



Dharma Classroom Etiquette Guidelines

Although online teachings seem quite different in some ways from attending a Dharma centre in person, it is most helpful for our minds to think—as soon as we tune in to each session—that we are really present in the meditation hall (Tibetan: "gompa"). We have entered the room and we sit quietly, respectfully and mindfully, awaiting the Teacher's arrival and then receiving the teachings, **keeping in mind the preciousness and power of the teachings to transform our minds and lives.**

Because the sessions are online, there are reminders that we may need about our behaviour, and there are unique aspects to being online, so the following guidelines are ideals, provided for your information, to help with your spiritual development. All of these things are done as a sincere expression of gratitude and respect for the teachings.

- Dress appropriately: not choosing clothing that may be distracting to anyone; for example, not wearing anything tight or revealing or skimpy. Do not wear a hat/head covering.
- Clean your space and arrange your altar; offer water bowls, for example.
- Remove your shoes. Sit so that your feet are not pointing towards the Teacher or any holy object.
- Arrive early, sit in a quiet place and spend some time quietening your mind prior to the teaching, not communicating with others.
- For those with faith in the Buddha, when you enter the room where your seat and altar are, prostrate to the altar and then wait for the teacher. When the teacher appears, you prostrate again. First time is to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, asking for guidance and inspiration to quickly become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings.*
- Ensure that your microphone is on mute.
- For live teachings, ensure that your video is turned on so the Teacher can see you. (In "Zoom Webinars" only the Teacher and VNOS volunteer facilitators can see participants; they cannot see each other. In "Zoom meetings" the Teacher should fill your screen so that you're not distracted by looking at other students.)
- Never place Buddhist texts, prayer books, etc. on the floor, but rather in a high, respectful place.
- If you want to recite along with the group, follow the chant leader in the prayers and practices, never chanting the words ahead of the chant leader.

- Sit as quietly as possible throughout the teachings, adjusting your posture only as necessary, and do not leave prior to the end of the teaching unless really necessary.
- Do not distract yourself and others by drinking or eating during the teaching (unless really necessary for health reasons - and then do so discretely).
- Take notes for later reference, as the Teacher provides this vital information for your spiritual development. Write down questions that arise in your mind, as there may be a question and answer session with the Teacher, when you may be requested to write questions in the chat box of Zoom. (To discuss private matters, you may wish to write or request an interview with the Teacher; it is good practice to make an offering if asking for advice.)
- For those with faith in the Buddha, at the end of the teaching hold your hands in prayer mudra as the teacher signs off and, after the Teacher has signed off, prostrate before you leave the room (unless you won't see the Teacher again for some time - in which case don't prostrate).*

* Our aim is to reach enlightenment as quickly as possible. To do that we need to know how to behave in order to accumulate merit and purify negative karma. Prostrations are very helpful. We can prostrate fully, partially or only imagined if necessary. If it's not possible to physically prostrate, while sitting you can put your hands on your crown.. to the throat.. to the heart, and when in public just to the heart—all while imagining full prostration. Those who have taken refuge—with any Teacher—should always prostrate to any Buddha encountered, which the Teacher represents, and should prostrate 3 times twice each day to a Teacher or image of a Buddha while reciting the refuge prayer. Prostrations are not made when the entire teaching/course ends, or when we'll be parted for some time, because this omission conveys our wish for the teacher to return soon.