

Five things to do at the beginning of a meditation

1. Gratitude.

To your teacher/teachers/monks/nuns/lay practitioners.
All those who have kept the teachings of the Buddha alive and well.

2. Motivation

Why do you sit? What is your motivation for your spiritual practice?
Your motivation needs to be something inspiring, long lasting and far reaching spanning a minimum of 3-5 years. This is not something that changes daily. Examples range from. I sit for peace of mind. I sit to master the five hindrances and their antidotes. I sit to alleviate suffering, mine and others. I sit to uproot suffering and it's causes. I sit to uproot craving. I sit to uproot greed, hatred and delusion.

3. Determination. Determine your intention for your sit. Be specific.

The general formula is to pick a method that generates concentration, i.e. anapana sati (mindfulness of breathing), sweeping, or metta for the first 2/3rds of the period followed by an insight practice for the last third.
Here are several examples of determinations.

Anapana, followed by insight practice of noticing arising and ceasing of sound.

Sweeping meditation followed by noticing arising and ceasing of sensation.

Loving-kindness meditation for the entire period.

4. Metta. Send loving kindness to a few people. Note: if you determine metta as your primary practice for the period, reverse 4 and 5.

5. Gatha. Breathing in I calm mind and body, breathing out, I smile.

Five things to do at the end of a meditation

1. Recapitulate. Review internal and external factors that led to either a restless, distracted or calm and concentrated sit. Delete what led to restlessness, a mind filled with hindrances (such as checking texts and emails prior to sitting). Repeat what supports calm and concentration, (such as being off all electronic media including television by 8 pm).

2. Insights. Review insights. Small, medium or large. Keep a meditation log. Note date, length of sit, a few descriptive words describing your meditation, and discoveries from your recapitulation. Designate one section of the log to record insights. Review them regularly.

3. Impermanence. Remind yourself that all conditioned states are impermanent.

4 Merit. Dedication. Dedicate any wholesomeness generated by your practice, now or at some other time to all sentient beings, or to a few specific individuals or situations happening in the world. This acknowledges the interdependent web of life. Each one of us sowing wholesome seeds, diminishing the forces of greed, hatred and delusion. This benefits everyone, the whole.

5. Mindfulness. Intend to be mindful upon arising from your sitting.

Supports for your meditation practice by Dr. Lucinda Green, Dharma Teacher
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Suggestions for establishing a daily meditation practice

Design your life around your meditation practice. Determine the day and time of your daily practice, and duration of time you will be sitting.

Write your meditation time in your calendar. Your meditation time is a sacred commitment you are making. You make dates with others and keep those dates. Make this "date" with yourself and honor it. When you look at your calendar, you see when you are meditating.

Carve out a time and a place. Make the place conducive to meditation. Quiet. Turn off phone. Minimize external distractions. Light a candle. Set up a "dedicated space" for your meditation.

As you build and cultivate that activity in that place, it easily serves as a "magnet," attracting you, drawing you to that spot to meditate.

Use a meditative timer on your phone, one that ends with bells. Get an application, such as The Mindfulness App, which not only provides bells, but provides alerts and documents the consistency of your practice, serving as positive reinforcement and motivation.

Keep a meditation journal, noting the basics, including length of time of your sit, as well as a brief description of your overall state of mind, such as: distracted, restless, fairly concentrated, calm, deeply concentrated, scattered, anxious, lost all sense of time.

Write down any insights, small, medium or large. Example, I looked at my email prior to meditating. Not such a good idea. It really affected my concentration. I need to discipline myself, i.e. make it a practice to abstain from doing email or taking care of telephone calls prior to sitting.

Or, I noticed that each and every breath had its own unique quality. No two breaths are alike. Maybe everything is constantly changing!

Or, today I let go. I let go of thinking and discovered the world did not come to an end. I was able to rest into the breath and trust that the next would come of its own accord. This feels like a major breakthrough that will affect many aspects of my life. Trusting the present, allowing the future to take care of itself. Letting go into the moment. Letting go of the illusion of control! Ah,,,,,what a relief.

Four Steps to Stillness Working with Breath

By Lucinda Green, Ph.D.

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- 1. In/out tip of nose or rise +fall if using diaphragm**
- 2. Beginning/ending of each breath**
- 3. Notice length of long exhalations**
- 4. Pause**
 - a. Rest in the pause**
 - b. Let go/release into the pause**
 - c. Be in the pause**
 - d. Be the pause**

Transition/close meditation by noticing entirety of breath cycle.