

Prostration Instructions

In Buddhist and in many Eastern traditions, prostrations are done to show respect to teachers, shrines and altars. In Mahayana Buddhism, prostrations are also performed as a spiritual practice to reduce pride and strengthen resolve and devotion. Sometimes they are done as part of a pilgrimage or done while circumambulating a stupa or other place of religious importance.

Om Ah Hum Vajra Guru Padma Siddhi Hum – Sanskrit
Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Péma Siddhi Hung – Tibetan pronunciation

Form for Prostrations to Show Respect

This is done when entering a meditation hall and is done facing the altar. One establishes the Refuge Meditation in one's mind.

http://www.friendsoftheheart.com/meditation_resources/right/guruyoga.shtml

Stand erect, balanced, with your heart-mind at ease. The hands are held, palms facing in gesture of prayer, touching the chest, at the heart centre. The heart centre is found in the centre of chest, centring about 4" above the bottom of the breast bone.

The hands are brought up to touch the forehead at the level of the brow centre. The sound chanted is **OM**; the colour visualized is white energy entering the brow centre from the brow centre of the bodhisattva/guru of the refuge tree.

The folded hands are then brought down to touch the throat, the sound is **AH**; the colour is red energy entering the throat centre from the bodhisattva's throat centre.

The hands are then brought to touch the chest in front of the heart centre. The sound is **HUM**; the colour is blue entering our hearts from the heart centre of the teaching figure in the refuge tree.

From here the hands drop, as we gracefully bend forward to kneel on our hands and knees, toes curled under and forehead touching the ground. As bend down and kneel, we complete the mantra with **Vajra Guru Padma Siddhi Hum**

With a mind established in the Refuge Meditation, we come again to standing. Without stopping the motion, the hands folded together come up to the forehead. The sound chanted is OM and the whole sequence is repeated for a total of three prostrations.

At the end of the final prostration, we complete the form with a final OM AH HUM and their respective gestures.

Form for Prostrations Done as Part of Foundation Practice (Ngön dro)

This is a full body prostration, again with the Refuge Tree Meditation established in the mind. The practice of 100,000 prostrations is hard on the hands and knees. When done as part of pilgrimage, these practitioners drop to their knees, stretch out full length with arms fully extended in front of them, then get up, walk three paces forward to where their hands had reached, and then complete the process all over again. Some will have calluses on their foreheads from repeated contact with the earth or stone ground as they repeat their prostrations. The Tibetans use aids such as leather aprons and mitts (with or without wooden blocks attached).

What works for Westerners is a folded blanket or flat cushion under the knees and cloth gloves on the hands to enable sliding on a smooth floor. A sheet over a carpeted floor also enables the practitioner to slide forward on bare palms.

The process is as described above in the short form until we come to bending to the floor. We are balanced on our knees, feet curled under and then we lean forward, arms extended to support us as we slide forward on our palms. Continue forward until you are lying stretched out on your stomach with arms extended above your head. The forehead touches the floor.

In order to get back up, we bring our hands back to a push up position and come to standing. At the end of the final prostration, we complete the form with a final OM AH HUM and their respective gestures.