**Goddess/Earth Circles: Suggested Resource**  1/23/2022

**WICCA LIVING** <https://wiccaliving.com/what-is-wicca/>

This is just a very brief introduction to the main beliefs found within the very diverse religion of Wicca. Other, more detailed articles on each of these topics can be found throughout the site, so please do have a look around! Notes: Items that are underlined present links to additional resources when this material is read online.

**What is Wicca? A Beginner’s Guide to the Wiccan Religion**

*What is Wicca? The answer to this question can vary, depending on who you ask, but below you’ll find a general introduction to this fascinating spiritual path.*

Wicca is a modern, Earth-centered religion with roots in the ancient practices of our shamanic ancestors. Its practitioners, who call themselves Wiccans, honor the life-giving and life-sustaining powers of Nature through ritual worship and a commitment to living in balance with the Earth. Wicca is technically classified as one of many Pagan religions, though not all Wiccans would identify as Pagans—and plenty who identify as Pagans are not Wiccans.

In truth, [Wicca](https://wiccaliving.com/wicca-beginners/) is extremely dynamic and ever-evolving, so it’s difficult to make very many statements about it that every single person identifying as a Wiccan will agree with. However, it’s probably safe to say that when looking at the night sky, or the view from the top of a mountain, or the glassy surface of a lake, most—if not all—Wiccans will feel very much in the presence of the divine. So then, what is Wicca? What does it mean to be a Wiccan? And [what are the core religious beliefs](https://wiccaliving.com/essentials-wicca/)?

**Life cycles: the Wiccan Goddess and God**

The deities of Wicca are the [Goddess and the God](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-goddess-god/), who are the feminine and masculine essences of the all-encompassing life force responsible for all of creation, including the cycles of life and death on Earth. Wiccans believe that these deities are multi-fold; in that sense, it is a duotheistic religion, rather than traditionally monotheistic religions like Christianity.

The Goddess is sometimes known as the [Triple Goddess](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-triple-goddess/), because she is split into three identities, or parts: the Maiden Goddess, the Mother Goddess, and the Crone Goddess. This Maiden, Mother, Crone triad is believed by Wiccans to symbolize the dividing of the year. Springtime, when life is blooming and beauty abounds, is the time of the Maiden goddess, whose youth and energy are worshipped at this time of year. In the summer, where the days are long and happy, the Mother goddess is worshipped for her fertility and maternal skills. And the long autumn and winter are the domain of the Crone, who is not as scary as her name will suggest! Although autumn and winter can be harsh and cold, the seasons traditionally associated with death and decline, Wiccans acknowledge the Crone’s wisdom and the peace that she brings, and during this time of the year, they often rest, soothed by the knowledge that the earth will turn again and restore light and beauty once more.

The God, meanwhile, is known sometimes as the Horned God, sometimes as the Green Man, and other times as the [Oak and Holly King](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-oak-king-holly-king/). Although that first one might sound a little scary, don’t worry! This iteration of the God has nothing to do with Satanism or devil-worship; rather, the horns represent his masculine virility and connection to nature, as Hellenic forest deities such as Pan were often represented with antlers. Like the Goddess, the God also splits the year: in autumn and winter, he is the Holly King, and in the spring and summertime, the Oak! The connection of Wiccans with nature is therefore very strong, found represented throughout their beliefs and the characteristics of their deities.

The God and Goddess are worshipped at regular intervals throughout the year. Festivals emphasizing the masculine are known as [Sabbats](https://wiccaliving.com/wheel-of-the-year-wiccan-sabbats/). Corresponding with the Earth’s position relative to the Sun, they include the Solstices, the Equinoxes, and the four cross-quarter days that fall in between these solar points. Some Wiccans divide these Sabbats into “major” and “minor”: the minor Sabbats are the solstices and equinoxes, whilst the major are the remaining four, which most famously including [Samhain](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-samhain/), celebrated today in the United States as Halloween. The Goddess, on the other hand, is worshipped at every [Full Moon](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-full-moon-ritual/), and these holidays are called [Esbats](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-esbats-full-moon/).

