



## MAKE A RUNE SET

### Why is Wood the Medium of Choice?

A tree is the most perfect of spiritual beings, with its roots buried alive in Mother Earth and its limbs alive and growing in Father Sky.

According to the Song of the Sybil, when the earth was young, Odin and his two brothers found two trees: an ash tree and an elm, faint, feeble, with no fate assigned to them. Breath they had not, nor blood, nor senses, nor language possessed, nor life-hue. Odin gave them breath. Hoenir gave them senses (shape). Blood and life-hue was given by Lothur.

We are the forbears of the trees. One does not just carve runes, one recreates this ritual. By chanting the name of the the rune, one give the rune breath, the energy of its name. By carving it, one gives the rune senses (shape). By coloring the rune red (blood is optional), one gives it life's hue.

When you carve runes you create life.

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This article was written by my dear friend, Maryam Povey Webster. I've inserted a few of my own comments in brackets.

## 1. The Materials

1. Basically, you'll need a 1" diameter fruit tree branch. Apple works well, yew and pine, too, and I've seen nice cedar, redwood and olive wood sets. It does have to be a fruit-bearing tree according to my reading and personal gnosis on the issue and harvested just before the tree comes into fruit (at the blossom stage) - you need that fruit-bearing power in the runes to lend to the overall power of the runic symbols. I have been taught by the Gods I work with that to have a "dead" branch (harvested fallen, non-fruit bearing or having already fruited) makes 'dead' runes. Others may have different feelings about this.

[Sunny's comments: Most trees are "fruit-bearing", save some species in which the male and female are separate. In that case, use wood from the female tree. If you are a city-dweller, use a purchased hardwood dowel or precut wooden buttons from a woodworking shop. Thin wooden blanks can also be found in hobby shops.]

2. You will need a knife, X-acto Blade or a burin (ice pick-like scribing tool), an ice pick or sharpened screwdriver, a 1/8" wood carving chisel or veiner, or a Dremmel tool fitted with a narrow bit. This instrument is for inscribing ("risting ") the runes onto the wood and can be consecrated (preferred) or not (acceptable). Less acceptable is a wood burning tool with a narrow gauge bit. This tends to produce undesirable results when you come to stain your runes and the resultant smoke can be difficult to deal with for those sensitive to it. Putting the wood of your runes to fire additionally puts a slightly destructive energy (the fire eating the wood and leaving behind the charring) into the runes that is not found with the clean lines of the knife blade.

[Sunny's comments: Woodburning is much easier than carving. Scrape out the char before painting. On the other hand, if you carve, you are almost guaranteed to have blood handy...]

3. Your own blood: if you're a woman in childbearing years, you have a readily available supply. If not, I suggest asking for a vial "to take home" (make up what excuse you will) the next time you donate or give blood for tests. You'd be surprised at the people who will accommodate such a request. Otherwise, get ready to prick your finger many times to stain your runes; or get a friend with a medical kit and training to take a vial. If you have access, you'll need the vial with the lavender top. This contains heparin; an anti-clotting agent. You really do need this as the blood begins to clot almost as soon as it leaves your body, rendering it unusable. I would recommend two full lavender-topped tubes be drawn; freeze as immediately as you can until you are actually ready to stain your runes. A way of fudging on the blood is to prick a finger and squeeze a drop into a tablespoon or so of red paint or stain. Some authors advocate the use of other bodily fluids; saliva, semen, urine and sweat, but blood is the most traditional of these as the "fluid of life". It is up to you which you feel best suits your purpose for the bodily fluid you do use makes the runes uniquely "yours". If another person picks up

your runes, they cannot leave their psychic mark on them because your blood remains to cancel out other influences.

[Sunny's comments: red ochre powder mixed with linseed oil or red acrylic paint are both good for reddening the runes. Put a few drops of blood into the ochre mixture or paint.]

4. Other materials: sandpaper, a saw to form the rune disks or shapes, varnish, tung, linseed, olive or lemon oil to seal the runes once risted and stained. A sturdy pouch is of paramount importance to contain the finished work and can be made of leather or any heavy material.

That's basically the materials. The formation of the runes and rituals surrounding it differ from person to person. Below is a representative sample which you are invited to use as is or change to suit your particular working style.

## **2. Formation Ritual**

1. Prior to the ritual, lightly pencil the runes onto the different disks, laying the symbols against the grain. Softly chant the name of each rune as you draw it. Draw all the component parts of the staves downward, to draw energies into the rune symbol. Cut two or three extra disks to cover cracked runes and missteps of your cutting tools, etc.

2. Set aside a sacred space in whatever way you feel comfortable; ideally in the workshop area of your harrow (altar). It is highly appropriate to do the Hammarsetning, or Hammer Ritual in the cardinal four directions as well as Above, Below and Center.

3. Invite into your space the Gods and Goddesses of the runes: Odin, Balder, Freya and Freyr, the Norns, etcetera. If you have a particular affinity for any one God/dess, invite that Deity also to witness and lend their energies to the proceedings. Invite also your lineal ancestors, especially those who worked magick in their own lives, your power animal allies, local land spirits or any other wights you may wish to have present. Pour a tot of milk, apple juice or wine in offering to the Gods and ask them to guide your hands and lend you their powers in the work you are to do.

