

Incorporating (and actualising) Physical Sigils and Patterns into Ritual Design and Movement

Part One: Pentagram Walking, Weaving and Dancing

by Blayze

In the first part of this workshop we are going to look at some interesting ways of physically working with pentagrams within a ritual space.

Some of you will be familiar with drawing pentagrams over objects, or in the air in front of you. When we draw a pentagram in this way, we are visualising it being created and then living apart from our will.

QUESTION: WHO HAS WORKED WITH ELEMENTAL PENTAGRAMS BEFORE?

Different traditions and magical systems ascribe various symbolic meaning or representations to the points and the lines on the pentagram. For the purpose of this workshop, we will be working with the 5 elements of Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit – with each of them placed in a certain position on the pentagram.

HANDOUT: DIAGRAM OF PENTACLE POINTS

Even though the focus of this workshop is not on the use of visualised inscribed pentagrams in magic and ritual, we will practice them a couple of times just so that you are familiar with the directions. However the deeper meanings behind the pentagrams are probably best left to the teachings of particular paths and traditions. If you already work with visualised inscribed pentagrams, I don't want to confuse you by exploring their mysteries in a way that may not be of your path.

We will instead look and practice how to use them physically in ritual. You can use these techniques to work with your own layers of meaning.

Take a moment to familiarise yourselves with the pentagram directions on the handout. It may look like a jumble of stars and lines, but there is an order to them all.

I use a simple technique for remembering where each element is placed on the pentagram. All you really need to remember is that Earth is in on the lower left hand side. The Sky is above the Earth. Water puts out Fire. Spirit crowns them all.

Air and Water are on the horizontal, Earth and Fire are on the vertical. When drawing pentagrams we go towards the point to invoke, and away from the point to banish.

Let's just practice drawing some of the pentagrams in the air before us. First we will perform the invoking pentagrams for Air, Water, Earth and Fire. Then we will perform their banishing pentagrams.

PERFORM: AIR INVOKING / WATER INVOKING / EARTH INVOKING / FIRE INVOKING

PERFORM: AIR BANISHING / WATER BANISHING / EARTH BANISHING / FIRE BANISHING

Some magical systems work with the Pentagram of Earth only, others with all five. We are going to be working with the pentagrams for Earth, Air, Fire and Water today. There are two pentagrams for invoking Spirit and two for banishing Spirit. Their use is out of the scope of this workshop but I have put them on the handout for you anyway, just so that you know they exist.

You don't necessarily need to use all of the different elemental pentagrams in the one ritual. As I said before, some magical paths only ever use the Earth invoking and Earth Banishing pentagrams.

However, knowing the other points can be useful as they can help you focus on a particular element.

Now we are going to do some practical exercises in working with physical pentagrams.

Walking Pentagrams

Walking pentagrams are a great way of moving participants around a ritual space, either as a group or individually.

If participants are practiced at walking pentagrams, then all that is needed in the ritual space are markers for the 5 points. However, most of the time it is easier if the pentagram is laid out upon the ground. This can be done by marking the ground in a contrasting colour. What you use generally depends upon the surface you are working with. You could use chalk, flour, salt, crystals, flower petals, grains. Whatever substance suits the ritual and the space. Since we will be dancing upon the pentagram later in the ritual, we are using rope and tent pegs so that pentagram doesn't move or become scuffed. When we used to have our temple in our garage we had a semi-permanent pentacle marked upon the concrete in thin strips of coloured gaffer tape. Not the most magical of materials, but it worked.

Once you have decided on the material to be used for the pentagram and marked it upon the ground, you can then use it in various ways.

