

The Kwan Um School of Zen

Precepts Information and Application for North America

January 2023

If you are applying for:	Please read these pages of this booklet:	*To avoid late fees have your application in Cumberland by:
Five Precepts	2, 3, 4, 5, 11	14 days before the ceremony date
Dharma teacher in training	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11	14 days before the ceremony date
Dharma teacher	2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 12	60 days before the ceremony date
Senior dharma teacher	2, 3, 4, 9, 11	14 days before the ceremony date
Bodhisattva teacher	2, 3, 4, 10, 11	14 days before the ceremony date

*Precepts applications will not be accepted after 10 days before the ceremony date

The Buddha taught us that we already have a balanced nature. We are, each one of us, already perfect and complete. As we endeavor to wake up to the compassionate and wise state, we must see what hinders us.

The instructions are so simple: Avoid evil and do good. Why can't we just write that in large letters over our beds and make sure we read it before we put our feet on the floor each morning? Then, as Zen Master Seung Sahn says, "just do it"? Avoid evil and do good, moment to moment to moment.

The precepts spell out the major hindrances. It's so obvious what these hindrances are and so helpful to be reminded of them. Read them and be honest with yourself; ask yourself to deepen your understanding of what it means to not take what is not given. What does it mean when it says to always tell the truth? Did we "kill" anything today? Were we destructive? How intimately familiar can we become with the precepts so that we can put our feet on the floor in the morning and not have to think of dichotomies such as good and evil? The precepts become, "How may I help you?"

As our practice matures, as we shed our accumulated fears and mistrust, we do realize that being compassionately awake is our natural state. We can take the sign off our bedroom wall and give it to a brother or sister who might still need the reminder.

As members of our Zen Center and of our larger sangha, we recognize and support each others' efforts. When we make our direction and vow clear together, we not only help each other, we also inspire our extended community around the world.

Zen Master Soeng Hyang
School Zen Master

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Information for all precepts categories

Precepts are taken in a formal ceremony. All categories of lay precepts are given at every ceremony. All precepts ceremonies in the Kwan Um School of Zen in North America are organized through the School office in Cumberland, Rhode Island.

- Membership:** If you are not already a member of your Zen Center, it is appropriate to formalize your support for it by becoming a member at the time you take the five precepts. Membership in good standing is mandatory for the other precepts categories.
- Precepts Teacher:** Precepts can be given by any Zen Master or Ji Do Poep Sa Nim. Dharma teachers of three years standing, with the approval of their guiding teacher, can give precepts to prisoners following the rules for each precepts category.
- Teacher's Gift:** It is a traditional custom to express gratitude to the teacher leading the precepts ceremony (who may or may not be your guiding teacher) with a small gift of money. At the time of the ceremony, you may leave an envelope containing a donation on the altar, with the name of the precepts teacher on it (and your own if you would like to). A personal note or card is always welcome along with the gift. (If you wish to make a gift by check, it should be made out to the precepts teacher personally, not to the School or the Zen Center; if the precepts teacher is a monk or nun, checks should be made out to their lay name. For example, Zen Master Dae Kwang's lay name is James Binger.)
- Precepts Burn:** During the precepts ceremony, you will receive a small burn on the inside of your forearm. This is a traditional Buddhist custom from China, modified in Korea. The burn itself is very small and relatively painless; the significance of this custom is expressed in the repentance ritual: "May all my offenses, accumulated during hundreds of kalpas, now be totally consumed, *in an instant*, as fire burns dry grass, extinguishing all things until nothing remains." The "instant" when fire touches skin is an all-consuming moment in which all opinions and ideas disappear, and only the direct experience of burning sensation remains. Our practice is to return again and again to each moment of direct experience. In experiencing totally what *is* in each moment, all our transgressions and defilements are extinguished. The chain of karmic residue is broken.
- Robe and Kasa:** The precepts application form at the end of this book also can be used to order your robe and/or kasa from the School.
- Robes, kasas, and bowls will be sent to the Zen Center hosting the ceremony. Robes are passed out before the ceremony, kasas and bowls during the ceremony.
- If you prefer, you may sew or otherwise obtain your own robe and/or kasa. Instructions for the kasas and for dharma teacher robes are available free of charge from the Kwan Um School of Zen office. For the bowing robes, instructions and full-size patterns are made available for \$45 plus shipping. Please contact the School office if you are interested.

