

Why call the Quarters?

There are obviously many reasons why it is important to cast a circle and call the Quarters. Most fundamentally, one of the original reasons for drawing a magical circle at all is to protect one's self from "ugly-buglies" that may attempt to intrude upon one's magical working. Ceremonial Magicians draw three circles, sometimes more, depending on the danger level of the work they are undertaking. As Wiccans, we are more concerned with subtler energies, and gentler nature spirits. To draw a circle, for us, is to create a space apart from the everyday world; a "world between the worlds, in a place that is not a place and a time that is not a time."

Calling the Quarters, then, is to invoke all the energies of the physical plane, allowing them to be present. Everything on the planet is composed of the four elements. By honoring them, we honor ourselves. On occasion, Ether, or Spirit, is invoked as a Fifth Element. Native Americans invoke six elements: East, South, West, North, Above and Below. The Chinese have six elements they work with which are quite different from our Western understanding of the elements. Most Wiccans content themselves with the basic four, using the fifth element for special occasions.

By casting a circle and calling the Quarters, you are honoring two basic shapes in nature, and two different natures: the circle and the square. If you want to take that further, the Circle represents the Feminine and the Square, or equal armed cross, represents the Masculine. If using these gender terms offends you, then think in terms of polarities rather than gender.

An important factor in your spiritual search will appear with the discovery that different traditions give the Quarters different associations than you are used to. When you are in another's circle, and their method of calling the Quarters is alien to you, it is considered polite to be respectful to your hosts, and refrain from criticizing their approach. If you need to, it is acceptable to call the Quarters silently in your head to regain your orientation. Each Quarter is associated with a direction, an element, a ritual tool and has an associated color and shape.

Our Tradition attributes the four quarters in this manner:

East	Air	Intellect	Athame
South	Fire	Passion	Wand
West	Water	Intuition	Chalice
North	Earth	Stability	Pentacle

You will see how there are many different formats that one can use to call the Quarters. There are also many approaches to performing a Cast and Call. Some people like to silently draw the Circle before calling the Quarters, while others might have a chant they like to say. You can use an athame, a wand, or your finger to call the Quarters. We also send energy to the person calling the Quarters. If you have attended our rituals for awhile, you will notice that we place our hands on one another's shoulders, ultimately directing the energy through each other to the Quarter-caller. In this way, we all participate in calling the Quarters.

Within the Assembly, we call the Quarters in their order as they go around the circle; first East, South, West, and finally North. Other groups, Norse groups in particular, may call them in the form of a cross; first North, then South, then East, then West.

One of the other ways in which groups vary in their Quarter callings are the attributions to the Quarters themselves. Some argue that Fire should be associated with the sword, and Air with the wand. They reason that Fire would burn a wand, and fire is more violent, like the sword. Our rationale for our attributions are that Fiery energy is produced by a wand. A sword cuts through confusion and chaos to bring order and intellect, which is why we associate it with Air. The other Quarters controversy comes in the form of the argument over where Water should be placed. Some would argue that because we live on the East Coast of the United States, that Water should be placed in the East. On the other hand, in England it makes sense to put it in the West. Since most systems place Water in the West, and the West is the land of the "Blessed Isles" in Celtic mythology, we in the Assembly place Water in the West.

The best way to learn more about Cast and Call is to explore the different ways in which it may be done. Listen to your coven mates when they cast the circle. Most of all, practice writing your own and doing it at home.

About the Quarters....

East

This is the Quarter associated with the element of Air, and with all things mental. It is our place of reason, where we are rational. It is about abstract learning, cognition, divination and forms of communication. In the Tarot, it corresponds to the Suit of Swords, and in Wicca, to the Athame. Each element has an elemental associated with it, and with Air and the East, the elemental is the sylph. (A sylph is a faerie-like creature). Also associate with the east would be beings with wings, the sky, clouds, breezes, etc.

South

This Quarter is associated with Fire, with passion, creativity, sex, artistic and vocational pursuits. In light of this, it makes sense that the Wand should go with Fire, as the Wand has a more fiery, masculine, sexual nature. It is the Generative Principle, will power, vitality, soul sexual energy, moral force, protection, purification and grace. The elemental associated with the South is the salamander. This is due to the mistaken medieval notion that salamanders came from fire because they were often seen crawling through wood in a fire place. Of course, spiritual reality is different from mundane reality, so on the spiritual plane, salamanders really could live in fire.

West

Water is associated with the West, and with emotions, intuition. It is the Creative Principle, and its attributes include emotions, feelings, love, the subconscious, aesthetics, relations, hips and cycles. As in the Tarot, Water and West are associated with the Chalice, which makes this Quarter Feminine in its energy. The elementals associated with the West and Water are the Undines, mermaid-like sea people. All bodies of water, oceans, rivers, etc as well as the rain are associated with the West.

North

Earth is associated with the North, and with it, things like stability, security, that which is solid. Earth is the Formative Principle, attributed structure, growth, material gain, creativity manifested, the body, our planet. The Pentacle is the tool associated with the North, and being round, it too is considered Feminine. Gnomes are associated with the North, as they are tenders of the Earth.

Ether

Ether is "The Fifth Sacred Thing." It is the Transcendent Principle, transformation, spirit rebirth, immanence, time/less/ness, clarity, All & Void, synthesis. There is no tool associated with Ether, however, a symbol for it in the Tattva system is the Clear or black oval.

Colors and the Quarters

In traditional Wicca, the colors are most frequently attributed thusly:

East	Air	Yellow
South	Fire	Red
West	Water	Blue
North	Earth	Green or Brown

In the Assembly, we like using the Tattvic system, which also uses a shape along with a color, and an aspect of the Self. The Tattvas are used to align the Five Holy Parts of Self, and can be used in conjunction with the chakras.

They are as follows:

East	Air	Blue	Circle	Mind
South	Fire	Red	Triangle	Soul
West	Water	Silver	Crescent	Heart
North	Earth	Yellow	Square	Body
Spirit	Ether	Clear/Black	Oval/Egg	Spirit

(Soul and Spirit are differentiated in this way: Soul represents who you are in this particular incarnation. Spirit is who the Eternal You -- who you are through out all time and incarnations.)