will see benefit. Commit and pray that you have the strength to complete Ramadan. I did fall ill for a day. While I was stuck to fasting, I did stay in bed for the day to give my body time to heal. Don't risk your health, but don't let one bad day affect your Niyyah (intent).

Support: If this is your first Ramadan, I would suggest that you find a support network. I found my support on TikTok and received hundreds of messages of encouragement, understanding and support. Find your local mosque and reach out. You will be welcomed with open arms. Being welcomed at a Muslim family for Iftar is an incredible experience, so if you are invited by somebody, please attend. There are some public Iftar's in communities. Search online for information about public Iftar's.

The "What-Ifs": If you eat by accident, your fast is still good. If you are sick, you are excused—Islam is ease, not hardship. If you do wrong or think a bad thought – forgive yourself and focus on your Ramadan intent.

Living in South Africa: The worst thing is Load Shedding/power failures just before or during Iftar. Don't panic. There are many Halal take-away and restaurants where you can have Iftar. Do not let load shedding mess with your peace.

Charity: Try to give a small amount of Sadaqah (voluntary charity) every day. I have included a list of organisations which assist people.

The Last 10 Nights: The last 10-nights are the most special. Your body and mind would have adapted by now, and you are likely to experience clarity of thought and lightness of your heart. This is a very rewarding time.

Ending: The month ends with Eid al-Fitr, a day of joy, gifts, and a special congregational prayer.

Where I shop

Category	Business Name	Summary	Google Maps
Halal Meat and Poultry	Hamzah Halaal	The best halal meat in Johannesburg. Personal service. Their lamb is the best.	Link
Bakeries	Homemade Bakery	Freshly baked bread, pies, frozen samosas and snacks, dates and sweets. Cold drinks.	Link
	The Datery	They specialize in all thing's dates. The best in Johannesburg.	Link
Halal Restaurants and Take Aways	My Diner	My Diners was established in 1996 as a small but enterprising take-away, with the best tikka in the country.	Link

Where I shop

Halal Restaurants and Take Aways	Chunky Chows	Mr Chau & his gargantuan gaggle of foodie friends just LOVE FOOD. And after extensive travel & existential eating around Asia, we have brought the mostest & the bestest & the deepest flavours back home to you.	Link
Halal Restaurants and Take Aways	Bismillah Restaurant - Melville	They take pride in serving our Guest Mouth watering world dishes. We using only the best, highest quality ingredients.	Link
Halal Grocer	Yummy Emerentia		Link
Online Shop	Suhayla	Our extensive range at SUHAYLA includes Islamic books, prayer mats, Islamic toys, homeware and many more products to help you and your children learn about, practise, and love your faith as Muslims.	https://www.suhayla.co.za

Website	Description	Link
Quran.com	<p>Since its founding in 1995, Quran.com has been committed to making the Quran available to everyone in a way that is clear, authentic, and easy to engage with. Every day, millions of people worldwide turn to Quran.com to read, listen, study, and reflect on the Quran—whether they are lifelong students, scholars, or just beginning their journey.</p>	https://quran.com
Al-Islam.org	<p>Access 3,000+ Resources about Islam and Muslim</p>	https://al-islam.org
Simplyislam.academy	<p>SimplyIslam Academy, a subsidiary of SimplyIslam.sg, is an online Islamic education centre, delivering quality Islamic courses via online since early 2021. The online Islamic school provides indispensable learning on the various sciences of Islam, covering Qur'an, Hadith, Sirah, Fiqh, Tasawwuf, and others. Our Islamic programmes empower you with the knowledge, tools and motivation to lead a good Muslim life, responsibly, and achieve your ultimate spiritual goals.</p>	https://simplyislam.academy/blog/understanding-islam-the-definitive-guide

Learn Islam	Free online Islamic Courses under the Guidance of Scholars who follow the Quran & Sunnah on the understanding & practice of the Sahaba.	https://learn-islam.org
Al Islam	The Official Website of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community	https://www.alislam.org
Mosque of Mercy	The Assunnah Muslims Association (AMA) is the charitable organization that operates through two arms - AMA Community Centre and Masjid ar-Rahmah (Mosque of Mercy). Its mission is to create a welcoming community for all through spiritual uplifting, education, community engagement and promoting diversity and equity.	https://www.mymasjid.ca
Majed Mahmoud	Majed Mahmoud is an internationally recognized Islamic speaker and educator. He holds degrees in Mechanical Engineering (University of Windsor), Islamic Studies in Islamic Jurisprudence & Legal Theory.	http://www.youtube.com/@MajedMahmoud



Mufti Menk

During my journey observing Ramadan, I have discovered Mufti Menk on YouTube, and I find his content incredibly helpful for navigating daily life. His insights provide a great deal of practical and spiritual guidance that complements the routine and discipline I've embraced through Salah and fasting. As someone who found that Ramadan significantly improved my emotional health and helped me reach a happy place, I highly recommend exploring his teachings if you are looking for clarity and motivation.

Mufti Dr Ismail Menk is a leading global Islamic scholar born and raised in Zimbabwe. He studied Shariah in Madinah and holds a Doctorate of Social Guidance from Aldersgate University.

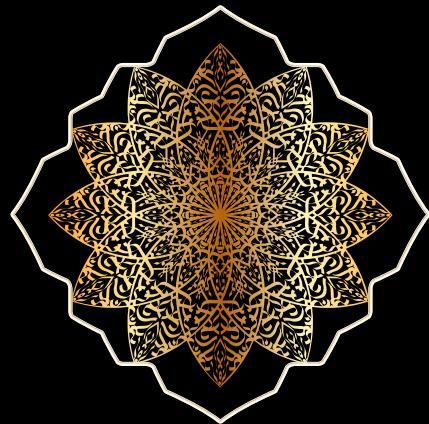
Mufti Menk's work has gained worldwide recognition and he has been named one of "The Top 500 Most Influential Muslims in the World" since 2010.



Mufti Menk

Dr Mufti Ismail Menk is a leading global Islamic scholar & motivational speaker born & raised in Zimbabwe. He studied Shariah in Madinah & holds a Doctorate of Social...

 YouTube



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