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## Before starting zazen in a chair

The important point of zazen is to sit in the right posture and breathe in the right manner. It is the same with zazen in a chair. It is especially important to stabilize the part of the body below the waist, relax the upper body, and stay flexible without tension.

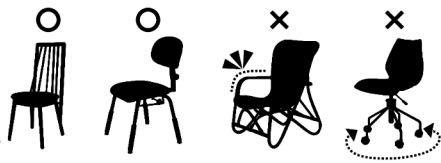
Therefore, you need to pay attention to the position of your feet while also visualizing the pelvis (sit bones) and spine.



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## Pick a chair

Use a chair with a firm cushion. Make sure your knees are horizontal to or slightly lower than your buttocks. It is convenient to use a chair which has an adjustable height. It doesn't matter if the chair has a back rest or not. Use a chair without an arm rest. Chairs that turn around or move on casters are not suited for zazen.



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## Proper environment for Chair Zazen

First, let's tidy up the room for sitting zazen. It is important to create surroundings that help you concentrate better.

Look around and see if you notice anything that may distract your attention. It is better to put distracting things away. One easy solution is to sit facing a wall. Please make a space of at least 1 meter between yourself and the wall.

Turn off the TV and radio and remove all possible causes of distraction. Keep the room at a moderate temperature, neither too hot nor too cold. Do not place an electric fan so that it blows directly on you. Simply put, keep your five senses from being stimulated. Zazen practice begins with setting up a comfortable environment.

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## Sit in a chair

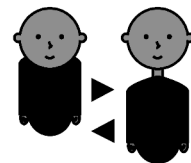
Usually when we sit in a chair, we let our body lean against its back. Zazen requires a slightly different posture. When you do zazen in a chair, you need to sit on the front half of the seat with your back away from the back rest.

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## Relax your body

Relax your body before sitting down. Lift and drop your shoulders about ten times. Swing your arms back and forth about five times. Turn your head about five times. Finally, take three deep breaths. Inhale a little and exhale through your mouth to thoroughly let the air come out. Relaxing your upper body helps you sit in the proper posture during zazen.

1. Lift and drop the shoulders



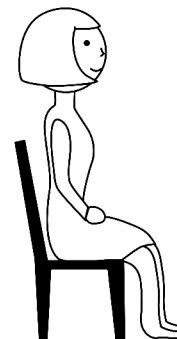
2. Swing your arms and turn your head a few times.



# Instructions for Chair Zazen

In zazen we simply allow any thought, feeling or emotion to come up and then we simply let them go away; we actually do nothing. In sitting, any thought or condition of mind is like a cloud in the sky. Somehow clouds appear in the sky, changing form as they stay for a while, and then they disappear. Similar to clouds in the sky, any thought that appears in zazen simply stays for a while and then disappears. I have been practicing this style of meditation for more than 35 years, and in my experience, no thought stays in the mind forever. Everything is coming and going, and we just let things come up freely and let them go away freely. We don't try to fight against our thoughts or any other mental condition, and we don't try to interact with them, either. The intention is not to grasp what is coming up from your consciousness. We actually do nothing but let the things happening within the mind just flow. Yet when you become aware that you are interacting with what is happening in your mind, just stop interacting and return to the zazen posture while breathing with the eyes open or closed. That means you let go of whatever thoughts come up, and you also don't sleep. This is the point in our sitting practice.

Yet if you try to sit in this way for just ten minutes, you will find it is really difficult. It is difficult for even ten minutes to continually keep this upright posture, keep your eyes closed or open without focusing on anything, and keep letting go of whatever arises in your mind. It is exceedingly difficult to do nothing, and zazen is essentially doing nothing but sitting. The founder of our tradition, Zen master Dogen Zenji, called this practice shikantaza. Shikantaza means "just sitting" in Japanese, and to just sit means that we really only sit without doing anything else. This is a really simple practice; we do nothing but sit in the zazen posture breathing easily, keeping the eyes open, staying awake, and letting go. That's all we do in zazen; we do nothing else. Yet even if you try to sit just five minutes in this way you will find it really difficult. This practice is very simple but simple does not necessarily mean easy. So whenever we become aware that we have deviated from that point of upright posture, deep breathing, keeping the eyes open without focusing, and letting go of whatever comes up, we try to return to that point. In whatever condition we find ourselves in, we just return to posture, breathing, waking up, and letting go. That is what we do in meditation.



