

## The Four elements (and the fifth)

The concept of all matter being made up of distinct elements is an old and universal one. In Northern European mystery lore we have fire, water, air, earth with spirit as the fifth. These elements combine to create the pentagram (or pentacle if it is within a circle).

In Nordic mysteries there is fire, ice, water, air and earth. In Chinese mysteries wood, water, earth, metal and fire. If we go back to the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers we will find the elements represented as blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm.

In Tarot we have the 5 elements of the pentacle..



**The symbols are really useful to understand, and create a great shorthand when writing Tarot notes.**

Spirit (or ether) is represented by the circle – The Major Arcana.

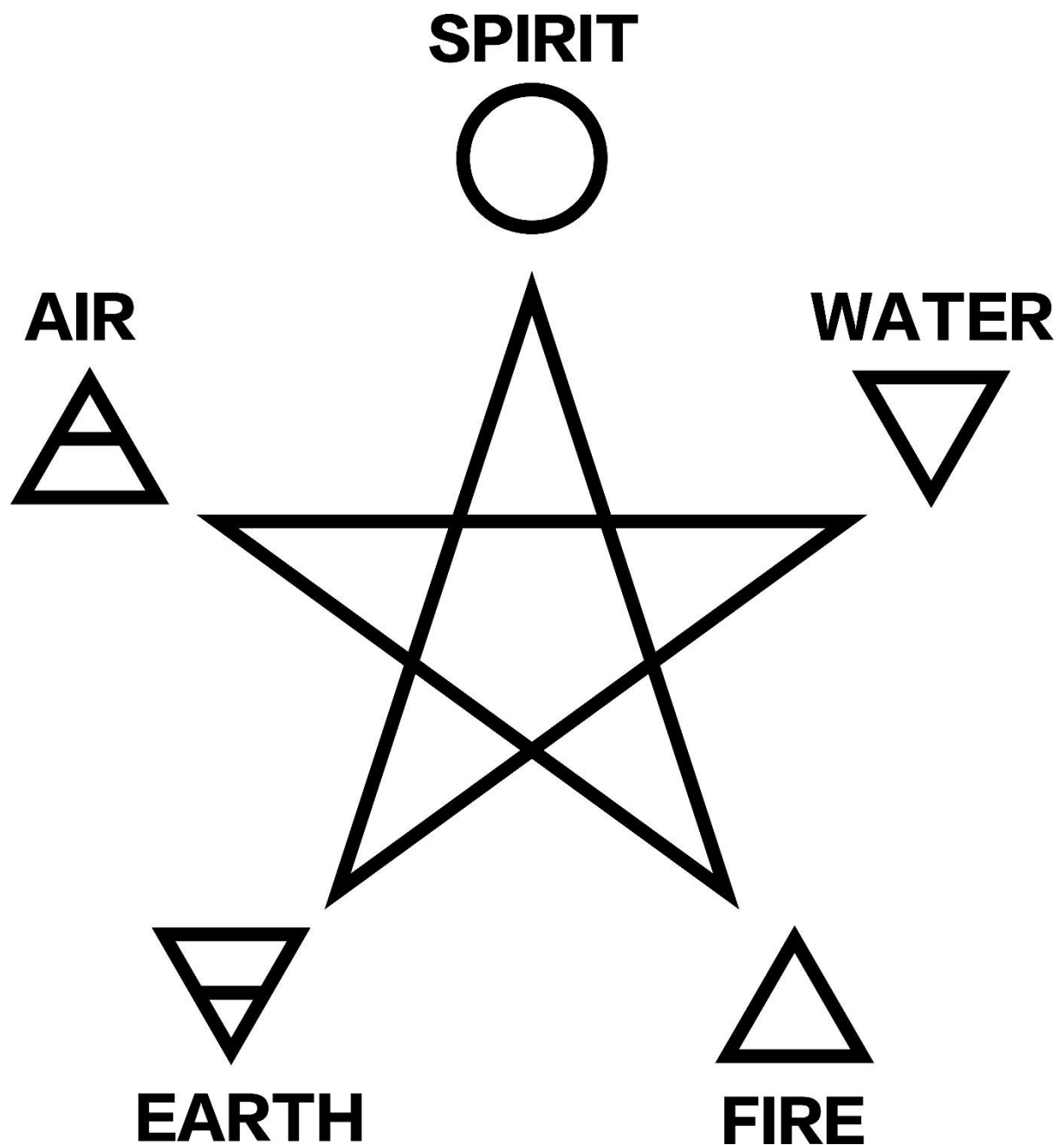
Fire; upward triangle (masculine, wands)

