

Religion	When they fast	How they fast	Why they fast
Baha'i	The Baha'i fast takes place during Ala, the 19th month of the Baha'í year, from March 2-20.	Abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset.	To focus on love of God and spiritual matters.
Buddhist	All the main branches of Buddhism practice some periods of fasting, usually on full-moon days and other holidays.	Depending on the Buddhist tradition, fasting usually means abstaining from solid food, with some liquids permitted.	A method of purification. Theravadin and Tendai Buddhist monks fast as a means of freeing the mind. Some Tibetan Buddhist monks fast to aid yogic feats, like generating inner heat.
Catholic	Catholics fast on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays in Lent, and Good Friday. For many centuries, Catholics were forbidden to eat meat on all Fridays, but since the mid-1960s, Friday fasting has been a matter of local discretion.	On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, two small meals and one regular meal are allowed; meat is forbidden. On Fridays in Lent, no meat is allowed. For the optional Friday fast, some people substitute a different penance or special prayer instead of fasting.	Teaches control of fleshly desires, penance for sins, and solidarity with the poor. The Lenten fast prepares the soul for a great feast by practicing austerity. The Good Friday fast commemorates the day Christ suffered.
Eastern Orthodox	There are several fast periods, including Lent, Apostles' Fast, Dormition Fast, and the Nativity Fast, and several one-day fasts. Every Wednesday and Friday is considered a fast day, except those that fall during designated "fast-free weeks."	In general, meat, dairy products, and eggs are prohibited. Fish is prohibited on some fast days and allowed on others.	Strengthens resistance to gluttony; helps open a person to God's grace.
Hindu	Fasting is commonly practiced on New Moon days and during festivals such as Shivaratri, Saraswati Puja, and Durga Puja (also known as Navaratri). Women in North India also fast on the day of Karva Chauth.	Depends on the individual. Fasting may involve 24 hours of complete abstinence from any food or drink, but is more often an elimination of solid foods, with an occasional drink of milk or water.	A way to enhance concentration during meditation or worship; purification for the system; sometimes considered a sacrifice.

Religion	When they fast	How they fast	Why they fast
Jewish	Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the best-known fast day. The Jewish calendar has six other fast days as well, including Tisha B'Av, the day on which the destruction of the Jewish Temple took place.	On Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av, eating and drinking are forbidden for a 25-hour period, from sundown to sundown. On the other fast days, eating and drinking are forbidden only from sunrise to sundown.	Atonement for sins and/or special requests to God.
Mormon	The first Sunday of each month is a fast day. Individuals, families, or wards may hold other fasts at will.	Abstaining from food and drink for two consecutive meals and donating food or money to the needy. After the fast, church members participate in a "fast and testimony meeting."	Closeness to God; concentration on God and religion. Individual or family fasts might be held to petition for a specific cause, such as healing for one who is sick or help with making a difficult decision.
Muslim	Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, is a mandatory fasting period that commemorates the period when the Qur'an was first revealed to Muhammad. Various Muslim customs recommend days and periods of fasting in addition to Ramadan.	Abstain from food and drink from before the break of dawn until sunset; abstain from smoking and sexual intercourse the entire month.	Some Muslims fast every Monday (some say Thursday) because Muhammad was said to do this, and some fast during the month of Sha'baan, which precedes Ramadan, and especially during the three days leading up to Ramadan.
Pagan	No organized fast days, but some pagans choose to fast in preparation for Ostara (Spring Equinox).	At the discretion of the individual--some totally abstain from food, others reduce how much they eat.	Intended to purify a person energetically; often used to raise vibrational levels as preparation for magical work. Ostara fasting is used to cleanse oneself from heavier winter foods.

Religion	When they fast	How they fast	Why they fast
Protestant (Evangelical)	At the discretion of individuals, churches, organizations, or communities.	Though some people abstain from food or drink entirely, others drink only water or juice, eat only certain foods, skip certain meals, or abstain from temptations, edible or not.	Evangelical fasts have become increasingly popular in recent years, with people fasting for spiritual nourishment, solidarity with impoverished people, a counterbalance to modern consumer culture, or to petition God for special needs.
Protestant (Mainline)	Not a major part of the tradition, but fasts can be held at the discretion of communities, churches, other groups, and individuals.	Discretion of those fasting.	For spiritual improvement or to advance a political or social-justice agenda. One example: the ELCA's "Campaign of Prayer, Fasting, and Vigils."