Taken together, all of these ritual celebrations comprise the Wheel of the Year, which Wiccans actively participate in “turning” as they mark the natural cycles of planting, growth, harvesting, and dying back. In this worldview, death is seen as an essential part of ongoing creation, as the old must make way for the new. The shadow side of life—represented by the “dark of the Moon” just before it turns new again—is every bit as important as the light. In this spirit, some [forms of Wicca](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-traditions-wicca-forms/) have a tradition of the “light half” and “dark half” of the year, marked by the [Summer](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-litha-summer-solstice/) and [Winter](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-yule-winter-solstice/) solstices, respectively. Similarly, this splitting of the year into “light” and “dark” is reflected in the multi-fold nature of Wiccan divinities.

**What is Wicca: a decentralized religion**

Wicca is a very unique religion for many reasons. First, unlike the dominant monotheistic, organized religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam, Wicca has no designated centers of worship. Instead, the Wiccan faith consists of a very decentralized community of groups and individuals who may worship in public spaces, in the privacy of their own homes, and/or outdoors in natural settings, either with others or alone.

Second, there is no official “holy book” or specific, rigid ideology that all practitioners are expected to adhere to. While there are several beliefs that Wiccans have in common, there is no single way of understanding the divine that is considered to be more “correct” than another. For example, some Wiccans have a pantheistic view of the world, meaning they believe that the same divine source is present in all of nature, while others are more polytheistic, incorporating one or more additional deities from other religions into their practice along with the Goddess and God. Practitioners do not have a Bible of any kind, although some may view the [Wiccan Rede](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-rede/) to be a kind of textual guiding force, and others may document their own beliefs and practices in writing in a book sometimes known as a grimoire, or [Book of Shadows](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-book-of-shadows-grimoire/), which may become their personal religious guide.

As a modern religion with a very “counterculture” feel to it,  Wicca tends to attract people who are accepting of identities and lifestyles which some view as “alternative,” including LGBTQ+ communities, feminists and non-monogamists. You will find that many Wiccans identify as either members or allies of these communities.

Finally, Wicca does not have a holy building, like a church or mosque, and although some branches may have specific, designated Priests or Priestesses, organized religious hierarchy is rare and most members believe that all participants are equal, with equal connection to the gods and spiritual power.

This fluidity within the overall Wiccan belief system is a welcome aspect to many who discover the religion, as it allows—and even encourages—people to seek their own truths as they make their way along their [own spiritual path](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-covens-circles-solitary/). Indeed, there is really an infinite variety of spiritual paths that fall under the umbrella term of “Wicca.” In fact, it could be said that the only absolute tenets within the larger umbrella of Wicca are the inherent divinity of Nature, and our responsibility to respect and care for the Earth. For this reason, many Wiccans are environmentalists, vegetarian or vegan, and may volunteer locally or independently work to uphold environmental justice and protect the earth.

Some people may be under the impression that Wicca is “evil.” This is due to mistaken associations between [Wicca and Satanism](https://wiccaliving.com/wicca-and-satanism/), which is a different religious affiliation altogether. But the answer is no: Wicca is not an “evil” religion, and there is no connection between Wicca and any sort of “devil worship.” In fact, most Wiccans [actively avoid harming others](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-threefold-law/); they seek out peace in their daily lives and are focused on coexisting as harmoniously as possible with the world around them.

**Wicca and magic**

Many people asking the question “*What is Wicca*” have heard of the associations between [Wicca and magic](https://wiccaliving.com/beginners-guide-wicca-magic/). This is because many (but not all) Wiccans tap into their personal connection with the divine energies of Nature to actually shape the circumstances of their own lives, as well as to work for the benefit of others. This practice is known as magic, or “magick,” as it is often spelled within the Wiccan and larger [Pagan community](https://wiccaliving.com/what-is-paganism/). Magic is a much older tradition than Wicca itself, and is definitely not exclusive to one religion, but there are a few common characteristics of the practice among those who follow Wicca that give it a particularly “Wiccan” feel.

For one, magic is often incorporated into the [rituals](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-rituals/) performed at Sabbats and Esbats, and plenty of Wiccans also perform spellwork in accordance with the lunar cycle. Wiccan magic generally involves the use of [ritual tools](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-ritual-tools/) and ingredients such as [candles](https://wiccaliving.com/magical-properties-colors/), [crystals](https://wiccaliving.com/magical-properties-crystals/) and [herbs](https://wiccaliving.com/magical-properties-herbs/), as well as spoken chants and affirmations, and may call upon the God, the Goddess,  and/or other “lesser” [deities](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-deities-ancient-pantheons/) for assistance in [manifesting](https://wiccaliving.com/law-of-attraction/) the desired outcome.

