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# *Overview of Regular Dojo Procedures* (PAGE 1 of 4)

**Introduction** The purpose of these procedures or rituals is to encourage practice in the dojo by reducing distraction, allowing for a minimum of speaking and providing for a graceful expression of practice. Many of us have practiced with other groups having other ways of doing things. However, we ask that everyone who sits with Three Treasures Sangha follow our procedures for the sake of ease and simplicity. It is not necessary to know all the procedures described below to participate; just follow along. Three Treasures provides cushions, pads, benches & chairs for use at Dharma Gate.

**Clothing** For practice in the dojo, clothing that is loose-fitting and comfortable is recommended. Dark colors are best (black, navy or brown), preferably without words or contrasting patterns. Please do not wear hats, shorts, or sleeveless tops in the dojo.

**Entering** Silence and stillness are important elements of zazen. At the entrance to the zendo, bow toward the altar while standing. During the bow, hold hands in the gassho position: palms together with fingertips pointing upwards at nose height. Bend slightly from the waist (about 45 degrees) and then straighten. Cushions are arranged around the room and chairs are also available. Select either a cushion that has no personal effects already on it or bring a chair to an unoccupied cushion. Use a chair if this will allow you to maintain quiet and stillness and the good health of your body. When selecting your cushion position, walk around the perimeter of the room rather than cutting across the space. Sit facing the wall except when requested otherwise.

While walking in the dojo, hold hands together in kinhin position rather than down or swinging at the sides. Kinhin hand position consists of right hand wrapped around right thumb, left hand wrapped around right hand with forearms parallel to the floor. Bow to the cushion, turn clockwise and bow to the sangha. Turns in the dojo are clockwise to avoid bumping into each other. When leaving the dojo at the end of the day or during a meal break, walk to the door in kinhin position, turn to bow toward the altar and then step out.

**Zazen** Zazen periods are 25 minutes and each begins with three bells. At the end of the period, two bells signal kinhin while one bell signals that something else is happening, such as a talk, sutras, a meal or the end of sitting. When the bell rings at the end of each period, gassho and bow while still seated at your place. Turn clockwise to face the middle of the room and stand slowly, maintaining practice. Stand facing the sangha with hands in kinhin position. (If your feet are asleep, remain sitting with your legs clear of the kinhin line. Join the line the next time your place in line passes your cushion.) At the sound of the clappers, gassho and bow.

**Kinhin** Standing at your cushion with hands in kinhin position, turn to your left and promptly step out to follow the person in front of you. Maintaining your practice, walk slowly while keeping the distance between you and the person in front of you steady as you proceed around the room. As people step out of line to use the restroom, let the gap remain open. When they return, allow them to rejoin the kinhin line by entering at their place. When the clappers sound, maintain the same pace until you are in front of your cushion and stand facing in toward the sangha. When the jiki (timekeeper) bows, bow to the sangha, turn clockwise and bow to your cushion. Sit facing the wall and resume zazen.



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**Kinhin** *(continued)* Leaving the dojo and returning during kinhin—to take a restroom break, etc.—is done in one of two ways. First, you may leave immediately after the bow and before walking begins, with your hands in kinhin position. Second, you may leave when your place in line reaches the door by bowing slightly where you are and stepping out. When returning, stand at the door and wait to rejoin the line. Bow and enter the line when your place passes the door. If the clappers are struck while you are waiting by the door, don't try to enter the line while people are returning to their seats. Wait for the jiki to raise the clappers, bow with the sangha where you are and then return to your seat.

**Sutras** Sutra books will be passed out at the beginning of sutra service and collected afterwards. When chanting from memory, hands should be either resting in the lap or in gassho position. Observe the ino (chant leader) for the gesture appropriate to the sutra. For sutras read aloud from the book, hold it at eye level with both hands. For sutras done in gassho, do not put down the sutra book, just continue to hold the book with thumbs inside, fingers outside. When you are not using your sutra book, place it on your zabuton, not on the floor. Maintain formal sitting position for sutras. Recite or chant as one voice; not too loud, too soft, too fast or too slow – following the ino's lead.

**Teisho** After kinhin the jiki (timekeeper) will announce, "Prepare for teisho." Remain at your seat while the teacher offers incense and returns to the seat at the front of the dojo. Bow with the teacher and take your seat. The ino (chant leader) will lead the sangha in the verse "On Opening the Dharma" which we ask you to memorize, and the teisho (dharma talk) will begin.

