

Appamada Roles Workshop

All roles are an embodied expression of our practice. We inhabit them mindfully, noticing anything that arises in us as we engage with them. We take and offer corrections when teaching roles without criticism, blame or judgment. It is an attitude of support and mutual care for practice, a guide for future action, not a criticism of what has already been done.

Monitor

Function: Calling the assembly to meditation, protecting the stillness and silence of the zendo, offering corrections or reminders in the zendo, assisting in room setup, managing disturbances.

- **At the door:**

- Round clappers: how to hold, strike, pace
- hospitality function: face the entry; warm smile for folks coming in
- holding function: keep folks from entering the zendo while the incense offering and bows are going on.

- **Leaving the kitchen**

- Turn off the main light, leave the under-counter light on
- If it is Sunday, lock the side door and unlock the back door
- Entering the zendo: wait until the three bells are completed, enter with bow as usual
- Anyone arriving after the start of the incense offering comes in right after you

- **During zazen**

- Face the center, keep one eye and one ear on things attentively
- You are the only person besides the teacher empowered to speak. Speak only if necessary, and only if you can find a completely quiet mind (no annoyance). Make the announcement generic: *please sit still*
- If someone comes to the door, give a small bow ("excuse me" bow), stand and bow to your seat, then go to attend to them. If they are coming after the start of zazen, and they are not sure what to do, walk them to the side room and let them know they can enter the zendo at the break. If it is a UPS delivery, person with a lost cat, etc., you are the point person to deal with it. If you need to, fetch the teacher/leader.
- If there is a disruption outside the zendo, you are the one to attend to it. If there is a disruption inside the zendo (someone emotionally overcome, etc.), you handle it: take them to the back study, maybe get them a cup of water, and stay with them until they are stable again. Be kind, but not "over caring."
- In all things, consider how to make the least disruption in the Zendo, and how to protect the stillness and silence of the space. If someone enters during a break and an extra chair or cushion is needed, you are the one who brings it from the side room.

- **At service time**

- You assist with fetching extra chairs if needed, helping people know how to line up if they are confused, and passing out chant books for those who do not have them.
- People should line up for service filling in the main room first, so if there are people in the far side of the room, invite them into the main space and find a place for them. Fill in from the altar out.
- Sundays, announce: *Please wait in the study, the kitchen, or the back deck while we set up the room for service.* Then ask a couple of volunteers (no more than 3) to bring chairs and help set up. Once the room is set up, invite people to return.

Timekeeper

Function: Create the space and time for zazen, prepare the room and altar for zazen, coordinate the flow of service with the doshi (officiant), maintain a calm presence that holds the sangha.

Other than the ekos in service, the timekeeper does not have a speaking role.

• **Before the start of zazen**

- Double check the altar. Remove any dead flowers, straighten the statues if necessary, and check that the incensor has been chidened. If not, and if there is time, chiden it. Remove excess wick (more than ¼") from the candles and light them. Place an incense stick on top of the incensor.
- Set up your cushions or chair in the timekeeper place
- Take a walk around the zendo to align cushions if needed: spacing, zafus centered, labels to the front.
- Silently say the robe chant and put on your rakusu. You will be wearing it at the start.

• **The bells**

- How to invite the sound: whole being, fully mindful
- Resting the clapper on the edge at the start
- Do not be in a hurry, do not lag
- How to do the stop

• **Square clappers**

- How to hold
- How to strike

• **Small bell**

- How to hold and strike
- Small bell rolldown

• **During Zazen**

- Use the timekeeper book as your guide
- Keep the time faithfully
- Don't be flustered by mistakes

• **During service**

- Watch the officiant (doshi): keep in the corner of your eye
- There is a flow...follow it. The doshi leads
- Make a very quiet reminder if the doshi forgets something
- Be completely still when you are not in action; act from that stillness
- Try to offer the eko to the room ("We offer the merit..."), instead of reading it with head down, or worse yet, mumbling. It is pretty easy to memorize, and that is a good practice. The same applies to the eko at the end of Sunday service. Be prepared, strike the clappers, and say the eko for the assembly, not for the book.

- **At the end of service**

- Make the dana announcement if indicated.
- After the two bells that releases the assembly at the end, do three bows (facing the altar if possible), standing or full bows are fine.
- Extinguish the candle(s).
- Take a last look around the room and straighten any cushions that are out of alignment.

