

CASTING A MAGIC CIRCLE

(note: In the podcast episode I described the casting of a magic circle more or less from the point of view of a participant in a group ritual. In the exercise that follows the instructions are geared towards casting a circle as a solitary operation. Simple modifications can be made if working in a group setting.)

Setting Up

Before anything, please be sure that you tidy up the room in which you are going to perform your magic, and remove all distraction objects or cover them with a cloth. Either remove all clocks, cover them or turn them so they are facing away from view. No watches should ever be worn in a circle due to the desire to be in a “time that is not a time and a place that is not a place; between the worlds and beyond.” Lock the door, close the drapes and turn off, unplug or take the phone off the hook.

Set your altar up in the center of where the circle is to be cast, facing east or north (depending on where you choose to begin casting your circle and evoking the quarters). In my beginning classes, I always use east as my starting point, and therefore this exercise is oriented toward the east but you may modify it of course. On your altar should be your two white altar candles, your water vessel with water in it, some sea salt, your thurible, incense charcoal, incense (for purifications as well as invocations), altar pentacle, anointing oil (some olive oil with a little essential oil of sandalwood or frankincense is perfect), Chalice for libations, cakes and wine (you can use juice etc. instead of wine), a candle for each deity you are going to invoke: God (often white) on the right, and Goddess (often black) on the left (or if you are only going to invoke one deity place the candle in the center of the altar), matches, athame, and wand (for invocations—this is optional). Next, you will want to either mentally or physically mark out where your circle boundary will be, and place your quarter candles in their appropriate directions on the boundary (East-yellow, south-red, west-blue, and north-green).

Step #1 Grounding and Centering

Assuming that you have already prepared yourself with a ritual bath, light the white altar candles and be seated before your altar (if you have trouble with back support, it is highly recommended that you use a chair at your altar). Begin to breathe fully and deeply, and relax each part of your body in turn. Once completely relaxed, feel roots extending from the base of your spine, through the floor and into the earth below. Stretch the roots down to the core of the earth which you see as a bright ball of white light. Breathe, and pull some of this energy up into the base of your spine and let it flow gently through your entire body, cleansing, purifying and relaxing you as you do. Then pull the energy up and out through the crown of your head, seeing it spill back down on to the earth. Pull the energy from the base of your spine and out through the crown of your head a few times, then relax. The object here isn't to raise intense power, it is to purify, relax, balance and connect with the earth's energy.

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Step #2
Purification of the Space

Begin by placing your pentacle before you. Place your water vessel with water in it on the pentacle. Place the tip of your athame into the surface of the water and see the water become imbued with the electric blue power light, saying: "I exorcise thee o creature of water and cast out from the all impurities and malignancies, letting only good remain. So mote it be!" Remove water vessel from the pentacle and set it aside. Take then three measures of salt (using the tip of the blade as the measure), and place it directly on the pentacle in the center of the star. Touch the salt with the tip of the athame, empowering it with the light of power and say, "Blessings be upon thee o creature of earth, I cast out all that is evil and let only good abide herein wherefore I bless and consecrate thee that thou may aid me. So mote it be!" Pick up the pentacle and tip it so that the salt falls into the water.

Place the vessel containing the salt and water back onto the pentacle and stir the mixture nine times, deosil, saying, "salt and water, earth and sea, no spell nor unknown purpose be, except in true accord with me. As I will, so mote it be!"

Pick up the vessel in your hands and, beginning in the center of the circle (at the altar) begin to sprinkle, or asperge the salt and water lightly. Be sure to get underneath the altar table, then begin walking a deosil spiral out, asperging with the salt water and completing a total of three circumambulations, thereby covering the entire area in which the circle will be cast. While purifying with the salt water, chant the purification chant above ("salt and water, earth and sea...") When you have completed the purification, return to the altar and replace the water vessel to the side of the pentacle.

Next, place the thurible in which an incense charcoal has been lit, onto the pentacle (be sure to have some sand or gravel on the bottom to insulate from heat). Point the tip of your athame to the coal, seeing it be charged with the blue power and say, "I exorcise thee o creature of fire, and cast out from thee all impurities and malignancies, letting only good remain. So mote it be!" Remove the thurible from the pentacle and set it aside.

