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fast, v.²

REVIEWED

By Chris Tighe at 9:15 am, Mar 07, 2017

Pronunciation: Brit. /fɑːst/, /fast/, U.S. /fæst/

Forms: OE–ME **fæstan**, ME **fæsten**, ME **festen**, ME *south. dial.* **vesten**, ME **fasten**. *Orm.* **fasstenn** ...

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: Common Germanic: Old English *fæstan* = Old Frisian *festia* ...

1.

a. intr. To abstain from food, or to restrict oneself to a meagre diet, either as a religious observance or as a ceremonial expression of grief.

971 *Blickl. Hom.* 27 Ðæt ure Drihten æfter þæm fulwihte fæstte.

c1050 *Byrhtferth's Handboc* in *Anglia* (1885) VIII. 311 Ðon sceal man fæstan on þam ærran sæternes dæge.

c1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 29 Ic wulle gan to scrifte and forleten and festen þer fore.

?c1225 (► ?a1200) *Ancrene Riwe* (Cleo. C.vi) (1972) 20 Hwenne 3e festeð. Iwinter.

1340 *Ayenbite* (1866) 50 God him hat ueste.

c1400 *Mandeville's Trav.* (Roxb.) iii. 10 Ðai fast noȝt þe Seterday na tyme of þe ȝere.

1484 CAXTON tr. G. de la Tour-Landry *Bk. Knight of Tower* (1971) vii. 19 Yf ye may not faste the thre dayes.

1542 T. BECON *Potacion for Lent* sig. G.ij, He also teachethe vs the true..manner of fastyng.

a1616 SHAKESPEARE *As you like It* (1623) III. v. 59 But Mistris..downe on your knees And thanke heauen, fasting, for a good mans loue.

a1711 T. KEN *Serm. preached at Whitehall* in *Prose Wks.* (1838) 163 When he fasted, his diet was afflicting, such as became a mourner.

1782 J. PRIESTLEY *Hist. Corruptions Christianity* II. VIII. 129 Some persons fasted before Easter.

1842 J. H. NEWMAN *Parochial Serm.* VI. i. 1 We fast by way of penitence.

fig.

a1425 (► a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Galba) l. 27916 To fast fro all syn.

1638 T. HERBERT *Some Yeares Trav.* (rev. ed.) 259 Prosper's saying, That to fast from sinne, is the best fast.

b. with mention of the kind of spare diet permitted. Const. *on*; †formerly also *in*, *to*, *with*, and quasi-*trans.* in phrase **to fast bread and water**.

c1305 *Edmund Conf.* 24 in *Early Eng. Poems & Lives Saints* (1862) 71 Ofte heo ȝaf hem mede For to faste þane fridai to watere & to brede.

a1450 *Knt. de la Tour* 12 [She] fasted..two tymes in brede and water.

1487 (► a1380) J. BARBOUR *Bruce* (St. John's Cambr.) XI. 383 Thai fastit [1489 *Adv.* fastyt] bred and

vattir ilkone.

- 1550 J. HEYWOOD *Hundred Epigrammes* xxviii. sig. Bii^v, Thou rather wouldest..fast bread and water.
 1598 SHAKESPEARE *Love's Labour's Lost* I. i. 288 You shall fast a weeke with Branne and Water.
 1806 J. LINGARD *Antiq. Anglo-Saxon Church* II. ix. 145 He fasted on bread, herbs, salt, and water.

2.

a. gen. To go without food. †Also (contextually) to go without drink.

Const. *from*.

- c1000 *Sax. Leechd.* I. 200 Genim ðysse sylfan wyrte leaf, syle etan fæstendum.
 c1220 *Bestiary* 126 [Ðe neddre] fasteð til his fel him slakeð.
 ▶ c1300 *Havelok* (Laud) (1868) 865 Two days þer fastinde he yede.
 a1400 (▶ a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Trin. Cambr.) I. 17345 Fro mete & drinke for to fast.
 c1400 *Mandeville's Trav.* (1839) v. 58 He [a camel] may well faste fro drynk 2 dayes or three.
 1608 E. TOPSELL *Hist. Serpents* 262 Shee must either quench her thirst with that, or fast.
 a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Antony & Cleopatra* (1623) II. vii. 98, I had rather fast from all, foure dayes then drinke so much in one.
 1657 W. RAND tr. P. Gassendi *Mirroure of Nobility* VI. 220 If he should fast all day from eating and drinking.
 1671 MILTON *Paradise Regain'd* II. 284 Fasting he went to sleep, and fasting wak'd.
 1747 H. GLASSE *Art of Cookery* x. 118 Drink half a Pint in the Morning fasting.
 1854 H. H. MILMAN *Hist. Lat. Christianity* I. III. vi. 421 The monk..was enjoined to fast rather than partake of food abroad.

transf.

- 1525 LD. BERNERS tr. J. Froissart *Chron.* II. cci. [cxvii.] 615 The doughter of Fraunce..this fyue or syxe yere..shall nat be able to kepe hym company..he hath answered..that..thoughe he faste a season, he shall take it well a worth.
 a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Winter's Tale* (1623) IV. iv. 601 Not a counterfeit Stone, not a Ribbon..to keepe my Pack from fasting .

b. Irish Hist. to fast against, upon (a person): said with reference to the custom of sitting without food or drink at the door of a debtor, or any person who refused to satisfy some lawful demand.

- 1865 HANCOCK tr. *Senchus Mor.* I. 115, I deem it right that they be fasted upon before distress shall be taken from them.
 1873 W. K. SULLIVAN *O'Curry's Anc. Irish* I. Introd. 283 Where the defendant was a *Rig*, the plaintiff was obliged to 'fast' upon him..before he made his distress.
 1887 W. STOKES tr. *Tripartite Life Patrick* I. 219 Patrick..went to the king..And fasted against him.

c. quasi-trans. in various nonce-uses.

- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Taming of Shrew* (1623) I. i. 108 Their loue is not so great..but we may blow our nails together, And fast it fairely out.
- 1668 G. ETHEREGE *She wou'd if she Cou'd* IV. ii. 65 Thou shoud'st fast thy Self up to a stomach now and then.

d. trans. To cause to fast or be without food.

- 1854 *Poultry Chron.* 1 15 Before they are killed, they should be fasted at least fourteen hours.
- 1970 *Nature* 24 Oct. 383/1 The animals were then fasted, one group for 4–6 days, another for 13 days.
- 1971 *Nature* 5 Feb. 420/2 They [*sc.* rats]..were fasted about 48 h before use.

†**3. trans.** To pass (time) fasting; to keep or observe (a day, etc.) as a time of abstinence. Also, **to fast out**. *Obs.*

- c1275 *Passion of our Lord* 30 in *Old Eng. Misc.* 38 Po he hedde heom [fourty dawes] yuast þo luste hym etc.
- a1400 (► a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 6558 Haf yee þe dais al fasten vte þat i bad ar i ne [*read me*] went?
- a1400 (► a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Fairf. 14) l. 12921 Til he haue fasted his lentyn-tide.
- 1553 T. BECON *Relikes of Rome* (1563) 168 Telesphorus..appoynted firste of all, Lente to be fasted.
- a1681 G. WHARTON *Fasts & Festivals in Wks.* (1683) 30 The Ember Weeks..are four..and anciently Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, in each Fasted.

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