

The Wiccan Laws

The original laws were handed down to us, created, as far as we know, in the 1960s by Gerald Gardner (without Doreen Valiente's influence). They are reflective of his beliefs, held at the time, and considered quite dated and generally at odds with much of contemporary practice. Note however, that some practitioners still hold them as authority. That said, no living tradition is static and thus it must adapt to the times in which it is practiced. What follows is an attempt to modernize the laws to reflect attitudes and beliefs held in the 2020s by current practitioners. There may come a time when these proposed modifications will need to be further adapted to meet future needs. The "old" laws can be found online, should the practitioner feel so inclined to compare them.

The *purpose of these laws* was to create a loose set of guidelines that practitioners could draw upon to help them navigate any issues that might arise within a group, between members, or between groups and downlines that didn't rely solely on the opinions and power of one individual.

These laws apply to all members of the coven, from leaders to newest members and should be clearly communicated so that all are aware of them.

Attitudes & Behavior

Wiccans love the Gods and just as they strive to learn and understand their loved ones - ever trusting, vulnerable, compassionate and each in service to the other in order to uplift one another, they should strive for the same within their practice. By learning to understand and nurture one another, each Wicca learns to integrate their own highest self and this unified embodiment allows *each practitioner to master their own divinity*. For Wicca is love for all beings, including the self.

Conduct

Remember that *you are the hidden children of the Gods so never do anything to dishonor them*. Never boast, never threaten, never say you would wish ill of anyone. If any person not in your circle of trust speaks of the craft, shy away from the conversation and ask them not to speak of it to you; use clever ambiguity and deflection to avoid conversation and speculation with those whom you do not feel safe. Heed your oaths and respect your vows of confidentiality for a witch's word is sacred.

Sacred Space

The Circle is a Temple of the Gods, thus it should be cast in love and truth so that it be a fit place for the Gods to enter. Likewise, the practitioners should be properly prepared, in right mind and spirit, in order to be in right relationship with one another and the Gods. With love and worship in their hearts, practitioners shall raise power from their bodies to give power to the Gods. This is done because the Gods can only help humanity via humans, and humans must be in the right frame of mind and heart in order to commune with the Gods.

Role of Coven Leaders

Each coven is overseen by one key leader, generally a High Priestess, who is seen as a representative of the Gods. This leader chooses a supporting member, someone who is trustworthy, suitably prepared, capable of representing the Gods and acting in energetic/spiritual polarity with the coven leader.

A co-leader defers to the authority of the coven's main leader, supporting and uplifting their leadership; but it is important to understand that *these roles ultimately work in collaboration* and could not exist one without the other. While there is one main leader to the coven, it is imperative to understand that a healthy coven finds balance between all members and that respect, trust, and love are earned through both words and actions.

As a coven grows, it can evolve and adapt the way it navigates leadership, in keeping with the group aspirations and philosophies; sharing power amongst established coven members; making way for new upcoming leaders; passing the mantle on from member to member, or any variation that the group sees fit and maintains a safe, healthy environment for practitioners to seek, grow and commune with the Gods.

Should a leader feel that they are no longer capable of performing their role to the fullest of their potential, *they can choose to step down* for a time or to pass on the mantle to another, ideally to a member that the coven has agreed upon collectively. The leader can choose to stay in the coven, handing over their mantle, or leave, if needed, knowing they are welcome to return later as a coven member provided there is room in the coven.

Safety

Sometimes we may be able to celebrate more openly, given the beliefs and practices of the time and society, but human nature being what it is, there are times when we need to practice our sacred mysteries in secret, so we have *created guidelines to keep coven members safe*, which can be adapted according to the coven and times it lives in.

Secrecy

None but the Wica may see our inner mysteries. Wicca is an experiential religion and one must practice it in order to truly understand the mysteries. Some things cannot be translated via the written word and for this reason, the inner mysteries are reserved for those who have been properly prepared through time and experience.

Covens *may choose to keep their covenstead location secret and their members anonymous*; with only leaders and messengers communicating between covens. Multiple covens may meet in a neutral location (or in an established covenstead should they desire) but may opt to keep their true names and locations secret for safety's sake, if they prefer. Should the covenstead, true names, and locations be shared, Wiccans are held to honor the trust that has been given and to hold said information in confidence.

Grimoire

In the past, before the age of computers, it was recommended that all Wiccan documents be kept *in your own handwriting* as a form of protection for all members. In the age of computers, this law applies less, but coven members are cautioned to be mindful about digital document safety and confidentiality. If a time of danger should arise, coven members are encouraged to

learn as much by heart as possible and destroy all documentation to keep their covenmates and families safe.

Tools

In times of persecution, to avoid discovery, *let your working tools be ordinary things* that any may have in their houses. Let your pentacles be of wax so that they may be broken at once or melted. Have no sword unless you can pass it off safely. Have no names or signs on anything. If you must, write the names and signs on your tools in ink before consecrating them and then wash them off immediately afterwards. Learn to identify tools through colors and do not engrave anything that might identify it as anything other than an ordinary household item.

Persecution

If the danger becomes great and Wiccans face persecution, keep all thoughts of the craft from your mind. If Wiccans become victims of torture and it be too great to bear, say "I will confess. I cannot bear this torture. What do you want me to say?" But if they try to make you speak of your covenmates, do not. If they try to make you speak of impossibilities, to obtain relief, plead temporary insanity. If you confess anything, say you cracked under torture and that you knew not what you said. Should you be condemned, trust that your covenmates will strive to help you escape or face the consequences of said conviction painlessly and in peace.

Group Dynamics

Each *coven leader is tasked with governing their coven with justice and love*, in keeping with the voice of the Gods and with the help and advice of their co-leader and elder coven members.

