Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh Holiday Descriptions

# Name: Buddha Purnima (Buddhism)

## Pronunciation

* [Boo-duh Por-nee-muh](https://www.howtopronounce.com/buddha-purnima)

## Meaning

* Purnima translates to “full moon” in Sanskrit.
* Festival dedicated to the birth of the price Siddhartha Gautama, who later became Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

## When?

* Buddha’s birth is celebrated as part of a festival week called Vesak, where three key moments of his life are recognized: his birth, enlightenment and death.
* The date of the celebration takes place on a full moon day in the month of Vaisakh.

## Greetings

* “Happy Buddha Purnima.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Many begin their day by cleaning their homes, bathing and spreading Gangajal around their house.
* Lighting candles and decorating homes with flowers.
* Donating food and clothing to those in need.
* Visiting viharas, temples or monasteries and taking part in prayer and meditation.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* In some areas of the world, people get the day off from work or school. Some people may choose to take the day off to participate in celebrations.

# Name: Diwali (Hinduism/Sikh/Jainism)

## Pronunciation

* [Duh-vaa-lee](https://www.howtopronounce.com/diwali)

## Meaning

* “Row of lights.” Composite of “the row” (avail) and “clay lamps” (deepa), coming from the act of placing lit, clay lamps outside homes to symbolize the inner light that protects from darkness.
* The five-day Festival of Lights, which is a New Year Festival, is a popular holiday celebrated by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and some Buddhists.
* The festival is associated with Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity and marks the beginning of the fiscal year in India.

## When?

* Takes place during Kartika, a Hindu lunisolar month.

## Greetings

* “Happy Diwali.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Lighting a row of clay lamps, decorating homes, giving gifts and several street activities.
* Dressing in traditional clothing: men wear kurtas and women wear saris.
* The third day of the festival, which takes place on the darkest day of the month, is the main day of celebration and involves fireworks and feasts.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Diwali is an important celebration for millions of people globally, some take time off work and school to celebrate. Other celebrations take place as the sun sets, so others will not take time off.

# Name: Ganesh Chaturthi (Hinduism)

## Pronunciation

* [Guh-naysh Chuh-tur-thee](https://youtu.be/lAJ7DJ-Z_TM?si=L5BQZaWSh7OyYkoG)

## Meaning

* Marks the birth of the Hindu deity Ganesha, the elephant headed god of prosperity, new beginnings and wisdom.

## When?

* A 10-day festival that is observed during the month of Bhadra, a lunisolar month.

## Greetings

* “Happy Ganesh Chaturthi.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* There are four main rituals performed during the festival: Pranapratishhtha, Shhodashopachara, Uttarpuja and Ganpati Visarjan.
* Hindus celebrate the festival at home or at public pandals, where they can pay respect, pray and bring offerings.
* Singing and playing religious songs, dancing to drums and lighting fireworks.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* It is not mandatory to keep Ganesha for 10 days, but the idol should not be left at home unattended.
* Some Hindus may participate in a lacto-vegetarian diet.

# Name: Guru Nanak Gurpurab (Sikh)

## Pronunciation

* [Goo-roo Naa-nuhk Gur-pu-rab](https://youtu.be/bXs3p5crVYM?si=sYsVEpC2kxSo9Fa1)

## Meaning

* One of the most important religious festivals of Sikhs, celebrated to commemorate the birth of Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru.

## When?

* The festival takes place on Kartik Poornima, the 15th lunar day in the month of Kartik according to the Hindu calendar.

## Greetings

* “Happy Gupurab.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Taking holy bath.
* Dressing in traditional clothing and visiting Gurudwaras.
* Reciting verses from Guru Granth Sahib.
* Some take part in Nagarkirtan, a procession of devotees led by five men known as the Panj Pyare. The procession includes a palanquin, the holy book, which is carried and recited from and decorated with flowers and flags.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Celebrations begin around 3 a.m. and end at 6 a.m., this may cause participants to find it difficult to participate in activities scheduled the rest of the day.