Water; downward triangle (feminine, water)

Air; upward lined triangle (masculine, swords)

Earth; downward lined triangle (feminine, pentacles)

The masculine and feminine triangles can be combined to make a 6 pointed star (see the notes on stars, and the Hermit)



The four elements can also be represented using Astrology and the four Evangelists. (note Wheel of fortune & World)

Fire: Lion of Leo, Mark

Water: Eagle of Scorpio, John

Air: Man of Aquarius, Matthew

Earth: Bull of Taurus, Luke

The four elements are also linked to a concept that has many names, linked to the Sphinx, the Magi, and various wisdom traditions. I like to think of them as the four magical virtues.

To Will (fire)

To Know (water)

To Dare (air)

To keep Silence (earth)

And the four **psychological traits of Jung** can be linked to the four elements (Take a look at the Myers-Briggs personality test)

Intuition – fire

Feeling – water

Thinking- air

Sensation- earth

You may have noticed that I always list the four elements in the same order, this is hugely influenced by Rachel Pollack, and I believe they **illustrate the order of creation**.

Fire (wands) the spark of knowing (linked to the crown chakra)

Water (cups) emotional connection to the concept, a dreamy state.

Air (swords) logical reasoning, planning.

Earth (pentacles) the actualisation, doing, experiencing.

### **Lets link these to planning a holiday.**

Fire: I just Know I need to go to Norway. I'm drawn there, I need to go there.

Water: I'm browsing online sites, imaging what it would be like to be there. As I look at various options I can almost imagine I'm there.

Air: I've got some dates provisionally booked and am now starting to organise and plan the trip.

Earth: I am on the flight and headed off to experience the trip!

So. Lets have a look at the four suits...

### **Fire**

The suit associated with Fire is the suit of Wands, also called Staves, Staffs, Clubs and Bows.

This is male energy, yang, active, our spirit, our energy. Fire is the spark of inspiration, that "Eureka!" moment when we connect to something greater than ourselves (our intuition, higher guidance, guides, divine energy, etc.). It is contagious optimism, with an ability to draw other people into a spirit of hope. It is the constant drive to understand ourselves more deeply, to create more passionately, to be and do just a little more. It is where we place our energy, our focus, our will.

**Key phrases:** Impulse, creative force, inspiration, expanding awareness, freedom, passion, desire, anger, spontaneous action, movement, optimism, energy, enthusiasm, new beginnings, projects, risk, self-growth.

**Colours & symbols:** Red, yellow, orange, golden. Flames, Yods, lightning, desert, salamanders, lightening, dragons, phoenix, sun, sunflowers.

**Concepts & Archetypes:** Loki, Thor, Kundalini, heart chakra, Prometheus, Dragons, The Pheonix, Transformation, aspiration, Apollo, Brigid, Lugh. The solar plexus, and the inner fire.

### **Watch out for too much Fire energy – it can burn you:**

- Unrealistically high expectations (of yourself and others).
- Very high energy levels lead to a tendency to 'burn out'.
- Potential for aggressive outbursts.

### **Whenever you see Fire cards, ask yourself:**

- What's your burning desire?
- Is there a new idea or inspiration offered here?
- Where is your energy focused – is it in the right places, and balanced?
- What is your intuition trying to tell you?
- Are you feeling burnt out?
- Are you seeing red?

**Connect:** Light a candle and gaze at the flame, sit by a fire. Connect with your Solar Plexus. Breath in Golden light, Sunbath.

### **Water**

The suit associated with Water is the suit of Cups, also called Chalices, Vessels and Hearts.

This is female energy, yin, passive, our unconscious, our dreams, our soul, our heart, our emotions. Water is the dreamy, reflective, instinctive part of our soul – where we 'feel' and words are just not enough. Water, ever yielding, always contained, ever changing. But it can extinguish the Fire, wash away the Earth or saturate the Air. Without that intensity of connection, life is barely worth living, yet too much of it makes life unlivable.

**Key phrases:** Feelings, dreams, relationships, imagination, fears, passivity, love, apathy, empathy, sympathy, psychic powers, visualisation, moods, nurturing, listening, reflection, romance, containment.