Continued on next page

Special Situations: Modification of the time requirements to take the various dharma teacher categories of precepts can be authorized only by Zen Master Soeng Hyang, the School Zen Master, in consultation with your own guiding teacher. Such requests should therefore be made through the School office well in advance of the ceremony date. Please note that these requests are approved only under very special circumstances.

Arrival: If you are taking the precepts at Providence Zen Center, you are expected to be at the Center in plenty of time for the precepts orientation meetings which are held before the ceremony. Please check the schedule for specific times. If you are taking the precepts elsewhere, please be sure you understand the ceremony schedule.

International Rules: Students from Europe, Asia, and Australia wishing to take precepts in North America must follow all the rules of their home sangha. In the case of European students, this includes receiving the permission of the guiding teacher of your home temple (except for five precepts). If there is not enough time to secure this permission, then the rules of the European sangha do not permit you to take precepts here.

Conversely, as a student from North America, you are governed by all the rules in this booklet, regardless of where in the world you wish to take precepts. This situation most often arises with students wanting to take precepts in Korea at the end of a Kyol Che. It is no problem to take five precepts in Korea. For other categories, it is strongly recommended that you submit a completed application to the School office in Cumberland before you go to Korea. Otherwise, it is cumbersome to become a dharma teacher, senior dharma teacher, or bodhisattva teacher, and virtually impossible to become a dharma teacher in training.

Taking the five precepts

I vow to abstain from taking life.

I vow to abstain from taking things not given.

I vow to abstain from misconduct done in lust.

I vow to abstain from lying.

I vow to abstain from intoxicants, taken to induce heedlessness.

When you take five precepts, you will receive a Buddhist name.

Taking the five precepts means recognizing the importance of practicing, and making it part of your everyday life. It means joining a family of other people who have made the same decision, practicing with them when you can. If you live near a Zen Center, you can frequently join others in formal meditation and will find great support practicing within a community of other Zen students. If you live at a distance from a Zen Center, you will find it helpful to come to intensive retreats periodically.

In order to take the five precepts, you must usually be at least eighteen years of age (but see below) and have participated in at least four days of retreat in the Kwan Um School of Zen.

If you don't already have your own short gray bowing robe, you must obtain one when you take five precepts. You will also need a kasa, an elaborately sewn cloth which is worn over your robe. These can be purchased from the Kwan Um School of Zen using the application form at the end of this booklet. Robes are \$85 and kasas are \$40.

Youths, at least 12 years of age, can take the five precepts after talking with the guiding teacher of their family's Zen Center. The retreat requirement is waived.

Prisoners can take the five precepts after six months of regular practice, as determined by the precepts teacher. The retreat requirement is waived and it is not necessary to have a robe or kasa. In lieu of a gift of money to the teacher, a homemade card would be appropriate.

If your application is received at the School office after 14 days before the ceremony date, there is a \$25 late fee. Applications will not be accepted after 7 days before the ceremony date.

Please follow the instructions on the precepts application form on page 11.

Becoming a dharma teacher in training

The dharma teacher in training program is an opportunity to deepen your commitment to your practice and your vow to help others. It encourages you to widen your focus from being largely a questioner and receiver, to being also able to guide, inspire, and teach others. During this training period, your relationship to your teacher and your Zen Center will have the opportunity to mature.

Prerequisites

- To have taken the five precepts at least twenty-four months before the ceremony date *or* have lived in a Zen Center for at least twelve months after taking the five precepts. (If you took the five precepts in another tradition, before becoming a dharma teacher in training you must retake the precepts in the Kwan Um School of Zen and then wait a year.) These are minimum requirements, and your guiding teacher may require you to wait and do additional practice before entering the training program.
- Read Zen Master Seung Sahn's books and feel in accord with the heart and direction of his teaching. The practices of bowing, chanting, sitting and walking meditation, kong-an interviews and dharma talks are accepted as a totality.
- Write a 1000-word paper on "Motivations for Practice." Please see the instructions in Section 4 of the application on page 11. This paper will be reviewed by the School Zen Master, Zen Master Soeng Hyang, and by the guiding teacher of your Zen Center.
- Have the recommendation of your Zen Center's guiding teacher and the approval of the School Zen Master, Zen Master Soeng Hyang.
- Be or become an active member in good standing with a Zen Center in the Kwan Um School of Zen, by paying membership dues through the School office and being current on your membership dues.
- As of the ceremony date, begin paying \$15 per month training dues in addition to your Zen Center membership dues.
- Pay a \$75 initiation fee. If your application is received at the School office after 14 days before the ceremony date, there is a \$25 late fee. Applications will not be accepted after 7 days before the ceremony date.
- Prisoners may become dharma teachers in training a minimum of five years after taking the five precepts, provided the prison program the student participates in uses Kwan Um School forms and has a regular practice schedule. In lieu of a gift of money to the teacher, a homemade card would be appropriate. Membership is optional for prisoners, and the initiation fee and training dues are waived. Upon release from prison, the student takes a minimum twelve month leave of absence before continuing in the dharma teacher in training program, at which time he or she begins to pay membership and training dues.

