

# Celebrating Commonalities: Festive Customs in Singapore

Singapore is home to many communities. We are a society of diverse ethnicities and religions which makes our festive celebrations diverse, vibrant and fascinating. Choose one photo of you at one of the celebrations and paste the photo in the space on the right.



- 1 **What are the four main festivals featured in the video?**
  
- 2 **In which year(s) did the festivals take place in the same period of time?**
  
- 3 **Choose one festival. Share how you would usually celebrate it in school or at home.**
  
- 4 **How do you think we can celebrate joint festivals in school? Give an example.**
  
- 5 **List one significant value of celebrating these festivals together.**

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# Preparation for Festivals

Many of our festivals have a lot in common. However, there are practices that are unique to each community.

**Circle the correct answers.**

**1 Name the common practice(s) for most households during the preparation of festivals.**

- (a) Decorating of homes
- (b) Go to bazaars
- (c) Spring cleaning
- (d) a & c only

**2 What do Muslims do at the Ramadan bazaar?**

- (a) Shop for decorative household items
- (b) Shop for red spring couplets
- (c) Shop for new traditional attire
- (d) a & c only

**3 Why do the Chinese hang red decorations during Chinese New Year?**

- (a) Remember the past
- (b) Usher in good luck
- (c) Ward off evil
- (d) b & c only

**4 What do rangoli and oil lamps represent to the Indian community during Deepavali?**

- (a) Good over evil, light over darkness
- (b) Joy and prosperity
- (c) For harmony
- (d) a & b only

**5 How do Christian families decorate their homes for Christmas?**

- (a) They put up ornate calligraphies
- (b) They light up lamps
- (c) They set up a tree
- (d) They put up red spring couplets

**6 List some of the similarities and differences between the preparations for the four festivals.**

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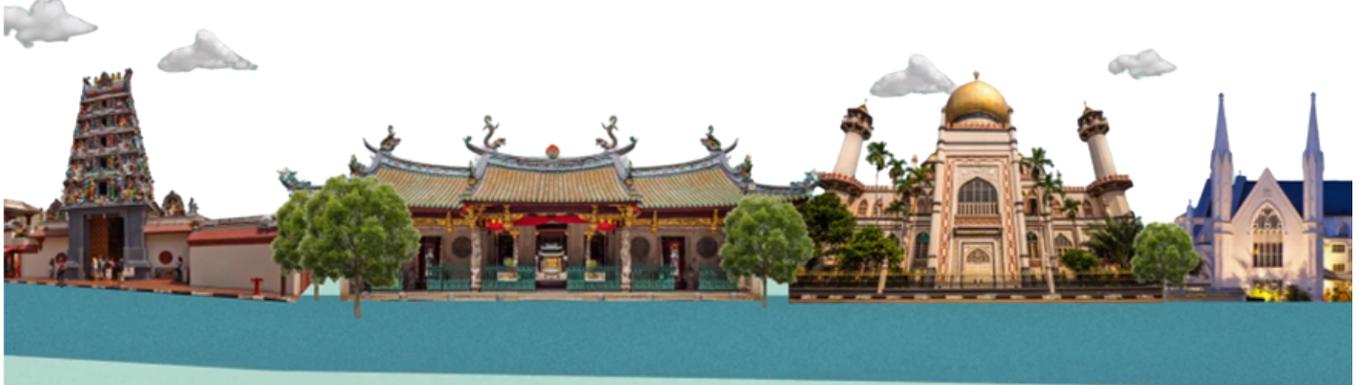
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# Visiting Places of Worship

When the festivals finally arrive, it is customary for the different communities here in Singapore to visit their places of worship - be it a temple, mosque or church.



National Heritage Board, Preservation of Sites & Monuments Division

Indicate if this statement is true (T) or false (F). Re-write the statement if it is false.

