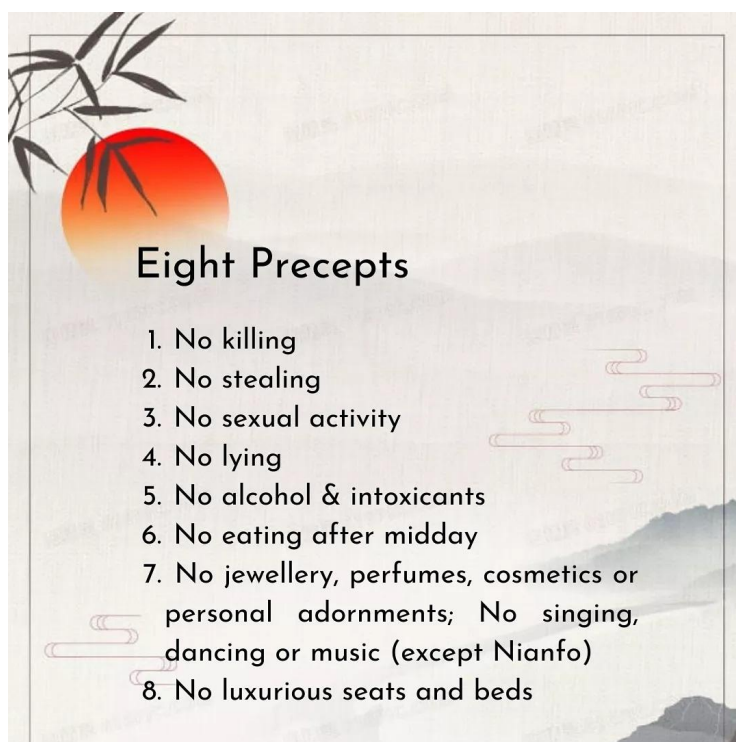


Eight Precepts

1. What are the Eight Precepts?

The Buddha encouraged his lay disciples to follow extra training rules as often as they could. The Eight Precepts (also known as the Uposatha Precepts) are an enhanced version of the Five Precepts (abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking alcohol & intoxicants) many lay Buddhists observe.

The Eight Precepts are:



1. Abstaining from killing

2. Abstaining from stealing

3. Abstaining from sexual activity (*different from 5 precepts where it's only sexual misconduct; for married couple better sleep separately when observe the Eight Precepts)
4. Abstaining from lying (*also include no gossiping, no harsh speech, and no frivolous talks)
5. Abstaining from drinking alcohol & taking intoxicants (*including smoking)
6. Abstaining from eating at the wrong time (after midday – can only water and clear liquids are allowed after midday, such as juice with no pulp)
7. Abstaining from wearing jewellery, perfumes, cosmetics or personal adornments; No singing, dancing or music (*except Nianfo)
8. Abstaining from using luxurious seats and beds

Following these extra precepts gives us the opportunity to practice some of the renunciation that monks and nuns follow every day. The precept on abstaining from sexual misconduct is changed to abstaining from any kind of sexual activity at all. The last three involve giving up other forms of enjoyment.

Giving up these things, even just temporarily, helps us to recognize and reduce our attachments and realizing that true happiness is not really dependent on external materials.

2. When to Observe them?

Different traditions in Buddhism may observe them on different days. In Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, the Eight Precepts are commonly observed on the **Six Observation Days** (known as 六齋日 in Chinese or the Six Uposatha days) **according to the Chinese Lunar calendar:**

8th, 14th, 15th (full moon), 23rd, 29th (near new moon)

(which means they fall under different dates each month for the Gregorian calendar, for instance, in June 2021, the dates are 3rd, 4th, 9th, 17th, 23rd & 24th).

Of course, one can also observe the Eight Precepts on any day and the more the merrier.

3. Merit & Benefits for Observing the Eight Precepts

In the sutras the Buddha told us about many merits for observing the Eight Precepts. For instance, by observing the Eight Precepts, it can prevent us from falling into the evil paths; by observing the Eight Precepts and do not commit the five grave offences, it can help us eliminate all evil karma; by observing the Eight Precepts for just one day and one night, one can be free from hunger for 600,000 lifetimes.....

There are also enormous benefits for observing the Eight Precepts: it can help to purify one's mind and body, sharpen one's awareness and become more focused, so one can enter into meditation more easily.

For Nianfo practitioners:

In the Visualization Sutra, the Buddha told us that if one observes the eight precepts for just one day and one night and transfer the merit for rebirth, one can obtain the middle level of the middle grade of rebirth; if one observe the eight precepts often, one can obtain the highest level of the middle grade; if one observes the eight precepts and also generate the unsurpassed bodhicitta with

good cultivation, transferring the merit for rebirth, one can obtain highest grade of rebirth.

4. How to Observe the Eight Precepts?

For practitioner who observes the Eight Precepts for the first time, one should do it in a temple under the guidance of a monk.

