

The Bodhisattva Precepts for Laypeople:

6 Major Precepts

- (1st Major) The Precept against Killing
- (2nd Major) The Precept against Stealing
- (3rd Major) The Precept against Major False Speech
- (4th Major) The Precept against Lustful Behavior
- (5th Major) The Precept against Speaking of Offenses Committed by Members of the Fourfold Assembly
- (6th Major) The Precept against Dealing in Intoxicants, Drugs, and Stimulants

28 Minor Precepts

- (1st Minor) The Precept against Failure to Make Offerings to Our Parents, Teacher, and Elders
- (2nd Minor) The Precept against Indulging in Intoxicants, Drugs, or Stimulants for Pleasure
- (3rd Minor) The Precept against Failure to Care for the Sick
- (4th Minor) The Precept against Failure to be Charitable to People in Need
- (5th Minor) The Precept against Failure to be Hospitable to, Bow to, and Pay Respect to Elders and Seniors of the Fourfold Assembly
- (6th Minor) The Precept against Becoming Arrogant upon Seeing Members of the Fourfold Assembly Violate Precepts
- (7th Minor) The Precept against Failure to Observe the Six Days of Vegetarian Fasting and Holding Precepts
- (8th Minor) The Precept against Failure to Go to Listen to the Dharma
- (9th Minor) The Precept against Taking Items Belonging to the Sangha
- (10th Minor) The Precept against Drinking Water that Contains Bugs
- (11th Minor) The Precept against Traveling Alone through Dangerous Places
- (12th Minor) The Precept against Staying Overnight Unchaperoned in a Convent or a Monastery
- (13th Minor) The Precept against Beating People as a Livelihood or for a Wage
- (14th Minor) The Precept against Bringing Leftover Food to Offer to the Fourfold Assembly
- (15th Minor) The Precept against Keeping Cats and Other Predatory Animals

- (16th Minor) The Precept against Raising Domestic or Wild Animals without Performing Pure Giving
- (17th Minor) The Precept against Failure to Keep in Reserve the Three Robes, a Bowl, and a Ringing Staff
- (18th Minor) The Precept against Failure to Look for Pure Water to Irrigate Land Crops
- (19th Minor) The Precept against Trading or Doing Business Using Altered Weights and Measures and Failure to Honor Prior Agreements
- (20th Minor) The Precept against Engaging in Conjugal Relations at the Wrong Times or Places
- (21st Minor) The Precept against Failure to Pay Official Taxes When Doing Business
- (22nd Minor) The Precept against Breaking Federal and Civil Laws
- (23rd Minor) The Precept against Failure to Offer New Food to the Triple Jewel First
- (24th Minor) The Precept against Abruptly Proceeding to Speak Dharma on Our Own without the Sangha's Permission
- (25th Minor) The Precept against Walking Ahead of the Fivefold Assembly
- (26th Minor) The Precept against Apportioning Food to the Sangha Unfairly
- (27th Minor) The Precept against Raising Silkworms
- (28th Minor) The Precept against Abandoning Sick People We Encounter while Traveling

THE SIX MAJOR PRECEPTS

1) *The First Major Precept: The Precept against Killing*

[Shakyamuni Buddha, addressing the elder's son Wholesome Birth:]

Good man! In accordance with the *Upasaka/Upasika* Precepts, even for the sake of sustaining our own body or life, we should refrain from any form of killing, up to and including killing an ant. If, after having received this Precept, we encourage or verbally instruct others to kill, commit an act of killing, or commit suicide, we thereupon lose this *Upasaka/Upasika* Precept.

Such a person cannot even attain the Dharma of the Level of Heat much less the Fruition of Shrotaapanna, up to and including the Fruition of Anagamin.

Such a person is called a Precept-breaking *Upasaka/Upasika*, a despicable *Upasaka/Upasika*, an outcast, a defiled *Upasaka/Upasika*, and an *Upasaka/Upasika* in bondage. This is the First Major Precept.

