

Ocean Zendo

~ Etiquette ~

Welcome!

There are customary forms that help to guide movement in the zendo. Observing these rules keeps us from banging into each other and helps us with our practice. This brief outline presents some of the forms observed in the Ocean Zendo. Every Zen center has variations on these forms. These forms are guidelines for practice. Forgetting or making mistakes is not a cause for shame or embarrassment; it's a chance to learn more about ourselves and our world.

Points to remember ~~~

~ Be on time:

Please arrive at least five minutes before zazen begins and take a seat in the zendo. Not hurrying preserves the quiet and helps us and everyone around us to settle into zazen more easily. If you are late, please quietly enter and be seated, or wait in the outer room.

~ Clothing and such:

Wear loose, quiet, and modest clothing, preferably in solid and muted colors. Avoid distracting jewelry and scents. Be sure to turn off cell phones. By not distracting others or ourselves with sights, smells, or sounds, we create an atmosphere conducive to the practice of zazen.

~ Silence:

Avoid speaking or making loud noises in the zendo. Conversation may disrupt our attention and our grounding in the present moment, and distract others, and should therefore be reserved for the outer room, or outdoors.

~ Entering and exiting the zendo:

On entering or exiting, bow in gassho (palms together, at eye level). Bowing in gassho is a sign of greeting and respect for our practice, our situation, our sitting companions, and all beings.

~ ***Finding a seat:***

With hands in shashu (right hand clasping left fist, in front of chest), find a seat. When passing in front of the Buddha's altar, bow in gassho.

~ ***Sitting down:***

Upon finding a place to sit, bow in gassho once toward the zafu (cushion), turn and bow in gassho once to the seat across the zendo. Then sit on the zafu and begin zazen. Note that sometimes we face towards the center of the circle, and other times towards the wall. Observe how others are seated and do the same. Three rings on the gong (or case) mark the formal start of zazen.

~ ***Getting up:***

Two rings on the gong mark the formal end of zazen. Get up slowly, fluff up the zafu, brush off the zabuton (the matt below the zafu), bow in gassho toward your seat, turn clockwise and stand in gassho.

~ ***Kinhin: walking meditation***

Between rounds of zazen, kinhin helps to stretch our bones, while maintaining our focus on our practice. When the clappers sound to begin a round of kinhin, turn and walk until you are directly behind the next person closest to the Jikido (or leader). Then follow the movements of the other people in the kinhin line.

~ ***Pay attention:***

Observe others around you and follow their actions. Many smaller details have not been addressed here. Watch and follow others and ask questions later. By asking questions we further refine our practice.

In Closing ~~~

Our struggles with zendo forms provide us an opportunity to practice and observe our patterns of living, while in a safe place. Everyone makes mistakes. The key to zendo etiquette is to be respectful, to be aware, and to smile a little.

If you would like more formal instruction, or have any questions, please ask one of the senior sangha members, or monks.

