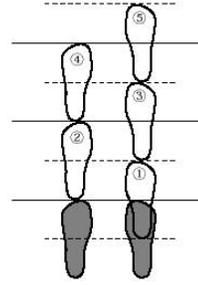


ZAZEN

- If the zendo door is closed, zazen has begun. Please wait to enter the zendo until the next kinhin period.
- Step into with your left foot. Bow from the waist with hands in gassho.
- In shashu, walk along the row of cushions or chairs until you reach an open place. Face your seat and bow in gassho as a greeting to the people on either side of you (whether anyone is there or not). They will also gassho and bow.
- Turn to the right to face the room, and gassho and bow. If someone is standing across from you, he or she will bow in response.
- If you will be using a cross-legged position (full lotus, half lotus or Burmese), sit down on your cushion, then turn around clockwise to face the wall.
- If you will be using a kneeling position (seiza), turn clockwise to face your seat, pick up your zafu or bench, kneel down on your zabuton and arrange your zafu or bench under you.
- If you will be sitting on a chair, move around the left side of the chair and sit down.
- Three bells will mark the beginning of the zazen period; one will mark the end. After the ending bells, bow in gassho and prepare to get up.
- Turn to the right until you face the room, and stand up slowly, taking care if legs or feet have gone to sleep. Turn clockwise again and kneel down to quietly plump up your zafu and brush off your zabuton. If you've used a chair, place it close to the wall. Bow in gassho to your cushion or chair, then turn to the right in gassho. Wait in gassho until the leader initiates a bow with everyone.
- If two bells have ended zazen, turn to the left and begin kinhin. If one bell has ended zazen, complete the bows as the doshi is rung out and exit the zendo formally (before meals) or informally (end of day).
- During a formal exit, practitioners leave the zendo in order, starting with the person closest to the altar on either side of the room. Informally, practitioners leave as they are ready, in any order they wish. There is no bow when stepping out of the zendo.

KINHIN

- Having turned to the left in front of your sitting place, with hands in *issshu* begin to walk slowly around the perimeter of the zendo
- From the waist up, your posture is the same as that of zazen. While keeping your eyes down at a 45-degree angle, make sure your back is straight and your head is up.
- Take half a step with your right foot as you inhale and exhale, then half a step with your left foot with your next breath and so on.
- Walking slowly and smoothly, as though you were standing in one place, without dragging your feet or making noise.
- Do not walk between an altar and a bowing mat. Walk around the tatami in front of the main altar.
- One ring of the handbell is your signal to stop, make as standing bow in shashu, and walk at a normal pace back to your seat.
- Gassho and bow to your seat, turn to the right and wait in gassho until the leader initiates a bow with everyone.
- Take your seat and return to zazen.
- If you need to leave the zendo during kinhin, wait until everyone has bowed together after zazen and turned to the left before doing so. Bow discreetly in shashu and leave carefully and quietly. There is no bow when stepping out of the zendo.
- You may return to the zendo while kinhin is in progress. Enter the zendo as usual and return to your place in line or take another open space if more convenient. Bow discreetly in shashu and start kinhin.
- If you prefer, you may enter the zendo at the conclusion of kinhin. Wait outside the zendo door until you hear the handbell, open the door and carefully enter the zendo once practitioners have finished filing past. Walk to your sitting place in shashu, bow to it in gassho, turn to the right and bow with everyone. Sit down and return to zazen.



MORNING BOWS AND GREETING

- Be in your seat at least five minutes before the day's first period of zazen is to begin. Wear your rakusu or okesa (if you have one), as there is no robe chant during sesshin.
- Five minutes before zazen is to begin, the sesshin leader will enter the zendo and close the door. S/he will make an incense offering and bows at the main altar before walking the perimeter of the zendo behind each of the practitioners.
- As s/he passes behind you, put your hands in gassho. Do not bow. After s/he has passed by, return to your zazen mudra. Three bells will signal the start of zazen.

A FEW MORE THINGS TO KNOW

- We do only four things in zazen: keep the posture, breathe deeply through the nose, keep the eyes open and let go of thought. We do nothing else. This is *shikantaza*, or just sitting.
- Try not to move around and make noise during zazen. If you must change your position during zazen, make a small bow in gassho to thank your neighbors for their understanding, and then move quietly. There is no need to bow after you've finished your adjustment.
- Kinhin is not break time. It's just another zazen period. If you really need to leave the zendo to attend to something in particular, it's fine to do so. If you realize that you're leaving in search of something more interesting, it's better to stay.
- While reading and writing are not prohibited during sesshin, they are discouraged. This is not the time to engage in dharma study. As Okumura Roshi says, "In our zazen we have to let go of any kind of thinking, even thinking about dharma." It goes without saying that engaging with devices during sesshin is also not optimal.

HAND POSITIONS



Gassho

Put your palms together, with fingertips at eye level. Hands are one hand-width from your nose. Elbows are held out slightly from the body.



Shashu

Fold your left thumb into your left palm and curl your fingers over it to make a fist. Cover your left hand with your right and hold your hands in front of you against the body, with forearms parallel to the floor.



Isshu

Fold your left thumb into your left palm and curl your fingers over it to make a fist. Cover your left hand with your right and hold your hands in front of you against the body, with forearms parallel to the floor. Turn your hands so that the back of your hand is up and the palms are down.

FORMALLY EXITING THE ZENDO FOR MEALS

- At the first bell, the sesshin leader bows to the Buddha, while the rest of the practitioners just stand in shashu and wait. At the second, s/he bows in shashu to all the practitioners, who also bow in shashu, and s/he goes out. At the third bell, all practitioners gassho and turn to bow to Buddha, then turn back. At the fourth, all bow together in shashu.
- Leave the zendo in order, starting with the person closest to the altar on either side of the room. There is no bow when stepping out of the zendo. File out through the door and up the stairs, put on shoes and walk quietly next door to the meals area.

EATING MEALS

- On arrival next door, put your shoes in the shelves, and bow in gassho to the worker standing in the kitchen.
- Gassho and bow before picking up a plate or bowl and helping yourself to food.
- Proceed to the first open seat at the table, without leaving empty chairs between you and others. Put down your food, gassho and bow. Those on either side of you and across from you will also gassho and bow—the same pattern as arriving at your seat in the zendo. It's not necessary to bow to anyone else arriving or leaving the table (except the abbot).
- Sit down, gassho and bow, and eat your meal. If you'd like seconds, you may go and return at any time without any bows or forms.
- When you've finished eating, gassho and bow, get up, push in your chair, gassho and bow to the people across from and on either side of you, and take your dishes to the kitchen to wash them.
- Leave your clean dishes in the drainboard for kitchen workers to dry and put away.



Practice forms for

Sesshin



This brochure tells you about the forms we follow here during sesshin. These forms help ensure that together we move smoothly through the activities of the day and they also give us to put aside self-involvement and pay attention to our actions in and around the zendo.

Please ask questions about things you don't understand before we enter into the silence of sesshin. After that time, watch sesshin leaders or experienced practitioners and follow along. This information is also available from the *Manners and Customs page* of our website.