



A GUIDE TO CONTRIBUTING TO RITUALS

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An Introduction to Rituals, How They Work & What Contributors Do

Rituals are a very powerful spell – so powerful that it takes a number of people and a special location to cast them. What they do can vary hugely, from creating a magical sword or a special kind of creature, through to summoning powerful creatures to this plane, magically teaching people new skills, or even killing something very powerful.

The power is wielded by the ritualist, who is the main person who casts the spell. How many people here are ritualists? Now, these ritualists may be the people who think they are the be-all and end-all, but the power to cast the spell is focussed through their contributors – who make up the rest of the ritual team casting the spell. Contributors are essential. It is not possible to focus the power safely without a minimum of 5 contributors, no matter what extra power you are able to muster through potions, learning or magical items. So, how many here are contributors? Yup – you are every bit as important as the ritualist, as there can be no ritual without you.

Ritualists must effectively control and direct their contributors, and use them properly. That means that, if you are contributing, you must be an active part of the ritual. Scratching your arse does not count! So, in order to contribute your power to the ritual, you have to do something, and that's what we're going to deal with today. What your ritualist might want you to do can vary wildly from ritual to ritual, so listen to your ritualist, and they should tell you what they want. The ideal time for a ritual is 13 minutes, and they should be between 10 and 15 minutes, so it's quite a long spell, with plenty of time to fill, so this is about how to be the most effective contributor you can be, how to make sure that what you do is helpful, and also to give you the confidence and knowledge you need to go in there and have fun – because that's pretty much the most important aspect. If you're all having fun, then that will come across and make for a great ritual. Besides, if you don't enjoy it, what's the point?

Speaking, Volume and Projection

One thing you're almost certainly going to need to do as a contributor in a ritual is speak. This might involve actual lines (don't worry, you're not going to be expected to learn pages of dialogue! It might be a single line, or many a couple), or it might just be some general ideas to convey, or even speaking as a chant with everyone together. If you're speaking, the most important part is that you can be heard. This can be harder than you think. Sometimes, the

ritual circle is a noisy place, with other people talking, or even a fight going on outside. It can be even harder if you're wearing a mask, or something else is in front of your face, and the ritual circle, whilst inside, can vary in terms of how good the acoustics are.

Now, you can shout, but that can sometimes make you harder to hear what you're saying as it damages your enunciation, and can certainly end up hurting your voice. So, there's a trick that actors use, called vocal projection. It's when you use your stomach muscles to push out air, and the sound with it, instead of forcing it from your throat and giving yourself a sore throat, or even losing your voice.

Now, vocal projection takes a lot of practice to master, but the basic techniques are pretty simple. So, give this a go. Stand up, with your feet a shoulder's width apart. Put your hands on the top of your tummy, so you can feel the bottom of your rib cage. Now, point your voice in the right direction. Wherever your face is pointing, that's going to be where the sound goes. So, if you're looking at the floor, the floor is going to eat your voice! Point your face at the people you're talking to! Then, take a nice deep breath in..... and you should feel those top muscles move – that's your diaphragm. Start with something simple - like Ha Ha Ha Ha. Push out the noise like you're pushing from your diaphragm. You can practice at home, in the bath, wherever is good for you. It can be a really handy skill, and not just for rituals!

Right, now we've covered how to make yourself heard, let's talk about when not to! Your ritualist is in charge, and they need to demonstrate that they are. Unless they ask you to, please don't speak over them. They need to be heard, too!

Blocking

The next thing we're going to talk about is blocking. This is a fancy theatre term for being able to see people properly – and, in many ways, a ritual is like a little play. You're telling a story together, using your voices and your bodies, to an audience, which is all a play is, after all!

Now, if you went to a play, and the actors all hid behind the scenery and you couldn't see any of the action, you'd get pretty fed up, right? Now, the key difference between theatre and rituals when it comes to where you and the audience are is the shape. Most plays have a stage at the front, raised up, with the audience sitting below, facing the stage. Rituals, however,

are in a circle. Where the audience is changes from circle to circle, but they can be almost all around you – which poses unique challenges. The only space which is never used for your audience is the void gate, where the circle opens to the void.

The most important thing is to be aware of where your audience is, and make sure that they are able to see what is happening. So, if there is some action happening in the centre of the circle, try to position yourself so that you're not obscuring the view from the audience to the action. This can be easier said than done! Sometimes, it means getting between the action and the void gate – the other side of the audience. Sometimes, it can be as simple as sitting or kneeling down.

Either way, it's important to avoid blocking the audience's view of the main action, the ritualist, and (if relevant), the target of the ritual, unless you're specifically covering, say a make-up, mask or costume change. Also, no-one really wants to see your backside! Try and avoid what we've often called 'the Viper huddle' (although I'm sure every faction has something similar!)

