

Intensive Timekeeper and Monitor Guide

Timekeepers are the clock and the heartbeat of the Zendo. It is absolutely important to keep time accurately, to be flexible with schedule changes, to improvise when things get thrown off. You may also need to (very quietly) signal or remind the doshi (officiant) about what comes next in the service. Timekeepers switch between the timekeeper role and the monitor role at midday. You are exempt from work period.

1. Before the intensive

Check the intensive schedule and review the timekeeper book.

2. Your job is to manage the schedule and its signals

There is a timekeeper book, with a section for the Intensive. Make sure you are looking at the right section of the Timekeeper book. There are printed schedules posted. There is also a large-print chant book, should it be needed; page numbers for the large print edition match page numbers in the regular chant book. If you have any questions, check with the teacher or the coordinator of the intensive.

3. As timekeeper

Arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of the first sitting of the day. Check the alignment of cushions and chairs, make sure the altar is in order, with a clean incensor. Remove any dead flowers, and make sure altar objects are properly aligned. Keep an eye on the altar in case it needs any attention during the day. Light the altar candles if they have not been lighted. You will also extinguish them when participants leave the zendo and during mealtimes. You relight them before the participants return from a break. Make sure there is a fresh stick of incense laid across the round incensor.

Know how to properly sound the bells and the clappers; if you are not sure, ask for instruction. Watch the doshi (officiant) closely for attuning with the forms of service.

Try to be as still as you can, and as silent as possible except for the sounds you are supposed to make. Do not daydream or sleep.

4. As monitor

Your main job is to take care of the zendo by handling any disruptions, such as people coming to the door, packages delivered, loud noises, cell phones, and so on. You preserve the peace of the zendo. If someone is upset or coughing excessively in ways that is disturbing others, you can bring them to the back study, get them a glass of water or a cough drop, and sit with them for a while if they are in distress.

You do the morning clapper rolldown if you are the morning monitor. At other times, you circulate indoors, outdoors, and in the back house 10 minutes before the return from a break, sounding the clappers once in each place.

Besides the teacher, you are in the only role in which speaking is allowed during zazen. You may make a general announcement or correction, for example, *please be still*. Or, *please do not bring drinks into zazen*, or *please space yourselves out evenly for kinhin*, for example.

You are an exemplar: people will observe what you do and think it is the correct thing to do. Please uphold the intensive guidelines by maintaining silence, stillness, and containment. Be on time. Avoid eye contact and resolve questions outside of the hearing of participants.