



A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO PERFORMING RITES

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What is a Rite?

A rite is a kind of spell, using ritual magic instead of incantation, channelling or arcane magic – and they come in many different forms. Some are quick and simple and can be performed alone, like a Rite of Transportation. Some are more complex, longer, and can involve many people. These are less like spells and more like rituals – think of them as a ‘halfway house’ between a spell and a ritual.

2) Types of Rite

There are two key types of rite: those which are commonly known to certain schools of magic, and those which are specific to a situation. For the purposes of this explanation, let’s call them ‘Spellbook Rites’ and ‘Creative Rites’ (or ‘Ad Hoc Rites’). Spellbook rites are the ones known to specific magical schools, with a specific purpose. They require the knowledge of both the relevant school of magic that the spell comes from, and the knowledge of ritual magic to cast it. They have a fairly standard format, and a standard duration, and can be cast by the sorcerer alone. Examples include the aforementioned Rite of Transportation, which takes just a minute to cast, and can be used to transport the caster and up to 15 other people from a transport or ritual circle, to another transport circle. That rite can be cast by any person with the knowledge of ritual magic, or any incantor, channeller or mage who has received training in performing this rite.

Other spellbook rites include the incantor rite to lay patterns to rest, or the dark college equivalent of dedicating a pattern, and the necromancy rites to corrupt bodies, all of which involve a 1 minute rite which can be carried out by a single caster; the mage rites to trace a transportation or teleport the caster, which each are quick 10 second rites, and the higher incantation rite to send a message to an ancestor – which takes a minimum of 5 minutes.

Outside of these set spells, there are many other things which can be done with rites, which are not in any spellbook. These simply require the caster’s imagination – which is why I’m referring to them as ‘creative rites’. I’ve seen these used to do anything from find a pattern or an object, such as an Artefact of the Land, or to strengthen the result of a ritual. Many years ago, I was involved in a rite which was performed immediately after a ritual – the ritual was to remove an ancestor from their dominion and replace him, and the rite was used to send a demon army to the Plane of Unlife to support that coup. Only a year or so ago, simultaneous

rites were held in every faction after the ritual to destroy the ancestor Dracos, to help ensure the success of that ritual – I led the one for the Vipers, and I'm sure many of you would have contributed to the one in your own faction. Finally, I've also used these 'ad hoc' rites to send power and devotion to an ancestor – the followers of the Dark Lord in Teutonia carry this out most nights at midnight in the Viper camp when we are met together – think of this as 'Paladins Prayers' in rite form, without the Paladin order!

How Rites Differ from Rituals

Think of rites as a 'cut down' form of ritual. Whilst rituals need to be held in a ritual circle, rites can be performed anywhere – with the exception of transportation rites – the clue is in the title! These need to happen in transport circles. There are no minimum or maximum number of participants, or set duration times beyond those required by specific spells. They also differ in what you can achieve through them, but we'll come to that in a moment. They also differ in that, whereas rituals can only be performed by second and third level ritual magic users, rites can be performed by those with the first level knowledge of ritual magic.

However, having said that rites can be performed anywhere, and this is true, I would strongly counsel against carrying out a rite in a ritual circle – active or otherwise. If a ritual circle is not prepared by the Watchers for the purpose of ritual magic, then the flows of energy can be unstable and chaotic and, whilst you may not intend to seal the circle and perform a full ritual, that may even occur without your knowledge and, whilst timings for rituals are well known, timings in unstable or unprepared circles may differ from what you expect. An unfortunate Unicorns rite team found this out some years ago to their great cost. They intended to perform a rite in an old ritual circle on their lands which was believed to be inactive. Unbeknownst to them, the circle was active but unstable, and sealed itself on the team. I don't recall the exact details, but I believe that they lost their High Ritualist and entire team of contributors. So, I would counsel against carrying out rites in ritual circles. There is no benefit in doing so, and you could well be opening yourselves up to greater risk than is necessary.

What Can You Achieve in a Rite?

Whilst there are a thousand and one uses for rituals, most people generally think of them as a way to 'get stuff', whether it's creating magic items or magical creatures. This is not the purpose of rites. Beyond that, the sky is really the limit. They can be used to gather

information, find things, commune with the ancestors, send messages to other planes of existence – pretty much anything which involves the movement of information and power.