To get a better idea, the two easiest ways to learn are to watch as many rituals as you can – preferably conducted by different ritualists. Watch critically, and get a feel for what does and doesn't work. Secondly, when you're taking part in a ritual, look at the other contributors. If you're new to contributing, buddy-up with someone who has been doing it a while, and follow their lead. Before you know it, it will happen without you even thinking about it.

Being 'In the Moment'

Like acting, or storytelling, or any other type of performance, you are building an atmosphere, whether it's suspense, horror, humour or excitement, or anything else. Before anything else, that's what you are doing.

There will be times when you aren't doing anything – or you think you aren't doing anything, but you really are. You still have an important part to play – watch the action, listen to the ritualist, and actively participate in listening, like it's the most interesting thing you've heard all day. If you're not interested, then why should your audience or the Watchers be interested? There's a massive difference between, for example, sitting on the floor and staring at the ceiling, and playing the part of someone listening to a story or watching the action. Basically, try and be part of the action, no matter what, and just be in the moment.

Do's and Don'ts

This is a list which is far from exhaustive, of things that a bunch of ritualists, Watchers and experienced contributors have given me as a list of what to do and what not to do to be the best contributor you can be. Let's start with the 'do's':

- Be on time! The ritual circle is in demand, and runs to a strict schedule. I don't care how important you think you are, the schedule is not going to wait for you! Your ritualist may ask you to arrive at a certain time before the ritual is due to start (typically 15-30 minutes ahead of the start time), often so they can hand out potions and magical items, quickly check everyone knows what they're doing etc. Please be on time.
- Do feel free to ask questions of your ritualist if there's anything you don't understand, and please ask them sooner rather than later (i.e. when you're talking through what's going to happen, or rehearsing, not in the circle and preferably not in the last few seconds before the seal goes up. If you've left it until then, find an experienced contributor and ask them, as the ritualist will have a lot on their mind, and it will help them focus on that if you can ask someone else.
- If you are a healer or can detect poisons, please check members of your team periodically during the ritual. You don't need to make a big thing about it – just popping your hand on their shoulder and whispering your detection vocal is great. Ritualists 'should' designate a healer and/or poison checker for each ritual (hint, hint!), but feel free to help them out if you can do so without disrupting what's happening!
- Do tell your ritualist or other contributors if you see anything untoward that worries you – like a bottle discarded in the circle, for example. It might be nothing, but it might not be.
- Do try and watch rituals. It will give you ideas and help you understand what does and doesn't work. It's especially useful to watch different ritualists from different factions, and it's always easier to learn from others' mistakes instead of your own!
- Most importantly – Do enjoy yourself! When you get involved and are clearly enjoying it, it shows in how well everything goes.

Then, the 'don'ts':

- DON'T SWEAR!!!! I cannot emphasise this enough. Your team WILL lose marks if you use coarse language. There are children around, often far later at night than you'd expect,

and the Dragon herself (who views rituals through the eyes of the Watchers) is a child – and a child who can do very permanently unpleasant things to you if you displease her. So, just don't. The same goes for anything sexually explicit or any other form of 'adult humour'. If in doubt, don't.

- Don't put your name down unless you intend to turn up and contribute. We all have things that happen that mean plans have to be changed at the last minute, and everyone understands that, but ritualists are only allowed 2 amendments on their paperwork. Help them out, and don't put your name down and then not turn up.
- Wear or carry anything that may detract from the moment and the feel of the ritual – especially things like modern timepieces.
- Don't have conversations across the ritual circle seal. I shouldn't have to say this, but I saw it happen twice at the last Moot alone. By all means engage with the audience, but having a chat with your mate on the front row..... not so much! You should be focussed on the ritual and what's happening, otherwise why should your audience care?
- Don't check the ritual seal. I know a lot of people do it, but at the end of the day, it's a ritual seal. I am 1162 years old. I've been a ritualist for many, many years. I have raised and lowered a thousand seals and, as a contributor and scholar, and also watching hundreds of rituals, I've seen many thousands more. The one thing I have never seen in all those many years is a ritual seal fail, or have any gaps or faults within it. Do you check whether the walls of your house have any holes in them every morning, or are you sufficiently confident that the walls will still be there each day? Checking the seal can be said to show a lack of trust in your ritualist – as well as a disbelief in the basic workings of the ritual network. Leave the seal alone, it's perfectly fine! Concentrate on what you're there to do!

Safety

Thinking about your personal safety is important. Done right, rituals are fun and safe, but the ritual circle can be a dangerous place for the unwary. Here are a few simple safety points that will ensure you are safe and are able to enjoy yourself:

- I. If there is anything about you which means that you have needs beyond regular healing, or a reason why you might not be the best choice of contributor for a particular ritual, then please tell your ritualist. Good examples here would be unliving, daemons, magical patterns with particular spells for healing, possessions which may affect your ability to think straight, or were creatures which haven't yet learned intelligence in bestial

form. They may suggest that you participate in a different ritual, or they will have time to ensure there is someone in the circle who can heal you or deal with whatever the potential issue is should it arise.