Now take three measures of incense from the tip of your blade and place on the pentacle in the same manner as you did the salt. Touch the incense with the athame's tip, charging it with power, saying, "Blessings be upon thee, o creature of air, I cast out all that is evil and let only good abide herein; wherefore I bless and consecrate thee that thou may aid me. So mote it be!" Pick up the pentacle and tip it so that the incense falls onto the coal in the thurible and begins to smoke.

Place the thurible of smoking incense on the pentacle, point the blade into it, seeing the smoke be filled with electric blue light and say, "Creature of fire, this charge I give: no evil in my presence live; creature of air, this charge I lay: no evil in my presence stay. As I will so mote it be!"

Pick up the thurible, and beginning again in the center (remember to get under the altar!), slowly spiral out a total of three times, this time swinging the thurible from side to side, making sure to allow the smoke to permeate all parts of the space. Be sure that during the purification by smoke that you chant the purification chant throughout ("creature of fire this charge I give..."). When this purification is complete, return to the altar and place the thurible to the side of the pentacle.

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Take a moment now and just sense the space. Does it feel pure and light? if not, simply repeat each cleansing until you do feel a change. When you are satisfied with your results, affirm it by saying "So mote it be!"

Step #3

Creating the Energy Boundary

Take your athame from the altar and move (always deosil) to the northeast—about halfway between the green and the yellow candles. Point your blade to the ground where you have chosen to lay your boundary. Recall your link to the center of the earth, and begin to fill your body with power. See and feel this power move through your arm and out the tip of the blade, falling directly on the floor where you are pointing. Slowly move deosil, seeing your circle strongly taking form. As you cast it, speak firmly the following conjuration: "I conjure thee, o circle of power, that thou be a boundary between the mortal world and the realms of the mighty ones, a guardian and protection which shall preserve and contain the great power I shall raise within thee. As I will, so mote it be!" End directly in the east, overlapping with your starting point. You may want to end by drawing a knot of eternity (a figure eight on its side) to connect the beginning with the end, or suffice with the overlap of energy. Either way, just be certain that there are no gaps in your energy boundary, if there are, repeat this step.

Step 4

Evoking the Watchtowers

You needn't return to your altar after casting the boundary, as the next step begins right in the east. Be sure you have some matches with you (you can set a book to the side of the eastern quarter candle ahead of time). When inscribing the pentagrams, they should be as big as you are. Use your body as a guide. When complete, they should be such that if you were a pentagram, you would be looking at a mirror image of yourself.

You are a living pentagram. You can identify the points of the pentagram on your body in this way. Stand with your feet a little more than shoulder distance apart and your arms outstretched at shoulder height:

Above Head: Spirit
Left Hand: Air
Left Foot Earth
Right Foot: Fire
Right Hand Water

To draw the evoking Pentagram, begin at the top (above your head about a 45 degree angle of your outstretched arm) and draw down toward your left foot, the Earth foot, then over to where your outstretched right hand would be (water), then over to where your your outstretched left hand would be (air), down to your right foot (fire) and up to spirit (just above your head again).

(Please refer to the document called "Support Material" for diagrams on how to draw a pentagram.

Begin in the east (facing the yellow quarter candle), by saluting the quarter with your blade. Speak the following evocation, slowly, with much feeling. *"Guardians, watchers, of the east—*

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breath of life for man and beast. Golden eagle, sylph and breeze, power of thought is what you seize. I summon stir and call this night, that you bear witness to this rite. Guard, empower faithfully, this eastern quadrant, blessed be!"

Next inscribe the pentagram. Hold your athame at a forty-five degree angle in front of you directly in line with the crown of your head. The first stroke is a straight line directly to the floor (still pointing the blade in front of you as if it were a mirror image in line with your left foot. The next stroke is a straight line up to the right, arm fully extended in line with your right shoulder. Then a line straight across so that your arm is fully extended but in line with your left shoulder (still tracing the figure in front of you), then down toward the floor in line with your right foot, and finally up to the top to connect with where you started. Finish by drawing a deosil circle around the entire figure, then pierce the very center of the star with your athame and see it fill with yellow light. Once you see it clearly, light the yellow quarter candle in front of you.