**Colours & symbols:** Blue, green, silver, grey. Moon, Cauldron, grail, mirror/reflections.

**Concepts & Archetypes:** Stella Marie, Freya, Neptune/Poseidon/ Njord. Holy Grail, Collective consciousness. Blood, water, wine. Cleansing and purifying.

Watch out for too much Water energy – it can swamp you:

- It's easy to be deluded by our dreams, fantasies and fears, and forget to actually live our life.
- We can be so influenced by others that we are constantly adjusting to their needs and desires, whilst neglecting our own.
- We can be so emotionally connected to others that we are immobilised by their pain, or our fear for them.

Whenever you see Water cards, ask yourself:

- How do I feel about this?
- Am I out of my depth?
- Am I honouring my own feelings, or giving way to others too easily?
- Do I need to stop dreaming and start planning and doing?
- Is it time to adapt, or move on?
- Is this my cup of tea – does it feel right?

**Connect:** Take a bath or shower and experience the water. Walk to natural water (or rain) and just be with the water. Bless your water before drinking (or watering plants).

## Air

The suit associated with Air is the suit of Swords, also called Spades, Arrows and Feathers.

This is male energy, yang, active, our logical mind, communication, words. A thought formed, then communicated by word. A list, a letter, a plan: thought through logically, analysed meticulously. Words can never completely communicate the full idea. Each person understands them uniquely. Words are never enough.

**Colours & symbols:** Yellow, white, blue, grey, turquoise. Intellect. Breath, clouds, mountains. Birds, storms, daggers/swords, bells and fans.

**Concepts & Archetypes:** Sky Fathers- Odin, Zeus, Jupiter. Hermes/Mercury, Eagle & Wren, sound, throat chakra, intellect, breath of life. Spring, Dawn.

**Key phrases:** Logic, reason, communication, words, planning, honesty, conflict, wit, breath, ideas, focus, opinions, law and order, cutting away, idealism, balance, thought, oppression.

Watch out for too much Air energy – it can cut right through you:

- It's easy to become detached from our emotions and the reality of life, by being caught up in our own mind.
- It can lead to conflict, as words spoken are easily misunderstood.
- Our mind can trap us with thoughts about low self-esteem and our lack of self-worth.

Whenever you see Air cards, ask yourself:

- What do I think about this?
- How can I plan, prepare and organise?
- What is the logical response to this?
- Am I being honest – and should I be honest?
- Think first, act second.
- Am I communicating clearly, and being understood?
- Would it help to talk to someone?
- What's the point?

**Connect:** Open a window, listen to some windchimes, cloud gaze, storm watch. Go some where high and feel the air. Breathe deeply and connect with your breath.

## **Earth**

The suit associated with Earth is the suit of Pentacles, also called Coins, Discs, Stones and Diamonds.

This is female energy, yin, passive, our body, our actions, our physical possessions. Earth, the spirit incarnated, this body you live in, this planet you live on. Everything that you can touch and feel. Yes, inspiration, love and communication all matter, but until we experience them right now, in the immediate present, with our body, they are of limited value. It's in the ordinary of everyday life that the real magic happens: a good meal shared, a walk

through woodland or by the shore, losing ourselves in a craft, the sensory experiences of a garden, dancing to music, gazing into someone's eyes. When we live with our senses, in the moment, we are truly alive.

**Colours & symbols:** Green, brown, black, grey. Bread, salt, Earth mother, birth, labyrinths, gnomes and brownies, stone circles.

**Concepts & Archetypes:** Earth mother, Frigg/Jord, Demeter, Hades, Rhea, Binah. Winter, Foundation, Receptive, Birth & Death, Womb & Tomb, letting go. The North.

**Key phrases:** Body, study, health, craftsmanship, attention to detail, tradition, money, abundance, community, food, home, garden, security, dependability, self-reliance, self-worth, grounded. Nurture, sustenance, safety.

Watch out for too much Earth energy – it can bury you:

- With Earth's overcautious attitude and obsessive attention to detail, it can be hard to get anything done!
- Don't become too attached to materialism (money or clutter) – it can get in the way of living.
- Don't get too stuck in your ways.

Whenever you see Earth cards, ask yourself:

- What should I do?
- How should I act?
- Do I need a little more perseverance?
- How are my work, home, income and health?
- Is my attention to detail slapdash or obsessive?

**Connect:** Stand, or lie outside, on the earth. Sit or stand with your feet flat on the ground, and breathe in through your feet. Cook and eat a meal from locally sources seasonal food.