

Zen Practice Forms

Dedication

May the merit of these practices extend to all sentient beings and free them from suffering.

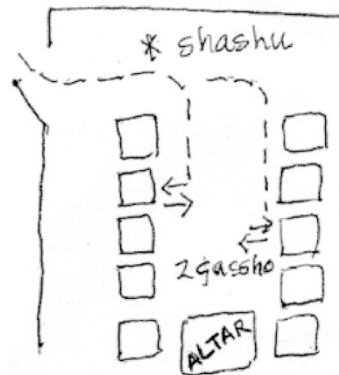
Bamboo in the Wind



Zen Practice Forms at Bamboo in the Wind Zen Center

How to move and sit in the Zendo

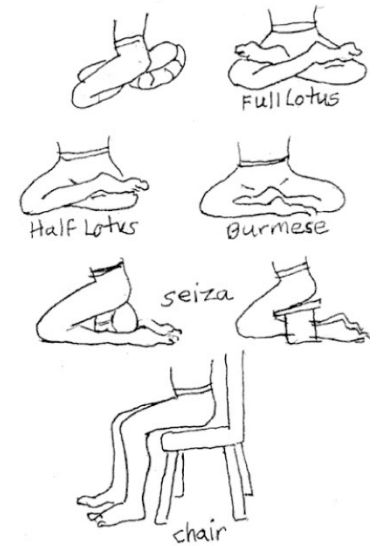
Welcome to the Bamboo in the Wind Zen Center, a quiet place that encourages a peaceful mind and heart. When in the *zendo*, move mindfully and quietly, not talking.



Bowing to the Meditation Space

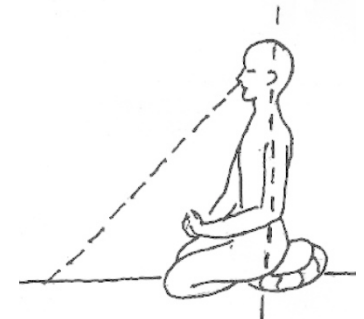
1. At the zendo threshold, before you enter the meditation space, place your hands together in *gassho* and make a slight bow to the zendo.
2. Visually select a place to sit, and walk quietly to it, approaching it from inside the sitting area.
3. Facing the seat, *gassho*, then turn (clockwise) and *gassho* to the other meditators.
4. If you will sit with crossed legs on the *zafu*, sit down, facing toward the center of the zendo, and then turn clockwise on the cushion to face outward.*
5. Sit on the forward quarter of the *zafu* so that the top of your pelvis tilts forward and your knees touch the mat. This posture provides the greatest stability.

- Full lotus, half lotus, quarter lotus, or Burmese style are all good positions for your legs.
- OR you may sit in *seiza* with the *zafu* placed on edge between your knees.
- OR you may sit in *seiza* using a wooden bench.
- If you need to sit in a chair, sit up straight without leaning against the back of the chair, with knees apart and feet parallel, firmly on the floor (a cushion can be used behind lower back or underneath your feet if needed).



Zazen Posture

In all seated positions it is important to sit upright with an elongated spine—ears aligned over shoulders, and shoulders aligned over hips. The chin should be tucked in slightly as a result of extending the spine through the neck, the lips and teeth gently together with the tongue resting lightly against the roof of the mouth. The eyes remain open, gazing softly at the floor 3 - 4 feet ahead. Open eyes maintain alertness, guard against daydreaming or visualizing, and help you remember that you are sitting with others, and for others.



* If you sit in *seiza* on either a cushion or bench or if you sit in a chair, it's hard to face inward first and then turn outward. Instead, after you *gassho* to your place and then to the other meditators, simply sit down on your cushion, bench or chair, facing outward.

1. Place your hands in the cosmic *mudra* (right palm up, left hand resting, palm-up, on the right palm, thumb tips lightly touching; hands resting against the lower abdomen. You may also rest your hands, palm down, on your knees.
2. To settle into *zazen* posture, rock gently from side to side in gradually decreasing arcs to find your natural place of balance. Take 3 - 4 slow, deep breaths to help settle your body and mind.

