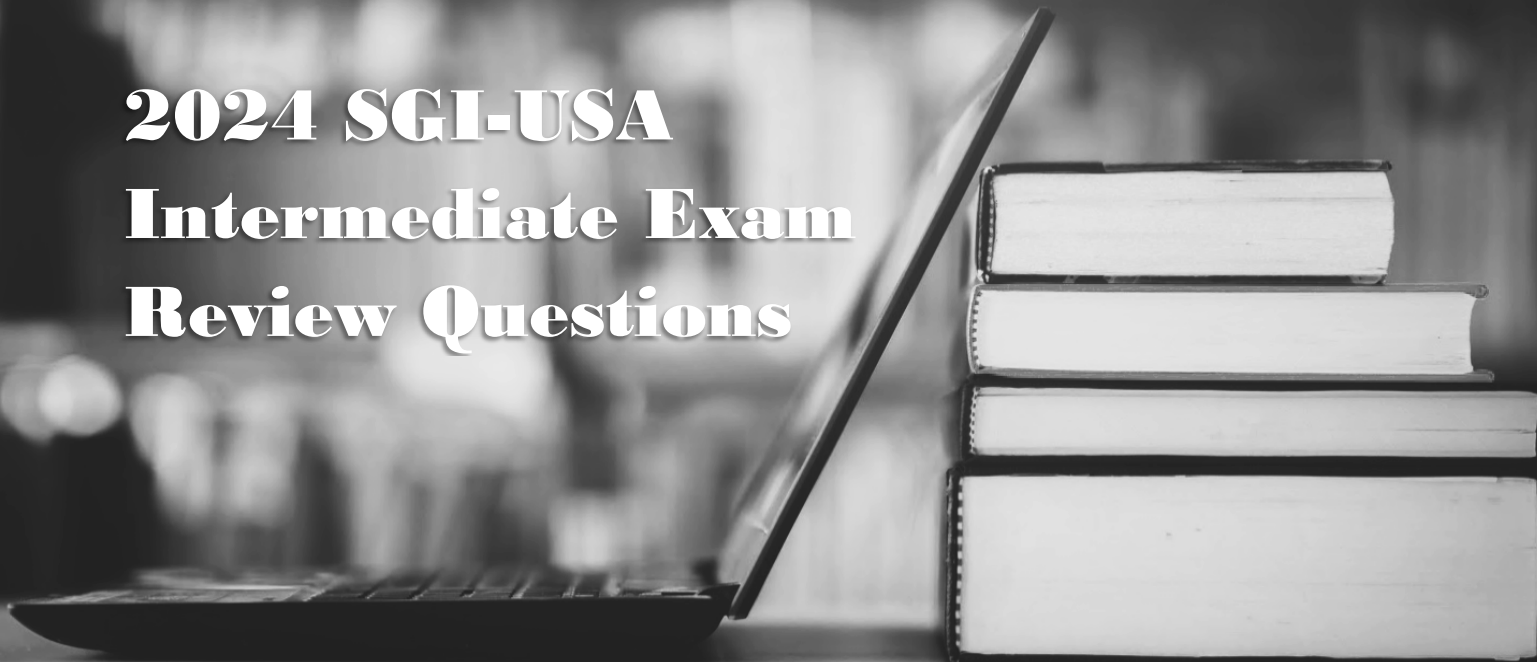


2024 SGI-USA Intermediate Exam Review Questions



Buddhist study is a vital element for maintaining throughout our lives a consistent Buddhist practice and an ever-deepening faith. As Ikeda Sensei wrote: “Buddhist study is particularly important. Through your efforts in Buddhist study, you establish your path in life. If you stop applying yourselves to Buddhist study, you will forget why you are practicing, be swayed by your emotions or self-interests and ultimately come to live and act in a disingenuous and calculating manner” (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, revised edition, p. 149).

The SGI-USA study program aims to support this effort through offering exams focused on the study of Nichiren Daishonin’s writings, various Buddhist concepts, the history of the SGI and Nichiren Buddhism, and Ikeda Sensei’s commentaries.

In December, the SGI-USA will hold the Intermediate Exam. SGI-USA members who passed the Introductory Exam, the study program’s first level, are eligible to take this exam.

WHAT IS IT?

The Intermediate Exam is the second level of the SGI-USA’s study program, focusing on key concepts and ideas expounded in the Lotus Sutra and by Nichiren Daishonin, passages from Nichiren’s writings as well as the history of the Soka Gakkai.

The exam is a pass/no pass graded exam, offered only in English, with 20 multiple-choice questions.

WHO CAN TAKE IT?

SGI-USA members who have passed the Introductory Exam can take the Intermediate Exam.

WHEN IS IT AND HOW TO PREPARE FOR IT?

This year, the exam will be held on December 7 and 8, 2024.

