

HOW TO SIT ZAZEN AT HOME

Should I sit zazen at home?

In our tradition, turning up at the Dojo for zazen is strongly emphasised as is going on sesshin. Buddhist practice is something we do together as Sangha and the Dojo facilitates this. Regular attendance at a place of practice will bring rigour to zazen and your life - it will also avoid you creating your own “zen” increasingly distant from authentic teaching.

That said, the dojo is not open everyday and it is not always possible to attend the set times. So yes, sit at home but find a way to check-in with a group or teacher regularly. We continue to broadcast zazen sessions via [Mixlr](#) and there are saved examples on the [showreel](#) too. These will often include instruction on the practice.

Ideally, you would in some way be sitting ‘with others’ when you sit at home - either by sitting at the same time as practice in the dojo, or by connecting with one of our Mixlr sitting broadcasts.

How often should I sit?

Daily practice is the aspiration, with one day of rest each week. But everyone starts somewhere - do not be discouraged if you can only manage less. It is better to sit regularly and steadily at a pace that works for you than to sit many times one week, and none the next. A routine is best so try and find the times that will work for you regularly.

Where should I sit at home?

Your practice place should be treated with great respect, as at the Dojo. If you are able to devote a permanent part of your home to this, be it a corner of a room, then this is preferable. Whether you are in this fortunate position or not, your practice place should be kept clean and tidy. Treating the area with mindfulness and respect will put you in the best frame of mind for zazen. In Soto Zen we face the wall and so try to find somewhere that you can do this, ideally a blank one.

Do I need an altar?

Creating an altar at home will support the framing of your practice in the spirit of our tradition but it is optional.

An altar is usually made up of flowers, an incense burner and a candle (from left to right). If you have a buddha statue, this is raised and placed behind the incense

burner. You should keep your altar immaculately. It is a focal point of your mindful attitude to the practice and a place to make offerings to the Buddha, the universe and all beings.

What about form?

It will not be possible to recreate all the forms of the Dojo at home, however use formality to create a sense of occasion about your practice. Offer incense at your altar - if you have one. Gassho to it and then when you are at your sitting place, bow towards the wall and again back into the room. This symbolises bowing to all those sitting with you and to all beings. When you are in your sitting position bow again and do not move until the timer goes or you need to move, in which case bow once more - just as you would at the Dojo. Formality and rigour are especially important at home where it is easy for practice to become lax.

What about ceremony?

If you are ordained and wear a Rakusu at home then you should recite the Kesa verse when you put it on.

If you would like to carry out a simple ceremony at home after your sit, then please speak with one of us. The simplest ceremony, used in the evening in temples, is to chant the 4 vows of the Bodhisattva. (*Shi gu sei gan mon*) while sitting on the zafu straight after zazen. For those familiar with chants and ceremonies at the dojo, we can help you decide what will work for you at home.

Chant sheets for some of these are available [here](#).

Additional Resources

[An explanation of zazen from the AZI](#)

[Dogen's Fukanzazengi](#)

[Insight Timer](#) - (a downloadable app that includes a meditation timer. It has an ingenious way of giving the sense of "sitting with others").