



Buddhist Council of NSW

Working for the Buddhist Community

Buddhist Protocol in Brief

In a Buddhist environment, it is important to conduct yourself with kindness and respect, including in your thoughts, speech and actions. Below is a basic list of appropriate conduct when greeting members of the Sangha. This term refers to a community of Buddhist monastics and laypeople. This list can be applied to all three Buddhist traditions.

1. When greeting any robed and ordained Buddhist monastics of any tradition, it is acceptable to give a half bow from the waist with palms together and a smile.
2. You can address all monks and nuns as Venerable (although there are many titles within traditions like Ajahn, Bhante, Rinpoche, Dharma Master, Roshi, Ayya, Sunim, Ani and Thay).
3. Dependent on their tradition, ordained monastics wear robes in these colour combinations: yellow/orange/brown, red/maroon and black/grey. Novices training for full ordination may be dressed in white.
4. Some ordained monastics may not touch money. If this is given, it may be given to an attendant who will handle the money.
5. While some ordained monastics allow touching with lay people, it is safer to not physically contact ordained monastics of the opposite sex.
6. Be aware that some Buddhist monks in Australia may not be fluent English speakers, so be sensitive to other non-verbal signals. It is helpful to be aware of stereotypes, so as not to commit offensive micro-aggressions.
7. It is best for lay people to wear modest clothes rather than tight or revealing clothing.
8. When seated, it is considered rude to point your feet at Buddha images or in the direction of any person, especially a monastic.
9. Theravada monks normally eat their main meal before 12 noon. Mahayana and Vajrayana monks generally do not follow this rule.
10. Religious books and artifacts should never be put on the floor, nor should you step over any books, people or food on the floor.



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11. It is considered rude and disrespectful to sit with your legs outstretched in a temple's shrine hall. An acceptable position is cross-legged on a cushion on the floor. If you are restricted by a physical problem, it is permissible to sit on a chair at the back of the shrine room.
12. When entering a temple's shrine room, a Buddhist practitioner may wish to do three prostrations facing the shrine, or make a short half bow with hands folded. This is done as a sign of respect and commitment to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Further Resources

This article provides a comprehensive guide on etiquette and appropriate conduct at a Buddhist temple.