# Name: Holi (Hinduism)

## Pronunciation

* [H-oh-lee](https://youtu.be/5Oee0-Zcz8s?si=EMnSeKXC3jzZ3DdJ)

## Meaning

* Known as the Festival of Colors, Festival of Spring and the Festival of Love, it is a celebration of the arrival of spring, the divine love of Radha Krishna and the victory of good over evil.

## When?

* The festival always falls on Purnima, or the day of the full moon. It begins on the evening of the full moon in the month of Phalguna, a month in the Hindu lunar calendar and extends into a two-day celebration.

## Greetings

* “Happy Holi.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* On Holika Dahan, the day before the full moon, a bonfire is lit for puja (prayer) that is cleansing and burns away bad and evil.
* Street festivals with smearing colored paint and water.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* In India, Holi is considered a public holiday. Most school and businesses are closed, some people in other parts of the world may take time off for celebration.

# Name: Krishna Janmashtami (Hinduism)

## Pronunciation

* [Krish-nuh Jan-maash-tuh-say-mee](https://www.howtopronounce.com/janmashtami)

## Meaning

* “Occasion of the birth of Krishna.”
* Celebrates the birth of Krishna who was born on this day, he is the eighth avatar of the god Vishnu and worshiped as the Supreme God.

## When?

* The festival is marked on the eighth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Bhadrapada, a lunisolar month.

## Greetings

* “Happy Krishna Janmashtami.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Fasting and prayer to Krishna.
* Gatherings and festivities involving singing, dancing and performances that recreate incidents from Krishna’s life.
* Decorating household shrines and temples with flowers, diyas and lights.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Hindu’s who are fasting may find it difficult to participate in activities scheduled toward the end of the day, especially around the time of sunset, when they are ready to break their fast.

# Name: Maha Shivaratri (Hinduism)

## Pronunciation

* [Maa-haa Shee-vr-aa-tree](https://youtu.be/hJZOFy6XdKQ?si=5MH-QsgXX1WtkCdI)

## Meaning

* Each month in the Hindu calendar, a Shivaratri or “Night of Shiva” is observed, which is a festival with an all-night vigil to remember the importance of overcoming ignorance and darkness.
* The Maha Shivaratri or “Great Night of Shiva” is the most spiritually significant night of shiva that occurs before the arrival of summer.

## When?

* Maha Shivaratri occurs on the 13th night and 14th day of the month of Phalguna, a month in the Hindu lunar calendar.

## Greetings

* “Happy Maha Shivaratri.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* During daylight, devotees wake early and take a ritual bath. Then, head to the nearest temple that is dedicated to shiva and make offerings that typically include yogurt, honey, ghee, sugar and water.
* The sacred mantra of Shiva is chanted in homes and temples while incense is burned and lamps are lit.
* Many maintain a fast until the following morning.
* Some stay awake throughout the night.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Hindus partaking in all-night vigils and staying awake may find it difficult to participate in activities scheduled on the following day.
* Hindus who are fasting may find it difficult to participate in activities scheduled toward the end of the day, especially around the time of sunset, when they are ready to break their fast.

# Name: Makar Sankranti/Pongal (Hinduism)

## Pronunciation

* [Maa-kaar San-kran-tee](https://youtu.be/BLqMVn3ZAjs?si=Vf-6kVaPvruW3iF9)
* [Paang-gaal](https://www.howtopronounce.com/pongal)

## Meaning

* Sankranti translates to “transfer.”
* Makar translates to “crocodile,” which is the symbol of the Capricorn.
* Celebration of the transferring of the sun into the Makara Rashi (“Capricorn”) zodiac in the Hindu calendar.
* Dedicated to the Hindu sun god Surya.

## When?

* The festival is usually observed on January 15, the only Hindu festival that is based on the solar calendar rather than the lunar.

## Greetings

* “Happy Sankranti.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Social festivities including decorating, children going house to house and asking for treats, dances, feasts, bonfires and kite flying.
* Dressing in transitional clothing including dhoti, gamosa and saadar mekhela.
* Singing traditional folk songs.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Many Hindus will participate in avoiding non-vegetarian food, alcohol, tobacco, gutka and other intoxicants.
* Observers are encouraged not to turn away beggars, the impoverished or people in need.