The main and most important aspect of Wiccan magic, however, is the rule often referred to as “harm none” or “The Wiccan Rede.” This states that all magic must be worked only for positive purposes, in a way that causes no harm to others, either intentionally or unintentionally. Wiccans take this rule very seriously, as it serves the ideal of living in harmonious balance with all of existence. The Wiccan Rede is a larger poem which many young practitioners learn when first beginning; as they discover their path, they may move away from its tenets, but most Wiccans continue to respect its closing declaration, which states “If it harms none, do what you will.” This is the “harm none” rule mentioned, and it is of vital importance to many members of the religion. (To learn more about magic, check out these articles on [crystal](https://wiccaliving.com/beginners-guide-crystal-magic/), [herbal](https://wiccaliving.com/beginners-guide-herbal-magic/), and [candle magic](https://wiccaliving.com/beginners-guide-candle-magic/) for beginners.)

Is this magic “real,” you might be inclined to ask? By that you probably mean, does it work? And the answer to that is again subjective. A huge number of practitioners believe that, with the strength of their wills and a little help from the gods, they can bring their intention into being, and there is compelling evidence to suggest this is possible. But like any religion, it’s about belief. And Wicca is certainly a real religion, with members all over the world.

**Wicca and Witchcraft**

So, if Wiccans practice magic and are connected with the earth, [are they Witches](https://wiccaliving.com/wicca-witches-difference/)? Yes and no. This is a complicated question with no one single answer, but the basic response is that some Witches practice Wicca and some Wiccans identify as Witches, but that one does not necessarily lead to the other.

It’s true that the two lifestyles have many beliefs and practices in common. Most Witches work with [herbs](https://wiccaliving.com/herbal-magic-spell-beginners/), [crystals](https://wiccaliving.com/crystal-magic-spell-beginners/) and [spells](https://wiccaliving.com/candle-magic-spell-beginners/); most of them practice magic and are connected to the earth in some way. But [Witchcraft](https://wiccaliving.com/what-is-witchcraft/) is a much broader term, and a much more individualistic path. While Wicca is united by its status as an established religion and its specific deities, Witchcraft is more ephemeral and independent. Witches may worship the God and Goddess, or they may instead believe in the Greek pantheon, or old Celtic deities, or in fairies and elves. Alternatively, they may not worship at all, but instead view all of nature as divine, based on ancient principles of druidism. Similarly, you can be a Witch *and* have a specific religion: there are Christian Witches just as there are Buddhist Witches. Because Wicca is a religion unto itself, it does not usually co-exist with other religions.

Witchcraft is also a more solitary path. Although sometimes Witches do come together to form covens, most Witches work alone, often following a specific “path” of Witchcraft, such as Green, Kitchen or Hedge Witchcraft. In general, Witches practice their craft alone, sometimes aided by a familiar. Witchcraft has no equivalent to the Wiccan Rede, and although some practitioners do believe its tenets, others are not bound by its rules. You can be a Witch, or a Wiccan, or a Wiccan who also practices Witchcraft, but the two are not inherently linked.

**The origins of Wicca**

Wicca is described as a modern religion, yet there is a sense of timelessness to the way in which Wiccans tune into the forces that make up our world. Much has been made of the question of just how far back in the past Wicca actually stems from. The [origins of what we now refer to as Wicca](https://wiccaliving.com/history-of-wicca/) are traced back to England in the first half of the 20th century, and to a spiritual pioneer by the name of Gerald Gardner. Seeking to revive what he believed was an ancient religion that had been almost completely eradicated by the spread of Christianity throughout Europe, Gardner and a few fellow spiritual explorers formed a coven and began performing rituals devoted to the worship of the Goddess and the God. The specific names for these deities, along with most other details of the coven’s practice, were kept secret under oath by the coven members, and passed down to new members only upon initiation. This was known as Gardnerian Wicca, and it still exists today, prominently in the United Kingdom and United States, but also elsewhere.

Over time, this resurgent practice of what many Wiccans refer to as “the Old Religion” began to spread, as members of Gardner’s group went on to form their own covens, which led ultimately to the spread of what came to be called “Wicca” from England to North America and beyond. Eventually, it became clear that there was not, in fact, a verifiable direct link between Wicca and a singular pre-Christian pagan religion. Nonetheless, Wiccans do feel a timeless connection to the energies of the Earth, which are very much still active today, and can be tapped into by communing with Nature.

