

## Guide to Terminology Used in Zen

*Note:* Many of the Japanese forms in traditional Soto Zen are not practiced by Joko's followers, and some other terms have been rendered in English. At Appamada we speak of *practice discussion* or *practice interview* rather than *dokusan* or *daisan*, for example. However, you may be curious about these terms, some of which you might encounter when visiting more traditional Zen centers. This is a general guide for practitioners, not an authoritative glossary.

<i>altar</i>	A focus for mindfulness and appreciation, a way of dedicating a space for the practice of Zen. Most altars in our tradition include a central figure or image, a candle, an incense burner, fresh flowers, and a small bowl of water, symbolizing life. Your home altar might include anything special to you, including photos or names of loved ones or teachers, artifacts from nature, or whatever will support your practice. Ordinary objects support and illuminate our spiritual journey through the care with which they are treated.
<i>appamada</i>	The last word spoken by the Buddha to his disciples. As he was dying, his disciples asked whether they should follow this teacher or that teacher. The Buddha told them to be an island unto themselves, follow his teachings, and fare forward with <i>appamada</i> , which means mindful, energetic care. We have taken this word as the name of our sangha.
<i>bodhisattva</i>	A bodhisattva refers to anyone who has generated <i>bodhicitta</i> , a spontaneous wish and compassionate mind to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.
<i>Bodhisattva Vow</i>	The Bodhisattva Vow arises naturally when <i>bodhicitta</i> is awakened: the determination to serve the aspiration for the safety, well-being, and liberation of all beings without exception, through this lifetime and any lifetimes beyond. The vow not to attain nirvana until all beings are liberated.
<i>Buddha</i>	Gautama Siddhartha, the historical figure who realized enlightenment, and whose teachings are the foundation of Buddhism.
<i>buddha</i>	Any fully enlightened being, not necessarily a Buddhist practitioner or student.

<i>Buddha nature</i>	The inherent quality of being a buddha, always already present in every sentient being.
<i>Buddhadharma</i>	The teachings of Buddha; the path or lived experience of Buddhism.
<i>chiden</i>	One who takes care of the altars, cleaning the incensors, trimming the candles, tending the flowers, and making sure there are supplies available.
<i>Dharma</i>	the teachings of Buddha. the path or way taught by Buddha, or the teachings of the enlightened ones who have followed Buddha.
<i>dharma</i>	Any phenomenon or set of phenomena
<i>Dharma Transmission</i>	The formal process of transmitting the Dharma from a Dharma-transmitted teacher to successors, accompanied by official lineage documents. This ceremony officially authorizes the successor to formally offer Jukai ceremonies, to teach independently, and to convey the Dharma by Dharma Transmission to successors. It entails a lengthy series of formal ceremonies conducted in private between the teacher and successor, before a formal public presentation.
<i>doan</i>	literally, one who takes care of the temple. In practice, the person who keeps the time and rings the bells to signal the beginning and end of zazen periods. The doan also lights candles and rings the bells for service.
<i>dokusan/daisan/sanzen</i>	one-on-one meeting with a Zen teacher to discuss one's Zen practice. Different teachers have more or less formal meetings with students. Topics range widely from managing physical pain in zazen to integration between practice and daily life, techniques for developing awareness, koan study, and so on.
<i>doshi</i>	the Zen priest officiating at a service or ceremony.
<i>dukkha</i>	literally, "wheel out of kilter," also translated as stress, suffering, dissatisfaction, dis-ease. Buddha's first noble truth states that all existence is marked by dukkha.
<i>fukudo</i>	the assistant to the doan. The fukudo strikes the han to signal the beginning of zazen, hits the mukugyo (small drum) for Japanese chants during services, and strikes the time drum and the densho bell when needed.

<i>gassho</i>	a formal position of the hands in which you bring the hands together a few inches in front of your nose, palms flat and pressed together. For a gassho bow place your hands in gassho position and bow from the hips.
<i>han</i>	a flat wooden board that is struck with a mallet to signal the beginning of zazen. Originally it served to summon the monks from the fields and far reaches of the monastery. There are three sequences of hits, each one followed by a rolldown. Zen practice is to be seated in your place by the second rolldown. At Appamada, we use wooden clappers for this function, to avoid disturbing the neighbors.
<i>Intensive</i>	See: sesshin
<i>Jukai</i>	A formal ceremony in which a Zen student receives the precepts, rakusu, lineage documents, and a Buddhist name, and commits to following the Buddhist path
<i>karma</i>	the traces or consequences of every thought, word, and action
<i>kesa</i>	the formal robe worn by a Zen priest, representative of Buddha's robe. The kesa was developed by the Buddha to distinguish his followers and its distinctive design was created by Ananda. In earlier times it was made of cast off fabric, cut in pieces and dyed. In the Soto tradition, ordained priests wear a black kesa, Dharma-transmitted teachers wear a brown kesa.
<i>kinhin</i>	walking meditation, most often between periods of zazen, sitting meditation. In kinhin, the left hand is folded into a fist with the thumb inside, pressed close to the solar plexus, and the right hand rests on top of it. It is not a break from meditation but a continuation of it.
<i>koan</i>	a story or saying, typically paradoxical or puzzling, used for teaching and practice, often to generate "great doubt," and to confront the limitations of our conventional ways of thinking
<i>kokyo</i>	the person who announces and leads the chants during services

