

## How to Practice Zazen

1. Sit on the forward third of a chair or a cushion on the floor.
2. Arrange your legs in a position you can maintain comfortably. In the half-lotus position, place your right leg on your left thigh. In the full lotus position, put your feet on opposite thighs. You may also sit simply with your legs tucked in close to your body, but be sure that your weight is distributed on three points: both of your knees on the ground and your buttocks on the round cushion. On a chair, keep your knees apart about the width of your shoulders, feet firmly planted on the floor.
3. Straighten and extend your spine, keeping it naturally upright, centering your balance in the lower abdomen. Push your lower back a little forward, open your chest, and tuck your chin in slightly, keeping the head upright, not leaning forward, or backwards, or to the side. Sway your body gently from left to right in decreasing arcs, until you naturally come to a point of stillness on your cushion.
4. Keep your eyes on the floor at a 45-degree angle, neither fully opened nor closed, and gaze naturally about 3 to 4 feet in front of your body. If the eyes are closed, you may want to start to daydream or visualize things. If your eyes are wide open, your mind will scatter.
5. Keep your lips and teeth together with your tongue resting against the roof of your mouth.
6. Place your hands on your lap with the right palm up and your left hand (palm up) resting on your right hand, thumb tips lightly touching, forming a vertical oval. This is the mudra of zazen, in which all phenomena are unified. Rest this mudra with the blade of your hands against your abdomen, a few inches below the navel, harmonizing your own center of gravity with the mudra.
7. Take a deep breath, exhale fully, and then take another deep breath, exhaling fully. Let your breath settle into its natural rhythm. With proper physical posture, your breathing will flow naturally into your lower abdomen. Breathe naturally, without judgment or trying to breathe a certain way.
8. Keep your attention on your breath. When your attention wanders, bring it back to the breath again and again -- as many times as necessary! Remain as still as possible, following your breath and returning to it whenever thoughts arise.
9. Be fully, vitally present with yourself. Simply do your very best. At the end of your sitting period, gently swing your body from right to left in increasing arcs. Stretch out your legs, and be sure they have feeling before standing.
10. Practice this every day for at least ten to fifteen minutes [or longer] and you will discover for yourself the treasure house of the timeless life of zazen -- your very life itself.

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Full Lotus



Half Lotus



Quarter Lotus



Burmese



Seiza



Chair