Valuables

If the coven has any land or wealth, let all coven members guard them and keep them clear and good for the group. If a member has wrought a tool, let them be paid fairly for their honest work, knowing that all acts of service and devotion freely given will be greatly cherished and valued by all.

Training

Often a *fondness may arise between a teacher and student*, which when properly fostered, can actually be beneficial to the art. However, sometimes this fondness can be problematic or disruptive and clear boundaries may need to be established to ensure that coven wellbeing is maintained. This can take many forms, from resolving to work from a viewpoint of siblings; parent and child; platonically; or setting norms about power dynamics and relationships within the coven and between members. It is for the coven leaders to establish the expectations within a group and to nurture a safe and healthy group dynamic.

Discipline

Order and discipline must be kept and it is up to a coven leader to maintain them ethically. Leaders can and should, respectfully, correct faults and guide practitioners appropriately. Leaders should never abuse this power and practitioners should remember that their leaders are human and thus practitioners must be responsible for their own safety and wellbeing.

Should leadership become punitive and toxic, it behooves the coven members to either confront the coven leaders or to remove themselves from the coven for their own safety. If a leader has been told their behavior is problematic and they cannot find a way to correct it, they should voluntarily hand over leadership to a group member who is trustworthy and properly prepared.

Group dynamics are difficult and safe leadership should always be the first priority of the entire group.

Disputes

The leader is charged with hearing all coven member complaints and striving to settle all differences among them. It must be recognized that there will always be people who want to gain control or push their methods and opinions on others. These individuals are not necessarily evil and often have good ideas that should be given fair consideration by coven members. If however, they cannot find common ground with their covenmates and cannot work with them or the coven leaders, they should leave the coven for the wellbeing of all.

If there are disputes amongst coven members, the *leader must convene with coven co-leaders and elders to hear from both sides*, first alone and then together, to decide justly, all the while not favoring one side or the other, in recognition that some may never be able to agree to work with others or that some may not work well together. For those who cannot abide by the leadership of another, they may either leave the coven; seek another coven; or create a new coven, taking with you those who will go.

Conversely, *some may not be able to lead justly* and run the risk of their coveners leaving because they cannot bear their leadership. Ultimately, no covener should come to meetings with those with whom they are at irreconcilable odds. If they cannot find a healthy compromise, one must go so that the craft might survive.

New Covens

Any second degree coven member may establish a new coven. They can establish a new coven because they live over 5 kms away from the covenstead or simply because they wish to start a new coven. Anyone living within range of the covendom wishing to form a new coven, must *tell the leaders and elders of the coven of their intention*, then withdraw from the old covenstead and focus on the new covendom.

Members of the old coven may join the new coven that is formed but they too must avoid the old coven for at least a year and a day.

Many covens may hive off amicably and wish to retain connection and community. In such cases, leaders and elders of both covens should *meet in peace to establish boundaries* between groups and guidelines for future interactions. While members from both covens may gather for great festivals; a coven member can only be a member of one coven, not both as sometimes division of covens can cause strife. The laws were made in order to help mitigate tensions and create clear guidelines for navigating distinct coven communities and dynamics.

Resignations

It may come to pass that a coven leader may formally resign and leave the coven. It may also come to pass that the leader may take a break for a time. However, *if the leader leaves the coven without notice* or agreement and does not return within a year and a day, the coven can

elect a new leader (unless there is a valid reason for them not to do so) with full confidence that the leader may not return and reclaim their leadership role.

Likewise, a coven member can withdraw from a coven for a time or permanently. They should, in good faith and integrity, inform the coven leaders and elders of their decision and honor their vows even after they leave the coven or if they cease to practice Wicca.

Witchcraft

Ideally, *no practitioner should do anything which will endanger any of the craft*, or bring them into contact with the law of the land or any persecutors; they should also rely on the laws of the craft and the council of coven elders and leaders, as appropriate.

Use of the Art

Remember *the art is the secret of the gods* and should ideally only be used in earnest and never for show or vainglory.

Baneful Magic

Let the craft *keep books with the names of all herbs which are good*, and all cures so all may learn, but keep another book with all the baneful medicines in safety and let only the elders and other trustworthy people have this knowledge.

There are those who might use their art against any who ill-treated them or members of the coven. In these times, we should avoid doing so, as much as possible, so as to not feed the fires of tyranny and persecution. Instead, we should trust that they will find their own punishments in time. *Should we need to resort to curses*, we must do so with discretion and mindfulness, only in times of great need, in order to keep fellow Wiccans safe.

Payment

It is generally *advised to avoid accepting money for the use of the art*, for money can taint practitioners and their aspirations if not careful. We do not want to run the risk of our craft becoming transactional in nature. Remember the coven is a family of sorts and you are the embodiment of the Gods in your practice, therefore your practice should reflect your highest nature, in accordance with your means. If you accept no money, you will be free from temptation to use the art for dishonorable causes. However, all may use the art for their own advantage or for the advantage of the craft if they are sure they unjustly harm none.

Magical Ethics

Let the Coven debate magical ethics at length. Only if all are satisfied that none may be unjustly harmed, may the art be used. If it is not possible to achieve your ends one way, perhaps the aim may be achieved by acting in a different way so as to harm none. While you may use magic to sway the minds of others, never haggle or cheapen anything you acquire by the art.

These “*laws*” are *guidelines and covens are encouraged to revamp them to suit their specific needs*. Wiccans are often unconventional folk, thus the laws they use should reflect their unique flavor and time, always responsive to the needs of the society in which they live and the liminal spaces they inhabit. That said, it does behoove a coven to take the time to clearly articulate expectations because often there are unspoken expectations and group norms that exist that

are not always obvious to newcomers. Taking the time to establish coven guidelines and lineage expectations is a good exercise for the group and fosters clear safety norms for all.