- 1 The Chinese go to the temples on the eve of Lunar New Year to pay respect to their ancestors.
- 2 The first thing Muslims do during Hari Raya Puasa is to visit the mosque or communal halls for a special prayer.
- 3 On Deepavali, Hindu families gather before household shrines for prayer rituals. The elders would smear new clothes and offerings with turmeric before placing them on the family altar to be blessed.
- 4 The Christians celebrate Christmas by having a breakfast feast on Christmas day itself.
- 5 The different communities visit places of worship during the festivals to give thanks and receive divine blessings.

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# Visiting Families and Friends: What are your thoughts?

**Who do you visit during the festivities?**

1

**Why do people visit their families and friends during festive seasons?**

2

**Do you think it is important to continue this tradition of house visitation?**

3

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# Feasting: Celebrating Festivities

In a country known for its mouthwatering cuisine, no festival in Singapore is complete without festive food.



Fill in the blanks with the correct word.

**kari tebal      ketupat      pineapple tart      palagaram      yusheng**

- 1 On the seventh day of the Lunar New Year, also known as *Renri*, the Chinese celebrate by having \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 The rice inside the \_\_\_\_\_ represents spiritual purity an individual attains after *Ramadan*.
- 3 During Deepavali, the Hindu families will offer \_\_\_\_\_ to their families, friends and visitors to represent good luck and prosperity.
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ is a dish enjoyed by the Eurasian families during Christmas.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ is a favourite snack for all festive occasions.
- 6 What is your favourite festive snack?

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# Celebrating Commonalities: Festive Customs in Singapore

Our calendar is peppered with festivals throughout the year. Singaporeans get to enjoy and experience different cultural festivities. Many of our festivals have a lot in common.

- 1 List two or more common features shared across these four festivals.**
- 2 Why do you think it is important for us to know the common features among the festivals?**
- 3 Share a tradition which you and your family observe and practise every year.**
- 4 In view of COVID-19, how do you think the pandemic has affected festive traditions?**

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# SUGGESTED ANSWERS

## Celebrating Commonalities: Festive Customs in Singapore

Singapore is home to many communities. We are a society of diverse ethnicities and religions which makes our festive celebrations diverse, vibrant and fascinating. Choose one photo of you at one of the celebrations and paste the photo in the space on the right.



- 1 What are the four main festivals featured in the video?**  
The four main festivals featured in the video are Lunar New Year, Hari Raya Puasa, Deepavali and Christmas.
- 2 In which year(s) did the festivals take place in the same period of time?**  
Lunar New Year and Hari Raya Puasa were celebrated within a week of each other in 1965, 1966, 1996, 1997 and 1998. Hari Raya Puasa was a few days after Deepavali in 2004, 2005 and 2006.
- 3 Choose one festival. Share how you would usually celebrate it in school or at home.**  
(Any acceptable answer(s) by students)
- 4 How do you think we can celebrate joint festivals in school? Give an example.**  
Organise concerts with cultural performances of various ethnic groups and allow students to come dressed in their traditional costumes. Set up a carnival featuring traditional food and game stalls from different ethnic groups. (Any acceptable answer(s) by students)
- 5 List one significant value of celebrating these festivals together.**  
It will help us to better understand and appreciate other cultures and festivals. This is important as Singapore is a multi-racial country. (Any other acceptable answer(s) by students)

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## Preparation for Festivals

Many of our festivals have a lot in common. However, there are practices that are unique to each community.

**Circle the correct answers.**

**1 Name the common practice(s) for most households during the preparation of festivals.**

- (a) Decorating of homes (c) Spring cleaning  
(b) Go to bazaars (d) a & c only

**2 What do Muslims do at the Ramadan bazaar?**

- (a) Shop for decorative household items (c) Shop for new traditional attire  
(b) Shop for red spring couplets (d) a & c only

**3 Why do the Chinese hang red decorations during Chinese New Year?**

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**4 What do rangoli and oil lamps represent to the Indian community during Deepavali?**

