

1. Position of the hands

Gasshō

Hold the palms and fingers of both hands together. Your arms should be slightly away from your chest, your elbows should extend outward from your sides in a straight line parallel with the floor. The tips of your fingers should be approximately the same level as your nose.

Gasshō is an expression of respect, faith, and devotion. Since the two hands (duality) are joined together, it expresses the "One Mind."

Shashu

Put the thumb of your left hand in the middle of the palm and make a fist around it. Place the fist in front of your chest. Cover the fist with your right hand. Keep your elbows away from your body forming a straight line with both forearms.



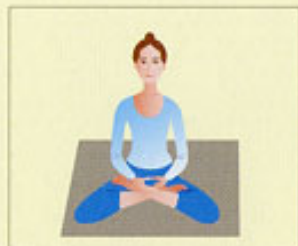
2. Entering the zendō

Hold your hands in shashu position and step forward with your left foot at the left side of the entrance. After entering the hall, bow in gasshō toward the altar and go to your seat. As a sign of respect, you should refrain from walking in front of the statue of Manjushri Bodhisattva. Rather, you should walk around behind the image. When walking, keep your hands in the shashu position.

(Manners in the zendō may vary in detail, depending upon the temple. Only the basic manners regarding zazen are described here.)



4. Sitting positions



Kekkafuza (Full-lotus position)

Place your right foot on your left thigh, and then your left foot on your right thigh. Cross your legs so that the tips of your toes and the outer edge of your thighs form a single line. The order of crossing the legs may be reversed.



Hankafuza (Half-lotus position)

Simply place your left foot on your right thigh. When you cross your legs, your knees and the base of your spine should form an equilateral triangle. Raising the opposite leg is also acceptable.



Sitting in a chair

Sit upright in a chair as you would on a zafu. Do not lean backwards. Use a square support cushion on the seat and/or under your feet as needed to find a comfortable upright posture. Hold your hands in your lap in the cosmic mudra (hokkai-join).



5. Posture

Rest both knees firmly on the zabuton, straighten the lower part of your back, push your buttocks outward and hips forward, and straighten your spine. Pull in your chin and extend your neck as though reaching toward the ceiling. Your ears should be in a line parallel to your shoulders, and your nose should be in line with your navel. After straightening your back, relax your shoulders, back, and abdomen without changing your posture. Sit upright, leaning neither to the left nor right, neither forward nor backward.



7. The mouth and breathing

8. The eyes