

Speaking of Monks / Speaking with Monks

When talking with monks, speech requires an “upgrade.” While you may never have had a chance (or may never ever have the chance) to use royal language with a member of the royal family, it is not hard to find yourself in conversation with a monk. Such instances require the use of certain special vocabulary and honorifics.

First, use the proper pronoun: Address monks as **ท่าน** + ordination name . For information on the ranks of monks, click <http://www.thaibuddhism.net/ranks.htm>

Special classifier for monks: **องค์** For example, **ที่วัดนี้มีพระกี่องค์** (How many monks are at this temple?)

There are more generic names for monks, often depending on their age and how long they have been in the Buddhist order. Many of these names are based on kinship terms.

Some examples of these more colloquial terms are:

หลวงพี่ *luang phi* — “Venerable Elder,” a reverential term for a younger, freshly ordained monk

หลวงตา *luang ta* — “Venerable Uncle,” a reverential term for an elderly monk without titles

หลวงพ่อ *luang pho* — “Venerable Father,” a reverential term for an elderly monk

หลวงปู่ *luang pu* — “Venerable Grandfather,” a reverential term for an elderly monk

เจ้าคุณ *chao khun* — a monk who holds *phra racha khana* rank (see link above) but not used for the

Sangharaja (Supreme Patriarch, Head of the Buddhist Order): **พระสังฆราช**

Other special vocabulary:

to be ordained: **บวช**

general term for a monk (noun or pronoun): **พระภิกษุ**

general term for a novice (noun or pronoun): **เณร**

first-person pronoun used by monks: **อาตมา**

Sangha or community of monks: **สังฆ์** or **พระสงฆ์**

laity: **โยม** Also used as a pronoun for laity when monks address them.

to invite (a monk): นิมนต์ For example, ผมอยากจะนิมนต์ท่านไปสวดมนต์ที่บ้าน (I would like to invite you to chant at my house.)

to eat: ฉัน

pre-noon meal: เพล พระกำลังฉันเพล (The monks are eating the pre-noon meal.)

a monk's residence: กุฏิ

to rest, nap or sleep: จำวัด For example, หลวงปู่จำวัดอยู่บนกุฏิ

to bathe: สระน้ำ

the rainy season retreat: พรรษา And ... !เข้าพรรษา (to enter the rainy season retreat) ออกพรรษา (to go out of the rainy season retreat) Also, ท่านบวชกี่พรรษา (How many years have you been in the monkhood?)

the monk's alms bowl: บาตร (Please do not refer to this object as a "begging bowl.")

the term for putting food in the monk's bowl in the morning: ตักบาตร

the term for monks' going out on morning alms rounds: บิณฑบาต For example, ตอนเช้าพระออกไปบิณฑบาตทุกวัน (Every morning, the monks go out on alms rounds.)

Essentially, the only thing a monk can ask for is drinking water. Other than that, things need to be offered to monks. So...

to offer a gift of something to a monk: ถวาย

offering items to a monk (often in connection with a ritual): ประเคนของ

Information on how to offer items and what foods should not be offered, click <http://www.kalyanamitra.org/culture/index31.html>

What monks eat for breakfast: <http://www.thaibuddhist.com/what-do-monks-eat-for-breakfast>

One tricky term worth noting: ภาวะ versus กรรม Be careful of vowel length when discussing these concepts with monks. The former is "sex or passion" and the latter is "karma."

Characteristics (นิสัย) of monks. Monks should be: เจริญ, สงบเจริญ, จิตสงบ, มีอารมณ์สงบ, สำรวม meditation: (การทำ) กรรมฐาน Two basic types... สมาธิ (samadhi) วิปัสสนา (vipassana)