If it's not possible for one to go to a temple, then one can also vow in front of a Buddha statute (or image) and the Three Jewels with a sincere heart.

When taking the Eight Precepts at home, one can follow the procedure of first bowing sincerely in front of the Three Jewels, take the Three Refuges, recite the Eight Precepts and also transfer the merit.

Please note: The validity of the Eight Precept is only for one day. If one wants to take again the next day, one has to make the vow again early in the morning the next day.

Taking the Eight Precepts at home

1. Three sincere bows in front of the Buddha and kneel down on the floor, then recite the following:

Disciple (Dharma Name if have) today takes the Eight Precepts in front of the Buddha. May the Three Jewels, Dharma Protectors, heavenly beings and all the spirits be my witness, may my evil karma be eliminated, may my practices and vows be fulfilled.

2. Recite the Repentance Verse:

Disciple (Dharma Name)

All evil actions committed by me

since time immemorial,

arising from body speech and mind

I deeply repent having committed.

3. Taking the Three Refuges

Disciple (Dharma Name)

I take refuge in the Buddha

I take refuge in the Dharma

I take refuge in the Sangha

For one day and one night I will be a purified Upasaka (men)/

Upasika (women)

(recite for 3 times & 3 bows)

4. Taking the Eight Precepts

1. Like all the Buddhas who abstain from killing for the rest of their lives, disciple (Dharma name) vows for one day and one night abstaining from killing.
2. Like all the Buddhas who abstain from stealing I for the rest of their lives, disciple (Dharma name) vows for one day and one night abstaining from stealing.

3. Like all the Buddhas who abstain from sexual activity for the rest of their lives, disciple (Dharma name) vows for one day and one night abstain from sexual activity.
4. Like all the Buddhas who abstain from lying for the rest of their lives, disciple (Dharma name) vows for one day and one night abstain from lying.
5. Like all the Buddhas who abstain from drinking alcohol & taking intoxicants for the rest of their lives, disciple (Dharma name) vows for one day and one night abstain from drinking alcohol & taking intoxicants.
6. Like all the Buddhas who abstain from eating at the wrong time for the rest of their lives, disciple (Dharma name) vows for one day and one night abstain from eating at the wrong time.
7. Like all the Buddhas who abstain from wearing jewellery, perfumes, cosmetics or personal adornments and no singing, dancing or music for the rest of their lives, disciple (Dharma name) vows for one day and one night abstain from wearing jewellery, perfumes, cosmetics or personal adornments and no singing, dancing or music.
8. Like all the Buddhas who abstain from using luxurious seats and beds for the rest of their lives, disciple (Dharma name) vows for

one day and one night abstain from using luxurious seats and beds.

5. Merit Transfer

(choose any of the following)

May the resulting merit and virtue

Adorn the Buddha's Pure Land

Repay the four great kindnesses above

Relieve the suffering in the three paths below

May those who see and hear this

All generate the bodhicitta

when the retribution body comes to an end

Be reborn together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

(or)

May we be reborn in the Western Pure Land

May the Nine Grade of Lotus be our parents

When the lotus opens we will see the Buddha

and realise the Dharma of No Birth

To be in company with non-regressing Bodhisattvas.

(or)

May the resulting merit and virtue
be distributed everywhere without discrimination,

May we all aspire to perfect enlightenment for
the sake of all sentient beings.

May we all attain rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss

Frequently Asked Questions

What can be eaten in the evening?

Water and clear liquids (fruit juice without pulp). Tea and coffee can be taken without milk (although not recommended to take coffee as it may stimulate the mind too much).

What should I sleep on?

Try and sleep on the simplest bed possible. If not possible, can also place a mat and sleep on the floor. If have health issues, then sleep

on the bed (but be mindful when sleeping, try to recline on the right side and sleep like a Buddha 😊)

Can I observe the 8 precepts on any day?

Absolutely. Apart from the six observation days each month, the Buddha encouraged people to observe them as often as possible.

What if I forget and eat something in the afternoon?

This is very easy to do if we are observing the precepts at home or anywhere outside a group setting. Don't worry. Simply mentally determine to take the precept again. You may find that wearing white helps you remember. You may even like to put up a sign on the fridge.

Do I have to stay home and meditate all day while observing the Eight Precepts?

No, just remember to Nianfo regularly (can join our 24hrs Nianfo Zoom room whenever have time). It is traditional and very beneficial to devote the day to Dharma practice. But it is still

beneficial to keep the precepts on a day when we may not be able to dedicate ourselves entirely to spiritual practice.

Can I still seek rebirth if I break any of the precepts?

Yes absolutely. Seeking rebirth purely depends on our faith vow and practice. Observing the precepts help one to attain a higher grade of rebirth. If break any of the precept, simply determine to take them again. Amitufo!

Namo Fundamental Teacher

Shakyamuni Buddha

Namo Amitabha Buddha

Namo Amitufo