Suggestions for Doing Zazen

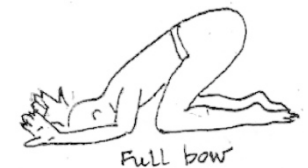
1. Initially, keep your attention on the breath, counting 1-2, as you exhale. Or simply observe the breath, not forcing it in any way. Breathe from the belly, allowing it to move in and out. Whenever you find thoughts arising, simply return to counting the breaths, without criticizing yourself for having thoughts. After practicing for a while, you can stop counting the breaths and simply observe what arises in the mind and let it go.
2. Observe your body and gently correct your posture if you find you are slumping or leaning. In *zazen*, we practice being in the present moment—observing the body and the mind. We quiet both by returning again and again to our breath.

3. In *zazen*, pain, both physical and emotional, often comes up. Meditation is an opportunity to work with pain—to see it without being bothered by it. When you feel a physical pain—an aching shoulder, a sore knee—rather than change position immediately, stay with the pain for a few breaths. Notice what kind of pain it is; notice how the rest of your body feels; also notice how your thoughts are reacting to it. Then if the pain persists, it's okay to adjust your posture to alleviate it. To change postures, *gassho* (see illustration to the right) and mindfully change your position.
4. Throughout the meditation period, do your best to pay attention to what is happening in the present moment—your breath, your body, the stream of thoughts. Try to let go of whatever is arising, moment by moment. Eventually, let go of the moment itself.



The Service: Bowing and Chanting

1. During our zendo Service, we bow three times toward the altar. We are not bowing to a statue or a historical figure. We are lowering the flag of the ego and opening to our own (and everyone's) Buddha nature, in humility and respect. Just follow what others do and you will learn when and how to bow.



2. You may do either a standing bow or a full bow to the floor, whichever is comfortable for you.
3. In each service, we also chant one or more zen *sutras*. Sutra books and cards are located under the right hand corner of the zabuton or under the chair.
- 4.

Kinhin – Walking Meditation

1. If zazen has ended with two rings of the bell, everyone stands and faces inward and gasshos to begin *kinhin*, a very slow walking meditation, for 10 minutes. Kinhin is announced with two strikes of wooden clackers. Turn to walk in front of the cushions, circulating (clockwise) the zendo. Bow as you pass the altar. While walking, maintain these forms:



- Hands in *shashu* (see illustration above), forearms parallel with the floor.
- Individuals evenly spaced in line.
- Take a half step, inhaling as your foot rises from floor, exhaling as you place your foot on the floor.
- Walk slowly, directed by your breath, moving forward a very little bit with each step.
- Stay upright, eyes open and cast downward, as in zazen, aware of body and breath.

2. Kinhin is the time when you can take a bathroom break. You may leave just after the



clackers are struck; following the bathroom use, you can return to the kinhin line.

3. After 10 minutes of kinhin, the clackers are struck again. Gassho and bow. Walk in the same direction, quickly—with energy—back to your seat and stand facing inward. As a group, we bow to each other. Return to sitting (facing inward first, then turning clockwise on cushion to face outward). Repeat the settling in steps done at the beginning of the meditation session.

Why is Zazen Practice Necessary?

Zen Buddhism teaches us that we *are* Buddha Nature. But if this is so, why must we practice? Are we not already enlightened?

When people begin the practice of zazen, or “just sitting,” as taught by our ancestor, Dogen Zenji, what comes up is this very question; it was also Dogen’s question. When he was a young man, he went on a quest to China for an answer. After encountering Tiantong Rujing (Dogen’s Teacher in China) Dogen realized the importance of sustained zazen practice. As Suzuki Roshi put it so succinctly, “while we are buddhas, we need a little work.”

