

Guidelines for Weekend Online/Home Retreats

White Heron Sangha

This is a powerful time to create a home retreat for yourself. It will take some dedication to do this, and we have suggestions for setting it up. By choosing to let go of the usual habits of distraction, unnecessary busyness, and taking on tasks that can wait, you can make this a beneficial and healing time.

Our homes tend to be places where our habits are strongest; the momentum of unconsciousness can be strongest in the home environment. The possibility of bringing awareness to this aspect of our lives is very powerful and allows us to deeply integrate our spiritual path into our living space.

We look forward to sitting with you on this retreat. If you choose to attend, we are asking that you commit to the retreat with the same integrity you would bring to a retreat in an in-person or residential setting.

PREPARING FOR THE RETREAT

1. Setting up your Retreat Space

- If possible, set up a dedicated space for the whole duration of the retreat, where you have internet access and a monitor that you can see easily from your meditation chair and/or cushion. Your computer/device will need speakers/microphone or you can use a headset. Ideally you also have a video camera.
- Find a place for walking meditation. It should allow for walking in a level, straight line about 20 to 25 steps, but more or less than that is all right, too. This might include walking outdoors, or in a hallway or larger room. It is preferable not to have to navigate street crossings or traffic.
- Set up your meditation chair or cushion in a way that will support your body. It can help to have more than one option for sitting or listening.

2. Electronic Media

- We will be using Zoom video-conferencing for our retreat. Details about how to use Zoom will be covered before the retreat begins. If you'd like to see a nice 8 minute video tutorial introduction to using Zoom, [click here](#). To support yourself and the group we ask that you **close all programs except Zoom and turn off all of notifications on your devices.**

- Set up auto-reply for email and phone, as if you were out of town.

3. Meals

- If possible, do all of your food shopping before the retreat begins.
- Keep the meals simple, perhaps pre-preparing some food that can be eaten throughout the weekend. Example: a large pot of soup for dinners.

4. Relating to housemates, spouses, partners, and children in the home who are not on retreat

- Have a conversation about your retreat time beforehand. Here are some things you might want to cover:
 - Acknowledge that it will most likely feel awkward and strange at first, but a rhythm can develop that can work for everyone.
 - Talk about noble silence and see if you can get support for being in noble silence for the duration of the retreat, if you are interested in exploring a silent experience.
 - If possible, ask for support in having a quieter overall living space.
 - Post your retreat schedule and a thank you note for everyone's supportive awareness of your retreat.
 - Suggestions for those with children: If they are old enough, talk with your kids about what you are doing and ask their input for how to create a supportive environment.
- Coordinating with those you live with will be part of the retreat. We will learn together how to turn toward such challenges with our practice.

5. Set Your Intention

When you begin the retreat, take a few minutes to consider what is calling you to this time of deepening practice. If you wish, you can light a candle or place a flower or inspiring image near you. Quiet yourself and inwardly create a strong and clear intention. Once you set your intention, you can recite it in your mind, or write it down on a notecard and place it by the candle or image. Regularly during the days of your retreat, remember and reaffirm this intention.

DURING THE RETREAT

1. Online Format and Etiquette

- We will be gathering for group sits, guided meditations, dharma talks, and Q&A using Zoom video-conferencing. Links to Zoom will be sent to you once you have RSVP'd and have committed to doing this retreat. **PLEASE DO NOT GIVE OUT THE ZOOM LINK TO OTHER PEOPLE.** This is a retreat centered around our community, and sharing the link with others would disrupt this.
- It is helpful for creating community to allow your video to be on during all scheduled times. It can also help to bridge some of the disconnection that can come with using an online format.
- Please join the retreat on time each morning and for the various segments during the day; joining on time and being fully present contributes to a sense of calm and dedication for all participants.
- Please don't multitask while online with our community. Engage as fully as you would if we were in person.
- Everyone will be muted when entering or exiting the rooms to cut down on microphone feedback and extraneous sounds. Instructions for unmuting during Q&A and practice discussions will be provided.
- Please refrain from moving your laptop / tablet / phone around with the video camera on. In addition, if you need to direct your attention away from the retreat, please turn off your video. This helps bring a quality of settledness to our online community.

Welcome Whatever Arises

Gently engaging what arises offers some of the very best opportunities for your meditation to deepen, and your wisdom and compassion to grow. Remember, we will be doing this together.

We hope you will be supported by the shared intention among the participants.

The teacher will dedicate their efforts to supporting you and your practice.

We're delighted you're here.