Move deosil to the south and stand before the red candle. Salute the quarter with your blade as before, and speak the following evocation, *"Guardians, watchers of the southern gate, ancient fire who knows my fate. Salamanders, lion red, will of life is what you've wed. I summon, stir and call this night, that you bear witness to this rite. Guard, empower faithfully, this southern quadrant, blessed be!"*

Inscribe the evoking pentagram just as you did in the east, but when you pierce the center you charge it with red light. When complete, light the southern candle and move to the west. Salute the west and say, *"Guardians, watchers of the west, the holy grail's eternal quest. Dolphin, nymphs, the hearts desire, the joys and sorrows that never tire. I summon, stir and call this night, that you bear witness to this rite. Guard, empower faithfully, this western quadrant, blessed be!"* Inscribe the pentagram, circle, pierce and charge with blue light. Light the western candle and move to the north.

Salute the north and say *"Guardians, watchers of the north, body of her who brings life forth. Black bull, gnomes, my earth and home, you the rocks and trees and loam. I summon, stir and call this night, that you bear witness to this rite. Guard, empower faithfully, this northern quadrant, blessed be!"*

Inscribe the pentagram, circle it, pierce the center and charge it with green light. Light the northern candle and move again to the east, having come full circle.

Stop for a moment in silent salute to the east; then return to your altar. Take a moment and visualize the circle, and all four pentagrams around you. Visualize the center of the earth as the white core and the roots that you have connected with this core. Now visualize a celestial sphere (if there is a full moon when you are doing your circle, definitely use that as your celestial sphere) the sun, the moon a star in the heavens, directly above you. This is to be your goal when you raise the cone of power.

Step #5

Raising the Cone of Power

Since this is a solitary ritual, you will raise the cone a bit differently than the manner described in the previous section. Begin by being seated before your altar and relaxing. Start taking very deep breaths and as you do, feel energy rising up from the center of the earth, through your extended roots. Keep on breathing and drawing energy until your whole body is tingling and glistening

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with light. Extend your arms out to either side of you, palms open, and as you exhale, send energy out your left arm, seeing it travel around the circle deosil. As you inhale draw the energy back in through your right hand. Keep pulling more and more energy from the earth as you continue to send the energy around the circle out through the left hand and in through the right. Feel it pick up speed, as if it were traveling twice as fast as your breathing, and see it rise like a sheet of pure light. Now either slowly or all at once, raise the energy all the way up to the celestial goal that you have pictured firmly in your mind and see the energy form a tip, attaching it to that heavenly body. Take a few moments to visualize the cone clearly in your mind and make sure it is anchored firmly at the perimeter of the circle.

Step #6

Invoking the God and Goddess

When you are preparing to invoke the presence of a deity, your body language is quite important. There are numerous body positions that are traditionally "invocatory." The one I prefer is simply to stand before the altar with arms outstretched, palms open and facing up. When both the god and the goddess are to be invoked, it is customary in my tradition for the god to be called first, this is of course not mandatory. Begin by lighting the god candle and sprinkling some incense onto the hot coals.

Stand in the invocatory stance and speak your invocation. It is best to write your own, but here is an example: *"Come to me, Lord of the green wood, laughing, merry and young guardian of wild things, protector of those untamed, wild and free. Be with me now in this sacred space and lift up my heart with yours, let me know the joy and passion you know, bring to my eyes the vision of beauty that you see, and to my ears the song of enchantment that only you can sing. Teach me the mysteries, unlock the gates of dream which have kept us apart, and never let me lock you out again! God, bring me your wisdom through joy, and let me receive it with unending gratitude! Blessed Be!"* Take some time to really feel the presence of the god and be desirous of receiving an exalted state from him. Engage an attitude of complete love and surrender.

Next, light the goddess candle and some more incense, and again stand in the invocatory stance. Here is another example of a simple invocation, but please try and compose your own: **"Come to me o sacred maiden, loving, gracious and fresh patroness of field and meadow, princess of the forest. Be with me mother, and receive me into your care. Grant me your nurturing and your protection. Ancient crone, grandmother of all that lives and moves, cut away all that is not your will from my life; teach me the path that you would have me walk, lead the way and I will follow. I will serve you, who is the spirit of love, the power of life itself. Blessed be."** Again take time to feel the presence of the mother and allow her to take you into an even higher state of consciousness. Let go, and deepen your mind, relax and let the Father and Mother take over.

