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GLOSSARY OF WICCAN TOOLS

altar cloth

Covering a plain and/or mundane surface to be used as an altar, the cloth may be black, white, or seasonally colored. It may have Elemental symbols and/or a pentagram drawn upon it. Some are plain, some are artistically embellished. The altar cloth can also serve as a wrapper for one or more altar tools, or to preserve a spell.

athame A ritual blade, used to project personal energy on the material and astral planes. *It is not used to cut physical objects.* (Traditionally, a smaller knife, called a "bolline," is used to cut herbs, thread, and other such ingredients of potions and spells.) Hands and fingers serve the same purpose as an athame. Wands (natural twigs or hand-made) can also be substituted.

bell Can represent East and substitute for incense if necessary for health or other reasons. It may also be used to begin and/or end segments of ritual.

bowls Used to represent West, to hold Water, and to hold Salt; used to hold libations/offerings of Cakes and Ale to the Gods. One or more paper cups can serve these purposes.

candles Used to mark the compass Quarters of the Circle, especially South, and burn for the Goddess and God on altars, as well as supplying light and being burned for specific magical purposes. Objects or drawings can Substitute as altar symbols, Quarter markers, and in spells. Images of candles can be used in spells.

censer (or *thurible*)

Something to burn incense in. Anything practical will work; it's better if it's something you can pick up and carry.

chalice or *cup* or *goblet*

Represents the Goddess, represents West, and is used during Cakes and Ale. A plastic or paper cup is fine.

cord Used as a belt for a robe. Traditionally four-and-a-half or nine feet long to be useful in drawing a nine-foot Circle, it's also a tool for knot-tying magic. Color can be used to signify initiatory degree, or correspond with a magical working. For magical purposes, a strand of hair can be substituted; so can short lengths of string or even the sleeve or leg of a garment.

gazing ball

Usually between 1" and 1¾" in diameter if natural and from 3" up if industrially produced, gazing balls are sometimes dark and sometimes clear, with or without color. It is best if there is some imperfection, like bubbles or internal fracture lines, to help refract light. Used to scry. (See **mirror**, below.)

Scrying is gazing, with a question or concern in mind, at a ball, a mirror or a bowl of water to see what images form. The hope is always that the images will suggest or inspire some resolution to the question or concern you have in mind.

libation/offering bowl

Used on the altar to receive/hold libations of "ale" and offerings of "cake" made to the Goddess and God during Cakes and Ale. A plastic or paper cup can serve.

mirror Used to scry, not to check the hair-do. A dark bowl full of water will also work, as will any dark, reflective surface. (See **gazing ball**, above.)

oils In various scents, used to consecrate Tools and worshipers and to catalyze or seal spells. Mineral oil will work; sun screen is oil. You can also use the oil from your skin to seal a spell.

pentacle

The five-pointed star, points connected, with a circle around it, in three dimensions, such as a pendant or earrings, or a candle-holder or other altar piece. However, the terms *pentacle* and *pentagram* (see below) are often used interchangeably.

pentagram

The five-pointed star, points connected, with a circle around it, drawn in two dimensions. ☉ As a whole, it represents the Earth and/or the Universe. Each point represents an Element. Elemental assignments will differ, but the top point is always Spirit. There are some very elaborate models, but a drawing on a piece of paper will work.

Salt or Earth

Used to represent the Element of Earth on the altar. Used for consecration, protection, and purification.

wand

Traditionally the length of your forearm, of some propitious wood, cut at the right phase of the Moon; some are made of copper or silver. A wand channels energy like an athame does, but is more inviting than commanding. Wands can be made of rolled paper when wood or metal is not available.

Not all altar tools are used at every Sabbat or Esbat, but most Wiccans have at least one of each of these tools – and sometimes others – available for use as they see fit. A Wiccan's tools, laid out upon an altar and use in ritual, are symbolic of the way we think the universe works.

An experienced practitioner can work effectively without any Tools at all, or using just what s/he finds in the kitchen or yard. But this is difficult for beginners, and for Wiccans, religious items that might seem non-essential to other faiths can be especially important. These items may not be "required," but for most of us, they are "needed."

Satisfying worship and successful magic require certain mental, psychological, emotional, and energy-working skills. Understanding and following protocol with religious items is an appropriate way to learn the magical and spiritual lessons of various tools and rituals.

These tools should be made available to Wiccans, either individually or as a group, for use at Sabbats and Esbats; it is always possible to make substitutions that do not threaten security. For more information, please feel free to contact Mother Earth Ministries.



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