If you are approved to become a dharma teacher in training, you enter the program by taking the ten precepts at a precepts ceremony. (At Providence Zen Center, there is also an induction ceremony prior to the main precepts ceremony.) At the time of the precepts ceremony, you will receive copies of the *Dharma Mirror*, the *Compass of Zen*, and the *Dharma Teacher Training Guidelines*.

Continued

The Ten Precepts

I vow to abstain from taking life.
I vow to abstain from taking things not given.
I vow to abstain from misconduct done in lust.
I vow to abstain from lying.
I vow to abstain from intoxicants, taken to induce heedlessness.
I vow not to talk about the faults of others.
I vow not to praise myself and put down others.
I vow not to be covetous and to be generous.
I vow not to give way to anger and to be harmonious.
I vow not to slander the three jewels (Buddha, dharma, sangha)

Obligations while in training

- Maintain an ongoing relationship with your Zen Center's guiding teacher.
- Attend at least four regular Yong Maeng Jong Jins each year. If not enough group retreats are available in your location, solo retreats are permissible. The retreat requirement is waived for prisoners.
- Continue to be an active member of your Zen Center, as determined by your guiding teacher.
- Become proficient in all aspects of the formal practice. The first year of your training is to be devoted to studying the School's practice forms; the second to allowing you to work with your guiding teacher in developing your teaching skills.
- Practice giving dharma talks, and learn to teach meditation and practice forms to others.
- Read books as recommended by your guiding teacher.
- Have interviews with as many of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sa Nims as possible.
- Stay current with your Zen Center membership dues and with your training dues. If you experience difficulty keeping up with your dues, you can keep your situation clear by requesting a leave of absence of up to one year. It is your responsibility to take the initiative to communicate with the School office; if you don't, you will be asked to clarify your situation by the School Zen Master, Zen Master Soeng Hyang. Non-payment of dues is grounds for being dropped from the dharma teacher training program.
- If you resign or are dropped from the training program, in order to become active again you must receive the permission of your guiding teacher and retake the ten precepts at a ceremony.

Please follow the instructions on the precepts application form on page 11.

Becoming a dharma teacher

At the end of a minimum period of twenty-four months as a dharma teacher in training, if both you and your Zen Center's guiding teacher feel you are ready, you can apply to become a full dharma teacher at a precepts ceremony. (Alternatively, you can become a novice monk or nun, with the approval of a guiding teacher who is a monk or nun.)

(If you became a dharma teacher in training while in prison, after your release you will take a twelve month leave of absence before continuing as a dharma teacher in training. Upon resuming active status, you will begin to pay membership and training dues, and will continue your training for a minimum of one more year before becoming a dharma teacher. The active training time, in and out of prison, must total at least twenty-four months. Prisoners cannot become dharma teachers while in prison, unless they are serving a life sentence without possibility of parole.)

You do not actually take precepts at the ceremony, since you have already taken the ten precepts; rather, this publicly marks your completion of the training program. Since you are not taking precepts, you will be seated separately from the students taking precepts, and will not receive a precepts burn.

Your guiding teacher's signature on your application form attests to your ability to lead practice, your knowledge of the School's teaching and its forms, and your willingness to take responsibility at your center or group. Because many students continue their training past the two year period, the School cannot automatically assume that you will become a dharma teacher at the first ceremony at which you are eligible. It *is* necessary to submit an application to make your situation clear.

