

## Bristol Zen Dojo – Guidance for Online Sits

Online sits are streamed over MixLr, and are accessible at:

<https://mixlr.com/bristolzendojo/>

These notes are intended to help practitioners follow what is happening in the sits. Often, the person leading the sits will give a 'commentary' explaining what is happening, but as people get used to the format this may reduce. There is a glossary of terms used below.

10-15 mins before start: Channel goes online.

5 mins before start: The lead will announce the format of the sit, and then sound the wood. The lead will then offer incense and bow to their altar. For a morning sit, the bows will be 'Sanpai'. Practitioners at home can simply sit, or can offer incense and then do three gassho or Sanpai. No bells are sounded for this. For afternoon sits, the offering is made followed by a single gassho.

At start: The lead sounds the gong 3 times.

We sit for 25-40 minutes. Usually, on weekday mornings we do a single sit of 40 minutes. On weekday evenings, we do two sits of 25 minutes separated by kinhin (walking meditation.) On Sundays, we sit for 1.5 hours – either 2 sits of 40 or 3 of 25, with kinhin between.

Before kinhin: The gong sounds twice. Gassho, rock from side to side, and slowly stand up. Stand in shasshu while waiting, and begin kinhin when the lead says.

Before the end of Zazen: There may be 'kaijo', which consists of sounding of drum and wood to mark the opening of the dojo following zazen. In the morning, the Kesa Sutra is chanted. Anyone who chooses can join in.

At the end of zazen: The gong sounds once. Gassho, rock from side to side, and sit for chanting, or stand to join in the ceremony.

Simple chanting:

The lead offers incense to the altar. Others can do the same.

Then we chant the Hannya Shingyo and the Four Vows.

The lead chants the dedication, and we all join in with the Ji Ho San Shi

Full ceremony:

The lead offers incense to the altar, and then performs sanpai.

Others can make an offering if they have an altar, and then perform sanpai, or 3 gassho.

There may be bells marking the bows.

Chanting takes place – it can be the standard set (as above) or may involve extra chants.

We finish with an offering to the altar followed by sanpai or 3 gassho.

Ending:

Stand in shasshu, facing the altar if you have one.

We bow together to the altar in gassho. This is to the Buddha.  
We bow (still facing the altar) in shasshu. This is to each other.

We may follow this with informal chat over WhatsApp and/or Zoom. Sometimes there will be Teisho or Mondo over Zoom. To join the WhatsApp group, contact one of the organisers.

#### MAKING A ZEN ALTAR:

The simplest Zen altar consists of three things:

On the left, something representing nature: Flowers, leaves or branches.

In the centre, an offering: An incense pot.

On the right, light: A candle.

A statue is not necessary. If there is one, it should be raised, and be behind the offering pot in the centre.

#### GLOSSARY

Zazen and Kinhin: Hopefully you will already have had an introduction in Bristol Zen Dojo or elsewhere.

Deshimaru:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3u9G1YIHwo>

Guidance from Reigen Wang-Genh of Ryumonji is available here (subtitles):

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLytVOdKL3s5q-tN0KwqWsdMjptzybKiR>

Understanding KinHin by Guy Mercier:

<http://www.zenbrighton.co.uk/themes/zen/assets/pdf/understanding-kinhin.pdf>

Shasshu: Standing meditation posture.

<http://www.zenbrighton.co.uk/#hand-positions> [And more good introductory information on this site.]

Gassho: Bowing from the waist with the hands in 'prayer' position, forearms horizontal.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lt4nEHAS\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lt4nEHAS_A)

Sanpai: 'Three prostrations'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YppGZUiA0-s>

Kesa: Garment worn by ordained people, symbolising transmission of the practice from the time of the Buddha.

Rakusu: A smaller version of the Kesa, worn around the neck. People who receive lay ordination as Bodhisattva wear Rakusu but not Kesa.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rakusu>

## CHANTS:

Kesa Sutra – Dai Sai Geda PuKu – Chanted by ordained people before putting on the Rakusu/Kesa. Chanted at the end of morning zazen.

<https://www.abzen.eu/en/teaching/kusen/308-comment-on-the-kesa-sutra>

Hannya Shingyo – The Heart Sutra

Shigu seigan mon – The Four Vows

Eko – Dedication: This can vary, but most often we use the FuEko (Universal Dedication).

This is chanted by the lead only.

Ji Ho San Shi – Every dedication ends with this verse, and everyone joins in.

More information is available here: <http://www.zenbrighton.co.uk/#chants-and-translations>