
Rules of the ABZE Dojos

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Forword

The dojo¹ is the place where seated meditation, zazen, is practiced. Focused on the body and breath, we learn to forget ourselves, thereby realizing the profound dimension of our existence in unity with all beings.

To enable a serene collective practice, certain rules must be respected. Paying attention to them is an opportunity to be mindful of our interdependence with others and to show them respect.

This helps to concretely realize the Way, with body and mind in unity during daily activities as well as in zazen.

The rules and behaviours within the dojo are not constraints but means of expressing the nature of Buddha, life without separation from others. Practiced without attachment, they allow us to live beyond our small ego; this is a source of liberation and compassion.

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1. All practices in the dojo—zazen, samu, ceremonies, and social moments—are opportunities to deepen the path of Soto Zen Buddhism in various aspects of life. This spiritual tradition is taught, studied, and practiced here.
 2. The ten precepts of the bodhisattvas serve as rules of conduct:
Do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not be greedy or cause suffering due to sexual desires, do not intoxicate body and mind, do not criticize others, do not be arrogant or consider oneself superior to others, do not be mean, do not get angry, do not slander the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (the community of participants). These precepts are both an expression of awakened practice and support for continuing practice in life.
 3. The other paramitas: generosity, effort, patience, and wisdom are expressions of the awakening realized in zazen.
 4. All practitioners are spiritual friends. They strive to create a stimulating atmosphere among themselves based on mutual respect. Each one endeavors to put into practice the teachings transmitted.
 5. Senior disciples responsible for teaching must transmit it with kindness and humility, avoiding hostile criticism of others' mistakes. They are careful not to abuse the power of influence granted by their role. They set an example by practicing what they teach.

¹ The dojo means the place of practice, including the following five categories: Temple-Zen Center-Dojo-Group-Correspondent.

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6. Aware of the privilege of receiving the teachings of Soto Zen Buddhism, each person strives to protect it and help ensure its proper transmission to future generations through their practice.
 7. To maintain the calm and concentration necessary for practice in the dojo, access will be refused to those who cannot adhere to its rules, especially those under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or severe mental illnesses, who will be invited to seek treatment.
 8. Quarrels and unnecessary discussions should be avoided. If they arise, practitioners should help to end them as quickly as possible.
 9. If a person persistently disturbs the practice in the dojo, they may be temporarily excluded. If, upon reflection, this person changes and repents of their error, they may be readmitted to the dojo.
 10. Everyone must arrive on time. Those who arrive late should not disturb others.
 11. Shoes and clothing must always be neatly stored. It is recommended to wear a black kimono or a solid, dark-colored outfit.
 12. It is also recommended to be clean and to avoid perfumes and decorations.
 13. Five minutes before the start of zazen, the wooden clapper is sounded, and silence is observed by all.
 14. After zazen, the ritual is an expression of it. It is recommended to conduct a short ceremony with the practice of *sanpai*, the offering of incense, and the chanting of the *Hannya Shingyo*, the *Shiguseiganmon*, the *Eko of the Patriarchs* (complete or abbreviated) or *Fueko* and the *Jiho San Shi*. In the morning, we start with the *kesa* sutra. We may also chant the *Sandokai*, the *Hokyozanmai*, or the *Daihisin Dharani*. Those who do not wish to participate may remain silent, hands joined in *shashu*.
 15. *Samu*, manual work in service of the dojo, is part of Zen practice as a practice of concentration and generosity.
 16. The dojo is reserved for the practice of zazen. However, practices that harmonize with zazen, such as yoga and massages, may take place there.
 17. It is necessary to seek the opinion of the responsible person before undertaking anything in the dojo premises. No one is allowed to remain in these premises outside of zazen without the approval of the responsible person.
 18. In the dojo, you should not speak loudly, cough or blow your nose loudly. After zazen, it is advisable to remain calm and focused.
 19. The responsible person of the dojo or the zazen group, supported by the teachers of the dojo, ensures adherence to these rules to protect the pure practice of all. For this, they can also be assisted by the spiritual council of the ABZE.
 20. These rules are precious and must be respected, but no rule replaces awakened practice, which is the source of wisdom, kindness, and compassion.