

Zendo Manners

Before you enter the zendo, you make gassho and bow at the entrance of the zendo. In the zendo you are supposed to walk with your hands folded in front of your chest. This so-called kinhin-style of walking which will be explained more fully later. You never walk inside the zendo with your hands swinging freely.

It is also a basic rule that you do not walk in the central part of the zendo – no matter whether there is wooden flooring or not –, as this space is considered to be reserved for the Roshi. Try to walk behind the rows of people sitting toward the wall.

When you reach the place where you should do your zazen, first bow in gassho toward your sitting position. By this action you greet your neighbors sitting on your right and left. Then, you turn around clockwise, with your hands still in gassho, and greet your co-sitters on the other side of the zendo with a bow. Then you turn around to your original position and sit at your place.

When you leave the zendo, turn around at the entrance, make a bow with gassho, and then step out of the zendo.

Please remember that almost **all circular movements in the zendo are done clockwise.**

Kinhin (Walking-Zen)

When you hear the *inkin* struck once during zazen, it is a sign to stop zazen for a free break. If you hear it struck twice, it is the time to finish one period of zazen and move on to *kinhin*, a walking form of Zen.

Do not stand up abruptly. That would not be good for your inner state; besides, that may possibly damage your spine. First swing from side to side several times, beginning with small movements, then slowly to larger ones. Notice that your movements of the *sayû-yôshin* this time are in the reverse fashion compared to those at the beginning of your zazen.

Then turn around on your zafu clockwise, and stand up slowly. Arrange your sitting place neatly, and face the co-sitters on the other side. With the sign of the wooden clappers, bow to the other side in gassho, and turn 90 degrees to the left. You slowly walk round the zendo with all others. Notice that this collective walking goes around clockwise too.

When walking in kinhin, you place the right fist, with the thumb inside, on the chest and you cover that fist with your left palm. Try to form a straight line with the elbows. Your hands should not be lowered to your belly or nor raised up to your chin. The head should stay erect, just as it was during zazen, with the eyes resting this time about 3 meters in front of you. Since this is walking Zen, you carry on your present practice further, either Mu or counting breaths, as you walk calmly and steadily around the zendo.

This practice of kinhin usually lasts at least for five minutes, until you hear the wooden clappers once again. Then you go back to your own place at a normal walking speed.

At your own place, you bow to the other side together with all others, turn around clockwise, and bow to your neighbors as well. Then take your seat and resume your zazen.

During the kinhin time, you may go out to the restroom and or washroom. When you come back to the zendo, wait for your position in the kinhin line to come in front of you. Then bow in gassho and join the kinshin.

While waiting for your position in the kinhin line, if you hear the wooden clappers finishing the kinhin, do not go rushing into the zendo but keep waiting outside. Only after the people inside have finished bowing to each other should you step into the zendo.

The above is in bold because we noticed that this is not followed by many of us.

By so doing you do not disturb anyone inside; otherwise people must wait for you to get to your own place before they bow to each other.

Before starting kinhin, check that your zafu is in the centre of the zabuton and nothing sticks out of the zabuton.

When you go back from dokusan to the zendo, you always walk in the kinhin style in the corridor. You enter the zendo with gassho and a bow, and go back to your seat in the kinhin style.