

Bringing the Museum Home: Buddha's Birthday

Buddha's Birthday (also known as Vesak) is celebrated around the world and commemorates the birth of the Buddha in around 563 BC. Born a prince, Buddha gave up his privileged royal life and became a holy man, ultimately reaching Enlightenment.

A mandala is an ancient symbol used in Buddhism to represent the universe. Mandalas are usually made up of a square representing the earth, containing a circle representing the heavens. Both shapes have a shared centre representing the truth.

A mandala usually has eight sections to represent the **Eight-fold Path** that leads to Enlightenment.

The Eight-fold Path

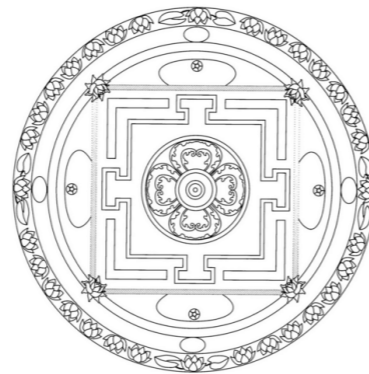
- Right seeing or understanding
- Right thought
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood or work
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right contemplation or meditation

Mandalas are sometimes used during meditation to focus the attention. The mandala is looked at so often that even the smallest detail of these complex pictures can be remembered. In Tibetan Buddhism, monks often make mandalas from sand. Starting at the centre point and working outward the monks spend several days creating an intricate pattern by carefully arranging coloured sand. Once complete, the monks will sweep up the sand and pour it into running water, usually a river, to spread the blessings of the mandala.

You can create your own mandala at home. Here are two different things to try:

Colour in a mandala

1. Print the mandala template, or try drawing your own.
2. Using coloured pens or tiny bits of coloured paper, decorate the mandala. If you have some paints, try painting it.



Jam jar lid mandala

1. Take a clean jam jar lid and press a small amount of blue tak, plasticine or homemade salt dough into it, covering it completely
2. Press dry pasta, lentils, beans, rice, old buttons, leaves, twigs or stones from your garden or pieces of coloured paper into the layer of plasticine to create your own unique pattern

