

**Mastering The Magick Of Witchcraft**  
<http://www.masteringmagickwitchcraft.com>

**Rose Ariadne Blog**  
<http://www.rose-ariadne.com>

**Ask Rose Ariadne**  
<http://www.askroseariadne.com>

## The "Good And Bad" Of It

Covens and schools of witchcraft are very simply, a group of people that work together for magickal and ritual purposes.

It is entirely possible that you could practice as a “solitary” Witch your entire life (and maybe doing some rituals with close friends once in awhile). In fact, most Witches throughout the world ARE solitary practitioners, and never join a coven or other witchcraft school.

Even though you can be just as successful as a solitary, sometimes Covens and schools can help. You may be the type of person that likes to do things in groups, and actually, sometimes it is easier to raise energy of a group all with the same focus.

Also, celebrating the Sabbats is a lot more fun with a group or Coven.

There are four basic coven structures: **Groups, Schools, Groves, and Covens.**

The first, and most non-structured type of coven simply calls itself a group. It can vary in function from a group that gets together on semi-regular intervals to do magick, to a group that mainly functions in other ways such as the kids play group that a friend of mine joined that also had kid centered rituals on every Sabbat, and threw great parties as a side benefit. Groups generally do not have initiations; they do not give out degrees, and they do not have High Priests or Priestesses although people may step into those roles for a particular ritual. Groups can also be large groups, open to the public, that do award degrees. Very often, the large groups will have a small number of core members in an inner circle that hold private coven meetings. Joining a group does not prevent you from joining other groups, groves, witchcraft schools, or covens.

The second type is a grove, which has some of the features of a group and some of a coven. There is generally a leader and there may be initiations into the group, but the group itself does not award degrees. Groves are usually started when somebody who has a second degree wants to start his or her own group, but this is not always the case. Many Faeri groups only have one degree, and this is handed out sparingly. Alexandrians can start covens when they have their second degree. Sometimes a person who has come





from a coven with a rigid structure and wants a group with a looser hierarchy starts a grove. Most groves do not prevent you from joining other groups, groves, or covens.

The next is the Coven. Covens, as a general rule, have the most rigid hierarchy. There is generally a High Priest (HP) and High Priestess (HPS), although members of the group may switch off in this role at times varying from every ceremony to every year. The same goes for witchcraft schools (which are not all that different from covens sometimes). Some covens have a permanent HP and HPS. If the group is large enough, it may have initiates, dedicates, and acolytes. One prominent exception to this is the Dianetic coven, which is based on consensus and equality, and oriented almost exclusively to the Goddess. Much of the hierarchy and practice depends on the sect of the HPS, although I do know of one coven that was run for several years by a Feri HPS with a strongly shamanic bent. There was another third degree in the coven who was a strong Alexandrian with a ceremonial magick viewpoint. The two of them switched off rituals for several years although there was a frequent butting of heads. This was unusual as in most covens there is only one third degree, and the HPS usually determines the direction of the group.

### **Benefits/Disadvantages**

The upside of joining a Coven is that it can give you some discipline when practicing your craft. For example, you will be celebrating every Sabbat, and making sure to do your daily devotions. It can be a rewarding experience to meet with like-minded people – no matter what you do.

Also, the High Priest and High Priestess will always be there to help guide you on your path.

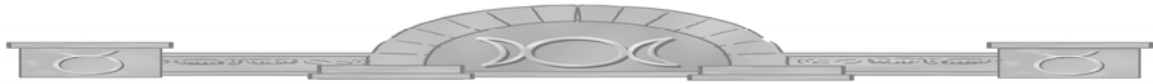
The downsides of joining a Coven are mostly the politics involved. There can be squabbles, and problems within the group (for example, arguments over who should lead, etc). There may also be people who join who have a lot of emotional baggage, and actually bring negative energy into the group. This can corrupt the energy that the Coven is working with – in short, it may bring everyone down.

The last downside of belonging to a Coven is that it can be a large commitment of time and energy. You will be expected to participate and even donate some money towards expenses and materials.

### **Where To Find Covens**

You can easily find Covens in your area by checking them out online. To start, just go to [www.witchvox.com](http://www.witchvox.com) and sign up if you aren't already (it's free). You can also try to "google" the name of your city along with the word "Coven". For example your search may be "New York Coven".





You may have many covens in your area, and may have a choice as to which one you want to join.

Once you have at least once Coven to visit, contact them and find out if you can join. Then go visit and talk to the High Priest/Priestess and find out what the Coven is all about, and if you feel comfortable with it.

Here are some of the questions you can ask on your visit to the Coven:

1. What does your group have to offer me?
2. What is your philosophy of witchcraft?
3. What tradition do you practice?
4. What do you feel that I have to offer your group?
5. What are your requirements for degrees?
6. How long is the dedication period?
7. What are the expectations of members in your group?
8. Are there membership dues?
9. What is your lineage?
10. What is your teaching style?
11. How do you define covenstead?

### **What Covens Do Together**

It would be more accurate to ask what covens do not do together! Make ritual candles one full moon. If you do not practice skyclad, make your robes together. If you do practice skyclad, make robes for when you do visit other covens. Make soap or other Yule gifts together. Buy a case of tomatoes from the Farmers market and can them as a group. Throw parties. Make ritual bath salts, make incense, go visit other covens or Renaissance festivals as a group. Cook a weeks' worth of meals for somebody mourning a loss or celebrating a baby. Become active in the pagan community. Make ritual jewelry together. Design and build a sacred space in your covenstead. Go to movies. Go out to dinner. Switch off babysitting. Adopt a road and pick up the litter. Hold a group yard sale. Help your fellow coveners move. Practice random acts of kindness. Enjoy!

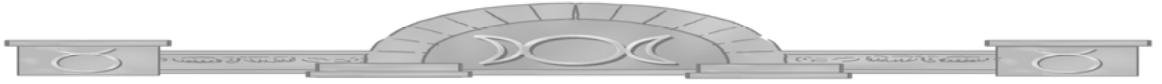
NOTE: For more information on what Covens are all about, how to join one, and even how to FORM your own Coven, see my Witchcraft Academy In A Box.

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