**Practicing Wicca**

Although there are still traditional covens following in the lineage of Gardner and his colleagues, modern Wicca bears little, if any, resemblance to the Wicca of the 1940s and 50s. Most Wiccans are solitary practitioners, who are not initiated into a specific tradition but rather borrow elements from various sources to create their own eclectic practice. Covens do exist, but they are rare.

This phenomenon of “DIY” Wicca, along with the rising popularity of the faith all over the globe, has resulted in an extremely rich and diverse religion that continues to evolve with each passing day. There is no one way to “become” a Wiccan, but it is one of the easiest religions to join: unlike Judaism or Christianity, there is no need for a formal conversion process. Simple belief and practice are enough. For people who are new to the faith, the amount of differing and sometimes even conflicting information about Wicca can be daunting. But for those who are naturally drawn to forging their own path in life, the diversity to be found within Wicca can be incredibly rewarding.

*This has been just a very brief answer to the question “What is Wicca?” You can find many other articles here on* [Wicca Living](https://wiccaliving.com/) *that go into more depth about everything discussed above. You should also check out the* [books by Lisa Chamberlain](https://wiccaliving.com/lisa-chamberlain-wiccan-books/) *as well as her* [recommended reading list](https://wiccaliving.com/best-wiccan-books/)*.*

# A Brief Summary of Core Wiccan Beliefs

Since its initial incarnation in the mid-20th century, the [religion of Wicca](https://wiccaliving.com/what-is-wicca/) has expanded and evolved into countless individual forms. And since there is no official, authoritative text laying out exactly how people who practice Wicca are supposed to think, it’s a bit dicey to be generalizing about Wiccan beliefs.

Nonetheless, there are a few core components to the Wiccan view of the world that tend to shape most, if not all, practices among those who identify as Wiccan. Links to more information about each of the topics discussed below can be found within the article.

## The Wiccan View of Deity: The Goddess and the God

The [Goddess and the God](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-goddess-god/) are the female and male essences of the all-encompassing life force responsible for all of creation, including the cycles of life and death on Earth. As supreme deities, they are honored at the [altar](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-altar/) during every [Wiccan ritual](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-rituals/), and often during magical work as well. Many ancient cultures worshipped a Sky Father and an Earth Mother in one guise or another, which modern-day Wicca emulates to a certain degree. Each deity governs certain aspects of existence, but it is through their union that life on Earth is created and sustained.

As the feminine half of this all-encompassing life force, the Goddess is associated with both the Earth and [the Moon](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-full-moon-ritual/). In her association with the Moon, the Wiccan Goddess rules the night and the ocean tides, as well as the reproductive cycles of women and the realm of the human psyche. In many [Wiccan traditions](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-traditions-wicca-forms/), the Goddess takes a three-fold form, known as the [Triple Goddess](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-triple-goddess/). Her individual aspects, known as the Maiden, the Mother, and the Crone, are aligned with the phases of the Moon’s cycle as it orbits the Earth—waxing, Full, and waning. In this watery element, the Goddess is associated with emotion, intuition and the wisdom that comes from engaging with our shadow side.

As the Earth, she represents the grounded, physical energy that allows all life to take root and flourish, and is associated with domesticated animals, fields and crops. She is both mother and partner of the God, and together their cycles of planting, growth, and return to death keep the Wheel of the Year turning, clearing away the old and bringing forth the new in the timeless co-creation between this divine pair.

As the essence of the divine masculine, the God is associated with the Sun, whose strong light is considered to be an aspect of male energy, and which is necessary for the growth of all life. But he is also associated with the horned animals of the forest, and with the masculine energy of hunting the game traditionally needed for survival. In some Wiccan traditions, the God is further represented by two twinned aspects: [the Oak King and the Holly King](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-oak-king-holly-king/). Representing the waxing and waning of the Sun as the seasons turn, the two figures take turns ruling over the year. The Oak King reigns during the light half, or throughout Spring and Summer, while the dark half—Autumn and Winter—belongs to the Holly King.

