

Gylden Briefing: Cloaks and Robes ©

And here's a very basic question for any pagan – what should you wear to a ritual or when casting a spell? There are several options, which can be summarised briefly:

- Skyclad
- Robes or cloaks
- Casual clothes.

We'll look at these options and also at the purpose of your cloak, according to your intent. It does add to the occasion, when putting on a robe or cloak before a sabbat, but that's just my opinion and it is best to check with the group beforehand. You don't want to be the only one there, either with or without a robe.

Skyclad

Let's start with this one, because few open groups expect their members or guests to take part in rituals skyclad, ie naked. Some closed covens might expect such, but it's important that all the attendees are informed well in advance. There are a few advantages to having the skyclad option:

- Robes and clothes don't mix well with candles or open fires.
- Some people feel better and nearer to their gods without clothes.
- If you're doing solitary magick within your own home (or with a few other witches), being skyclad may add to the focus.
- Some groups may insist on people being skyclad in an initiation.

However, my common reply to people who ask runs along the lines of, "Get real, this is England". And I have to say that I've been to some very cold outdoor rituals in the past when I've worn normal clothes. If the ritual takes place on public land, even in a forest, the option of being skyclad is simply not an option at all.

Casual clothes

There is a certain appeal to just wearing your normal clothes for rituals or for magick. I would advise that any magick done in your own home could be skyclad (see *above*), but I've found that everything works so much better if loose clothing is worn, subject to care around flames.

If you feel most comfortable in jeans, shirt and pullover or cardigan, that's fine. To be honest, there's no rules on what to wear for magick or ritual, none of that Sunday best twaddle. If you're happy with some pagan bling, eg pendants, rings, bracelets, torcs, etc, that's fine too. Outdoor rites do demand some common sense, eg warm coat, waterproof shoes and so on.

Do clothes define the pagan? Actually no, so if you want to celebrate a sabbat in normal clothes. Many witches don't get dressed up to make herbal medicines or brew up some kitchen witchery or to heal someone, as it's not needed. This witch has never done so!

I was a solitary witch for over a decade before joining a moot and, during that time, I wore whatever I liked, depending on the sabbat or the magick being performed. A small confession here – I'm not really into black, except for effect when storytelling or for funerals.

So, loose clothing of bright colours worked better for me – did you know that Celtic villagers preferred bright colours too? Shades like blue, saffron and henna were much more common from plant dyes – it was other ancient peoples, like the Egyptians and Romans who were more into purple, white and darker colours.

Robes and cloaks

So, let's leave Nick the Goth for another day. It's common to find Goth pagans at a lot of events and that's fine too – each to their own. It's more common to find pagans dressing up for the sabbat ceremonies and this is when one has to decide about robes or cloaks. Again, it's an opinion thing rather than a rule. Let's start with the cost of robes.

1. If you're a twit (and there's no other word for such pagan snobs), go to Glastonbury and order a set of robes from any of the shops there in a variety of colours and materials. A set of made-to-measure, cotton velvet robes (fully-lined) is going to cost in the region of £300-£350, not necessarily including the twiddly bits of clasps, special hoods, etc.
2. Or, if you're good at sewing, some of my friends have made their own – I'm told you can make a good cloak for nothing from an old duvet cover.
3. Or you get a cheaper deal from one of the many MBS or witchcraft fayres.
4. Or you can do what I did – I'm useless at sewing, but a friend offered to make a washable lined cloak and hood for me in my choice of colour. It cost £90 all in. Oh yes, it's brown as I feel better with earthen colours than in black.

Most of the time, I do wear a cloak for ceremonies, particularly as Gylden Fellowship celebrates every sabbat with other groups around the region, as do several other groups in the Gylden Community network. One tip that is useful (I think) is to have a main robe for most things, but also a lighter summer robe for Litha or Lughnasadh. A lined robe is no joke in the sweltering heat of summer solstice.

Energy cloaks and intent

Some cloaks or robes are linked with different types of energy, if you intend to cast a spell, it may be worth casting an energy cloak too, depending upon your intent.

- Keep your eyes closed and raise your dominant hand.
- Draw a circle around your head and visualise pulling the cloak over you.
- You need a deosil circle to put the cloak on and widdershins to take it off.
- Energy cloaks can drain you – it may be worth practising beforehand.
- After the magickal activity, take the energy cloak off, rather than letting it fail.

Energy cloaks can be used for different purposes, but here's a brief list.

1. Empaths may refer to using shields against negativity, but a protective energy cloak is (roughly) the same thing. Basically, it's a barrier between the witch or empath and the outside world – it's good for crowd situations if you feel overwhelmed.
2. Talking of negativity, a mirror energy cloak reflects bad energies away from you, but there is a caveat here. It's a bit like the visual bubbles of white light that some witches believe keep them safe from hexes or jinxes. A solid curse or poppet spell will go straight through the bubble or mirror cloak – so, you'll need a little more reinforcement in these cases (more details in the piece on **Protection Magick** on www.gyldenfellowship.co.uk).
3. For some witches, energy cloaks are used as means of identification. By this, I mean that your energy cloak may be visualised in a whole spectrum of different colours or sparkly hues, that can be discerned by other witches.
4. A power energy cloak is designed to draw more energy to you and to boost your aura, perhaps for more complex spells.



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