

## Wiccan Ethics

A journey into any Pagan tradition should begin by exploring the ethics of that tradition. That is the only way to prevent harming yourself and others. No magick should be attempted without a thorough understanding of the ethics of the tradition you are working with.

Most Wiccan traditions follow The Wiccan Rede. It is reprinted below for easy reference. There is a lot of information about being Wiccan in the long version of the Rede which is not easily grasped during the first reading. You should read it on a regular basis or even memorize it to make sure you are acting in an ethical manner. In a nutshell, the ethics of the Rede state that you can do whatever you want as long as you don't harm another creature, including yourself. There is much debate about what causes harm and how to live without harming yourself and others. It is my belief that it is not possible to live truly "harm free." I believe that all things, even those many consider to be dead, contain energy and therefore, everything is alive. People must harm plants (and sometimes animals) to eat and live. There are many other instances where a person must cause harm to survive. So, I believe that you should cause as little harm as possible.

There is another tenet of the Wiccan traditions called The Threefold Law of Return. It is similar to the concept of Karma. This principle states that whatever you send out into the Universe, be it deeds or thoughts, will return to you three times as strong. So, if you do bad things and/or think bad thoughts, bad things will happen to you and others will think bad thoughts about you. Conversely, if you do good things and think good thoughts, good things will happen to you and others will think good thoughts about you. It encourages you to think about the consequences of your thoughts and actions to take personal responsibility for them. Gerald Gardner's version of The Threefold Law is listed below.

### The Wiccan Rede (long version)

Bide within the Law you must, in perfect Love and perfect Trust.  
Live you must and let to live, fairly take and fairly give.  
For tread the Circle thrice about to keep unwelcome spirits out.  
To bind the spell well every time, let the spell be said in rhyme.  
Light of eye and soft of touch, speak you little, listen much.  
Honor the Old Ones in deed and name,  
let love and light be our guides again.  
Deosil go by the waxing moon, chanting out the joyful tune.  
Widdershins go when the moon doth wane,  
and the werewolf howls by the dread wolfsbane.  
When the Lady's moon is new, kiss the hand to Her times two.  
When the moon rides at Her peak then your heart's desire seek.  
Heed the North winds mighty gale, lock the door and trim the sail.  
When the Wind blows from the East, expect the new and set the feast.  
When the wind comes from the South, love will kiss you on the mouth.  
When the wind whispers from the West, all hearts will find peace and rest.  
Nine woods in the Cauldron go, burn them fast and burn them slow.  
Birch in the fire goes to represent what the Lady knows.  
Oak in the forest towers with might, in the fire it brings the God's insight.

Rowan is a tree of power causing life and magick to flower.  
Willows at the waterside stand ready to help us to the Summerland.  
Hawthorn is burned to purify and to draw faerie to your eye.  
Hazel-the tree of wisdom and learning adds its strength to the bright fire burning.  
White are the flowers of Apple tree that brings us fruits of fertility.  
Grapes grow upon the vine giving us both joy and wine.  
Fir does mark the evergreen to represent immortality seen.  
Elder is the Lady's tree burn it not or cursed you'll be.  
Four times the Major Sabbats mark in the light and in the dark.  
As the old year starts to wane the new begins, it's now Samhain.  
When the time for Imbolc shows watch for flowers through the snows.  
When the wheel begins to turn soon the Beltane fires will burn.  
As the wheel turns to Lamas night power is brought to magick rite.  
Four times the Minor Sabbats fall use the Sun to mark them all.  
When the wheel has turned to Yule light the log the Horned One rules.  
In the spring, when night equals day, time for Ostara to come our way.  
When the Sun has reached it's height time for Oak and Holly to fight.  
Harvesting comes to one and all when the Autumn Equinox does fall.  
Heed the flower, bush, and tree by the Lady blessed you'll be.  
Where the rippling waters go cast a stone, the truth you'll know.  
When you have and hold a need, harken not to others greed.  
With a fool no season spend or be counted as his friend.  
Merry Meet and Merry Part bright the cheeks and warm the heart.  
Mind the Three-fold Laws you should three times bad and three times good.  
When misfortune is enow wear the star upon your brow.  
Be true in love this you must do unless your love is false to you.

**These Eight words the Rede fulfill:**

**"An Ye Harm None, Do What Ye Will"**

The Threefold Law

Thou hast obeyed the Law. But mark well, when thou receivest good, so equally art bound to return good threefold.