This exam covers the latter half of *The Basics of Nichiren Buddhism* booklet (pp. 117–96). The booklet can be purchased at local SGI-USA bookstores and online at <https://bookstore.sgi-usa.org/>.



The material is also accessible on the SGI-USA membership portal (portal.sgi-usa.org) by clicking “My Exams,” the “Exam Study Guides” tab, then “Intermediate Exam.”

Review questions with corresponding page numbers in *The Basics of Nichiren Buddhism* are provided on the following pages to aid in studying for the exam. Please contact your local leaders for exam locations, times and other details. Happy studying!

2024 SGI-USA INTERMEDIATE EXAM REVIEW QUESTIONS

REPUDIATING THE ERRORS OF THE NICHIREN SHOSHU PRIESTHOOD UNDER NIKKEN

1. Who are “enemies of the Lotus Sutra,” and what sorts of acts do they commit? (See *The Basics of Nichiren Buddhism*, pp. 118–19)

2. Of the “five cardinal sins,” _____
or actions that create disruption and division among the body of Buddhist practitioners, is extremely serious as it destroys the Buddha’s teachings and deludes people, causing them to fall into unhappiness. This is the gravest offense that Nikken committed. (See *Basics*, 123)

3. A doctrine of the Nikken sect regards the high priest as infallible and an object of worship or veneration. What is correct faith in Nichiren Buddhism based on? (See *Basics*, 123–24)

4. The Nikken Sect claims that the high priest is an infallible object of worship or veneration. In Twenty-six Admonitions of Nikko, what does Nikko Shonin say about following those who go against the Buddha’s Law and propound their own views? (See *Basics*, 123–24)

5. Nikken and his followers hold an erroneous view that there is a mysterious and exclusive heritage passed on only from one high priest to the next and that the high priest is the single entity that embodies the oneness of the Person and the Law. In contrast, what is this heritage as described by Nichiren Daishonin? (See *Basics*, 126)

6. How does Nichiren Buddhism view positions of hierarchy between clergy and laity? (See *Basics*, 127)

7. In contrast to the Nikken sect's assertion that funeral services must be conducted by priests for the deceased to attain Buddhahood, based on Nichiren's teaching, what determines one's attainment of Buddhahood? (See *Basics*, 128)

8. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood excommunicated the SGI on November 28, 1991, which Soka Gakkai members consider the day they achieved their spiritual independence. Freeing themselves from the chains of the corrupt and misguided priesthood, Soka Gakkai members have emerged around the globe, dedicating themselves to what? (See *Basics*, 129)

NICHIREN DAISHONIN AND THE LOTUS SUTRA

9. The truth or reality of all things that Buddhas, through their vast and profound wisdom, are able to perceive is called the _____.

Once one perceives this reality, one understands that all phenomena and their true aspect are not two separate things but that all phenomena are in fact manifestations or expressions of the true aspect. Therefore, all phenomena and their true aspect can never be divided or separated. (See *Basics*, 134)

10. What does the Lotus Sutra's "Life Span of the Thus Come One" chapter reveal about Shakyamuni's enlightenment? (See *Basics*, 137)

11. After Shakyamuni's passing, when will the Bodhisattvas of the Earth actually appear, and what exactly is the great Law they will spread when they do? (See *Basics*, 139-40)

12. In “The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” Nichiren Daishonin writes: “Now, no matter what, strive in faith and be known as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and remain my disciple for the rest of your life. If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a _____
_____. And if you are a _____
there is not the slightest doubt that you have been a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha from the remote past” (WND-1, 385). Please write the same phrase in both blanks. (See *Basics*, 140)

13. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging consistently venerates everyone he encounters, no matter who they are, including those who attack or persecute him, bowing in respect and reciting to each a phrase known as _____. (See *Basics*, 141)

14. Nichiren Daishonin states: “The heart of the Buddha’s lifetime of teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra is found in the ‘Never Disparaging’ chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his _____
_____” (WND-1, 851–52). (See *Basics*, 142)

15. “Emergence of the Treasure Tower,” the Lotus Sutra’s 11th chapter, describes six difficult and nine easy acts, which emphasize the great difficulty of accepting and spreading the sutra in the time after Shakyamuni Buddha’s passing. The Buddha calls on bodhisattvas to make a great vow to propagate the sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. Why is it so difficult to propagate the Lotus Sutra? (See *Basics*, 143)

16. “Encouraging Devotion,” the Lotus Sutra’s 13th chapter, contains a passage known as the twenty-line verse describing the “three powerful enemies.” Among the three powerful enemies, what is the third powerful enemy and what do they do? (See *Basics*, 144)

17. How did Nichiren Daishonin prove the validity of Shakyamuni’s words in the Lotus Sutra? (See *Basics*, 145)

18. So that all people of the Latter Day of the Law could attain enlightenment, in what form did the Daishonin express his fundamental life state of Buddhahood and what was it modeled after? (See *Basics*, 146)