When you become a dharma teacher, you must obtain a long gray robe and a four-bowl set for use at formal meals. These can be purchased from the School using the application form on page 11; please also fill out the measuring diagram on page 12. New Robes are \$325 and bowls are \$40. Robes are custom-made in Korea, so your application must be received in the School office at least sixty days before the ceremony date. There is a \$25 late fee if your application is received in the School office less than 21 days before the ceremony date, and it is likely that you will receive loaner robes at the ceremony. Applications will not be accepted after 7 days before the ceremony date.

At the time you apply to become a dharma teacher, you must be in good standing by being current both on your Zen Center membership dues and on your dharma teacher training dues. If you are in arrears on your dues, you must bring them up to date before becoming a dharma teacher, and make a clear commitment to staying current in the future.

If you ever experience problems in keeping up with your dues, you can keep your situation clear by requesting a leave of absence of up to one year. It is your responsibility to take the initiative to communicate with the School office. If you don't, you will be asked to clarify your situation by the School Zen Master, Zen Master Soeng Hyang, and may ultimately be dropped from the dharma teacher rolls.

The robe and bowls and certificate you receive are symbols of a relationship with the Kwan Um School and its precepts lineage. You are given these symbols with the understanding that you will maintain this relationship, and if you stop being a dharma teacher for any reason, we will ask that you return the robes and bowls to the School so that they can be used by others for this teaching. In order to become an active dharma teacher again, you must receive the permission of your guiding teacher and be formally represented with robes and bowls at a precepts ceremony. Your guiding teacher may require you to go through the dharma teacher training program again.

Please follow the instructions on the precepts application form on page 11.

Becoming a senior dharma teacher

Senior dharma teachers are senior students who take on greater responsibility in order to help people better understand our practice. Senior dharma teachers give “consulting” (not kong-an) interviews which focus on practice, thereby making their experience available to newer students. During retreats, senior dharma teachers may provide support to students who need it. Senior dharma teachers can lead retreats, particularly for beginning groups. The responsibilities taken on by senior dharma teachers are helpful in intensifying one’s practice. Learning how to digest our practice and use it to help other people becomes an active sharing and learning experience.

You are eligible to become a senior dharma teacher at a precepts ceremony if:

- you have been a dharma teacher for at least sixty months
- you have completed a 90-day Kyol Che; or a 90-day period of more intensive practice at home (such as midnight practice or extra bows) as determined by your guiding teacher
- you have attended at least one ceremony at the international head temple, Providence Zen Center, since taking the five precepts,
- you are in good standing by being current both on your Zen Center full membership dues and on your dharma teacher dues.
- you have the approval of your guiding teacher, who may require you to have additional experience before taking this step.

Senior dharma teachers take the sixteen precepts:

I vow to abstain from taking life.

I vow to abstain from taking things not given.

I vow to abstain from misconduct done in lust.

I vow to abstain from lying.

I vow to abstain from intoxicants, taken to induce heedlessness.

I vow not to talk about the faults of others.

I vow not to praise myself and put down others.

I vow not to be covetous and to be generous.

I vow not to give way to anger and to be harmonious.

I vow not to slander the three jewels (Buddha, dharma, sangha).

I vow homage to the Buddha.

I vow homage to the dharma.

I vow homage to the sangha.

I vow generosity to people.

I vow compassionate speech and compassionate action toward people.

I vow together action with people and to become one and to attain the Buddha Way.

Senior dharma teachers wear a special green kasa, only at ceremonies. This kasa can be bought from the School using the application form on page 11. The kasa costs \$100. If your application is received at the School office after 14 days before the ceremony date, there is a \$25 late fee. Applications will not be accepted after 7 days before the ceremony date.

Please follow the instructions on the precepts application form on page 11.

Becoming a bodhisattva teacher

Bodhisattva teachers make an increased and visible commitment to the teachings and practices of the Kwan Um School of Zen. Many people who become bodhisattva teachers feel a connection to traditional monks and nuns, but because of their current life situations are not able to take that path.

To become a bodhisattva teacher, you must have been a senior dharma teacher for at least twelve months; you must desire to help your Zen Center by volunteering there; and you must have the approval of your Zen Center's guiding teacher. You must be in good standing by being current both on your Zen Center full membership dues, and on your dharma teacher training dues.