For many Wiccans, within these all-encompassing God and Goddess energies are countless [ancient deities](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-deities-ancient-pantheons/) who have existed since before the beginning of recorded history. Gods and goddesses like Osiris and Venus, who predate the [modern religion of Wicca](https://wiccaliving.com/history-of-wicca/) by thousands of years, have been essentially reclaimed over the past century by those who feel connected to them as a living presence in their lives. Traditionally, these ancient deities are incorporated as parts, or “lesser aspects,” of the Goddess and God. However, some eclectic Wiccans are more polytheistic in their practice, and may worship ancient gods and goddesses in addition to the Wiccan divine pair.

## The Wheel of the Year

The eight major holidays—or Sabbats—of the [Wiccan Wheel of the Year](https://wiccaliving.com/wheel-of-the-year-wiccan-sabbats/) provide regular occasions for practitioners to honor the roles of the Goddess and God in sustaining life.

The mythological story of the Wheel revolves around the cyclical relationship between the God as the Sun and the Goddess as the Earth, with the God continually dying each Autumn and being reborn each Spring, growing strong throughout the Summer only to die again, echoing the growth cycles of plant life both in agriculture and in the wild. In this worldview, death is seen as an essential part of ongoing creation, as the old must make way for the new.

The overall vision of the endless birth/death/rebirth cycle is one of balance between the female and male Universal energies, and each Sabbat can be seen as representing a particular stage of the cycle. Corresponding with the Earth’s position relative to the Sun, the Sabbats include the Solstices ([Yule](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-yule-winter-solstice/) and [Litha](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-litha-summer-solstice/)), the Equinoxes ([Ostara](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-ostara-spring-equinox/) and [Mabon](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-mabon-autumn-equinox/)), and the four cross-quarter days ([Imbolc](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-imbolc/), [Beltane](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-beltane/), [Lammas](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-lammas-lughnasadh/) and [Samhain](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-calendar-samhain/)) that fall in between these solar points.

## Co-creators of Nature: The Elements

In addition to the God and Goddess, many Wiccan traditions emphasize [the Elements](https://wiccaliving.com/classical-elements-wicca/)—meaning the “classical elements” of [Earth](https://wiccaliving.com/earth-element/), [Air](https://wiccaliving.com/air-element/), [Fire](https://wiccaliving.com/fire-element/) and [Water](https://wiccaliving.com/water-element/), plus the [Fifth Element of Spirit](https://wiccaliving.com/spirit-element/). The Elements are seen as the fundamental building blocks of the Universe, physically present in everything throughout the world. In other words, every aspect of material existence is bound up in Earth, Air, Fire and/or Water, while Spirit, the Fifth Element (also known as Akasha), is present in each of the other four.

The Elements are the acting forces of the eternal cycle of destruction and new creation that is at the heart of all life on Earth. The Elements are understood to be distinct spiritual energies and are an integral part of Wiccan ritual. Typically, they are invoked at the start of ritual to participate in the celebration at hand and may be asked for assistance in magical work.

## Magic, Ethics and Consequences

When it comes to Wicca, [magic](https://wiccaliving.com/what-is-magic/) is not so much a “belief” as a practice. Wiccans don’t need to “believe” in magic, as magic is merely a set of techniques for working with the natural laws of the Universe, and the results of successful magic can be experienced with the physical senses.  Magic is not unique to Wicca, and not all Wiccans practice magic, but those who do are careful only to work spells that do not harm other living beings or the Earth itself. In fact, one of the first things Wiccans usually learn when it comes to working magic is the phrase “harm none.” It is often said that this is the only real “rule” in Wicca. This is the main takeaway from what is known as the [Wiccan Rede](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-rede/), and it is taken quite seriously, as it serves the ideal of living in harmonious balance with all of existence.

A related tenet regarding [Wiccan magic](https://wiccaliving.com/beginners-guide-wicca-magic/) is the [Threefold Law](https://wiccaliving.com/wiccan-threefold-law/). Also known as “the Rule of Three,” this belief is part of many, but not all Wiccan traditions. It states that every magical act sent out into the Universe—whether positive or negative—will be returned to the Witch three times. This is somewhat akin to the concept of karma found in some Eastern religions, but with a Western twist, as it applies a specific equation (“three times”) to the return of the energy sent out by the practitioner. It could be argued that the Threefold Law is in place for those who need consequences, in addition to ethics, in order to resist any temptations to work harmful or manipulative magic. After all, like everyone else on the planet, Witches are ultimately only human!