

Aids to Study for Online Classes

For many years, Temple study classes have been conducted in person, in Halcyon at the Center and in various locations throughout the world. The main precepts for these classes are the sacred geometry of the Square and Aids to Study, a set of guidelines for conducting meetings efficiently and harmoniously.

The worldwide health crisis in 2020 made in-person classes temporarily impossible, and necessitated a transition to online meetings. The great gift of this transition has been the removal of the impediment of distance. Participants from all over the world can now gather together virtually, greatly strengthening the Temple community. Virtual classes do not, in substance, change the nature of the Square, which is materialized in the act of gathering together and fulfilling our designated roles. The help provided by Aids to Study is equally relevant regardless of the venue, but online classes differ in some details and, for this reason, an updated set of guidelines is called for.

- 1) Join online classes with your microphone muted; only unmute when it is your turn to speak. Prior to the start of class, conversation between attendees is fine, but all conversation should come to a close before the start time.
- 2) Endeavor to join the online session at least three to five minutes prior to start time and to remain online until the end. If circumstances prevent this, join or depart quietly.
- 3) Designated officers will manage the online session. Unless a special topic or course of study has been scheduled, a leader chosen beforehand from the group will guide the discussion for the day. The leader will structure the discussion in the form of a series of questions that call attention to pertinent details in the lesson or reading. When it is your turn to lead, develop questions thoughtfully in a manner that inspires reflection. You don't need to know the answer to ask a question!
- 4) The leader will call on participants in order, who will raise their hands to contribute in an agreed manner – currently, we do this by typing “rh” (raise hand) into the chat window. Because it is the leader's role to recognize each speaker in turn, please do not use the chat window to comment on a question.
- 5) All commentary should be addressed primarily to the leader, and secondarily to the group as a whole. This point is especially important. Participants in the study group are joined together to embody the geometry of the Square, and any back-and-forth exchange between individual members threatens to disrupt the balance of energies thus created.
- 6) When called upon to contribute, convey your point of view briefly, then yield the floor for the next speaker. Comments should be relevant to, and focused upon, the question to which you are responding.

- 7) Remember, the Master says, "It is not easy for humanity to understand that two diametrically opposed methods of action may both be right." Similarly, those whose opinions apparently contradict yours may still be speaking truth. All contributions offered in sincerity are to be respected. Keep in mind the words of H.P.B.: "In Theosophy what is needed is emulation and not rivalry." Even regarding adherence to the guidelines in this document, respect and tolerance are important.
- 8) Though external sources and traditions can often add to the discussion, use them sparingly and mindfully. So too, personal experiences are often helpful, but only if they are generalized and made applicable to the subject at hand. The main topic will always be the assigned lesson or reading in the context of the Temple literature.
- 9) Development of the faculty of intuition depends upon care of motive and attitude of mind. Attention to these qualities contributes to spiritual growth. Consider that study classes provide us with an especially valuable opportunity to attend to our motives and attitudes and to develop our intuitions.
- 10) As the end of class approaches, be mindful of the time. Our shared goal is to end discussion at least five minutes prior to the designated end of class in order to leave time for closing. The officer managing the lesson (typically the Outer Guard) will call an official end to discussion.

Aids to Study for Online Classes – Brief Version

- 1) Stay muted unless it is your turn to speak.
- 2) Join class early and stay until the end. If you cannot, join or leave quietly.
- 3) When leading, develop questions thoughtfully in a manner that inspires reflection.
- 4) Answer a question by raising your hand. Only answer when called upon.
- 5) Address all comments to the leader and the group as a whole.
- 6) Comments should be brief and relevant to the question at hand.
- 7) All contributions offered in sincerity are to be respected.
- 8) Cite external sources and personal experiences sparingly and mindfully.
- 9) Consider class as an opportunity to attend to motives and develop intuition.
- 10) Be mindful of time as the end of class approaches.

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