

Who?

Anyone over the age of seven and who is in good health and not too elderly or infirm to fast should fast.

Who will know?

You should fast in such a way that only you and God knows that you are fasting. Practically, obviously, if you are living with others they will know too but all of you should do this in a low key manner. In a family or community you can support each other but no-one outside the family should know except, of course, your spiritual father from whom you should receive a blessing before you fast!

Spiritual Father

You should be guided by this person who will help you not to fall into the pitfalls of following things to the letter but not in spirit!

What if I've never fasted before?

Do as you can – don't do as you can't! You'll be tempted to go too far but without the right back-up (recipes, availability of ingredients and an understanding of fasting nutrition) you can soon find yourself discouraged.

Any tips?

Ask some of those who have been Orthodox a long time for recipes. It takes time to learn new recipes and how to build them into your fasting schedule. Also: don't forget to feast!

Remember to pray when you fast.

“Gluttony makes a man gloomy and fearful, but fasting makes him joyful and courageous.

“And, as gluttony calls forth greater and greater gluttony, so fasting stimulates greater and greater endurance.

“When a man realizes the grace that comes through fasting, he desires to fast more and more.

“And the graces that come through fasting are countless...” (Saint Nikolai of Zicha)

Fruit

In Eden it was the pleasure of eating that caused Eve and Adam to sin!

Going without.

Fasting from food and bodily pleasures reminds us to do a sort of “life audit.” Have a good look at yourself, what else do you have that you can give away or limit? Too many clothes? Too much TV? Too much time spent playing electronic games? Or what can you take on? Too little time in prayer and studying the Scriptures or the writings of the Church? Too little time and money given away to others in need of it? Too few occasions for confession and spiritual direction? Fix it.

What about someone else's fasting?

What business is that of yours?

God bless you! Pray for each other and your enemies.



Fasting

Secretly!

St. Matthew's Gospel Chapter 6:

*Jesus said: "Moreover, **when** you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

"Do I have to?"

Yes!

Notice that Jesus does not say "if you fast" but "**when** you fast" so fasting is not optional – you are expected to fast. If you read the whole passage you'll see

that Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke about fasting in the context of prayer and giving away money. So when you fast you should also be praying and giving away money, time and goods.

When?

Fasting is traditional on the following days:

Every **Wednesday** and **Friday** (except during special non-fasting weeks and after Easter until the Ascension). From midnight to midnight.

For the whole of **Great Lent** and **Holy Week** (from midnight to noon).

For the whole of **Advent** (before Christmas).

Before the Feasts of

Peter and Paul (June 29th), **Transfiguration** (August 11th) and the **Dormition** of the Mother of God (August 15th).

For the **Holy Cross** (September 14th)

And you fast before receiving **Holy Communion**.

How?

On the long fasts and Wednesday and Friday the following is normal:

No animal products that come from any animal with a backbone (birds, fish, mammals, reptiles or amphibians) i.e. meat or dairy or eggs.

No alcohol or olive oil.

No sexual relations.

Before Holy Communion:

No sexual relations, food or drink for a minimum of five hours before the Divine Liturgy begins.

On feasts of the Holy Cross and Good Friday:

No food, drink or sexual relations from midnight until after 3pm