

GENERAL ADVICE AFTER TAKING REFUGE

1. After taking refuge in the Buddha, one should not take ultimate refuge in worldly deities.
2. After taking refuge in the Dharma, one should refrain from harming any beings.
3. After taking refuge in the Sangha, one should not associate with people who negatively influence one's path.
4. One should respect all images of the Buddha as though they are the Buddha himself.
5. One should respect every letter of dharma scriptures, because it is from them that we understand and realize the dharma. The scriptures should be considered enlightened manifestations of the Buddha himself.
6. One should respect the sangha, both the noble sangha of bodhisattvas and the sangha of practitioners, never thinking or speaking ill of them. One should also respect any symbol of the sangha, such as monastic robes, as equally important.

FIVE GENERAL REFUGE ADMONITIONS FROM ATISHA

1. One should not let go of the three jewels for one's own mundane benefit, such as if one is offered a kingdom.
2. One should not let go of the three jewels, even if in danger of losing one's life. One may be extremely afraid of death, but the ultimate refuge is one's own enlightened nature, which cannot be lost even if the body is destroyed. If one lets go of the three jewels, then one does not have the resource of confidence in them.
3. One should not take refuge in another view of mind and phenomena that contradicts the Buddhist tradition. Again, it is one's own mind that one takes refuge in, and if one gives up this refuge for an "outer" refuge, one effectively gives up one's own mind as the basis for refuge.
4. One should know the nature of the objects of refuge—to know what Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha mean, and what it means to take refuge in them. One should really know from one's heart and take refuge fully.
5. One should bow upon seeing images of the three jewels, and make offerings to them daily.

OFFERINGS TO THE THREE JEWELS

After taking refuge in the Three Jewels it's beneficial to offer each meal before eating. The following is a traditional prayer for doing this. It can be recited in Tibetan or English.

The Meal Prayer

Tönpa lamé sangyé rinpoche
Kyobpa lamé damchö rinpoche
Drenpa lamé gendun rinpoche
Kyabné könchok sum la chöpa bul

The unsurpassable teacher is the precious Buddha.
The unsurpassable protector is the precious Dharma.
The unsurpassable guide is the precious Sangha.
To the unsurpassable Three Jewels, I make this offering.

THE WORDS OF MY PERFECT TEACHER

In the Refuge chapter of *Words of My Perfect Teacher* by Patrul Rinpoche there is an excellent description of conduct to adopt and to abandon after taking refuge.

THE UPASAKA VOW AND COMMENTARY

These are actual vows which are received upon taking the refuge vow.

1. The first is to refrain from sexual misconduct. If one is married or in an ongoing relationship, one should not sleep around with other partners. If one is not in a relationship, one should refrain from jumping around sexually in a way that does not benefit one's path. One could find a relationship that actually supports one's life and path.
2. The second is to refrain from killing. This is self-evident, but also refers to not physically harming other beings intentionally.
3. The third is to refrain from lying. This refers both to ordinary lying and the tendency to present oneself as being something one is not, such as pretending to have qualities one does not have.
4. The fourth is to refrain from stealing.
5. The last is to refrain from drinking alcohol or partaking in other mind-altering drugs. One should not indulge in alcohol in such a way that one's mind, and therefore one's path, is disturbed. By causing one to lose awareness, alcohol can cause one to break any of the other vows.

One may take the full Upasaka Vow, which would include abstaining from alcohol and sexual intercourse. One may also take a partial Upasaka Vow, vowing to refrain from any one or more of the five actions described above.

GENERAL ADVICE FROM ATISHA CONCERNING THE BODHISATTVA VOW

1. The first point is not to disparage, either mentally or verbally, the lower yanas. Even though one has now entered the Mahayana and is now a Mahayana practitioner, it is important to remember that the Mahayana is built on the Hinayana. Without it, there could be no Mahayana.
2. The second is to refrain from turning away from the view of karma and cause and effect. One should guard against intentionally or unconsciously adopting a view of eternalism, thinking that one will be saved by an outside force, or a view of nihilism, thinking there is no connection between one's actions and their effects.
3. The third is not only to refrain from abandoning the Hinayana path, but to learn it fully. This could provide one with more skillful means to benefit others.
4. The fourth is not to discourage others from practicing the Mahayana path of the six paramitas because it is too vast or too much work.
5. The fifth is not to believe that one's obscurations are unremovable, that they are somehow intrinsic and impossible to work with.
6. The sixth is not to hold onto oneself or one's tradition as a source of pride and arrogance, or put others down for some kind of benefit to one's ego.
7. The seventh is not to create disputes between members of the sangha.
8. The eighth is not to let go of one's bodhicitta. This is very important because the intention to benefit others is the heart of the entire bodhisattva path. Keeping one's bodhicitta intact allows the other aspects of the path to remain, or be easily regenerated.
9. The ninth is not to be intentionally impatient with others, giving into one's anger as though it is justifiable.
10. The tenth is not to turn negative emotional actions into "dharmic action." One tries not to use the dharma to justify one's own negative actions. This could be in the form of twisting the teachings to fit one's ego agenda, or trying to cover up for some negative action one has already engaged in.
11. The eleventh is to refrain from *not* helping others who are suffering physically or emotionally. The essence of this point is not to hold back with regard to others.
12. The twelfth is to try to extend oneself to provide for other people's physical comfort and emotional well-being as much as one can.
13. The thirteenth point: Because of one's own small irritations and sufferings, one is not able to extend to others even though they may be suffering a great deal. One would only have to exert oneself a tiny bit to make a big difference to someone suffering intensely, but because one holds on tightly to one's own predicament, one doesn't extend at all. We should guard against such a self-absorbed, selfish tendency.

These are the general points of advice for the refuge and bodhisattva precepts, which can be used as reference points to work with the vows one has taken. Of course, one can't expect to be perfect in approaching these precepts and advice, but by reflecting upon the meaning of them and trying to integrate them into one's daily life, they can slowly become more a part of one's makeup.