Instructions for Chair Zazen that you can do easily at home or at work anytime, anywhere



<http://www.sotozen-net.or.jp/>

find more zines at

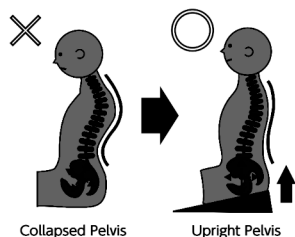


[www.littlemouse.fun](http://www.littlemouse.fun)

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## Make your pelvis upright

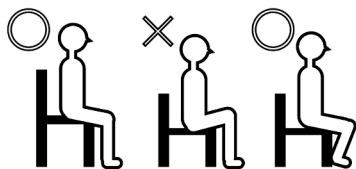
Keeping your pelvis upright is the most important thing. See if you can feel your sit bones under your pelvis touching the surface of the chair. It is not necessary to push your lower back forward.



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## Position and angle of the feet

Adjust your knees so they are lower than or horizontal to the top of your thighs. Set your feet shoulder-width apart. It's OK to pull your feet back and rest on your toes, with your heels not touching the floor.



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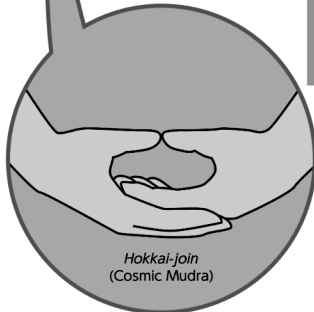
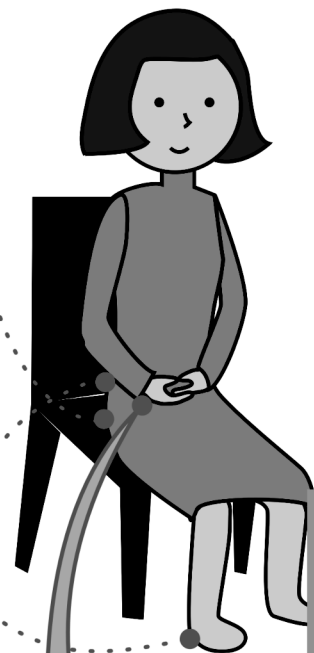
## Imagine stacking your vertebrae in a column

Once your pelvis is standing upright, make sure the entire lower back is stabilized and visualize stacking up your vertebrae one by one from the bottom. Then, once you reach the neck, slightly pull in your chin so you feel settled.

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## At the end of zazen

Do not stand up abruptly. Sway your body sideways gradually and relax your mind and body. Let the relaxing serenity of chair zazen linger.



Hokkai-join  
(Cosmic Mudra)

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## How to breathe

You basically breathe into and out of the abdomen. Until you are accustomed to breathing like this, please focus on taking slow, long breaths. Once you can breathe quietly and deeply, you do not need to make a conscious effort.

## How to start Chair Zazen

Stretch and relax your body. When you have prepared a chair follow these steps carefully to start zazen in a chair.

## What is zazen?

Do not concentrate on any particular object or try to control your thoughts. When you maintain the proper posture and your breathing settles down, your mind will naturally become tranquil. When various thoughts arise in your mind, do not become caught up in them or struggle with them; neither pursue nor try to escape from them. Leave thoughts alone, allowing them to come up and go away freely. The essential thing is, by neither falling into distraction (thinking) nor dullness (drowsiness), to let zazen sit zazen.

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## Hokkai-join (Cosmic Mudra)

Put your left hand on top of your right hand. Put the thumb tips together and naturally place your hands on your lap.

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## Position of the eyes and mouth

Keep your eyes open. Look at the area about 1.5 meters in front of you. Neither widening or narrowing your eyes, let them naturally stay open. Close your mouth and keep your tongue against the roof of your mouth.

Imagine the gentle look of a Buddha statue



Look at the area 1.5 meters in front of you



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## Sayu-yoshin (Swaying your body sideways)

First breathe out consciously through your mouth a few times and release all the tension from your upper body. Paying attention to your pelvis, sway your body sideways. Make sure your body is not tilted either to the left or the right, to the front or the back. Imagine a horizontal line running through your shoulders and ears and a vertical line running through the nose and navel to help you make small adjustments and check your posture for yourself.

Gradually make the sideways movements smaller.

