

## A BASIC FORMAT FOR SPELLCASTING AND RITUAL

This is my generic format for spellcasting and for rituals. It's set up for one person, but could be easily adapted for use in a group setting (for instance, you'd make the circle larger, and would say "WE thank the Goddess" rather than "I thank the Goddess"). Of course, you can change it as you see fit; nothing is cast in stone. It borrows heavily from the writings of Silver RavenWolf, Gerina Dunwich, and Starhawk.

A word of warning: one writer has said that the way magick works is by making everything fall apart. The Deities have a sense of humor. Don't be surprised if you get what you ask for ... but in an unusual container.

Before you do anything else, write out a Statement of Purpose. Make a list of everything that you want to ask for: guidance about your job, healing for a friend's daughter, success in some upcoming endeavor, healing of emotional hurts, accuracy in divination, strength to put up with the jerk you work with at your office, wisdom to make a special decision. This is the "meat" of the session. Be "generally specific," i.e., define the qualities of what you want but leave yourself open as to HOW it will manifest. Remember that you're not giving a grocery list to the deities; you're asking for their help.

Of course, you don't even have to ASK for anything; you can circle to celebrate a Sabbat, or just to "hook up" with the Other Side.

I usually take a shower just before doing ritual. I then put on comfortable clothing and an amulet, usually a pentagram.

If you aren't sure which way is north, consult a compass. When you set up your altar (and later, when you call the quarters), you'll need to know what direction you're facing.

And I always lock up the household pets or put them out in the back yard. I don't want them wandering into the circle during ritual. The word "sacred" (as in "sacred space") means SET APART. It's special. Let the animals graze somewhere else.

One more thing: Don't bring a watch into the circle. If there's a clock on the wall, cover it. When you're in sacred space, there is no time. If you have some kind of time deadline - for instance, your husband is coming home at 5:30 - set a timer to go off in an adjacent room.

Then: gather up the materials you're going to use and take them to the place where you'll cast the circle (you may need to move the furniture back). After you've cast a few circles, you'll find yourself keeping most of your equipment in one place (such as a cardboard box). I use:

A candle ... one of those little "tea lights" will do.

Salt (preferably sea salt).

A bowl (or cauldron) to hold the salt.

A bowl (or cauldron) to hold the water.

A wand (it's best if you make it yourself) or an athame.

Incense, and an incense burner.

A besom

A bell (any small bell will do; you can buy an altar bell at any occult supply store).

An altar cloth (the one I use has a Goddess pattern on it).

One or more statues of deities.

Tarot cards (optional). You may figure that if you're going to be doing some serious communing with the Deities, it's a perfect time to consult the cards - while you're inside the Circle.

Next, I set up the altar. Nothing magickal is happening at this point; it's just like setting the table before dinner. You could use a coffee table, or just turn a cardboard box upside down. I always set up the altar OUTSIDE (to the north of) the circle that I cast. My altar faces SOUTH; when I face the altar during ritual, I'm facing NORTH.

a. Spread the altar cloth over the altar.

b. FIRE. Put the (unlit) candle on the SOUTH (near) edge of the altar. I have an extra cauldron (4" tall), and I put a tea candle inside it. This makes it easier on my eyes when I'm looking at the altar during ritual (the candle's flame isn't right in my face).

c. WATER. Place your cauldron/bowl of water in the WEST.

d. EARTH. Place your cauldron/bowl of salt on the NORTH side of the altar.

e. AIR. Place your incense (in the burner) in the EAST.

f. Arrange your deity image(s), and any other objects that feel special to you, among the other "furniture" on the altar. Use any arrangement that feels good to you and appears balanced. You could include a basket of dried leaves on Samhain, or a photograph; a bowl of fruit on Ostara; etc. Set it up so that it's personal and meaningful to you.

### 1. Purify the Space.

Visualize a circle on the floor in front of your altar, to the SOUTH of the altar, about 8 feet in diameter. Take the besom and walk a full circle around the rim of the circle, clockwise (deosil), sweeping AWAY from the circle, to purify the space.

Then walk a full circle AGAIN around the rim of the circle, clockwise, dribbling a "line" of salt (yes, you'll be using the vacuum cleaner after ritual!). Tradition has it that salt repels unfriendly spirits.

### 2. Light the Candle and the Incense.

Remember to be very careful with open flames. If you have an accident with fire, the expression "Never again the burning times" will take on a special significance to you.

### 3. Cast the Circle.

Step into the circle, taking with you —

- a. the wand
- b. the bell
- c. a printout of your ritual format (unless you've memorized it)
- d. your Statement of Purpose;
- e. (optional) tarot cards.

You are about to cast the circle — from the inside.

