

How to Cast a Shamanic Protective Circle

Protective circles are a standard and essential part of walking between the world. Cast by an experienced shamanic practitioner for personal journeys, they can be activated quickly because they may not ever be fully deconstructed. And they can be activated as a ritual in themselves or at the start of a healing ceremony.

When just beginning to work with psychic or spiritual energies, it is recommended that you cast a protective circle before going into meditation or trance work, or doing a reading, and then fully deconstruct it – also called releasing it – when the “working” is done.

My personal preference is to cast the circle with your mind. Being able to do this and feeling confident about it means that you can do this at any moment wherever you are and not be hampered by any lack of tools, nor by environmental / situational distractions.

This instruction provides the steps for casting a 4 direction circle or medicine wheel. If you are interested in casting a 7 direction medicine sphere, please contact me for additional preparation and instruction.

Casting a Generic Protective Circle

A generic protective circle can be cast by anyone in alignment with the energies of the spirit worlds. What follows is generically Pagan, with some refinements and integration of shamanic features. It is important to understand that there are many different shamanic cultures around the world, and a wide range of beliefs and practices. What I'm providing here is a mix of my Celtic and Ojibwa traditions.

What You Need

- Innate sense of the cardinal directions, or a compass
- Understanding of the medicine /magickal powers of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water
- Traditional spiritual beings who stand watch as guardians of the directions

Type 1 = Can be angels, archangels, ancestors, humanoid spirit guides

Type 2 = Can be shamanic animal spirit guides or spirit animal teachers*

I recommend not mixing type 1 and 2 beings until you are highly skilled

If a beginner, refer to the guardians as just the Guardian of the East, Guardian of the South, Guardian of the West, and so on until you specifically call for your own guides and guardians who will respond to you *every* time.

A note about the animals associated with the directions – Different cultures, both Pagan and Shamanic relate different animals to each direction. A similar ritual should be done to call your own personal spirit animal guides for each direction. Until you do that, these can be used, but your own will be much more powerful and protective for you.

Start with Clearing, Grounding, and Centering

Clearing means to clear or clean your energy fields (your aura). This is often done by smudging, and that is recommended if you can do so. But you can also use your mind, breath and intention. Take a long slow deep breath and as you exhale connect with the mental intention to shed and cleanse all the sticky emotions that are hampering you and attracting what you don't want, and all that is in the way of your spiritual advancement.

Take another long slow deep breath, and as you exhale connect with the intention to shed and cleanse all of the mental chatter, intellectual clutter, disbelief, doubt, and judgmentalism that has lodged in your mind.

Grounding means to send the emotional and mental energies you have shed literally down into the ground. Use the force of your exhaled breath to direct those energies downward. If you can, feel them exit out the bottoms of your feet and flow into MotherEarth for recycling.

Then use the attraction of your inhaled breath to pull strong clean energy up from MotherEarth and into your body so that you feel rooted, or grounded, in place. Feeling rooted to MotherEarth helps create a feeling of security and power for creating the protective circle.

Centering means to use your breath to draw your attention further inside yourself, blocking out everything and anything going on around you. Effective centering is physical, mental, and emotional, and lends resilience to your grounding. Again use long slow deep breaths to shift your consciousness out of a normal state, and into a slightly meditative or trance state.

You may notice, from the prolonged long slow deep breathing that you begin to feel – as the shamans say – like a hollow bone in which spiritual energies and information flow freely through you. That can have a somewhat “floaty” feeling, as if you are on an air mattress in a quiet pool on a calm warm day. It feels comfortable, supported, and safe. Both mind and body are relaxed, and emotions are calm and curious.

When you have achieved this sensation of being centered, you'll know it's right for you to proceed.

Call the Directions

Start with the East -- Although some practitioners will begin their circle casting by facing West to first align with the intentions of Endings in order to release all that does not belong to the purpose of the circle, most Pagans and Shamans begin in the East. Physically – if possible, or at least mentally – stand facing the East. Use a compass to determine exactly where that is if you aren't certain.

In your grounded and centered state of consciousness, request the Guardian of the East to come forward to protect the circle and within it. Typically a calling will have a bit of formality to it. This is usually done by enumerating the qualities associated with the East:

- Direction of beginnings and new life
- Elemental energy of Air and realm of the Mind
- Season of springtime and a day of perfect balance
- Powers of illumination, inspiration, and clarity
- Territory of the Sacred Eagle

Speak these associations aloud or clearly in your mind, as acknowledgments of the sacred medicine you are asking to guard and protect you. End with thanking the Guardian of the East for answering your call.