How to Perform a Rite

Rites are fairly simple and ‘free form’ – there is no ‘script’ or set wording, and you are free to perform a rite as you see fit. I’ve seen rites carried out through mediums such as music, chanting, or movement, formal rites carried out with large numbers of people, and simple rites carried out with just one or two people sat together with a cup of tea. ‘Spellbook’ rites are fairly straightforward, and have a general format, but ‘creative’ rites will have as many ways of doing them as there are rites.

In general, there are 3 essential components – opening the rite, explaining what the rite seeks to achieve and how, then closing the rite. Let’s use a really simple example – transportation.

You start the rite by saying by what power you perform the rite, then you say what you want the rite to do (to transport myself and all gathered within this circle safely to *insert name of circle*), then use the body of the rite to build the required power to complete it – which in the case of transportation rites is a minute, then end the rite by confirming what you are doing “....and I transport us all to *insert name of circle*, and away you go!

As for what to do with the 45 seconds or so in the middle, that’s up to you. I personally talk about how we will traverse through the pathways of light, how I’ll use the power generated to ensure the safety of all who are travelling with us, gathering up the q6 elements that comprise every living thing, ensuring that those elements remain balanced within us as we travel. You may have your own little transportation song, or rhyme – it’s entirely up to you.

The rite I am most often asked to perform is to speak with someone’s ancestor. In this instance, I am simply a conduit for them. I open the rite as I would any other, then tell the ancestor that I have someone, or some people who wish to speak with them – then I let them crack on and do just that. Unlike a ritual, where the ritualist must be in control at all times as they are focussing much more considerable levels of power, the rite leader does not need to be the primary speaker.

When it comes to longer ad hoc rites, the ball really is in your proverbial court. If I'm carrying out a rite to give power to my ancestor with others, then I normally commence by calling on the power that my ancestor gives me, and thanking him for that power. I then explain that we are here to give glory and power to him, and then invite everyone who wishes to take part to speak directly to, as well as of, him. This can take 2 minutes, or 20. I then close by thanking him for his favour, thanking the contributors, and presenting the power we have generated to him. At the end of this session, we'll have a go at a practice rite all together, for whoever would like to join in.

Rite Focii

There's a fair bit of confusion about rite focii. Do you need one? The short answer is 'not really', but they can come in handy. Literally anything can be a rite focus. If you are doing a ritual which is specific to your nation, then an item of the land, an iconic artefact, can be a good rite focus. In the past, if I am looking for a pattern, I've requested something precious to the subject. If it's to an ancestor, maybe a symbol of that ancestor – which could be a holy symbol, leaf from the incantation grove, or even something that ancestor is partial to (yes, on more than one occasion, that has been a pie or a pint of ale!)

So, no, you don't need them. Yes, you can use them if you like, and they can be helpful, and they can be whatever you want them to be.

How Many People do you Need?

As we've already said, this is a much less formal event than a ritual. You can do a rite all on your own. However, if it's a longer, more involved rite, that can be very boring, especially if you're expecting some poor soul to watch the damned thing! I've always thought that, if something is worth doing, then it's worth getting more people involved. Unlike rituals, where your contributors have to have been trained to focus and channel power within the confines of a ritual circle, rites require no such formality. Anyone can participate. If you're doing a rite about a subject, or to an ancestor, then why not invite people who are close to that ancestor, or subject, to take part? The rite will be much more interesting for all concerned, and will almost certainly be more successful for it.

How Much Power do you Need?

In the case of spellbook rites, there is a set level of power which you need to devote to the rite. In the case of transportation or tracing a transport, the amount required is a single thaum. For high level rites, which need stronger effects – like speaking with an ancestor, or the one I would never do under any circumstances and anyone who says they have seen me do is a liar, such as the greater corrupting of mortal remains, then four thaums of power are needed.

For the more 'freeform' creative rites, then the answer is "How long is a piece of string?" There is no set level of power, like there is no set level of power for a ritual. In general, though, the bigger the effect you seek to create, the more power it will need. However, 'the more the merrier' isn't always the case. I'll explain about safety and power levels in a moment.

