

Seven Point Posture

In the Tibetan tradition the recommended posture is said to have 7 points.

The first point has to do with the legs. Best is crossed-legged; or you can sit in a chair.

- You can sit cross-legged with your left foot on top of your right thigh, and your right foot on top of your left thigh, known as the full lotus position.
- Or, you can sit in the half-lotus position, with one foot on the thigh of the opposite leg and the other foot on the floor.
- Another way is to have both feet on the floor with your legs crossed.
- If you sit in a chair, make sure that you have both feet on the ground.

The second point has to do with the arms and hands.

- Let your shoulders relax.
- Leave some space between your arms and the sides of your body so that the air can circulate.
- Place your hands in your lap with the right hand on top of the left hand and the palms facing upwards. So your right fingers are on top of your left fingers, the fingers aligned, the palms are slightly curved.
- Touch your 2 thumbs above your hand making a kind of triangle shape.

The third point has to do with the back. The back should be straight. This is actually the most important part of the posture, keeping the back straight.

- It might be helpful to imagine that there is a string attached to the top of your head and someone is pulling it from above, straightening your back.
- Or that your vertebrae are stacked one on top of the other.

The fourth point has to do with the eyes.

- It is recommended that we keep our eyes open a little bit, just enough to allow some light coming in but not enough that we can see things clearly that can attract our attention. Just have them open a little bit, with your gaze directed downward on your lap or on the floor in front of you.
- If it is difficult, then just let them close gently. But then if you do notice that you are starting to nod off or fall asleep then it is better to open them up a little bit.

The fifth point has to do with the mouth and the jaw.

- They should be relaxed; don't clench your teeth but keep them loosely and naturally apart and have your lips together.
- The best way of breathing is through your nose so your mouth should be closed unless you cannot breathe through your nose.

The sixth point has to do with the tongue.

- Place your tongue on the roof of your mouth behind your upper teeth. Just let the tongue rest there.

The last point has to do with the neck and the head.

- It is recommended that we don't have our head raised up too high or too low; the best way is to have the head and neck just slightly bent downwards.

So those are the 7 points recommended in the Tibetan tradition, the 7-point posture. Again, if you can sit in the posture with all the 7 points it is good; but if for some reason you cannot do all of them just do whatever is comfortable.

- So the point is to be in a position that is comfortable so that you can focus your mind on the meditation, and not be bothered by what is going on in your body.
- It is not correct to force the body into a position, which is painful, because the pain in the body will distract the mind and we won't be able to meditate. It is more important to be comfortable than to sit in a perfect position.

Many Lamas, including Pabonkgka Rinpoche, who wrote **Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand**, talks about the 8th feature of the posture, which is breathing.

- So it is good to do breathing after you get in the posture, to quiet your mind, and let go of any delusions and distracting thoughts.
- Remember, any action of your body/speech/mind done with a mind that has negative emotions and delusions is non-virtuous. Actions done with a mind of love and compassion is virtuous. So the mind you have determines the result of your meditation.