2) *The Second Major Precept: The Precept against Stealing*

In accordance with the *Upasaka/Upasika* Precepts, even for the sake of sustaining our own body or life, we should not steal—not even one cent. In the case where this Precept is breached, the violator thereupon loses this *Upasaka/Upasika* Precept.

Such a person cannot even attain the Dharma of the Level of Heat, much less the Fruition of Shrotaapanna, up to and including the Fruition of Anagamin.

Such a person is called a Precept-breaking *Upasaka/Upasika*, a despicable *Upasaka/Upasika*, an outcast, a defiled *Upasaka/Upasika*, and an *Upasaka/Upasika* in bondage. This is the Second Major Precept.

3) *The Third Major Precept: The Precept against Major False Speech*

In accordance with the *Upasaka/Upasika* Precepts, even for the sake of sustaining our own body or life, we should not falsely proclaim, “I have perfected the

Contemplation of Impurity, up to and including the Fruition of Anagamin.” When this Precept is breached, the violator thereupon loses this *Upasaka/Upasika* Precept.

Such a person cannot even attain the Dharma of the Level of Heat, much less the Fruition of Shrotaapanna, up to and including the Fruition of Anagamin.

Such a person is called a Precept-breaking *Upasaka/Upasika*, a despicable *Upasaka/Upasika*, an outcast, a defiled *Upasaka/Upasika*, and an *Upasaka/Upasika* in bondage. This is the Third Major Precept.

4) *The Fourth Major Precept: The Precept against Lustful Behavior*

In accordance with the *Upasaka/Upasika* Precepts, even for the sake of sustaining our own body or life, we should not engage in lustful behavior. When this Precept is breached, the violator thereupon loses this *Upasaka/Upasika* Precept.

Such a person cannot even attain the Dharma of the Level of Heat, much less the Fruition of Shrotaapanna, up to and including the Fruition of Anagamin.

Such a person is called a Precept-breaking *Upasaka/Upasika*, a despicable *Upasaka/Upasika*, an outcast, a defiled *Upasaka/Upasika*, and an *Upasaka/Upasika* in bondage. This is the Fourth Major Precept.

5) *The Fifth Major Precept: The Precept against*

Speaking of Offenses Committed by Members of the Fourfold Assembly

In accordance with the *Upasaka/Upasika* Precepts, even for the sake of sustaining our own body or life, we should not announce or discuss any offenses or faults of *Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, or Upasikas*. When this Precept is breached, the violator thereupon loses this *Upasaka/Upasika* Precept.

Such a person cannot even attain the Dharma of the Level of Heat, much less the Fruition of Shrotaapanna, up to and including the Fruition of Anagamin.

Such a person is called a Precept-breaking *Upasaka/Upasika*, a despicable

Upasaka/Upasika, an outcast, a defiled *Upasaka/Upasika*, and an *Upasaka/Upasika* in bondage. This is the Fifth Major Precept.

6) *The Sixth Major Precept: The Precept against
Dealing in Intoxicants, Drugs, and Stimulants*

In accordance with the *Upasaka/Upasika* Precepts, even for the sake of sustaining our own body or life, we should not deal in intoxicants, drugs, or stimulants. When this Precept is breached, the violator thereupon loses this *Upasaka/Upasika* Precept.

Such a person cannot even attain the Dharma of the Level of Heat, much less the Fruition of Shrotaapanna, up to and including the Fruition of Anagamin.

Such a person is called a Precept-breaking *Upasaka/Upasika*, a despicable *Upasaka/Upasika*, an outcast, a defiled *Upasaka/Upasika*, and an *Upasaka/Upasika* in bondage. This is the sixth major Precept.

[Shakyamuni Buddha, addressing the elder's son Wholesome Birth:] Good man! If, after having received the transmission of these *Upasaka/Upasika* Precepts, a person can uphold them with utmost sincerity and guard against infraction and transgression, such a person will accordingly attain the Fruition of these Precepts.