You can do this in any way you wish, but in case you'd like an example, here is one way that your calling might sound:

Oh Guardian of the East, hear me
I ask for your protection, to stand with me
As I confront new beginnings
I ask for guidance through the realm of the Mind
So that illumination, inspiration and clarity
Will honor you and the energies of Air
Throughout the territory of the Sacred Eagle.
And with humble thoughts, I thank you
for your abiding protection.

Turn to the South – In creating a circle or sphere, your movements should be consistent with that purpose and follow the clockwise sequence. So turn next to face the South. And in a similarly formal manner, call the Guardian of the South by acknowledging the sacred medicine of that direction, including:

- Direction of growth and learning
- Elemental energy of Fire and realm of Life Force or Spirit
- Season of summer and day of the long Sun
- Powers of creative action, interconnection, and patience
- Territory of the Sacred Coyote

End with thanking the Guardian of the South for answering your call.

Here is one way that your calling might sound:

Oh Guardian of the South, hear me.
I ask for your protection, to stand with me
As I confront the tasks of growth and learning.
I ask for guidance through the realm of the Life Force
So that interconnection, creative action and patience
Will honor you and the energies of Fire
Throughout the territory of the Sacred Coyote.
And with humble steps, I thank you
for your abiding protection.

Turn to the West – By now you may be starting to feel the magical sacredness building up around you. Continue with your intention, and your formality of asking for the Guardian of the West to join your circle, acknowledging:

- Direction of endings and releasings
- Elemental energy of Water and realm of Emotions
- Season of autumn and a day of perfect balance
- Powers of attunement, dreams, and inner knowledge
- Territory of the Sacred Bear

End with thanking the Guardian of the West for answering your call.

Here is one way that your calling might sound:

Oh Guardian of the West, hear me.
I ask for your protection, to stand with me
As I survive endings and releasings.
I ask for guidance through the realm of the Emotions
So that inner knowledge, dreams and attunements
Will honor you and the energies of Water
Throughout the territory of the Sacred Bear.
And with a humble heart, I thank you
for your abiding protection.

Turn to the North – If you are using just the 4 cardinal directions for your protective circle, this is the last. Once again, maintain the formality of ritual in calling for your Guardian of the North, acknowledging:

- Direction of rejuvenation / preparation for rebirth, and wisdom
- Elemental energy of Earth and realm of the Physical Body
- Season of winter and day of the short Sun
- Powers of the natural world, and great mysteries
- Territory of the Sacred White Buffalo

End with thanking the Guardian of the North for answering your call.

Here is one way that your calling might sound:

Oh Guardian of the North, hear me.
I ask for your protection, to stand with me
As I confront the preparations of rebirth
And the requirements of attaining wisdom.
I ask for guidance through the realm of the Body
So that the great mysteries and the natural world
Will honor you and the energies of Earth
Throughout the territory of the Sacred White Buffalo.
And with humble embrace, I thank you
for your abiding protection.

When you have called the guardian of the North, you have completed the 4 direction medicine wheel and protective circle. You now have a very private sacred space in which to pray for healing or discernment, to do a reading with some divination tools, to commune with nature spirits, or to open yourself to psychic channeling.

Closing Your Circle

It is considered proper magickal protocol to formally close any protective circle you construct, thank the guardians and bid them farewell. As a beginner, it is a gesture of respect to the spirit world to show that you aren't just taking advantage of their powers when it suits you by calling a circle and then not closing it when you are done.

The process is much the same in terms of grounding and centering yourself with long slow deep breaths. Then start with the direction of the North and to say something like this:

Oh Guardian of the North, I thank you
For your guidance and protection this day,
For allowing me to align a little bit
With your great powers, and
For keeping me safe during the work
I have done. I am grateful, and I bid you farewell.

Turn, face the West, and repeat something similar, and go around counter clockwise until all 4 directions have been thanked and released.

If you have done a healing or have channeled other spirits or deceased loved ones, it is best after deconstructing your circle to also smudge the space to further cleanse it of any lingering energies.