

ATHEOPAGAN RITUAL PLANNING WORKBOOK

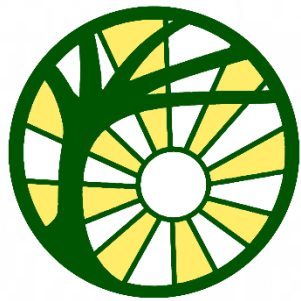
*A step-by-step workbook
for ritual planning*

Introduction

Atheopagans do rituals to celebrate the cycles of the natural world and our connection to nature and the Universe. We do them to mark important milestones in our lives. And we do them to work with our own psychologies, to focus our intentions, heal our wounds, and find wisdom within ourselves.

Ritual design is a creative process, and it can be really fun. But more than that, it enables you to create a ritual that is tailored exactly to what is meaningful and transformative to you. While it can be great to draw inspiration from rituals others have created, at the very least they usually need some adjustment to be “exactly right” for any given individual.

This workbook will walk you through steps to create an effective and meaningful ritual for yourself or for a group. Enjoy this creative process of discovery!



PLANNING YOUR RITUAL

To begin with, what is the **purpose** of your ritual? Is it a Sabbath or full Moon celebration, or a ritual to heal some inner hurt? A ritual for guidance and wisdom, or to align yourself with an intended purpose, or to get some perspective on a problematic situation?

Write out the purpose of your ritual as a short sentence below.

Next, what are the emotional *themes* of your ritual? Anger? Fear? Sadness? Hope? Determination? A longing for freedom? Write out the thematic elements of your ritual as short phrases:

What's the *atmosphere* you would like to create in the ritual? Is it hushed and fervent, or happy and upbeat, or spooky and witchy, or silly, or solemn and grave? Jot down adjectives that describe how you would like the ritual to feel:

What *symbols* are meaningful to you in relation to that theme and atmosphere? What objects, tools, processes, or metaphors do you associate with the theme and atmosphere? List them:

What *sensory experiences* do you associate with the theme?

Sight/sound/scent/taste/touch? List those. It's important to engage multiple senses so the brain can settle into the *Ritual State*—a heightened state of presence and creativity also called “trance” and known by artists as *flow*.

What *activities* do you associate with the themes and meanings of the ritual? List them, too.

All of these things are the raw
materials for your ritual*

**You don't have to use all of them!*

Next, from these materials and on a fresh sheet of paper, create an outline. There is a structure recommended in the Atheopagan Ritual Primer (downloadable at atheopaganism.org) which isn't required, but it's tested and true. It will work.

Its elements are:

Arrival*: creation of safe, sacred space within which to do your ritual

Qualities and Intentions*: calling on those attributes you would like to be with you as you conduct the ritual

Working or “Deep Play”*: the “main event” or “enactment” of the symbolic activities of the ritual

Gratitude*: expressions of appreciation for the gifts you enjoy

Benediction*: completion and closing of the ritual

**The linked posts go into detail about each phase.*

Remember—in conducting a ritual, you seek to provoke the Ritual State: a *feeling*. It is a state of heightened awareness and presence. There isn't a “wrong way” to do it. What works for you is the right way.

Now... Do It!

Lay out a special Focus (or altar) for your ritual using the symbols, tools, and objects you have identified.

Prepare yourself; perhaps take a shower or bath, and/or don a special garment or jewelry. And then begin.

And if the outline for the ritual you have developed turns out not to feel right, toss it! Improvise and go with what you feel.

Afterwards, **be sure to ground** and return to an ordinary mental state before operating a vehicle or machinery. See [this link](#) for more information.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING GROUP RITUALS



If you're planning a group ritual, you follow a similar planning process to planning a solo ritual, while adding some additional considerations:

How many participants will there be? Practically speaking, does the ritual concept work for that many people? What if fewer or more show up—can the ritual accommodate that?

How will participants be engaged during the ritual? Rituals work best when there is a minimum of standing around watching others do something. Give others things to do.

How would you like participants to feel, emotionally—especially during the Working, the “meat” of the ritual?

How will you **engage their senses**? Does the ritual impact participants on multiple sensory levels?

Will you share **food and drink**? If so, what?

What are the **logistics** of the activities you have planned? Are there materials which must be distributed to participants? If so, how will you do that? Will you need something to light a fire or candles with? Will you need a corkscrew? What about separate serving containers and a tray on which to pass a beverage (in the era of COVID-19, PLEASE do this!)? Go over every step of the ritual to be sure you will have the tools and advanced planning so everything can go smoothly.

Consider the **ability** and **comfort level** of participants. Some may need to sit, particularly if the ritual lasts longer than 15 minutes or so. How will the ritual be for people who can't see or hear well? Make sure

participants understand that you are considerate of their needs and it's okay for them to use a chair or otherwise take care of themselves.

How does your ritual concept square with **inclusiveness**? Did you assume a “male and female” sex binary (as in, all the women do one thing and all the men something else)—this can be excluding of people who are nonbinary or genderfluid. Are you equating “black and white” with “bad and good”? Just think about what your ritual might look like to people who aren't like you, and be considerate.

Along those lines, if Pagans of other paths are invited, will they feel **welcome**? That doesn't mean you need to invoke gods, but... well, you don't need to insult the idea of them, either!

Does the ritual work as a cohesive whole? Are all the elements consistent with the *purpose*, the *theme*, and the sensory and symbolic *associations*?

Adjust your outline to take these questions into consideration. Recruit others to help you with different parts of the ritual, so it's not a “one-person show”.

And have fun!