Step inside the circle and set down everything you've carried in with you (except the wand) on the floor. While still standing up, call the quarters:

Face toward the East and say,

"Guardians of the watchtowers of the East, I summon ye now to witness this rite and guard this circle." Pointing the wand toward the East, use it to draw a pentagram in the air. "So mote it be."

Turn toward the South and say,

"Guardians of the watchtowers of the South, I summon ye now to witness this rite and guard this circle." Pointing the wand toward the South, use it to draw a pentagram in the air. "So mote it be."

Turn toward the West and say,

"Guardians of the watchtowers of the West, I summon ye now to witness this rite and guard this circle." Pointing the wand toward the West, use it to draw a pentagram in the air. "So mote it be."

Finally, turn toward the North and say,

"Guardians of the watchtowers of the North, I summon ye now to witness this rite and guard this circle." Pointing the wand toward the North, use it to draw a fourth pentagram in the air. "So mote it be."

The circle is now cast. You are inside the circle, and are now occupying sacred space. Of course, there will be no going in or out of the circle until it is un-cast (unless you cut a door with your wand).

Sit cross-legged on the floor in the center of the circle, facing the altar.

Speak these words:

"The circle is cast. The Guardians are present. I am now between the worlds ... beyond the bounds of time ... where night and day, birth and death, joy and sorrow, meet as one."

4. Invoke the Deities [Goddess(es), then God(s)].

(I invoke both the Lord and the Lady.)

Ring the bell three times. Then say:

"O Goddess Maiden, I call upon thee; O Goddess Mother, I call upon thee; O Goddess Crone, I call upon thee."

Now call the name(s) of the Goddess as you know her. This is how I invoke the Goddess:

"Come and honor me with thy presence,

Aditi  
Aradia  
Ariadne  
Asherah  
Cailleach  
Cerridwyn  
Cybele  
Danu  
Demeter  
Diana  
Hathor  
Hecate  
Inanna  
Isis  
Lakshmi  
Maat  
Macha  
Morrigan  
Nathor  
Pandrosos  
Quan Yin  
Sekhmet  
Tefnut."

And then I invoke the God:

"O Lord Cernunnos, Herne, Pan, Thoth, Osiris, I call upon thee. Come and honor me with thy presence."

##### 5. Statement of Purpose/Actual Working.

It could be self-initiation; a request for healing for yourself or for others; a request for inner strength; a request for guidance and wisdom about an important decision (marriage, divorce, career,

children); a request for protection for upcoming travel. There is no special format here; just tell the Deities what you want.

Some witches will use a rhyming spell at this point, something written especially for the occasion. For instance:

Goddess of the sacred earth,  
Goddess who gives life and birth,  
Fire, Water, Earth, and Air,  
Hear me as I speak my prayer (etc.).

Here's one from Doreen Valiente (known as The Witches' Rune):

Darksome night and shining moon,  
Hearken to the witches' rune.  
East and west, south and north,  
Hear me now, I call ye forth.  
By the powers of land and sea,  
Be obedient unto me.  
Wand and pentacle, cup and sword,  
Waken ye unto my word.  
Cord and censer, wand and knife,  
Waken all ye into life.  
Powers of the witch's blade,  
Come now as the charge is made.  
Hornéd hunter of the night,  
Work my will with all your might.  
By the strength of moon and sun,  
As I say, it shall be done !

#### 6. Tarot (optional).

Tradition tells us that divination doesn't work if one does it for oneself. In the circle, I use the Tarot for meditation.

#### 7. Meditation (no set amount of time).

No matter what the specific reason was that I circled, I like to take advantage of the fact that the Lord and Lady are with me in a powerful fashion. That's why I always meditate before I open (undo) the circle. Is there something special that they want to tell me today? I want to give them a chance to speak to me.

8. Thank the Deities and the Guardians.

"I honor you, O Goddess, in all your guises. May we walk together in your light and in your love for all time.

"I honor you also, O Lord.

"Guardians of the watchtowers, I thank you for your blessings and your work. Stay if you will; go if you must; hail and farewell!"

9. Open (un-cast) the Circle.

Hold the wand above your head and make several full circles - counter-clockwise (widdershins).

10. Ground the Energy.

Before you stand up (your circle is now "open but unbroken") push both your hands against the floor for 1-2 seconds. This sends your energy back into the earth.

Don't Blow Out Your Candle

There is a tradition to the effect that you shouldn't blow out your candle(s) after a ritual. The reason is that it uses one element (air) to extinguish another element (fire); or it is said that you are "dissipating" the energy that you just conjured up. In any case, I always finish up by using a snuffer, or bare fingers, to extinguish the candle.