- (a) Good over evil, light over darkness (c) For harmony  
(b) Joy and prosperity (d) a & b only

**5 How do Christian families decorate their homes for Christmas?**

- (a) They put up ornate calligraphies (c) They set up a tree  
(b) They light up lamps (d) They put up red spring couplets

**6 List some of the similarities and differences between the preparations for the four festivals.**

The two similarities are the spring cleaning and the sprucing up of homes with festive decorations. One difference is the type of decorations used. For instance, Chinese families would decorate their homes with red spring couplets and paper cuttings for Lunar New Year while Muslim families would decorate their homes with vibrant festive lights and ornate Islamic calligraphies. For Indian families, they draw rangoli on the floor and place oil lamps around it, while Christian families will set up a Christmas tree and decorate their homes with twinkling lights and Christmas decorations.

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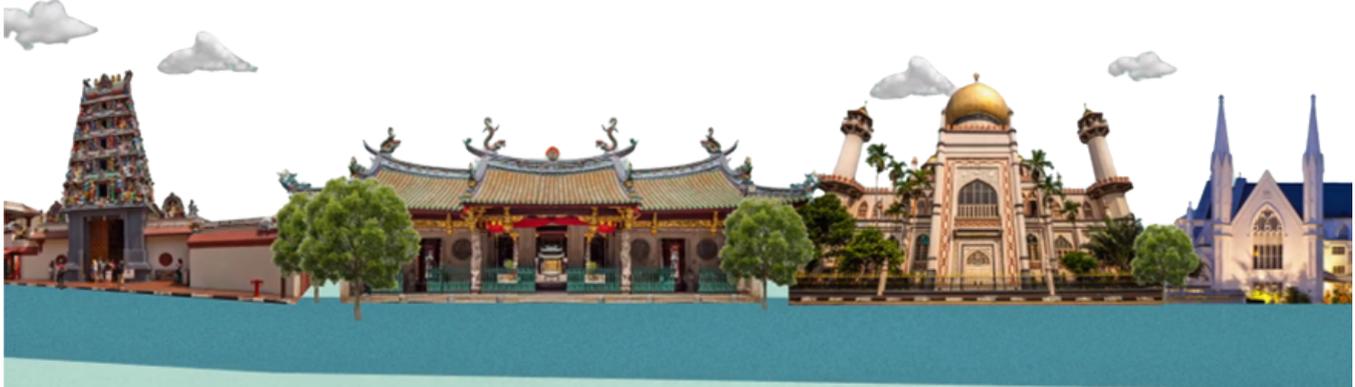
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## Visiting Places of Worship

When the festivals finally arrive, it is customary for the different communities here in Singapore to visit their places of worship - be it a temple, mosque or church.



National Heritage Board, Preservation of Sites & Monuments Division

Indicate if this statement is true (T) or false (F). Re-write the statement if it is false.

- 1 The Chinese go to the temples on the eve of Lunar New Year to pay respect to their ancestors.**  
False. They hope to be the first to place their sticks of incense into the incense urn at the temple at the stroke of midnight in order to receive blessings from the deities.
- 2 The first thing Muslims do during Hari Raya Puasa is to visit the mosque or communal halls for a special prayer.**  
True.
- 3 On Deepavali, Hindu families gather before household shrines for prayer rituals. The elders would smear new clothes and offerings with turmeric before placing them on the family altar to be blessed.**  
True.
- 4 The Christians celebrate Christmas by having a breakfast feast on Christmas day itself.**  
False. They usually attend Masses and services where Christmas carols are sung and passages from the Bible are read.
- 5 The different communities visit places of worship during the festivals to give thanks and receive divine blessings.**  
True.

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# Visiting Families and Friends: What are your thoughts?

**Who do you visit during the festivities?**

1

Answer varies according to different students.

**Why do people visit their families and friends during festive seasons?**

2

People visit their families and friends to exchange well wishes and gifts, and to strengthen familial bonds and friendships.

