



Happy Kwanzaa!

# Kwanzaa

Interfaith/African-American

[KWAN-za](#) 

Kwanzaa is an annual seven-day African-American and pan-African holiday celebration that takes place from December 26 to January 1. For seven days, a principle (Nguzo Saba) is reflected upon such as unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. The final day climaxes with gift-giving and a feast called Karamu Ya Imani. The festival is a nonreligious holiday inspired by West African harvest celebrations. The word Kwanzaa means “first fruits.”



This collection of information sheets on major holidays and cultural events is a joint partnership of the School of Information staff, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and the Office of the Provost. Facts have been vetted by U-M's Association of Religious Counselors (ARC), and other campus groups. Public feedback is welcome; please email [DEIHolidayFacts@umich.edu](mailto:DEIHolidayFacts@umich.edu).

## Date

- December 26 - January 1 of each year.
- Check the [Calendar Index](#) for Religious Holidays during the current academic year for the exact date.

## Greetings

If you would like to recognize Kwanzaa with your colleagues and friends, saying, “Happy Kwanzaa” would be appropriate.

## Common Practices and Celebrations

- Singing songs, telling stories and sharing of meals.
- Candles in red, green, and black are used; one candle is lit for each day of the holiday.
- Symbols of importance include fruits, vegetables, nuts, a straw mat, a candle holder known as a kinara, ears of corn, gifts, a communal cup.

## Impact to U-M Community

- Kwanzaa is typically celebrated outside of standard work hours, but it is important to remember that employees may request time off or a modified schedule to be with their families during the week of the celebration.
- Link to [U-M Guidance Regarding Conflicts](#).

## U-M Campus Resources

- [U-M Programs and Resources](#)
- [Maize Black Organizations](#), U-M
- [Association of Religious Counselors](#), U-M

## Information Sources

- [Official Kwanzaa Website](#)
- [Black Culture Connection](#), PBS
- [Kwanzaa Fact Sheet](#), Tanenbaum

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