

Basic Hand Positions



Shashu

Make a fist with your left hand, with the thumb tucked inside, and place it in the pit of the stomach. Cover the fist with your open right hand. Keep your elbows away from your body, and position them so that they are parallel to the floor. Shashu is a form used in walking.



Gassho

Put both hands flat together. Place the tips of your fingers at the level with your nose, and keep your elbows away from your body. Gassho is an expression of respect, mindfulness and oneness.

Entering the Meditation Hall (Zendo)



Enter the Zendo crossing the threshold with your left foot first and keeping the left side of the entrance.



Stop to make a slight bow before entering the circle. Then walk clockwise and approach a seat that is available.

Keep in mind to choose a zafu (round meditation cushion) that is suited to your body weight and height.

Bowing in Gassho



Choose a seat and make a bow in Gassho towards your zazen practice place.

(It is called *Rin'i Monjin*, an expression of your respect to people sitting next to you)



Turn clockwise, and make a bow in Gassho towards the opposite side of the hall.

(This is called *Taiza Monjin*, an expression of your salutations to the person sitting on the opposite side)

Getting on your Zabuton (Meditation Mat)



Hold up your body with both hands placed on the Zabuton, and quietly slip on to the Zafu (round cushion).

Postures



Full-Lotus Posture

Sit on the Zafu cushion allowing your buttocks to rest on the front part of the cushion. Then, put your right foot on your left thigh and your left foot on your right thigh. Your body will be supported on three points: buttocks on a cushion and both knees resting on the mat.



Half-Lotus Posture

Sit on a Zafu in the same manner as the full-lotus posture. Next, bend one knee to bring the foot close to your Zafu, and put your other foot on your opposite thigh. This posture is easier for most people still a traditional position.

Preparation for Sitting



Sway gently from side to side a few times, and then gradually decrease the swing. You will find a position of balance in the middle when your body stops rocking. It is called Sayu-Yoshin.



Place your right hand face up on your lap close to your stomach, and put the fingers of your left hand on the fingers of your right hand. Curve your hands into an oval, so that the tips of your both thumbs lightly touch each other.

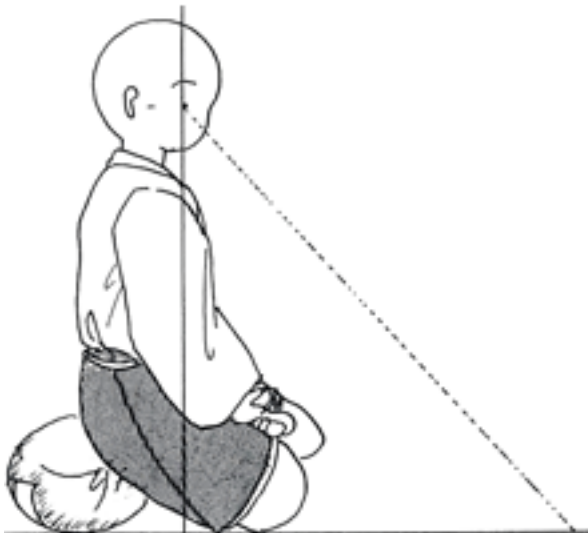
This is called *Hokkai-Join*, the form of hands used for the Cosmic Mudra.

Postures

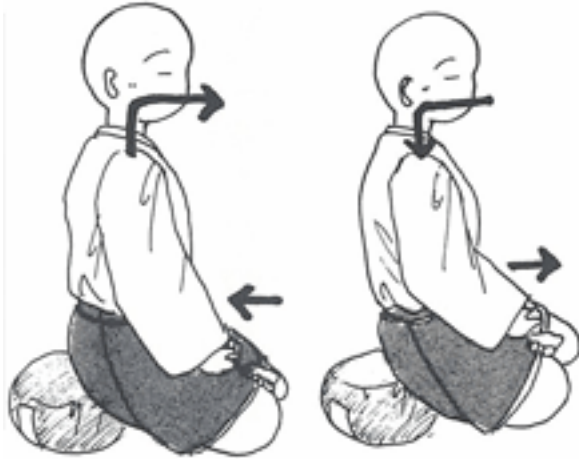


With your legs and arms positioned, stretch your spine upwards with your shoulders relaxed. Try to keep your back naturally straight, by pushing the buttocks out slightly and the stomach out forward.

Then, pull the chin down slightly and stretch the neck upwards as if being pulled up from above. Keep your eyes open naturally, and gaze at an angle of roughly 45 degrees to focus on a spot of about three feet in front of you. You will find your eyes being neither opened widely nor completely closed.



Breathing



Settled into your sitting posture, take a deep breath and then breathe out slowly. It is called *Kanki-Issoku*. Your tongue should be placed against the roof of the mouth.

It is helpful in the beginning to count your breath (Susokukan).

Source: <http://zenken.aichi-gakuin.ac.jp>