

Setting Up the Support Mandala for the Altar

How to Prepare

- The better of your two mandala plates or a nice plate (for a common plate, preferably a new one or something you'd be proud to have the three jewels and three roots sit upon!).
- 2-3 tablespoons of rice in a small clean bowl—add 1 teaspoon of water and let sit for 5 min.
- A place prepared on your altar or a suitable place in your practice area—raised and covered by a nice cloth is traditionally stated, but use your judgement and resources on hand.
- This handout is the only text you need to prepare this.

How to Construct the Mandala of Accomplishment

- As you do to begin the practice, do the prayer to the guru above your head and recite the prayer for refuge and bodhicitta
- Then before beginning the mandala section of the preliminary practices, hold this plate for the mandala of accomplishment in your left hand and clean it by wiping it with the inside of your right wrist, circling clockwise three times while reciting the 100 syllable mantra one time:

**oṃ vajra sattva samaya manu pālaya vajra sattva tve nopa tiṣṭha dṛiḍho
me bhava suto ṣhyo me bhava supo ṣhyo me bhava anu rakto me bhava
sarva siddhim me pra yaccha sarva karma su came cittam śhreyah kuru
hūṃ ha ha ha ha hoḥ bhagavān sarva tathāgata vajra māme muñca vajrī
bhava mahā samaya sattva āḥ**

- Say the following mantras, reflecting on the meaning:

oṃ vajra amiṛta kuṇḍali hana hana hūṃ phaṭ

[This cleanses the materials being used.]

oṃ svabhāva śhuddhāḥ sarva dharmāḥ svabhāva śhuddhoḥ haṃ

[With this we recall the emptiness of all which makes what comes next possible.]

- Use the water-soaked rice (add a bit more water if it's not sticking together) to make five piles of rice on the plate—one in the center and one in each of the four cardinal directions near the edge of the plate. Tidy up the piles. Try to make them the same size and place them as symmetrically as you can. Then do as instructed below:

From *The Torch of True Meaning*

“From the state of emptiness, meditate that the mandala itself is a jeweled palace with all the characteristics, in the middle of which the five piles are the sources of refuge, as in refuge practice [that is, the gurus, the yidams, the buddhas, the dharma, and the sangha]. It is not necessary to visualize the lake and wish-fulfilling tree. Meditate that the dharma protectors are in the spaces in between. Lights radiating from the three seed syllables in their three places invite innumerable wisdom deities from their natural abodes, who dissolve inseparably into them. Place it on a high, covered shelf before you and supplicate them to remain. If possible, surround it with the five types of offerings. If you cannot afford a mandala of accomplishment or if you are doing it as a continuing practice, visualize the recipients of your offerings in the sky in front of you.”

- Do your best to imagine the objects of refuge in their respective places. Imagine white, red, and blue light radiating from their three places, forehead, throat, and heart center, respectively. This invites the “real” objects of refuge to come and dissolve into those imagined/the piles of rice. Place it on your altar with the pile you regarded as the yidams closest to the front edge of the table (closest to you as you’re sitting in front of it).
- You are now ready to begin the mandala practice in the text.
- If you are not able or do not wish to do this step of making the mandala of accomplishment, as it says in *The Torch of True Meaning*, you can just imagine the objects of refuge in the sky before you.