**Do you think it is important to continue this tradition of house visitation?**

3

It is important to continue this practice as it is part of our ethnic heritage and identity. If not, we might lose touch with some of our relatives and friends whom we hardly get to see throughout the year. This might weaken the familial bonds and friendships.

(Any other acceptable answer(s) by students).

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# SUGGESTED ANSWERS

## Feasting: Celebrating Festivities

In a country known for its mouthwatering cuisine, no festival in Singapore is complete without festive food.



Fill in the blanks with the correct word.

kari debal      ketupat      pineapple tart      palagaram      yusheng

- 1 On the seventh day of the Lunar New Year, also known as *Renri*, the Chinese celebrate by having yusheng.
- 2 The rice inside the ketupat represents spiritual purity an individual attains after *Ramadan*.
- 3 During Deepavali, the Hindu families will offer palagaram to their families, friends and visitors to represent good luck and prosperity.
- 4 Kari debal is a dish enjoyed by the Eurasian families during Christmas.
- 5 Pineapple tart is a favourite snack for all festive occasions.
- 6 What is your favourite festive snack?

Answer will vary according to different students.

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## Celebrating Commonalities: Festive Customs in Singapore

Our calendar is peppered with festivals throughout the year. Singaporeans get to enjoy and experience different cultural festivities. Many of our festivals have a lot in common.

- 1 List two or more common features shared across these four festivals.**  
Preparing for festivals, visiting places of worship, visiting families and friends, and feasting.
- 2 Why do you think it is important for us to know the common features among the festivals?**  
It will help us to better understand and appreciate the common features shared by the different communities, and foster a stronger sense of shared identity as Singaporeans. It will also help promote social cohesion and racial harmony in a multi-racial and multicultural society like Singapore.
- 3 Share a tradition which you and your family observe and practise every year.**  
Answer will vary according to different students.
- 4 In view of COVID-19, how do you think the pandemic has affected festive traditions?**  
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Muslim community had to celebrate Ramadan by connecting with their relatives and friends online to break fast together. They also participated in online prayers and virtual bazaars where they can buy items such as traditional attires, decorative household items and food, which were delivered to their homes. (Any other acceptable answer(s) by students).

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FOR VIDEO ONLY



# Celebrating Commonalities: Festive Customs in Singapore

## LEVEL 1

**1 What are the four main festivals that are featured in the video?**

Lunar New Year, Hari Raya Puasa, Deepavali and Christmas.

**2 Share how you would celebrate any one of the festivals at home or at school.**

(Any acceptable answer(s) by students)

**3 Name two or more common features shared across these festivals.**

Preparing for festivals, visiting places of worship, visiting families and friends, and feasting.

**4 Why is it important for us to know about these common features?**

It will help us to better understand and appreciate the common features shared by the different communities, and foster a stronger sense of shared identity as Singaporeans. It will also help promote social cohesion and racial harmony in a multi-racial and multicultural society like Singapore.

# Celebrating Commonalities: Festive Customs in Singapore

## LEVEL 2

- 1 Share one festive tradition that your family still observes or practises every year.**

Answer will vary according to different students.

- 2 Do you think such festive traditions should continue and why?**

We should continue with our festive traditions as they are part of our ethnic heritage and identity, and they help to strengthen familial bonds and friendships.

- 3 Can you share an example of how one such festive tradition has evolved over time or changed because of COVID-19?**

In recent years, more families have been engaging cleaning companies to spring clean their homes as this saves time and is less tedious.

More families also prefer to have reunion dinners at restaurants/food places instead of cooking traditional dishes at home as it is more convenient.

Due to the advancement of technology, the banks in Singapore have also introduced digital red packets (or e-hongbaos) instead of the traditional red packets.

More recently, due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Muslim community has been celebrating Ramadan by connecting with their relatives and friends online to break fast together. They also participated in online prayers as well as virtual bazaars where they can buy items such as traditional attires, decorative household items and food to be delivered to their homes.