If you are able to learn Rite Mastery (and more on this shortly), then you do not need to use your own power necessarily. You can take power freely given from your contributors. However, people do not need to contribute power to participate. I've done many speak with ancestor rites where I've been the only one contributing power, but the people I am doing the rite on the behalf of have done most of the talking. That's also perfectly fine.

The easiest way to collect power is to ask as part of the rite. I normally ask 'does anyone wish to lend their power to aid in this task?' people then have an opportunity to speak up, say why what you're doing is important to them, and give you the power they wish to contribute. I normally stand in front of them, take their hands and let them physically channel the power from their hands to mine.

Risks Associated with Rites

Rites are not rituals, so most of the risks that you would associate with rituals are not so with rites. However, this does not mean that they are entirely risk-free. If anything is powerful enough to have an effect, it stands to reason that it is powerful enough to have a side-effect, which may be unplanned and unwanted.

The greatest risk is the bane of the ritualists' life – the Arcane Resonance curse. This is a curse which affects a ritualist's pattern, and it's nasty. It's not fatal of itself, but it can indirectly cause death. All your non-beneficial spells rebound on you, you cannot carry magical items or have active sigils cast on you. Basically, your pattern is damaged by trying to control too much power and means that any additional power, no matter what the source, is fragmented and doesn't work properly. It's fixable, but it's not as simple as just getting healed. It requires specialist skills and a certain time of the day – I'm not a healer, but I believe it must be carried out on or around midnight or midday.

Now, this curse is often seen in a ritual circle where reckless ritualists ask for too much. However, it's also felt where a rite leader tries to control too much power in a rite. No-one knows for certain how much is too much but, after a certain amount of experimentation, we believe that the maximum power a rite leader can safely hold outside of a ritual circle can be calculated by taking the amount of power a caster has at their disposal in a day, multiplied by their level of ritual learning. So, I have 24 thaums of power that I can use to cast spells, and I am a 3rd level ritualist. How many thaums of power can I safely wield in a rite? The answer is 72. If I were a second level ritualist, it would be 48.

Now, when you're leading big rites, many of your contributors will not know about this risk. They will want to help, the subject may well be very emotive to them, and they will want to throw loads of power at you. If necessary, explain to them, but I always ask my contributors to tell me how much they are giving me as they do so. For example "I grant you 5 thaums of my power".

Now, if you don't need to go to the max, then don't – why add more risk than you need to? Also, bear in mind that sometimes, you need light to 'see' how much power is changing hands! ;) If it's dark, I always add a -5 margin of error, in case an overzealous contributor can't count! The risk falls on you, so you are the one who needs to manage it.

The only other risk is that of who does or doesn't like what you're trying to do. This could be other attendees of a Gathering of peoples, or forces from outside the plane. When you bung a load of power out into the ether, you may as well be lighting a whacking great arcane beacon and waving at all everything out there, yelling 'coo-eee! We're trying to bind a daemon!' If that

daemon isn't that keen on being bound, and let's face it, who would be? Then he or she may have something to say about it. With extreme prejudice and all their mates/allies/minions etc.

When we did the rites linked to the ritual to destroy Dracos, every rite in every camp was attacked by what can only be described as 'a screaming shitload of Death Knights'. If that isn't the correct collective noun, then it should be. So, if you're doing something which may prove contentious to someone or something out there, bringing you friendly local toughs to guard you all and help keep your team safe is a pretty good plan. As the rite leader, you are responsible for your team. As with rituals, don't take that responsibility lightly, or you won't have a team. Look after them, and keep them safe.

Specialist Skills

Finally, specialist skills (who is not my twin brother). There are a range of skills you can learn to augment your ritual abilities, and these are equally useful for rites. These include scholar/sage skills, and the aforementioned Ritemaster skill, which allows you to take power given to you freely by your contributors. These are well worth learning! In addition, 'summoning skills' can be relevant to rites, as well as rituals:

Theology (for ancestral stuff) Elementalism (for elemental stuff, perhaps unsurprisingly!), Daemonology (guess what that's used for!) and Necromancy are really useful for that specific type of rite.

You can only learn the summoning skills relevant to your arcane abilities, so it pays to choose a 'school' and specialise, especially if you have a dedicated team who can specialise with you.