Another example here is that some creatures, by their nature, may not be an ideal choice for certain rituals – not because of anything they may do, but simply because their energies may be in conflict with that of the ritual or the circle it is being held in. So, if you're an unliving contributor, or oathsworn to evil, and the ritual is to make a healing item in the Wellspring of Good..... then it might be best to sit this one out. Don't take it personally if your ritualist asks you not to participate when you tell them – they're thinking of your safety as much as anything else!

2. In a similar vein, if you have any personal medical or phobia-related reason why you may need more help to participate, tell your ritualist in plenty of time. Ritualists are able to specify on their paperwork what does and doesn't happen in the circle regarding effects if they know in advance. So, if you're (for example) epileptic, asthmatic, allergic to smoke or certain make-up, or have a condition which can be exacerbated by some of the things that may happen in the circle, speak up sooner rather than later. This will mean that your ritualist is able to ensure that that doesn't happen and that you're safe and able to participate without putting yourself at risk. The same is true of trigger warnings and phobias. If you're (for example) likely to freak out if you see clowns, or blood effects, then let your ritualist know so that they can either put your mind at rest that the trigger in question won't happen, amend the plan to enable you to participate without traumatising you, or (if the issue is central to the ritual), suggest that you sit this one out. There will be other opportunities.

Ways of Being a More Sought-After Contributor

So, you've totally got to bug and want to contribute to ALL THE RITUALS!!!! That's fair, it happens to us all..... There are a selection of skills which make some contributors more valuable than others, and more applicable to specific rituals. Sometimes, the thing that makes a contributor more valuable to a certain ritual is something fairly integral that you can't change. For example, I once did a ritual with an all-female team – not something you can change, and I've done rituals where the best possible contributors for that particular ritual were all healers, or all incantors, or all followers of a particular ancestor.

However, those things aside, there are skills which can make contributors very useful to certain ritualists and for certain rituals. The key initial one is learning to contribute to a second ritual.

Being able to contribute to rituals allows you to contribute to one ritual a day, but you can learn to contribute to a second. If you want to learn this and you don't know how to, then it's an unrestricted first level occupational skill, and easy to learn, with the only prerequisite being that you're a contributor.

Then, we have the specialist summoning skills (who is not my twin brother, promise!) There are a range of skills you can learn to augment your ritual abilities, and these are equally useful for rites. There are 4 of these: Theology (for ancestral stuff) Elementalism (for elemental stuff, perhaps unsurprisingly!), Daemonology (guess what that's used for!) and Necromancy. 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. So, in order to learn Theology, you must be an Incantor. If you want to learn Daemonology, you have to be a spellcaster of some kind. If you want to learn Elementalism, then you must be a healer, a light Incantor, or an enchanter. If you want to learn Necromancy, then you must be a Dark Incantor, Corruptor or Shadow Mage.

So, for example, I'm a Dark Incantor, and I've learned Theology and Necromancy. I cannot learn Daemonology or Elementalism, unless I learned the pre-requisite skills.

Now, there are other skills which might make you extra useful as a contributor – for making items, if you're already an armourer, then having the ability to spell temper items may prove useful in a circle for some rituals, and rituals surrounding alchemy may benefit from alchemist contributors – it's all about what is specifically relevant to what you're doing at the time.

The final skill set which may be useful are the knowledge skills – Sage and Scholar. Scholar is the lower of the two, and you can be a scholar in 2 different disciplines, or a Sage of 1 subject. If it helps, think of being a scholar as getting a degree in a subject, and being a Sage as going on and doing a masters degree. Also, when you pick a first degree subject, it might be quite general, whereas when you opt for higher learning, it tends to be a more specific aspect of a subject, So you might be a scholar of Teutonia, but you might be a Sage of Teutonian History, or Culture, or Faith.

Allied to these knowledge skills is research abilities. Research is something we do to find out stuff we don't otherwise have access to. So – and this is just an example, people can't fly, silly! Let's say that Bob the goblin came to me and said he wanted to be the Mean Green Fighting Machine, and that he wanted the ability to fly. Now, we've never seen a flying creature, and

we don't know how to make one. So, I could go to the Librarian's desk and make a research request to search the library for flying creatures. You then will get an answer to your research at some point in the future, which may or may not answer your question. How this is done is outside the scope of this workshop, so if you want to find out more about research, please go and visit the Library or the Bards' Guild and ask about their workshops. If they are having them, ask them why not!

However, the part that is relevant to us here is that you can learn all sorts of enhancements to research, which may prove useful in a circle – the ability to carry out research in Summer as well as Winter, for example. Also, you will enhance the relevance of your ritual if you were the researcher that did the study, and you're contributing to the ritual, instead of the ritualist reading out someone else's research who isn't there – after all, would you rather hear about a study from the person doing the study, or someone else reading out of a book?