Walking the pentagram individually

- Have everyone in the circle, then one person walks the invoking pentagram. At the close they walk the banishing pentagram
- Have everyone in the circle, then four people individually walk one of the elemental invoking pentagrams. This can be done one after the other, or at the same time. However, since the Air and Water pentagrams utilise the same horizontal line to start, this may not be practical. Again, they would walk the banishing pentagrams at the close of the ritual.
- A variation on having four people walk the pentagram, invoking each element, is to have someone standing in the centre of the pentagram. They are then elementally charged as the pentagrams form around them. Or trapped. It really depends on why you are doing this. You could also use the same technique with an object in the centre. We have built up pentagrams around a maypole to charge it before.
- You can also have the pentagram walkers walk the circle first, then their pentagram, and then bring everyone in to the circle.
- This really depends on where the pentagram walking is occurring in the ritual and how you want to layer the energies

- If everyone is already in a circle, the circle can move around the edge whilst the pentagrams are walked. This creates a layering and spinning of energies.
- As each person walks the pentagram, those standing(or moving) in the circle can chant or intone something appropriate to the ritual and the tradition.

PERFORM: 4 VOLUNTEERS TO WALK THE ELEMENTAL INVOKING PENTAGRAMS ONE AT A TIME.

PERFORM: 4 VOLUNTEERS TO WALK THE ELEMENTAL BANISHING PENTAGRAMS ONE AT A TIME.

Walking the pentagram in groups

- Start everyone off standing around the circle. They then all walk around the circle and the leader breaks off from the circle at the spirit (top) point of the pentagram. They then move to Earth (bottom left), to water (top right), to Air (top left), to Fire (bottom right) to Spirit and then back to Earth and then re-join the circle. They can weave in and out of the people still walking.
- You would do the same to banish. Just have the leader start from Earth and then go to Spirit etc. If you use opposite circle directions to open and close a ritual, then you could perform the invoking circle in the circle opening direction and the banishing circle in the circle closing direction.
- If you are working in a ritual setting where participants are broken up into elemental groups beforehand. Then each group can walk their elemental pentagrams at the appropriate point in the ritual. This is a good way to build active participation into the ritual.
- You could just have everyone already standing on the pentagram, and it is an object that is passed in the invoking pentagram shape. To move everyone into the pentagram position, one person walks the pentagram and starts and stops at Spirit. The next person moves and stops just behind the first person and so on back until everyone is standing upon the pentagram. This will depend upon the number of participants and the size of the circle.
- If you look at all of the points and angles that make up the pentagram, you can work out how many people you could move around the pentagram to just be standing on points – rather than in single file along the lines. You can also work out if they need to be able to reach out to each other to pass an object around the pentagram.

PERFORM: WALK THE EARTH INVOKING THEN THE EARTH BANISHING PENTAGRAM AS A GROUP. START IN A CIRCLE AND BREAK AWAY.

Pentagram journeys

- You can also create a ritual in stages where you walk the pentagram and stop at each point. At the point will be a person who is representing that element. They may say something to the participant, give them an object, cleanse them etc. The participants are walking the pentagram as, for example invoking earth, but on their journey they experience how earth relates to the other elements. Eg Earth of Earth, Earth of Fire, Earth of Water, Earth of Air, Earth of Spirit. When the first person walking gets to earth (from Spirit) and then moves to the 2nd point of Water, the next person can start their journey. This means there are five mini rituals happening at once, all flowing in the shape of an earth invoking pentagram.

- If the group performing the ritual is experienced with elemental and elemental combination magic, it could be that there are no guardians at the points, just an object. As each participant journeys, they perform some task at the point and then move on. They may be given a small pot of earth in spirit. They travel to earth and plant a seed in the pot. They then go to water and pour water onto the soil and seed. They go to air, smudge or cense the pot and blow on it to represent the wind that will carry the new seeds when the plant is grown or a breath of life, then to fire where they run a candle around the pot to represent the sun that will help the plant to grow, then back to Spirit and then to the outside of the circle.

If you know the techniques for walking physical pentagrams, you can basically apply them to many different ritual outcomes. Just use your imagination.

Just a note on drawing pentagrams: when drawing a pentagram in the air, we will often perform a sixth stroke to seal the pentagram. You can do this with the physical pentagrams as well. It just depends on the ritual and how people are moving around the space.

