

Building an Altar Study Guide for Initiates and Members
of
Circulos Tenebris Matrem Arcanas
Circle of the Dark and Mysterious Mother



Introduction

Building an altar is a personal experience and something that should be done with the individual's preferences, style, and purposes in mind. I don't believe there is really a "wrong" way to build an altar. This study guide will lay out one particular method of building an altar from a Kabbalistic point of view (because that's how I build my altars). Again... this is to give someone ideas and not the only way it can be done.



The above altar is an example of one of my altars. This altar is dedicated to Hecate. I'm going to describe what is required and what is not based on the Kabbalistic altar style I am using. You can skip anything I am describing or change however you see fit.

Required Components:

Pentacle (right) – round or oval representation of Earth that is flat on 2 sides. It is usually made of stone or wood.

Sphere (right) – sphere representation of Spirit. It is usually made of crystal or sometimes another mineral.

Wand (right) – long pointed object that represents Fire. It is usually made of metal, wood, crystal, or a mineral. This is used for casting.

Athame (left) – knife that represents Air. This is usually made of metal but can be made of crystal or a mineral. This is used for banishing.

Cup or Chalice (left) – cup used to represent water. The cup is most often glass or crystal, but can be made of metal or wood.

Candle (center) – Although there may be several candles on an altar, there is usually a central flame that is kept lit during the full working.

Statues – Most altars have a representation of a deity on them. It may be one statue or many, representing one or more Gods or Goddesses. Generally, the right is for “Force” – male, power, intent, etc. and the left is for “Form” – female, archetype, substance, etc.

Optional Components:

Crystals – Crystals can be used to enhance or alter the energy of a working. A large crystal can be powerful on an altar, but before selecting what crystal to use, make sure you understand it’s properties so that it works well with your altar setup.

Misc. Items – Almost anything can go on your altar if it helps you to focus the energy of what you’re trying to do. There are items that may be on your altar all the time and others that are only there temporarily. This is completely optional.

Consecrating the Altar:

To consecrate my altar, I anoint every item with oil and pray that they are bound to me and the workings I am trying to do. I then light the altar and smudge it with either sage or incense seeing the power of magic entering and surrounding everything to build it into a cohesive whole. If I add, remove, or move anything on the altar I anoint the new items and resmudge the whole altar.

Final Note:

Don’t be afraid to play with your altar, making changes as you change or for the seasons. The altar is a tool and so are all the items on it. Have fun with it.