Good man! The *Upasaka/Upasika* Precepts are called strands of gems and adornments. Their fragrance is subtle, wonderful and pervades everywhere. The Precepts shield us from unwholesome dharmas and function as the Vinaya of wholesome dharmas. They are a treasury of unsurpassed, wondrous jewels. They are the great, still, and quiet place of supremely noble birth, the flavor of sweet dew, and the ground that nurtures wholesome dharmas.

The straightforward intent to receive and uphold them alone will bring us limitless benefits. How much the more is that the case when we are further able to single-mindedly receive and uphold these Precepts without transgression!

THE TWENTY-EIGHT MINOR PRECEPTS

1) *The First Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Failure to Make Offerings to Our Parents, Teachers, and Elders

[Shakyamuni Buddha continues addressing the elder's son Wholesome Birth:]

Good man! As the Buddha has said, if an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept fails to make offerings to and provide for his/her parents, teachers, and elders, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

2) *The Second Minor Precept : The Precept against*

Indulging in Intoxicants, Drugs, and Stimulants for Pleasure

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept indulges in intoxicants, drugs, or stimulants for pleasure, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

3) *The Third Minor Precept: The Precept against Failure to Care for the Sick*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept fails to care for the sick, due to evil motivations, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

4) *The Fourth Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Failure to be Charitable to People in Need

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept fails to distribute an appropriate amount of what is requested upon encountering someone in need, and instead sends the person in need away empty-handed, he/she

thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

5) *The Fifth Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Failure to be Hospitable to, Bow to, and Pay Respect to Elders and Seniors of the Fourfold Assembly

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept, fails to rise, be hospitable to, bow to and pay respect to *Bhikshus*, *Bhiksunis*, Elder Masters, and/or senior *Upasakas* or *Upasikas* upon encountering them, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

6) *The Sixth Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Becoming Arrogant upon Seeing Members of the Fourfold Assembly Violate Precepts

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept becomes arrogant upon seeing *Bhikshus*, *Bhikshunis*, and/or *Upasakas* or *Upasikas* violate the Precepts they have received, and says, "I am superior to them; they are inferior to me," he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

7) *The Seventh Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Failure to Observe the Six Days of Vegetarian Fasting and Holding Precepts

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept fails to observe the six days of holding the Eight Precepts and making offerings to the Triple Jewel every month, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

8) *The Eighth Minor Precept: The Precept against Failure to Go to Listen to the Dharma*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept fails to

go and listen to the Dharma when it is being lectured anywhere within a twelve-and-a-half mile radius, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

9) *The Ninth Minor Precept: The Precept against Taking*

Items Belonging to the Sangha

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept takes the beds, seats, or bedding belonging to the Sangha of the four directions, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

10) *The Tenth Minor Precept: The Precept against Drinking Water that Contains Bugs*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept deliberately drinks water that he/she suspects contains bugs, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

11) *The Eleventh Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Traveling Alone through Dangerous Places

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept travels without a companion through dangerous places, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

12) *The Twelfth Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Staying Overnight Unchaperoned in a Convent or a Monastery

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept stays overnight unchaperoned in a convent or a monastery, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

13) *The Thirteenth Minor Precept: The Precept against
Beating People as a Livelihood or for a Wage*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept beats or verbally abuses slaves, servants, errand boys or girls, or other hired help, doing that as a livelihood or for a wage, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

14) *The Fourteenth Minor Precept: The Precept against
Bringing Leftover Food to Offer to the Fourfold Assembly*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept brings leftover food to offer to *Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas* and *Upasikas*, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

15) *The Fifteenth Minor Precept: The Precept against
Keeping Cats and Other Predatory Animals*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept keeps cats or other predatory animals, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

16) *The Sixteenth Minor Precept: The Precept against
Raising Domestic or Wild Animals without Performing Pure Giving*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept raises elephants, horses, cattle, sheep or goats, camels, donkeys or mules, or any other kind of animals whether domestic or wild, and fails to bestow those animals on someone who has not taken this Precept in an act of pure giving, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

