

Buddhist Meditation

What is Jhana?

Jhāna (Pāli, *Dhyāna*, Sanskrit, 禪那) A state of one-pointedness absorption where the mind becomes fully immersed and absorbed into the chosen object of attention, a deep state of equanimity and concentration. This one-pointedness of mind is usually achieved through training and cultivation of the mind by practicing *śamatha* (tranquility, concentration, 靜止) and *vipaśyanā* (insight, observation, 觀慧). The elimination of the five hindrances (五蓋) is a prerequisite to the success of the practice.

There are eight progressive stages of jhāna, with four lower ones belonging to the rūpa-dhātu [色界] and four higher ones belonging to the ārūpya-dhātu [無色界].

Samādhi (三摩地、等持) is meditative absorption attained by *maintaining balance* (等持) and the continuous practice of *jhāna*.

Jhana Factors (factors that facilitate the arising of Jhana)

Name	Actions/Functions
1. Initial application, searching (<i>vitakka</i>) 尋	Learning and trying to focus the mind on the object of meditation so that it becomes obvious and stable.
2. Sustained application, watching (<i>vicara</i>) 同	Maintaining continual attention on the object: becoming happy and habitual with the object of meditation so that continual and stable attention with untiring momentum can be established.
3. Joy (<i>pīti</i>) 喜	Anticipating and finding joy and relaxation from the abandoning of five hindrances, like a person totally free from the burden of debt.
4. Happiness (<i>sukha</i>) 樂	From joy and relaxation, the body grows tranquil. When the body is tranquil, he is sensitive to pleasure. Feeling pleasure, his mind becomes concentrated.
5. One-pointedness (<i>ekaggata</i>) 心一境	<u>The mind and mental factors remain evenly and rightly focus on the object of meditation</u>

The Four Jhana(s)

First Jhana

<u>Acquiring (5 Jhana Factors 禪支)</u>	<u>Abandoning (5 Hindrances 五蓋)</u>
Searching	•Greed and Sensual desire (貪欲)

Watching	• Ill will (瞋恚)
Rapture	• Laziness and disinterest (睡眠)
Happiness	• Restlessness and worry (掉悔)
One-pointedness of the mind	• Doubt (疑)

Second Jhana

<i>Nourishing</i>	<i>Abandoning</i>
One-pointedness of the mind	Searching
Rapture	Watching
Happiness	

Third Jhana

<i>Nourishing</i>	<i>Abandoning</i>
One-pointedness of the mind	Rapture
Happiness	

Fourth Jhana

<i>Achieving</i>	<i>Abandoning</i>
One-pointedness of the mind	Happiness

Gradual Steps to Practice Meditation

- I. What does it take to succeed in the practice of meditation?
 1. Knowing the benefits of meditation
 2. Treasure the opportunity to learn and develop an aspiration to practice diligently.
 3. Accumulating the right knowledge and resources

- II. Inducing Environment to Practice Meditation
 1. Make your life simple
 2. Be around friends and teachers that practice meditation
 3. A comfortable, quiet and secure environment
 4. Allot some time specifically for meditation

III. Pick an appropriate object of meditation

1. The object of meditation is what you pay attention to when you meditate. These objects should be wholesome and assist your development of compassion and wisdom.
 - i. Body: part(s) of your body, movement or function of your body (e.g., your breathing)
 - ii. Mental object: feeling, a mental object develops and/or recalls from memory or an experience, the mind (i.e., an overall and collective apprehension of all the mental factors)

IV. Develop skills to direct and focus your attention on the object of concentration

relaxingly, continually, effortlessly and clearly, for example:

1. Mindfully and continually pay attention, with balance and care, to a bodily part or a function of your body
2. Contemplate continually on a particular topic to induce a desirable mental state and dwell continually, with balance and care, in the induced mental state
3. Paying attention to observe and discern the true nature of the object of concentration

V. Enjoy

1. Enjoy the physical and psychological joy and pleasure that arise from the practice
2. So that your mind becomes fully and totally absorbed into/with your object of meditation

VI. Excel and deepen

1. When you become familiar with a certain level of concentration, excel and go deeper
2. Develop a better understanding of the true nature of the object of meditation

VII. See reality as reality and accepting reality as reality

VIII. Verifying your experience and observation with the teachings of Buddha and accomplished meditation masters

The Practice

I. Taking Care of Your Body and Mind

Taking Care of Your Body

1. Wear loose clothing.

2. Give your body a massage.
3. Sit upright with your spine straight but not stiff.
4. Relax and center your hands on your lap, palms up on top of each other with the tips of the thumbs touching gently.
5. Close your eyes gently.
6. Place your tongue so that it touches the upper jaw gently.
7. Take a deep breath through your nostrils and let it out with a sigh. Do this one more time and just let it all go.
8. Smile!

Taking Care of Your Mind

1. For the moment, there's nowhere else to go, nothing to do but to practice.
2. This is a time for you to be with yourself, enjoy being with yourself
3. The past belongs to the past, the future belongs to the future. I am here now, and I am relaxing and enjoying the present moment.

II. Mindfulness of Breathing¹²

- “Setting mindfulness to the **fore**. Ever mindful (of his breathing), he breathes in, ever mindful he breathes out.”
 - *Learn to be aware of your breath while breathing effortlessly and automatically*
 - *How to do it?*
 - *Relax your body and observe it. Be mindful of your body in a way that would assist its relaxation.*
 - *Bring your attention to the glabella, the area between your eyebrows, and try to relax the whole area. Remain continuously mindful of this area so that you will not pay attention and try to control and intervene with your breathing.*
 - *Know the difference between ‘conscious and intentional breathing’ and ‘effortless and automatic breathing’*
 - *When you can breathe relaxingly and harmoniously, slowly pay attention to your breathing by knowing the “in breath” and “out breath” as you breathe in and out*

● **Mindfulness of In-&-Out Breathing**

- "Now how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, of great benefit?"
- "There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a

¹ MN 118 , PTS: M iii 78, translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

² 5.1.2.118 出入息念經 中部 蕪式球譯

tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore.^[1]

- Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.
- "[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.'
- [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.'
- [3] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.'^[2] He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.'
- [4] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.'^[3] He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

- “比丘們，怎樣修習出入息念呢？什麼是勤修呢？什麼是大果報、大利益呢？
“比丘們，一位比丘到森林、樹下或靜室盤腿坐下來，豎直腰身，把念保持安放在要繫念的地方。他只是念及呼氣和吸氣。
“當呼氣長的時候，他知道自己呼氣長；當吸氣長的時候，他知道自己吸氣長。
當呼氣短的時候，他知道自己呼氣短；當吸氣短的時候，他知道自己吸氣短。
“他這樣修學：‘我要在呼氣的時候，體會整個身體；我要在吸氣的時候，體會整個身體。我要在呼氣的時候，平息身行；我要在吸氣的時候，平息身行。’

III. The Five universal mental factors and meditation

- **Contact (觸)**: the meeting of the mind (consciousness) and the object of meditation. It is the basis for perception.
- **Paying attention (作意)**: Directing and holding the mind to focus on the object of meditation continuously. For example, directing your attention toward your breathing while trying to breathe relaxingly and effortlessly.
- **Sensation and feeling (受)**: appreciating and relishing the object of meditation.
- **Perception(想)**: being able to identify the specific characteristics of the meditation object and label them with names and concepts.
- **Contemplation and volition (思)**: the use of words, concept and prior knowledge to analyze and discern the object of meditation. It is a powerful tool that can help us to investigate and develop a better understanding of the meditation object so that we can formulate an appropriate attitude toward it.