



Days of the Dead Divination Practice

Workbook + Guide

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We are now headed into the time of year that many of us feel drawn closer and closer to the liminal, the medial, all that is 'betwixt and between.'

For my part, I have found that the period roughly from Samhain (pronounced Sow-en) on October 31st until New Year's Eve on January 1st is a pause between the old and the new. The time between the ending of one year and the beginning of a new year, is like the time between conception and birth, the space and pause between breathing out and breathing in.

It is a time for gathering the internal resources to be able to truly call out, proclaim, celebrate or welcome the new year. Many of my ancestors understood October 31st to mark the end of the calendar year. Feasts were prepared and the Beloved Dead were consulted as tribes and communities prepared to enter the dark season of the year when faeries, ghosts, miracles and saints were believed to walk among the living.

Across an ocean and in a new land, another group of ancestors marked January 1st as the beginning of the calendar year – and handed down a number of revelries, divinations, and charms to celebrate and validate the transition from old to new.

What I have found is that my ancestors, though they came from many different parts of the world, spoke many different tongues, and all looked different (from each other and from me), also each had an understanding and insight that has been handed down from one pair of hardworking hands to the next until it was given to me. Part of that understanding is how to work with and view this special time of year.

The nature of this time of year is liminal. If we know how to attune to it, we find ourselves able to concourse with a realm beyond time and beyond space. As such it is the perfect opportunity to do what so many cultures and tribes and peoples from around the world have done and continue to do – **Speak to the Dead**, the Invisible, the Unseen, with an eye to the Living. We do this through Ancestor Divination.

The ways of doing this are myriad. I will listen to the ones who have gone before me and who see beyond me, and a little bit each day I will weave the story of my next year into being, carrying it with me wherever I go, listening and participating in other **traditions of spying signs and celebrating the unseen**, and preparing for all of the gatherings yet to come.

Here is a simple divination I performed each year in consulting with my own Beloved Dead and you can work with it as well - enjoy!

1.) Build an ancestor altar, and devote your time and loving attention to it.

I start by building our ancestor altar. The process commences at the beginning of October right after **Michaelmas**. On the evening of November 1st we prepare the traditional foods and drinks that our beloved ones loved in life, and offered them up along with plenty of copal incense and candlelight to help our old ones find their way to their temporary home.

That first night we sat quietly together and remembered our Beloved Dead. This is a family endeavor, so we speak to our little one who is five, and who naturally understands that the hot chocolate and *pan de muerto* are to be shared among the dead and the living. Our oldest child, who is twelve, assists in setting up the altar and preparing the food.

I thank our ancestors for watching over us and guiding us throughout the past year and for being the strong shoulders upon which we all stand. In this first night of bittersweet celebration there is no asking, but simply offering up good things and saying thank you.

2.) Before the sun rises, get your cards, ask for assistance and get down to business.

On the morning of November 2nd, I get up dark and early before the sun rises. I fix a cup of strong coffee and chocolate for myself and offer another one to the ancestors and then I sit down with my talismans, my cord, my prayer shawl, and my cards to get down to business. I bless all of the ancestors and then ask them to assist me in getting information for my family to better engage with our next year.

Major Arcana

Begin with the Major Arcana. Because this is a family matter, I pull cards not only for myself but for my loved ones too. This and one other time of year are the only times when I divine for our entire family.

Pull one major arcana card for each family member you are going to read for. The question that I hold in my heart when I do this is:

What do I most need to know/what does X most need to know as we head into another year?

Remember that the major arcana cards are invitations.

Ask yourself: Does the card present energy and understanding that you want to *step into* or is it something that you need to *step out of*?

For married couples you may pull one major for each individual and then a third for the relationship.

Minor Arcana

Then onto practical matters! Traditionally divination, especially at this time of the year is meant to be practical and concrete. So, I turn my attention to the minor arcana.

I pull four minor arcana cards for each person I am reading for. They are laid out in a line and are read as first, second, third, and fourth quarter of the upcoming year. This allows the cards to be taken on their own but also placed in context so that a story can be told with them. If there is a card that needs more explanation, then pull I will pull a fifth card to attain that information.

3.) Don't forget the BIG questions!

Finally, if there are BIG questions that the entire family is concerned with – projects, endeavors, big choices, ask about them directly and pull one card (I will pull from the minor arcana with an eye to practical wisdom) for each question. In my own practice, the divination lasts as long as the sun has not risen. Once the sun is up the session is over. I'll make a note of the cards I received for myself and for anyone else who wanted me to read for them, and then I'll go back to sitting with my ancestors, thanking them for the presence and their patience with me.

On the night of November 2nd, we will have a final celebration where I will make more foods that are beloved by our way back people, load up the altar with more offerings, and then on the morning of November 3rd we will prepare to say farewell, for now.

Hold the images and messages received in the early morning divination close to heart and mind over the next two months. Dream. I'll also peer at the upcoming astrological transits, tell stories, remember stories that were told to me, go for walks with my beloved, laugh with my sweet boys, and listen above all.

I will listen as the sun dips lower earlier, the wind caresses leaves and bare branches, and the squirrels with their mouths full of pecans scurry across our rooftops.

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Briana Saussy is an author, storyteller, consultant, and ritualist dedicated to the field of Sacred Arts and her growing community of soulful seekers.

Her books [Making Magic: Weaving Together the Everyday and the Extraordinary](#) and [Star Child: Joyful Parenting Through Astrology](#) are available at your favorite bookseller. Reach her at her [website](#).



**Those Who Are Remembered,
Never Die**