

Rakusu etiquette and care

- The moment you begin sewing practice is the moment what you are working on becomes a rakusu, kesa, bowing mat, or envelope.
- Before beginning sewing, light incense and bow at the altar.
- Sewing practice is basically a zazen period with a task and comfortable chairs.
- While sewing, please practice mindfulness of the task; do not get distracted by your thoughts, emotions, or the activities nearby. Do not chat, eat, or drink while sewing. Disconnect from all electronic devices and put your phone in airplane mode.
- Once sewing is completed, the rakusu is incensed before being given to the teacher for inscription.
- When wearing the rakusu or kesa, you are an ambassador of the dharma and represent the Buddha and the sangha. It reflects not only on you but on the dharma, the Buddha, and our sangha. It is a good teaching in our larger presence in the world.
- The rakusu and the kesa are always treated with utmost respect.
- Nothing is to be placed on top of it, it is always the thing on top.
- It is never worn into the bathroom or for kitchen work or cleaning.
- Before putting it on the first time of the day, always recite the verse of the robe silently, if you are not putting it on during service. Normally this is done while kneeling. Put it on your head in its envelope. Then remove it at the end of the verse of the robe and put it on.
- Once you have chanted the verse of the robe, and you later remove and replace the rakusu (for example when working in the kitchen), just touch the back (with the pine needle stitch) to your forehead before putting it on.
- When using the bathroom, remove the rakusu before entering the room and either hang it on a nearby hook or fold it and set it down nearby. Don't forget to retrieve it when you come out!
- It needs to be carefully hand cleaned in cold water and mild soap, then hung to dry before being pressed with a warm iron, under a pressing cloth. (Pressing is optional.) You can spot treat small spots as needed.
- When traveling, it is the top thing in a suitcase, in its envelope.
- It is considered perfectly polite to ask to see someone's rakusu, and to read what is written on the back.