

# How to listen to the teachings

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## 3 parts:

1. Contemplate the benefits of hearing the teachings
2. Developing reverence for the teaching and the instructor.
3. How to actually listen.

## Contemplating the benefits of hearing the teachings

Through hearing, phenomena are understood  
Through hearing, wrongdoing is overcome,  
Through hearing, what is meaningless is eliminated,  
Through hearing, nirvana is attained

The result of hearing is to engage in substantive practice;  
You will be released with little difficulty from the fortress of rebirth

Develop enthusiasm from the depths of your heart with regard to these benefits of hearing

Asanga says that you should listen with 5 ideas in mind.

1. **The idea of a jewel**, due to the fact that the teachings are rare because seldom to Buddhas appear nor do the teachings
2. **The idea of an eye**, since the wisdom that arises together with the hearing of the teachings becomes greater and greater.
3. **The idea of illumination** since the eye of wisdom that has arisen will see the real nature [emptiness] and the diversity of all phenomena
4. **The idea of great benefit**, since in the end the teachings bestow the results of nirvana and great enlightenment
5. **the idea of being beyond reproach**, since from this very moment you will attain the bliss of meditative serenity and insight... the causes of nirvana and great enlightenment

To contemplate this is to contemplate the benefits of hearing the teachings.

## Developing reverence for the teaching and the instructor

View the instructor as being like a buddha. Eliminate disrespect. Honor him or her with homage and goods by

offering a lion throne and the like.

The Bodhisattva levels says to listen without arrogance and contempt.

To be free from arrogance means to listen with the 6 attributes

1. listening at an appropriate time
2. showing homage
3. showing deference
4. not being resentful
5. practicing according to the instructors words
6. not looking for the chance to argue

Being free from contempt means to respect the teachings and the one who gives it and not to belittle these two.

Not bringing to mind the 5 conditions means to cast away the thought, 'I will not listen to this person because he or she'

1. has fallen from ethical discipline
2. is of poor lineage
3. has an unattractive physical appearance
4. is inarticulate
5. or speaks harshly and unpleasantly

Stay on a low seat  
Show the glory of discipline  
Look with an eye of delight  
Show respect and one-pointed obeisance,  
as if drinking a nectar of words.  
Show reverence and listen to the teachings  
With clear delight and a mind undefiled  
Like a patient listening to the words of a doctor

-Garland of Birth Stories

## How to actually listen

### a. Abandoning the 3 faults of a vessel

1. Held upside down
2. Though right side up, being dirty - not being able to fulfill its function because it is contaminated

3. Though right side up and clean, having a leaky bottom - do not solidify the teaching and let them fade due to them being forgotten

Therefore, free yourself from these faults

Listen well, thoroughly, and hold it in your mind.

-sutras

Listen while wanting to understand everything, staying one-pointed, attentive, with your mind focused, and reflecting with complete composure.

-Bodhisattva levels

Relying on the 6 ideas:

1. **Think of yourself as a sick person.** You have been sick for a long time with the ailments of the afflictions such as attachment. An illness that is long lasting and causes intense suffering. Therefore you must recognize this to be your situation. Stricken with the virulent and chronic disease of the 3 mental poisons, we are extremely sick, but we are completely unaware that we are ill.
2. **Think of the teacher as a doctor.** Upon consulting your doctor, you are greatly delighted and listen to what he says, revering him respectfully. In this way seek a teacher who imparts the teachings. Venerate your teacher with respect and do what he or she says. While doing this, consider it a privilege, not a burden. Vanquish your pride decisively.
3. **Think of your teachers explications as medicine.** You should view the explications and instructions as very important, taking great pains to hold them in high esteem. and not squander them by lapses, like forgetting them
4. **Think of earnest practice as a way to cure your disease.** Sick persons know that they can't get better if they don't take the medicine the doctor prescribed. Likewise, earnestly practice the instructions after you have seen that you can not vanquish such afflictions as attachment without putting into practice the instructions of your teacher. Don't devote yourself just to piling up words in great numbers, without engaging in practice. To put the meaning of the instructions into practice just once or twice is insufficient since we have had this sickness since beginningless time. **Therefore, analyze with discerning wisdom the entirety of every aspect of the path and make effort that is like a river's current.** Think of earnest practice as what clears away the illness of the afflictions. To practice, you need to know the lessons. To do that, you need to study. **The purpose of knowing them through study is to do them.** Therefore it is vital to put the meaning of what you learn into practice as much as you are able. Therefore give up delighting in just words. Always be conscientious and reflect on the meaning.
5. Think of the Tathagatas as excellent beings. Develop respect by remembering the one who set forth the teachings, the Bhagavan Buddha.

6. **Wish that the teaching will endure for a long time.** Think 'How wonderful, if dependence upon studying such teachings, the Conqueror's teachings would remain in the world for a long time!.'

Listen in such a way that you determine how these teachings apply to your mind. When you listen to the teachings, your faults such as misconduct and attachment should appear in the mirror of the teachings. At the same time you regret that your mind has become like this and you then work to clear away those faults and establish good qualities. Hence, you must train in the teachings.

When I see the form of my misconduct  
Clear in the mirror the teachings  
I develop a feeling of regret  
And turn my mind toward the teachings

-Garland of Birth Stories

In brief, develop the spirit of enlightenment thinking

For the sake of all living beings, I will attain buddhahood. In order to attain this,  
I must train in its causes, for this, I must know those causes. For this, it is evident that I must hear the teachings. Therefore, I will listen to the teachings.