



# MEDITATION: QUICK START GUIDE

## QUICK START INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) choose the place where you will meditate
- 2) choose your meditation posture
- 3) meditate

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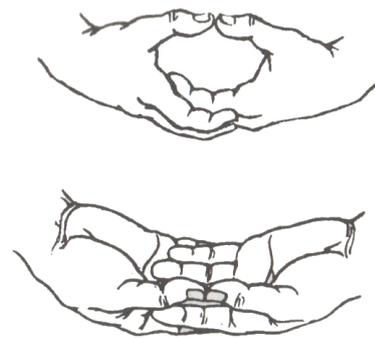
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## POSTURE

Choose the position you feel most comfortable and be assured there is absolutely no meaning to the different positions and what is most important is what you do with your mind and not what you do with your feet or legs. Remember it is pointless to worry about looking good and then finding you can not maintain your position. Be realistic. Experiment and find out what is best for you.

## HAND POSITIONS

The classic hand position is known simple as the 'meditation-position' or 'dhyana-mudra' where the right hand rests on the left with the thumb tips lightly touching. This position is said to offer a "meditation effort meter" where your thumbs drift apart whilst daydreaming or push to together while straining.



## POSTURE: FULL LOTUS

For those who are flexible enough the most stable position is the full lotus, where each foot is placed up on the opposite thigh. This is very solid and perfectly symmetrical.



## POSTURE TWO: HALF LOTUS

In the half lotus the left foot is placed up onto the right thigh and the right leg is tucked under. When using this position you should make a habit of alternating which leg you bring up in order to stretch the spine both ways since this position forces one to slope slightly to one side.

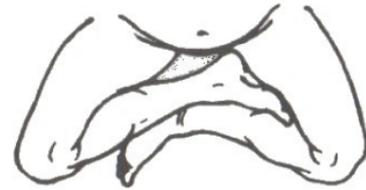




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## POSTURE: BURMESE POSITION

The simplest position while sitting on the floor is the Burmese position where your legs are crossed and both feet rest flat on the floor. Knees should also rest on the floor. To help your knees drop to the floor we often sit on a small cushion called a zafu. Keep your spine upright but keep a slight curve in your lower back region. In this position, it takes very little effort to keep the body upright.



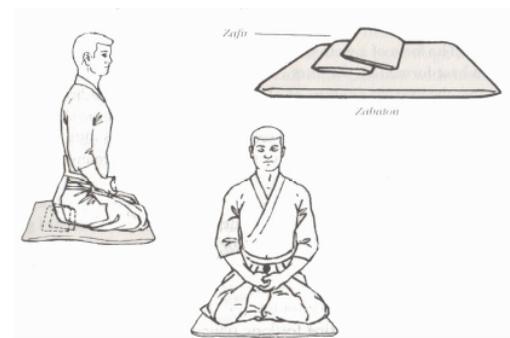
## POSTURE: CHAIR POSITION

It is also fine to sit in a chair. The posture you will keep is almost identical to the position you would have whilst sitting at a computer desk with your feet flat on the floor, spine straight and vertical.



## POSTURE: CUSHIONS

Sitting on the floor can become uncomfortable so a mat to cushion your knees from the floor is advisable where possible. A small cushion is used to sit on to raise you off the floor in order to keep your back straight and help your knees touch the floor.



## EYES: WALL GAZING

Zen meditation is sometimes called 'wall-gazing' as in order to minimise distractions it is advisable that you face a wall and have your eyes half-closed.



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## MEDITATE: MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING (Ānāpānasati)

Mindfulness of breathing refers to several techniques of being aware of one's process of inhalation and exhalation. In the first stage you use counting to stay focused on the breath. After the out-breath you count one, then you breathe in and out and count two, and so on up to twenty, and then count backwards to one and then start again.

Breathe naturally through your nose. As you engage in this exercise you may find that your mind wanders, caught by thoughts or by noises in the room, or bodily sensations. When you notice that this happens, know that this is okay, and simply notice the distraction but gently bring your attention back to the breath.

### FURTHER READING

For a more in-depth look at Zen meditation there's a second part of this series called 'Zazen Instructions' that looks in more detail about other meditation methods and some issues and opportunities involved in meditation.

I also highly recommend a book by the Japanese Monk Omori Sogen called "*An Introduction To Zen Training*" which is a translation of '*Sanzen Nyumon*' which addresses most of the opportunities and issues in meditation such as breathing, pain, posture, drowsiness and how to maintain concentration when sitting and not sitting.