# Name: Navratri (Hinduism)

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## Pronunciation

* [Nuh-vra-tree](https://www.howtopronounce.com/navratri)

## Meaning

* Festival dedicated to the Divine Feminine, often associated with Durga Ma and Goddess Parvati. The festival lasts for nine days and nine nights, in which the nine goddesses are worshipped. The celebration is dedicated to her victories over demons and evil.

## When?

* The festival takes place in the month of Chaitra according to the Hindu calendar, and last for nine days and night nights.

## Greetings

* “Happy Chaitra Navratri.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Temples and religious places are decorated for people to come and offer prayers to the goddesses.
* Many perform rituals and pujas as per Hindu astrology.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Many people avoid alcohol and non-vegetarian food items. People also abstain from onion and garlic.

# Name: Onam (Hinduism)

## Pronunciation

* [Ow-nam](https://youtu.be/8dZBe4_ZpZA?si=Cm4kmnzcngN7EVFA)

## Meaning

* A 10-day harvesting festival that symbolizes the annual coming of the demon king Mahabali.
* Celebrated across India and the world, honoring King Mahabali who is thought to return to Kerala during the festival.

## When?

* Begins on the day known as Atham and ends on the tenth day known as Thiru Onam or Thiruvonam.

## Greetings

* “Happy Onam.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Boat races called Vallam Kali, tiger dances called Pulikali, dance rituals and other forms of worship.
* The traditional feast (sadya) is nine ourses and has 26 dishes.
* Several cultural actives are held in temples and religious spaces, especially on the tenth day.
* Elephants are decorated with ornaments and displayed in most spaces.
* Grand processions are held.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Onam is a major holiday of the people of Kerala, India. It is their state festival.
* Many schools in this area have time off for up to two weeks, but working professionals typically have one or two days off.

# Name: Vaisakhi (Sikh/Hinduism)

## Pronunciation

* [Vai-saa-kee](https://youtu.be/F--jZCoiSm0?si=BaI0E0JN4o_gE6Po)

## Meaning

* Sikh New Year, regarded as one of the most important dates on the Sikh calendar.
* Marks the start of the Punjabi New Year.
* Celebrates the birth of Khalsa and symbolizes standing up to oppression.

## When?

* Takes place during the traditional harvest festival in Punjab, celebrated on April 13th or 14th.

## Greetings

* “Happy and Prosperous Vaisakhi.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Singing, dancing and music performances.
* Visiting temples in traditional Punjabi clothing.
* Large feasts and community meals (Langars) take place to share traditional food. The meals symbolize equality and everyone is encouraged to attend.
* Sikhs travel in the city singing and being led by the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy scripture, is known as Nagar Kirtan. They are all led by the Panj Pyaarey, or five baptized Sikhs, to symbolize the five Sikhs baptized during the creation of the Khalsa.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Those celebrating might choose to take the day off work or school.

# Name: Vijayadashami, Dasara, Dussehra Puja (Hinduism)

## Pronunciation

* [Vi-jai-uh-duh-shuh-mee](https://www.howtopronounce.com/vijayadashami)
* [Duh-sr-uh](https://www.howtopronounce.com/dasara)
* [Doo-she-ruh](https://www.howtopronounce.com/dussehra) [Poo-ha](https://www.howtopronounce.com/puja)

## Meaning

* Composite of “victory” (Vijaya) and “tenth” (Dashami) because of the victory of the Rama, an avatar of Vishnu, over the 10-headed demon king, Ravana, on the tenth day of the month of Ashvin. The festival symbolizes the victory of good over evil.
* Marks the end of Sharada Navaratri.

## When?

* Comes after the nine nights of Navratri, taking place on the tenth day of Ashvin, the Hindu lunisolar month.

## Greetings

* “Happy Dussehra.”
* “Happy Vijayadashami.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Some incorporate Ram Lila into their celebrations, a reenactment of Rama’s life.
* Public processions that often involve Effigies of Ravana that are stuffed with firecrackers and lit at night in open fields.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Those that observe this festival are instructed to follow several guidelines, including to not cut trees or harm animals which could conflict with school or work activities.