Step #7

The Work

As was stated earlier, the work time is a purely individual matter, and therefore I will not dictate to you at this time of which it should consist. I will make a few suggestions, however. If this is your first year or so in the Craft, much can be said for just relaxing and getting to know the father and mother and enjoying the energy and space that you have prepared. Just sitting and relaxing and deepening further and further your meditative state is probably some of the most powerful

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work you can do. This is a perfect time to work a spell (read the three chapters on spell casting thoroughly and check with your teacher before attempting to work a spell, however). We always celebrate witches sabbats and esbats (even solitary ones) inside of a circle.

Stating positive affirmations, to heighten self esteem, is especially powerful inside a circle, as are guided visualizations, chakra meditations, healings, divinations, scrying, and just about every sort of magical exercise you can imagine. If this is your first or second time casting a circle by yourself, however, you might be a little overwhelmed and just ready to take it all down. That's fine too!

Step #8

The Libations

The cakes and wine are sometimes known as the witch's communion. In a way this is true. We see everything in nature as the embodiment of our Lord and Lady, therefore the wine is their blood and the grain is their body, but we don't regard this as a mystical act of transubstantiation; it is more of a simple recognition that all that we eat and drink comes from the body of nature and we do so with a sense of gratitude and reverence.

Take the chalice and fill it with wine or juice, and place it on the altar, and place the cakes next to it (always have enough cakes and wine for everyone present in the circle, this includes the god and goddess). Place your hands over the cakes and wine and say, "*Great Father and Mother, thank you for your nurturing presence on the earth. As we eat and drink we remember you and are grateful for the loving care you give to us, your children. Blessed Be.*" Then simply eat, drink and be merry!

Step #9

Final Salutations to the Deity

Now it is time to take down the circle. You will do so in the reverse order of how you put it up. First, say farewell to the Lord and Lady. Remember that you wish for them to remain always within your heart but for now you are saying farewell. "Lord and Lady, Thank you for your gracious and loving presence. I invite you to remain with me throughout all time and all space. Stay if you will, leave if you must; Farewell, blessed be." You may either leave the god and goddess candles burning, or extinguish them and save them for next time as you choose (just remember to never leave a candle burning unattended).

Step #10

Earthing the Cone

Begin by imagining the cone clearly around and above you. Breathe the energy of the cone gently back into your body and allow it to slowly drain back into the earth. Some people visualize this as melting wax; others see the cone's strands of energy unraveling. Use whatever visual aid helps you. The important thing is that the energy you raise from the earth gets returned to the earth so that your body, mind and spirit are centered. It often helps to place your open palms flat on the floor and feel all the excess energy drain through the palms back into the earth. If you drain off too much energy, simply pull more up through the roots you have still extended into the earth.

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Step #11
Dismissing the Watchtowers

Remember that whenever you evoke an entity, you must also dismiss that entity and close any portal you have opened through which it entered. Thus we must now dismiss the watchtowers. Begin in the east by saluting the watchtower, and say, "Watchers of the east, I thank you for your power and protection. As you return to your realm, with harm to none, I bid you farewell. Go in peace, blessed be." Trace a banishing pentagram (note that you un-circle it widdershins), and end by pushing the pentagram with your blade and seeing it disappear into the horizon. Some people like to actually close the portal by making a gesture as if drawing closed a curtain. The bottom line is that after you draw the banishing pentagram and un-circle it, do what ever you need to do to convince your self that the portal has been closed (even if it means drawing the pentagram over. Once the portal is closed, extinguish the candle.

Move now to the south, west, and north in turn and repeat the exact process (substituting the appropriate name of the direction in the spoken dismissal) and end with a silent salute to the east.

Step #12
Banishing the Energy Boundary

Begin in the east, by taking your athame and giving a sharp cutting gesture to sever the knot of eternity (if you used one), and then walk the perimeter either deosil or widdershins, this is your choice, seeing the boundary disburse and sink into the ground, saying: "I erase thee o circle of power, and return this ground once more to the mortal world. So mote it be."

Step #13
Final Grounding and Closing

For a few moments, stand or sit quietly and feel the change in energy now that the circle has been opened. Check to make sure that your energy is balanced, and if not perform the grounding and centering exercise again. Say something to the effect of, "The circle is open, blessed be!" Then clap your hands for a few second to be sure all the energy is disbursed. In the support material are diagrams for all of the evoking and banishing pentagrams.