Weaving Pentagrams

If you don't want to go to the trouble of laying out a physical pentagram upon the ground, there are still ways to incorporate physical pentagrams into rituals and layer the energies accordingly. Having participants weave a pentagram in ritual is a good way to stimulate active participation in a ritual. It does take a bit of practice to perform smoothly though.

Weaving hands

- Weaving hands together to form a pentagram is simple and requires no props.
- The technique for weaving a pentagram is the same whether weaving hands, staves, brooms or wands.
- Have five people step into the centre of the circle and form an inner circle / pentagon.
- One at a time each person extends their right hand towards the person two away from them (on their right).
- That person then extends their left hand and they both grip.
- Go around the circle doing this until each person has offered their right hand and received with their left. This is an excellent way of passing energy.
- Try to weave arms over and under. This comes with practice.
- The actual pattern is:
 - 1 points to 3 and catches 4
 - 2 points to 4 and catches 5
 - 3 points to 5 and catches 1
 - 4 points to 1 and catches 2
 - 5 points to 2 and catches 3
- With practice the 5 participants should be able to do this simultaneously to great effect. It does produce a different energy than weaving the pentagram one by one.
- If desired, the five can then walk or dance in a circle with their hands still woven together.
- This pentagram can also be woven around a person standing in the centre. Can be a bit squishy but also produces a very intense result.

- If each person is representing an element and you wish the pentagram to invoke a particular element, then number 1 becomes the starting point for that elemental pentagram. E.g for an Earth invoking pentagram, 1 would be Spirit and 3 would be Earth.
- Un-doing the pentagram can be simultaneous or un-woven individually in the direction of the banishing pentagram. With the Earth example, 3 would let go of 1's hand first etc.

PERFORM: PENTAGRAM – WEAVING HANDS. BREAK PARTICIPANTS INTO GROUPS OF FIVE TO PRACTICE

Extract from AWC 2006 Ostara Ritual by Blayze

The two Guardians of each element move to the centre of the circle. They leave their elemental items at the base of the banners planted in the ground.

The females form a circle of joined hands. The males line up in a star formation with the HP standing for Spirit.

Earth Male: *We stand for the Earth*

Earth Female: *The Stone*

Earth Male: *And the Shield*

Air Male: *We stand for the Air*

Air Female: *The Wind*

Air Male: *And the Sword*

Fire Male: *We stand for the Fire*

Fire Female: *The Flame*

Fire Male: *And the Spear*

Water Male: *We stand for the Water*

Water Female: *The Wave*

Water Male: *And the Cauldron*

HP: *We stand for the Spirit*

HPS: *The Unification*

HP: *And the Egg*

Those in the pentagram join hands at each call of the HP

HP: *Sword to Spirit
Spirit to Shield
Spear to Sword
Cauldron to Spear
Shield to Cauldron
Cauldron to the Circle of the Season
So Mote It Be!*

All: *So Mote It Be!*

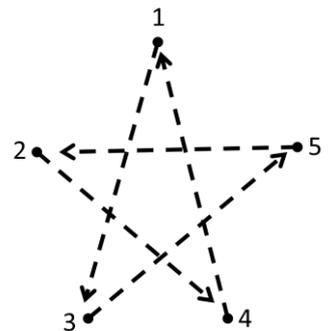
The males now stand in a pentagram with a circle of females surrounding them.

HPS: *5 is the star at the centre of all
The circle surrounds... never ending
All of you create and form the Temple of Truth!
Join hands in the circle.*

HPS then casts the circle.