After the teisho is complete the ino will lead "Shiku Seigan Mon," which ends with three full bows or prostrations. As the small hand bell is rung in an *accelerando*, stand and face the altar. Do a gassho and standing bow, continuing to the floor to a kneeling position with face near the floor and hands on either side of the head, palms facing upwards. Raise the flat palms upwards, as if lifting the feet of the Buddha over the head. Stand and at the sound of the hand bell, repeat for a total of three prostrations. (If you are physically unable to do full prostrations, a deep—90-degree—standing bow done in unison with prostrations is acceptable.) After the last bell, do a standing bow and return to your seat. Remain standing for another bell, gassho and do a standing bow to the sangha, turn clockwise to tidy your cushions, then turn again to face the sangha. The jiki will strike clappers to begin kinhin.

**Dokusan** Literally translated "to go alone," dokusan is a one-to-one meeting with the teacher. Dokusan usually begins with one of the leaders and proceeds clockwise around the room.

Index cards will be available at the entrance of the zendo for those wishing to go to dokusan. The jisha (dokusan attendant) will be responsible for ensuring that people are aware of their place in the line and that the flow continues in order. When the jisha announces it is time, indicate your desire to go to dokusan by placing the small card stored under your cushion in front of your sitting place. Put the card back under the cushion when you leave for dokusan. Those with cards out will be tapped on the shoulder by a returning person or by the jisha.



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**Dokusan** *(continued)* When you are tapped, stand and leave the dojo with hands in kinhin position. Do not bow either after standing or to the altar when leaving—this is an exception to usual procedures: the dokusan line functions as an extension of the dojo. Maintain your practice while waiting in the dokusan line. When it is your turn to go to dokusan, please wait either in the area where shoes are stored or on the back porch until you hear the teacher's bell or observe the person ahead of you leaving the cottage. When arriving at the dokusan room, make a standing bow on the threshold of the open door, enter the room and close the door. Make a second standing bow before the teacher. Sit on the chair and dokusan begins. State your name and indicate your practice, such as breath counting or koan study. When the dokusan is over the teacher will ring a small bell. Bow while seated, rise and make one final standing bow. Leave the door open and return to the dojo with hands in gassho. When arriving back at the dojo door, bow to the altar and return to your place. (Do not use the restroom or leave Dharma Gate until the next kinhin period.) Bow to your cushion and to the sangha, then sit down to resume zazen. The jisha will let you know if you are to tap the next person lightly on their shoulder when you return to the dojo.

Turns will continue around the dojo in order with no variations made for those leaving or arriving. If you choose not to put your card out and the line passes, you will not be offered another chance to go until the next pass around the room or until "last call for dokusan" is announced. At the end of a block the jisha will note the last person to go and will start with the next person when dokusan begins again.

In any given block each person may go to dokusan once unless otherwise directed by the teacher. This request should be made known to the jisha when you return to the dojo. If every person in the room with a card out has gone, the jisha will then announce, "last call for dokusan." Those who have not yet gone may now indicate their desire by putting their card out. You can go to the area where shoes are removed or the back porch when you are tapped. When those people have gone, dokusan is closed until the next block.

It is important to realize that there are times when individuals will miss getting into dokusan. The sangha has made every effort to equalize the process with the use of the cards and by establishing these simple rules. At sesshin, the dojo procedures may deviate from these and will be outlined at that time.

**Shoken** Shoken is the ceremony of commitment between teacher and student; shoken literally means seeing one another. It acknowledges the affinity that brings them together. It also implies that there is realization here and now, in addition to the process of moving towards realization. This simple ceremony establishes the relationship between teacher and student as well as that between student and the path itself.

Shoken involves sangha membership and a commitment to daily practice, along with attendance at zenkais, sesshins and/or weekly sitting opportunities. Prior to shoken, it is recommended the student attend three zenkais and six weekday zazen sittings, either Wednesday evenings or Friday mornings. New students may arrange an interview with the teacher ahead of time. For information on shoken, approach the jisha (dokusan attendant) or other sangha leader.



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**Jukai** Literally meaning to receive the precepts, jukai is a ceremony of public commitment to walk the wisdom path set out by Shakyamuni Buddha. In this ceremony the student states his/her intention to walk this wisdom path in a particular way by following the 16 Bodhisattva precepts. In doing so the student takes refuge in the three treasures of Buddha, dharma and sangha and acknowledges the precepts as guidelines for practice on the cushion and in daily life. The sangha's role is to help hold the student and encourage day-to-day living on this path. Our ceremony of jukai is for lay people and is an affirmation of oneself as a wayfarer on the path. It is common to renew the vows at intervals throughout one's life. Three Treasures Sangha holds this ceremony at the end of sesshin, and it can be for one or more students.

**Questions** With questions about our dojo procedures, call Lee Shields 206 395-5226. Also recommended for general introduction and reference is Robert Aitken's book, *Taking the Path of Zen*.