- **Intensives:** Have their own instruction set

Jisha

Function: The Jisha is the attendant to the doshi (officiant). In that capacity, the jisha makes sure the doshi is where he or she needs to be. This means a discreet reminder as needed. The jisha is often the point person for contact with the teacher or doshi, in case someone needs to see them or if there is a question about what to do. The jisha also attends to the doshi's appearance, straightening a bent collar or reminding the doshi to get the rakusu or kotsu (staff). The jisha also fetches what the doshi needs, or what is requested.

• Weekdays

- Wait in the kitchen facing the doshi. At the start of the first clapper rolldown, make a small bow and go to the zendo, light the incense, put out the jiko (small) candle, and return, facing the doshi. Hold the incense at the bottom.
- At the end of the second rolldown, the doshi and the jisha bow to each other. When carrying incense, hold the incense level when you bow, the incense does not bow
- Follow the doshi into the zendo, walk behind the mat and stand slightly behind and to one side
- Move when the doshi moves up to the altar, hand the doshi the incense, give a small bow, and return to your seat. Bow to your seat, turn, and face the room, hands in gassho. Bow when the doshi bows to the room and then be seated.

• Saturday and Sunday program

- The Jisha manages the Practice Discussion line in the study.
- Follow the doshi out of the zendo after the robe chant and assist folks waiting for Practice Discussion in getting seated, finding a chair, and so on.
- If someone is new to Practice Discussion, give a brief instruction in the form for entering.
- When the bell rings at the beginning, go into the Practice Discussion room, tell the doshi how many people are in line, and if the next person is in a chair. Do this after each walking meditation period, when new folks may have joined the line.
- If you wish to have Practice Discussion, you may step in before the next person at any time. Timekeepers always have priority (they go in ahead of anyone else), monitors are second in priority, then jishas.
- Take care of people waiting in line, and people coming in the back door for later sitting periods. Provide tissues or cough drops as needed.
- When the bell rings for walking meditation in the main zendo, make a brief announcement: *you may stand, stretch or use the rest room.*
- During the dharma talk: Attend to the doshi's needs. They may ask you to fetch something from the other room. Bring the lectern and make sure the recorder is properly set up. Bring tea or water if the doshi would like it. At the start of the talk, make sure the recorder is actually recording. There should be a steady red light on the record button

- **Intensives:** Have their own instruction set

Chiden

The Chiden is responsible for mindfully caring for all of the altars. There is a kind of orderliness and beauty to the altar which anchors the whole room. It is the focus of attention and aspiration. The care of the altar expresses the mindful active care of our name. The chiden also makes sure that the altars are supplied with candles, matches, and incense. This is a lovely practice in mindfulness. Please do not do this work if you are in a hurry or agitated state of mind.

- **Daily**

- Bring incensors that need cleaning and the chiden supplies (in the altar drawer) to the kitchen.
 - Lift incense stubs from the incensors, fluff the ash in the bowl with the fork. It should be like a cloud. Shake the incensor (mindfully!) to level the ash. When replacing the incensor on the altar, place a stick of incense across the top.
 - **Sundays:** Put the strainer in the small white ramekin. Lift out the charcoal square and put it aside. Use the small shovel to lift the chip incense. Remove every bit of chip incense. Transfer them to the strainer and sift out the ash. Replace the ash in the incensor, shake to level and then tap to pack the ash. Make the design on the surface. Put the chip incense back in the chip incense holder from the altar. Use the shovel to mound the chip incense in the center of the holder.
 - Wash the incense tools, dry with a paper towel, then use the damp paper towel to wipe the edge and outside of the incensors. Finally, wipe down the counter.
 - Replace the incensors carefully. The one on the altar has three legs; one leg should face forward. The incensors on the main altar are exactly centered on the white tray. The one in the Practice Discussion room should be level, or the incense stick will roll off.
 - Place an incense stick on an incensor once it has been cleaned.
 - Check the water levels and replenish them as needed. There is special water for this in the refrigerator and a small stainless pitcher in the island. Use them. Refill the water bottle only from filtered water in the refrigerator.
 - Check the flowers and remove any dead ones, replenishing if needed from other arrangements or even the yard
 - Check the candles and the candle supplies: remove excess wick to ¼"
 - Check the matches and the match supplies at other altars. There should be three tea candles and two boxes of matches in the practice discussion altar drawer.
 - Wipe down the altars if there is any dust or spilled ash, water, etc. Adjust the placement of any figures, candles, flowers, etc.
 - If any altar supplies (candles, stick incense, chip incense, charcoal, etc.) are running low, leave a note in the basket on the shoe rack in the study.
- **Intensives:** chidens clean the altar at every break, and manage flowers and supplies.

For all roles, in general, use your best judgment in the situation, then ask for clarification later.
The priority is helping people feel at home here—especially you!