Weaving staves

- Weaving staves is performed in the same patterns as weaving hands. However, care has to be taken not to poke the other people with one's staff. When you receive a staff, do so in the hand NOT holding your own staff. You can then bring your hands together to hold both of them at the point.
- Thick staves are, of course, less bendy and will not sit flat.
- There are two methods for safely weaving staves
 - Have each person point their staff towards the feet of the person receiving their staff. The staves are then slowly raised up to form the woven pentagram
 - Have each person raise their staff vertically and then lower it, pointing towards their receiver.
 - Which method is used can depend on the nature of the energy being worked with. It is up to the ritual organiser if they want the pentacle energy coming up from the ground or down from the sky.
- If there will be someone standing in the centre of the pentagram and you wish the weave to be around their neck, then you will need to use the vertical / lowering method. This is good for a fool / king / challenger / sacrifice type role.
- If you want the weave to be around their waist (and you will need long staves for this to get the right size central pentagon) then use the raising up method. This is good for empowering a May King in the symbolic rising.
- After the staves have been woven, you can then raise the pentagram up and then lower it. Dance in a circle with each person holding their two ends together.
- The pentagram can then be un-woven or lowered and placed upon the ground. The participants then return to their places in the circle.
- If there is a person in the centre and the pentagram is around their neck, be careful as you un-weave the star.
- If you are leaving an object (that you have been empowering) in the centre of the circle and pentagram, then you can leave the pentagram woven for the duration of the ritual.
- We have woven pentagrams around a maypole using brooms.
- In place of staves, you could use wands, brooms, similar sized tree-branches, elementally coloured (or ribbon wrapped dowl) etc.
- If your group or participants work with certain trees, or have a group totemic tree, then you could use specific wood for the weaving.
- As our group is called Applegrove, we could use Apple wood staves for our pentagram rituals. We all have applewood wands for example.
- If you were using the pentagram weave at a sabbat, you could use sabbat themed staffs, topped with pinecones, or decorated with flowers and vines.



PERFORM: STAVE WEAVING WITH BROOMS

Pentagram Dance

Our group has been using various pentagram weaves for many years and I had always wanted to be able to form a dance around its patterns. After joining a Morris side and ending up with the dance teacher as a flatmate, we started working on just such a dance.

This particular dance is called The Apple Reel and is in part based on a 3 person dance by Black Joak Morris called The Black Reel. There are now 4 versions of the Apple Reel Pentagram Dance, all of which have slightly different purposes. It is the simplest version you will be learning today and it will be performed at a walk rather than with complicated dance stepping – although that version exists too.

We first used this version at an Applegrove Beltane to empower the Maypole. We laid a rope pentagram on the grass around the pole and used purpose-made brooms instead of Morris sticks. The thinner diameter of the staffs made weaving the pentagram a lot easier and they were also appropriate for the ritual setting. Each broom was decorated with coloured ribbon to represent one of the elements

Earlier in the ritual each person gave an offering of a particular ingredient to the cauldron. The brew was then stirred by each of the children present. Some of the brew was then libated around the base of the maypole.

HPS: We have empowered the cauldron, the symbol of the Mother. Now let us empower the Pole – symbol of the fertility of the God. We will weave the power of the elements around the pole, dancing the five points of the star, dancing with the brooms that also mark the union of brush and stave. Whilst the dance is taking place, please stamp and clap and send your energies to the centre.

The maypole became like the sixth dancer. When circling around the inner pentagon, each person would put their hand out to swing around the pole. The last figure of the dance involved weaving the pentagram around the pole. At the end of the dance the woven brooms were placed around the base of the maypole. Each person was then given some of the brew in a little chalice. The chalices all had ribbons tied around the stems. After each person made a toast and drank their brew, they then took the ribbon and tied it to the circlet of flowers that was to crown the pole. The pentagram weave was holding the raised energy concentrated in the pole. When the pole was crowned using a stang and thus sealed, the broom weave was taken up and removed. The maypole was then danced.

TEACH & PERFORM: APPLE REEL (WALKING VERSION) BY TOM GRYLLS & GABBY CLEARLY

MUSIC: Walking Version – IDBURY HILL

Skipping Version – SALTARELLO

Bledington Stepping Version (with round clashing) – SACKPIPSPLAT.

HANDOUT: THE APPLE REEL