The work of our practice is to sit quietly, facing the wall, with body aligned in a posture for breathing fully and naturally (torso upright, ears aligned with shoulders, breathing through the nose, eyes opened, cast down in a 45 degree angle) observing thoughts as they arise in the mind, and letting them go. The practice is repeated over and over again as we sit in meditation. Beginners may start their

sitting practice with 10 minutes then work up to 40 minutes. Over time as one observes what arises in the mind, transformation occurs.

What is this transformation? For each person it is unique and will be seen in his or her everyday life. One person may find that they are more aware of anger arising and may choose to breathe before allowing the emotion to take hold. Another may see through fear as impermanent and be less paralyzed by outside events. Some may just become more calm or satisfied in their lives.

Whatever form it takes, one should continue to sit every day. This is a lifelong practice. There is no place to go, or anything to gain. It is a way to become intimate with yourself, not only the self of your everyday mind, but your true self. Your true self is the self that connects you with all being.

To complement your daily practice, participating in a Sangha will provide support for your practice as you meet and share with others. Additionally, becoming familiar with Buddhist teachings through reading or listening to Dharma talks will provide a basis for understanding your experiences. Lastly, working with a teacher can guide you through the process of studying the self, forgetting the self, and being actualized by myriad things.

Chants used in all services at Bamboo in the Wind Zen Center

Heart of Great Perfect Wisdom Sutra

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, when deeply practicing prajna paramita, clearly saw that all five aggregates are empty and thus relieved all suffering. Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. Form itself is emptiness, emptiness itself form. Sensations, perceptions, formations, and consciousness are also like this. Shariputra, all dharmas are marked by emptiness; they neither arise nor cease, are neither defiled nor pure, neither increase nor decrease. Therefore, given emptiness, there are no forms, sensations, perceptions, formations, or consciousness; no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, or objects of mind; no realm of sight, and so forth, down to no realm of mind consciousness. There is neither ignorance nor extinction of ignorance, and so forth, down to neither old age and death, nor extinction of old age and death; no suffering, no cause, no cessation, no path; no knowledge and no attainment. With nothing to attain, a bodhisattva relies on prajna paramita and thus the mind is without hindrance. Without hindrance, there is no fear. Far beyond all inverted views, one realizes nirvana. All buddhas of past, present, and future rely on prajna paramita and thereby attain unsurpassed, complete, perfect enlightenment.

Therefore, know the prajna paramita as the great miraculous mantra, the great bright mantra, the supreme mantra, the incomparable mantra, which removes all suffering and is true, not false. Therefore we proclaim the prajna paramita mantra, the mantra that says: "Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha."

Before Dharma Discussion

The unsurpassed, profound, and wondrous Dharma Is rarely met with, even in a hundred, thousand, million kalpas. Now I can see and hear it, accept and maintain it, May I realize the meaning of the Tathagata's truth.

After Dharma Discussion

Beings are numberless, I vow to free them.
Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them.
Dharma gates are boundless, I vow to enter them.
Buddha's way is unsurpassable, I vow to realize it.

Repentance Sutra

All my past harmful karma
Born from beginningless greed, hate and delusion
through body, speech and mind
I now fully avow.

Recommended Books for Beginners

Contemporary

Returning to Silence, Dainin Katagiri
You Have Something to Say, Dainin Katagiri
Zen Mind Beginner's Mind, Shunryu Suzuki
Opening the Hand of Thought, Uchiyama
Taking the Path of Zen, Robert Aitken

Traditional

Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, compiled by Paul Reps
The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma, trans. Red Pine
The Diamond Sutra & Sutra of Hui-neng, A.F. Price & Wong Mou-lam

Dogen

Moon in a Dewdrop
A Primer of Soto Zen: Zuimonki, translated by Masunaga
Dogen Zen, translated by Shohaku Okumura

Glossary of Zen Terms

Doan: The person who rings the bells during service or **zazen**. Doans also serve as **Kokyo** or **Greeter** on the **Doan-ryo** [the group of people who serve in doan roles].

Dokusan: A formal interview with an Abbot or Dharma Teacher. Also called practice interview.

Doshi: The priest or spiritual leader who officiates at **zazen**, service, or ceremonies.