Bodhisattva teachers take an additional forty-eight precepts:

1. *To respect your teachers and friends.*
2. *Not to drink liquor.*
3. *Not to eat meat.*
4. *Not to eat the five pungent roots.*
5. *To always encourage one who has committed an offense to repent and reform.*
6. *To request the dharma from teachers, and make offerings to them.*
7. *To always go to places where dharma is taught.*
8. *To not disavow the Mahayana.*
9. *To care well for the sick.*
10. *Not to possess implements for killing.*
11. *Not to act as an emissary to create hostility between warring parties.*
12. *Not to conduct business with evil intentions.*
13. *Not to speak badly of others.*
14. *Not to set fires that will harm wildlife.*
15. *Not to teach other doctrines (besides Mahayana).*
16. *To teach correctly, without desiring personal gain.*
17. *Not to use your dharma position to extract favors from people of power.*
18. *Not to become a teacher if you do not have a clear understanding of the Buddha-dharma.*
19. *Not to gossip or spread rumors or slander to create discord in the sangha.*
20. *To always cultivate the practice of liberating sentient beings, and encourage others to do likewise.*
21. *To be compassionate and not seek revenge.*
22. *To let go of all arrogance, and request the teaching.*
23. *To let go of all resentment and arrogance, and teach appropriately.*
24. *Not to desert the three jewels, and to always cultivate the bodhisattva path.*
25. *To skillfully administer all the resources of the three jewels with a compassionate mind.*
26. *Not to accept benefit for yourself alone.*
27. *Not to accept special invitations which single you out for deference while excluding other members of the practicing community.*
28. *Not to issue special invitations to monks.*
29. *Not to make a living through illicit or harmful means.*
30. *To handle temple affairs with integrity, and not be duplicitous towards the teaching.*
31. *To always find ways to protect and rescue all persons and valuables of the sangha.*
32. *Do not act in ways that would harm any being.*
33. *Do not watch or participate in improper activities.*
34. *To always keep to the Mahayana path.*
35. *To always keep the great vows of the Mahayana.*
36. *To always follow the precepts.*
37. *When doing retreats, to always avoid hazardous situations.*
38. *To always keep the correct seating order.*
39. *To cultivate merits and wisdom.*
40. *To not discriminate in giving the bodhisattva precepts.*
41. *To not become a teacher for personal gain.*
42. *To not use the precepts for harassment.*
43. *To not think of breaking the precepts.*
44. *To always honor and keep the precepts.*
45. *To always teach all beings.*
46. *To always take a respectful seat when teaching the dharma.*
47. *Not to establish incorrect rules to control the sangha.*
48. *Not to act in ways that destroy the Buddha-dharma.*

Bodhisattva teachers wear a special blue kasa, only at ceremonies. This kasa can be bought from the School using the application form at the end of this booklet. The kasa costs \$100. If your application is received at the School office after 14 days before the ceremony date, there is a \$25 late fee. Applications will not be accepted after 7 days before the ceremony date.

Please follow the instructions on the precepts application form on the next page.

2023 Precepts Application

1. Ceremony and Zen Center

Ceremony Date/Location _____

Zen Center/group you are affiliated with _____

Guiding Teacher _____

2. Contact Information

Name (*exactly as you want it to appear on your precepts certificate*) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone day _____ evening _____

Cell _____ E-mail _____

3. Precepts Fees

___ \$25 Application Fee (*waived with a purchase of precept materials below*)

Five precepts; ___\$85 for robe ___\$40 for kasa - TOTAL \$_____

If you're ordering a robe please tell us your height_____, weight_____, and robe size if known : S M L XL

Dharma teacher in training; ___ \$75 fee

Dharma teacher; ___ \$325 for long robe ___ \$40 for bowls - TOTAL \$_____

Senior dharma teacher; ___ \$100 for ceremony kasa

Bodhisattva teacher; ___ \$100 for ceremony kasa

Late fee (for all applications received in Cumberland after the deadlines on the front cover); \$25

4. Dharma Teacher in Training Essay

"Motivations for Practice" paper emailed to director@kwanumzen.org and your guiding teacher

If you are applying to become a dharma teacher in training, please write a 1000-word paper on "Motivations for Practice." At the top of the paper put your name, Zen Center, and e-mail address. *E-mail the paper as an e-mail message or attachment to director@kwanumzen.org.* If you are unable to e-mail it, please instead enclose a typed copy of it with this application.