17) *The Seventeenth Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Failure to Keep in Reserve the Three Robes, a Bowl, and a Ringing Staff

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept fails to keep in reserve the *samghati* and other robes, a bowl, and a ringing staff, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

18) *The Eighteenth Minor Precept: The Precept Against*

Failure to Look for Pure Water to Irrigate Land Crops

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept needs to engage in agricultural work as a means to earn a livelihood, but fails to look for pure water to irrigate the crops, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

19) *The Nineteenth Minor Precept: The Precept against*

*Trading or Doing Business Using Altered Weights and Measures and
Failure to Honor Prior Agreements*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept engages in business transactions as a means to earn a livelihood, using weights and measures in the sale of merchandise, then once a price has been agreed upon, he/she must not retract it and demand a higher price. Any weighing and measuring should be done fairly and in full view, and if they are not, the differences should be stated and adjustments made. Otherwise, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

20) *The Twentieth Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Engaging in Conjugal Relations at the Wrong Times or Places

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept

engages in conjugal relations at the wrong places or wrong times, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

21) *The Twenty-first Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Failure to Pay Official Taxes When Doing Business

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept does not pay the official taxes when engaged in trade or commerce, as when buying or selling, but instead defaults on or evades them, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

22) *The Twenty-second Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Breaking Federal and Civil Laws

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept violates federal or civil laws, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

23) *The Twenty-third Minor Precept: The Precept against*

Failure to Offer New Food to the Triple Jewel First

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept obtains newly acquired grains, fruit of trees or vines, root or other vegetables and does not offer them first to the Triple Jewel, but instead first takes them for himself/herself, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

24) *The Twenty-fourth Minor Precept: The Precept against*

*Abruptly Proceeding to Speak Dharma on Our Own without the Sangha's
Permission*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept abruptly

proceeds to speak Dharma or words of praise on his/her own without the Sangha's permission, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

25) *The Twenty-fifth Minor Precept: The Precept against Walking Ahead of the Fivefold Assembly*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept walks ahead of the Fivefold Assembly when traveling along a path, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

26) *The Twenty-sixth Minor Precept: The Precept against Apportioning Food to the Sangha Unfairly*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept shows favoritism while apportioning food among the Sangha members by selecting delicious food for any given Master and giving more of it to him/her, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

27) *The Twenty-seventh Minor Precept: The Precept against Raising Silkworms*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept raises silkworms, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

28) *The Twenty-eighth Minor Precept: The Precept Against Abandoning Sick People We Encounters while Traveling*

If an *Upasaka/Upasika* who has received and should be upholding this Precept encounters someone sick while traveling and does not go to check on that person and arrange for his/her care and safe destination, but instead abandons the person, he/she thereby commits an offense through negligence. Failure to repent and

reform will lead to a fall, caused by such impure behavior.

* * *

[Shakyamuni Buddha continues addressing the elder's son Wholesome Birth:] Good man! If an *Upasaka/Upasika* can wholeheartedly receive and uphold these Precepts, he/she is called a *pundarika* [white lotus] among *Upasakas/Upasikas*; a supreme and subtly wondrous fragrance among *Upasakas/Upasikas*; a pure lotus flower among *Upasakas/Upasikas*; a true, treasured jewel among *Upasakas/Upasikas*; and a hero among *Upasakas/Upasikas*.

Good man! As the Buddhas tell us, there are two kinds of Bodhisattvas. One is the lay Bodhisattva and the other is the monastic Bodhisattva. Monastic Bodhisattvas are called *Bhikshus*; lay Bodhisattvas are called *Upasakas*. It is not difficult for the monastic Bodhisattvas to uphold the monastic Precepts. It is difficult for the lay Bodhisattvas to uphold the lay Precepts. Why is that? It is because laypeople are entangled in and surrounded by many evil causes and conditions.

(End of the *Six Major and Twenty-eight Minor Precepts of the Sutra of the Upasaka Precepts Spoken by the Buddha*)