THREE THOUSAND REALMS IN A SINGLE MOMENT OF LIFE

19. Regarding the principle of “three thousand realms in a single moment of life,” Ikeda Sensei expresses this principle in describing the theme of his novel *The Human Revolution*: “A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and, further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind.” How does his statement relate to this principle? (See *Basics*, 150)

20. What does the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds say about the potential of anyone in any of the Ten Worlds? (See *Basics*, 152)

21. Among the “ten factors of life,” the tenth and final factor, “consistency from beginning to end,” means that all the other factors are consistent from the beginning to end, from the first factor, _____, to the ninth factor, _____. For example, a life presently in the world of Buddhahood will have the _____ of Buddhahood, the nature of Buddhahood, all the way through the _____ of Buddhahood, and the same principle applies to each of the Ten Worlds. (See *Basics*, 152–55)

22. What does the principle of the “three realms of existence” teach us? (See *Basics*, 156)

EMBRACING THE GOHONZON IS IN ITSELF OBSERVING ONE’S OWN MIND

23. Nichiren Daishonin cites the analogy of bird in a cage singing, attracting birds in the sky who gather around, causing the caged bird to strive to get out. Explain what this symbolizes. (See *Basics*, 158)

24. The Gohonzon reflects the world of Buddhahood within ordinary people and allows them to observe it and bring it forth. This is why it is often viewed as a _____.
(See *Basics*, 160)

25. Nichiren called the Gohonzon the “_____,” because it exemplifies the intent of the Buddha to spread the Mystic Law in the evil age after his passing and the spirit to open the way for kosen-rufu. (See *Basics*, 163)

26. The Daishonin writes: “Shakyamuni’s practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo. If we _____ these five characters, we will naturally be granted the same _____ as he was” (WND-1, 365). (See *Basics*, 165)

THE MISSION AND PRACTICE OF THE BODHISATTVAS OF THE EARTH

27. What passage from the Lotus Sutra articulates the abiding wish or the compassionate desire of the Buddha? (See *Basics*, 167)

28. Based on the Lotus Sutra’s 15th chapter, who are the Bodhisattvas of the Earth? And in the sutra’s 21st chapter, what do they do? (See *Basics*, 168)

29. Nichiren Daishonin awakened to the Law within his own life—the Law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, which is the essence of the Lotus Sutra—and he vowed to become the “pillar,” the “eyes” and the “great ship” to protect, support and guide all people to enlightenment. Regarding this task, what did the Daishonin urge his followers to do? (See *Basics*, 169–70)

30. The Soka Gakkai has emerged in modern times in accord with the Buddha’s intent and has taken responsibility to fulfill the vow for kosen-rufu, succeeding to the will of Nichiren Daishonin as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. How can the Bodhisattvas of the Earth be described in today’s world? (See *Basics*, 170–71)

31. The stronger one's faith and practice becomes, the more strongly the three obstacles and four devils and the three powerful enemies will emerge to interfere. What can we do for obstacles to cease functioning as devils? (See *Basics*, 172)

32. In order to attain Buddhahood, it is not enough to simply refrain from committing slander oneself. It is also important to strictly admonish and challenge the slander of others, endeavor to correct them and free them from the path to suffering. What practice does this effort describe? (See *Basics*, 174)

33. The Daishonin refers to a Buddhist principle called the "precept of adapting to local customs." What does this principle teach? (See *Basics*, 175)

THE LINEAGE AND TRADITION OF BUDDHIST HUMANISM

34. What did Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, teach is the noblest and most admirable way for people to live with true dignity? (See *Basics*, 178–79)

35. After examining various Buddhist sutras and finding the answer in the Lotus Sutra, _____ vowed to identify and carry on the Buddhist teachings capable of realizing genuine happiness for all people and took action in exact accord with its teachings, even at the risk of his life. (See *Basics*, 180)

36. The _____ rediscovered the tradition of humanistic philosophy and practice originating with Shakyamuni and inherited by Nichiren Daishonin, recognizing it and treasuring it as the very essences of Buddhism. (See *Basics*, 182–83)

37. What are the three treasures of Buddhism? (See *Basics*, 183)

38. What does the treasure of the Buddhist Order refer to? (See *Basics*, 183)

STUDYING THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

39. In “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” Nichiren says that the way by which people can resolve their suffering and bring peace and security to society is by reforming “the tenets that we hold in our heart.” When we transform our hearts and minds, what tenet or ideal should we base them on? (See *Basics*, 189)

40. Being able to see the true nature of our mind, or attain enlightenment, is not something achieved through conceptual thought or meditative practice. That is why in “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” Nichiren writes, “This Gohonzon also is found _____
_____.” (See *Basics*, 195)