



Treeleaf Zendo Forms and Etiquette

To help create a calm and harmonious space so that practitioners can fully and mindfully experience Zazen, there are various Zendo (Zazen Hall) practices. These practices, called “forms”, are meant to create harmony and present simple actions not requiring too much thinking or choosing preferences. Please keep in mind that, at Treeleaf, we practice with whatever our health and other circumstances are, adapting these forms to our bodily limitations or special circumstances. In other words, please do change the forms and procedures as you need due to your health requirements, room location or other life circumstances.

Set a space aside for your meditation, with your Zazen cushion, sitting bench, chair, or other arrangements ready before a scheduled sit or an event. If possible, wear clothing that’s comfortable but not too visually distracting, avoiding bright colors. It is acceptable to participate with the camera off if your circumstances require it, although we do encourage having the camera on so that we can see each other face-to-face. If in doubt what to do during an event, just follow along. Do your best to do as others do, but there really are no mistakes if your effort is sincere, so do not worry too much about mistakes. We have a comprehensive beginner’s guide to Zazen and Zen to assist new practitioners, which can be found on the Treeleaf forum here:

<https://www.treeleaf.org/forums/forumdisplay.php?171-The-BEGINNER-s-PLACE>

Please join the room a few minutes before the meeting starts. Give a bow in Gassho (with palms joined) upon entering, whether anyone is there or not. When other practitioners join, return their bows unless you have already commenced sitting Zazen, in which case, just continue sitting, paying no attention to those arriving or departing. Make sure your

microphone is muted and that the view in the Zoom room is set to “gallery” rather than “speaker.” Try not to face the computer or camera directly during Zazen, thus avoiding visual distractions. Traditionally, we face an empty wall while sitting. Unless otherwise stated in the meeting details, please put on your Rakusu or Okesa robe before joining the events (assuming that you have received one.)

For Zazen

After entering your room, walk from the entrance to your sitting place with your hands laced over your chest in Shashu (see description below). After arriving at your sitting place, when physically possible for you, first bow toward your cushion (or other sitting place), lightly fluff your cushion (or arrange your other seat), bow toward the cushion again, and then turn clockwise to bow again away from the cushion, chair, or other seating arrangement. This is traditionally done with palms together. Then sit, find your posture which feels as balanced, stable and comfortable as possible, and get ready for the bells announcing the start of Zazen.

Three strikes of the bell announce the beginning of Zazen. Try to be settled into your posture and still by the last bell. During Zazen, try not to pay attention to the screen, other participants’ actions or anything but sitting.

For Kinhin

Two bells at the end of sitting means that it is time for Kinhin (walking meditation). This is usually verbally announced as well. Rise from sitting, bow once with joined palms toward one’s cushion or other sitting place, fluff or otherwise straighten the sitting place, turn clockwise to face into the room, bow with pressed palms again. Turn left, if possible, and begin Kinhin walking.

In Kinhin, walk slowly, half a step for each breath, with hands in Shashu position (left hand forms a fist around the thumb and is placed in the center of your chest, then covered by the right hand, both arms parallel to the ground). Walk very slowly, only half a step forward at the top of each slow and relaxed breath.

The end of Kinhin is announced with the sound of the clappers. Oral instructions will be given to return to Zazen. Repeat the procedure for walking to your sitting place, bowing, straightening and sitting.

End of Zazen

One ring of the bell means Zazen is completely over for that group of sittings. Bow in Gassho while seated, at the sound of the one bell strike, then sway a few times left and right to loosen the legs and get rid of any numbness. Upon carefully standing, rearrange the Zazen cushion if using one or otherwise straighten the seat of practice. Bow in Gassho to the cushion or sitting space and then turn clockwise and bow again in the opposite direction. Do not rush to get up from the cushion. Do not rush to leave the meeting.

Service (Ceremony)

If there is a ceremony, it will be verbally announced and chant books will be provided in advance. For ceremony, usually stand in Gassho (with palms joined). A roll down of the hand bell (Inkin) announces a sequence of three floor prostrations, marked by hits of the bowl bell, but there can be substituted standing bows with hands in Gassho, or any other sincere action for bows or whatever your body allows you to do. Choose one of the practitioners or priests in the meeting as a reference for what and when to do, but do not follow the bows or movements of the officiant priest.

Rakusu and Okesa

If you have received a Rakusu or Okesa robe, whether at Treeleaf or elsewhere, you are welcome to wear them. At Treeleaf we are a Nyoho lineage, so we make no distinctions between the colors of the robes based on practitioner “ranks,” but we use simple muted colors, avoiding primary ones, and we reserve golden (“mokuran”) Okesas for transmitted teachers. You are welcome to wear the style of Okesa or Rakusu that you were given.

End of Meetings

END OF MEETINGS

Move to the door with your hands crossed on the chest in Shashu. Always give a bow in Gassho before leaving a sitting room, regardless of whether someone is there or not.

Tea Time (after Zazenkai)

You are welcome to stay for an informal chat after practice is over. Keep your microphone muted until invited to participate in the conversation.

Privacy

Please be aware that most of the Treeleaf events are being recorded for later viewing and usually streamed live to YouTube.