Please also give or e-mail a copy of your paper to the guiding teacher of your Zen Center.

6. Payment

Check enclosed (payable to: Kwan Um School of Zen, send to: KUSZ Precepts 99 Pound Rd., Cumberland, RI 02864)

Credit/Debit Card _____ Security Code: _____ Expiration _____

5. Signatures

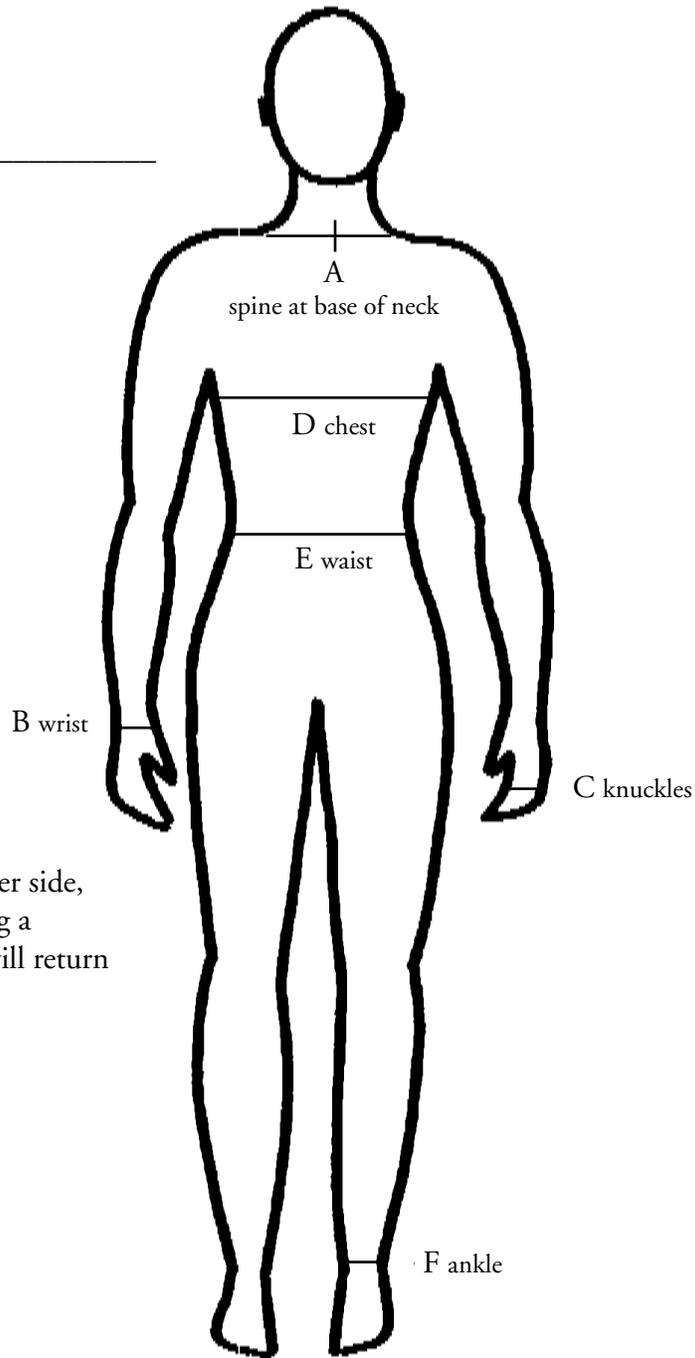
Signature of your Zen Center's guiding teacher _____

(Your guiding teacher's signature may be substituted if the teacher sends an email confirming his/her approval to director@kwanumzen.org)

Signature of applicant _____

Measuring for Dharma Teacher Robes

Name: _____



By signing the application on the other side, you are agreeing that if you stop being a dharma teacher for any reason, you will return your robes and bowls to the School so they can be used by others.

Sorry, there is no choice of fabrics; robes come only in a medium blend. If you need a lightweight or cotton robe, please contact us for patterns so you can make your own.

Please measure in centimeters:

- A to B, over the shoulder with arms down..... _____ cm
- A to C, over the shoulder with arms down _____ cm
- D _____ cm
- E _____ cm
- A to F in a straight line (i.e. not over the shoulder)..... _____ cm
- A to E in a straight line (i.e. down the backbone)..... _____ cm