

Alex Berzin on the Ten Dharma Acts

To **split my days and nights** doing these **ten Dharma acts** – that doesn't mean that every day we have to do all ten acts. "Days and nights" just means "our time." So, we try to devote our time to the particular type of practice that suits us very well. What sorts of practices can we do? There are the ten Dharma acts:

1. **"Copying scriptures"** – that doesn't mean just photocopying them. In olden times, it meant writing out the scriptures, since there were no printed versions and making a handwritten copy made the text available to more people. Even nowadays when written versions are readily available, writing out or typing the texts can be very helpful for familiarizing us with their contents, especially of scriptures or teachings that concern the type of practice that we're interested in.
2. **"Making offerings to the Three Gems"** – that's always good to do, but we can also make offerings with the motivation of, "May I be able to practice well."
3. **"Giving to the poor and sick"** – this is also general, something that, in terms of Mahayana practice, we would do in any case.
4. **"Listening to teachings"** about the things we really have strong admiration for and conviction in.
5. **"Reading scriptures"** about the teachings that we have particular admiration for.
6. **"Taking to heart the essence of the teachings through meditating"** – meditate and engage in the type of practice that's involved with the particular teaching or style that suits us.
7. **"Explaining the teachings"** – if we are able to explain a teaching, or if we're able to share it and to discuss it with others who might also be interested in the type of teaching that we're interested in, we do that.
8. **"Reciting sutras"** – that's also very inspiring. Reciting out loud the texts that deal with the topic we're interested in – whether it's pujas, praises, sutras, or whatever – is very inspiring, particularly when we do it with a group of people.
9. **"Thinking about the meaning of the texts"** that deal with the topic that we're interested in, thinking about it during the day, whenever the opportunity arises.
10. **"Meditating single-pointedly on the meaning of the teachings,"** trying to really focus on them.

This is how we would spend our time studying and practicing a particular type of teaching that we feel attracted to within Buddhism. And we do that without denying or putting down the other types of teachings that Buddha gave.

There are many things that can be included in this list: transcribing teachings, writing up the teachings we have received, making them available to others, etc. Those too are Dharma acts. The best way to familiarize ourselves with a teaching is to write it up after a class.