Eko: The dedication chanted usually at the end of service, dedicating the merit or energy of our practice to all beings, and sometimes specific persons.

Gassho (Literally "palms together"): A **mudra** expressing nonduality. The palms are joined so that the fingertips are at the height of the nose. The hands are approximately one fist width away from the face.

Han: Fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled time of **zazen**, the **Greeter** begins striking this wooden sounding board with a mallet. We have roll-downs and then add one, two and three hits, at 15, 7 and 1 minutes before meditation events. Traditionally at larger temples the han hits every 50 seconds between roll-downs.

Inkin: A portable bell. It usually sits atop a lacquered wooden handle and may have a drape of material that covers the user's hand. It is used during service or ceremonies with a procession, where a portable bell is needed.

Ino: The meditation hall (**zendo**) manager, who is responsible for training the doans and helping coordinate ceremonies and services, and helping care for the zendo forms.

Jisha: The attendant who carries incense for the **Doshi**.

Jukai: Also known as "lay ordination", or "bestowing the Precepts", this ceremony is an initiation into the practice of the sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts for lay practitioners. During the ceremony, initiates receive the Precepts and a **rakusu** from a lineage-holding Teacher.

Jundo: Broadly speaking, "jundo" can mean any ritual circuit or circumambulation. At Bamboo in the Wind, this is now done at the beginning of the day by the Dharma teacher during All-day sittings. After offering incense and bowing at the altar, the **Doshi** walks around the **zendo** behind the meditators, in what is called the "kentan", or "inspection of the sitting platform". As the **Doshi** passes, each practitioner raises his/her hands in **gassho** without bowing; this joins **Doshi** and sitters in mutual acknowledgement.

Kinhin: Walking meditation, usually between two periods of **zazen**. This is usually very slow walking, with half steps, raising the foot with each inhale, and placing it down on the ground with the exhale.

Kokyo: Person who announces and leads the chants at service and chants the Dedications [**Eko**] at the end of service.

Mokugyo (Literally "wooden fish"): A traditional Japanese temple instrument played during services to set the pace of certain chants.

Mudra: A ritual hand position or gesture.

Okesa (From the Sanskrit "Kashaya"): A rectangular, patched robe made and worn as monks have done since the Buddha's time. It encircles the body and is draped over the left shoulder, leaving the right shoulder uncovered. It is given to a new priest during the priest ordination ceremony.

Oryoki: The traditional system of eating bowls, wrapped in a cloth and used for formal zendo meals.

Rakusu: A small version of Buddha's patched robe [okesa], suspended from cloth straps and worn around the neck. Usually, each initiate sews his or her own and receives it from the Preceptor during ordination ceremony. In Danin Katagiri's lineage a blue rakusu is sewn for lay ordination, black for priest ordination, and brown for those with Dharma transmission; but these colors vary in other Zen lineages.

Ryo: A Japanese word meaning "chamber" or "section", for example, the **doan** ryo ("instrument player section") or the **tenzo** ryo ("kitchen section").

Seiza: A sitting position where one kneels and sits back onto the heels. This is the standard position for chanting during service.

Service: A period of bowing, chanting, and making offerings to the Buddhas and Ancestors.

Sesshin (Literally "gather or touch the mind"): An intensive meditation retreat usually lasting 1 or 3 days, or more.

Shashu: A **mudra** used when standing or walking in formal practice situations. The left hand gently makes a fist around the thumb and is held against the body at the solar plexus (right below the breastbone); the right hand gently covers the left. This mudra is used whenever walking in the zendo, as well as during **kinhin**.

Sutra: A scripture regarded as having been spoken by the Buddha.

Temple Administrators: Director, **Ino**, **Tenzo**, Treasurer Work Leader.

Tenzo: The Head Cook of the temple, in charge of the kitchen and related practices.

Zabuton: A large, rectangular mat made of fabric-covered cotton batting, usually placed under the **zafu**.

Zafu: A round cushion used for **zazen**.

Zazen: A Japanese word meaning "seated meditation".

Zendo: The meditation hall.