<i>mudra</i>	generally, any one of a number of special positions of the hands, held still. In zazen, the left hand is cradled in the lap with the right hand resting in it. The two thumbs are lightly touching, so that the hands form an oval. This position provides an alive, steady, and calm resting posture for the hands.
<i>mukugyo</i>	a small wooden drum, often shaped like a fish, that is used to keep time for Japanese chants during services
<i>oryoki</i>	a formal meal that also serves as mindfulness practice in eating. Special bowls and utensils are used, food is formally served, and meal verses are chanted. Oryoki developed as an efficient and mindful way to serve and clean up after meals in monasteries with many monks.
<i>practice period</i>	a period of time, typically around 90 days, in which Zen practitioners have an opportunity to explore a deeper commitment or dedication to their practice, through attending sesshins or classes, more frequent participation in zazen and other sangha activities. It is based on the gathering of the Buddha's disciples for concentrated teachings and practice during the rainy season in India.
<i>rakusu</i>	A small, symbolic version of Buddha's robe, sewn by a Zen student while undertaking formal precept study. A rakusu is worn around the neck, like a bib. On the back of the rakusu, the Zen teacher writes the student's Buddhist name and the date of the formal ceremony, jukai, when the student officially receives the precepts and commits to the Buddhist path. The teacher signs the rakusu and sometimes adds a verse or saying. A red seal on the back represents the temple. At Appamada, those who have taken the Precepts sew a deep blue rakusu. Dharma transmitted teachers wear a green rakusu, and in our tradition, black rakusus are worn by ordained priests, brown rakusus by Dharma Transmitted teachers.
<i>Rinzai, Rinzai Zen</i>	One of two major branches of Zen; the other branch is Soto. Rinzai Zen is commonly held to have originated with Lin Chi, Rinzai in Japanese. Rinzai Zen tends to focus on practice with koans.
<i>samadhi</i>	a state in deep meditation, marked by profound clarity, equanimity, awareness, and egolessness

<i>samsara</i>	the world of suffering, dissatisfaction, struggle, delusion, old age, birth and death, and everyday phenomena, conditioned existence; an illusionary but powerful experience masking ultimate reality
<i>samue</i>	Traditional Japanese work clothes, worn informally in Zen temples and monasteries, consisting of loose-fitting pants and wrap jacket.
<i>sangha</i>	a community of Buddhist practitioners. Any group of people who practice regularly together, who share an aspiration to realize the awakened life, and who support each other in this aspiration.
<i>seiza</i>	a sitting position that can be used for meditation, during talks, while waiting for practice interviews, or eating oryoki. In seiza you sit upright in a kneeling position, sometimes supported by a zafu or a small bench.
<i>sesshin</i>	a period of intensive Zen practice, lasting anywhere from three days to a month or more. Zen practitioners come together in silence, doing zazen, eating, working, taking breaks, meeting with a teacher for practice discussion, listening to talks, and having services.
<i>shashu</i>	A formal position of the hands in which the left hand is folded into a fist with the thumb inside, pressed close to the solar plexus, and the right hand rests on top of it. This forms a quiet, steady posture. This position is used in kinhin and also when walking about in the Zendo or monastery.
<i>shikantaza</i>	The core meditation practice of Soto Zen. Stillness, silence, and abiding in present moment experience without trying to “do” anything with the mind or body, no manipulation of present moment experience, only open awareness.
<i>Soto, Soto Zen</i>	One of two major branches of Zen; the other branch is Rinzai. Soto Zen is commonly held to have been brought to Japan from China by the great Zen teacher, poet, and philosopher Dogen. Soto Zen practice tends to rest on <i>shikantaza</i> .
<i>Tokudo</i>	literally, “home leaving.” The formal ceremony in which a Zen priest is ordained. In the ceremony the new priest is presented with priest robes, bowls, and bowing cloth, and receives precept and priest vows.
<i>zabuton</i>	the large rectangular mat used for zazen, sitting meditation. The zafu—small round cushion—is placed on top of the zabuton

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<i>zafu</i>	the small cushion used in sitting meditation, most often round
<i>zazen</i>	the practice of sitting meditation; still, relaxed, silent, mindful awakeness
<i>Zen</i>	historically, a form of Buddhism that originated in China, where it is called ch'an. Zen is the Japanese term. It is distinguished by its emphasis on sitting meditation and direct experiencing as the path to enlightenment, rather than the study of scriptures, mediation by priests, or practice of rituals. Zen is also marked by directness, curiosity, spontaneity, and immediate experience of the present moment. It is remarkably free of dogma or doctrine, and is fundamentally grounded in the practice of wisdom and compassion. It is based on inquiry, not institutions or authorities. Thus it is a practice, rather than a faith or a set of beliefs.
<i>zendo</i>	The meditation hall; any room that is being used for zazen