4. Place your cut disks or tablets on the workbench or other safe space, with the Fehu disk in a clamp. Lay a white cloth napkin or other clean white cloth in front of your workspace to place the finished runes on.

5. Draw the sign of the hammer over the disk to sain it and placing your lips close enough to vibrate the wood, "galdor" the rune (intone the rune sound) strongly into the disk while holding a strong visualization of the one thing that means "Fehu" to you. This could be one of the traditional meanings, such as "money" or

"cattle" or something that is extremely intimate and personal only to you. Whatever it is, hold the visualization strongly and begin to carve, Dremmel or burn the rune into the wood.

6. When you are finished with the first rune, take it out of the clamp, put it on the white cloth in front of your workspace and clamp the second rune in. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until you have all twenty-four Runes done. Ideally, you should try to do this all in one session. If this is impossible, do three separate workings, each encompassing one of the three Ættir (rows of eight Runes) until you are done.

7. When you have all of the Runes done, assemble them in order on the white cloth. Fix your gaze intently upon each one in turn, again galdoring intensely the vibration of each Rune into the wooden disks. When you have galdored the last rune, galdor the Ansuz-Laguz-Uruz formula "Ahhhluuu!" (meaning "It is sealed"/"So mote it be") over the rune set.

8. Ground the sacred space (and yourself), thank the Gods, and dismiss any minor wights you might have called.

### **3. Consecration Ritual**

This is a ritual which takes place in two parts. In the first part, you are erecting sacred space for bleeding or painting the rune staves. After a period of time waiting for them to dry, you will come into sacred space again to seal and do the final consecration of the runes.

1. Again, set aside sacred space in whatever way you feel comfortable using the Hammarsetning to sain and seal the space.

2. Invite into your space the Gods and Goddesses of the Runes, your lineal ancestors and any other wights you may wish to have present. Dedicate the space and the time to the consecration of your rune set. Lay your runes on a cloth that you don't mind getting soiled with your own blood or ink. (This cloth will later be ritually burned) Pour a tot of milk, apple juice or wine in offering to the Gods and ask them to lend you their powers of purification for the consecration to follow.

3. Wash your runes lightly in clean, consecrated water. The Icelandic spring water or Glacier water that is currently on the market is perfect for this application. The purer, the better. Don't soak them as you want them to absorb the pain or blood later in the process. Light a recel or smudging blend made of purifying herbs like oakmoss, cedar, Thor's beard (house leek), vervain, clary sage and perhaps a smidgen of amber perfume resin. (Refer to the "Nine Worts Galdor" in the Lacnunga for ritually appropriate herbs.) Dedicate the recel to the Purifying forces and pass each rune through the smoke, saying a formula like "By Oak and Sage, by Fire, Water, Air and Earth, in the name of Odin, purified be this Rune, clear be its purpose and great be its Power. Ahhhluuu! " Then intone the name of each

Rune and blow the vibrations into the disk. Repeat with all twenty-four runes and return them to the cloth.

4. For a Man or Non-Menstruating Woman: Have an altar space set aside upon which is your bottled blood (several drops from pricking your finger, in a quantity of red ochre acrylic paint or red India ink is just fine as is a whole lavender-topped tube from a professionally done venipuncture), the completed Runeset and a quill, or small brush.

For Menstruating Women: If you intend to insert the Runes vaginally (the most effective way, in my experience), conduct the ritual nude, or have no underclothes on and wear a loose skirt which you are easily able to raise and lower during the ritual. Have tissues and a sanitary napkin available and sit on a folded towel to contain any spills. Have on your altar a small brush and bowl next to the Runeset. If you are able to extract any of your blood (this is most easily done with the fingers) and prefer not to insert the Runes, put the blood into the bowl and mix it with red ochre acrylic paint or red India ink. You will need enough to color the staves of all twenty-four Runes.

5. For a Man or Non-Menstruating Woman: Take up each Rune disk and paint each component part of the stave downwards, drawing the power of the energies you are raising into the rune. Chant three times "Fehu, Fehu, Fehu!" while you are painting, or as many times as it takes you to feel that the energies are present in the rune. After which you seal the energies into the Rune by again vibrating "ALU!" into the wood. You have repeated this process four times before and will repeat it once more before your set is consecrated, for a total of six times. The repetition is necessary as it gets the energies well worked into the physical structure of the wood and carved staves. Repeat with each rune until all twenty-four are stained. Take down the sacred space and wait for your Runes to dry.

For Menstruating Women: Obviously, inserting the Runes vaginally colors them all over. Women who do this must be totally comfortable with touching themselves intimately. This method is usually preferred by more serious magickal workers and "galdarkonas" (literally: magick-wives) but is not necessary to consecrate your Runes for everyday use. If you prefer to paint on your own blood with a paintbrush, follow the directions above. I prefer to insert the Runes a pair at a time in order in twelve separate sessions. Sometimes you will not be able to complete this at one sitting due to the availability of your blood and the thirstiness of the wood. As you insert each pair of Runes, galdor three times the name of each Rune or as many times as it takes you to feel that the energies are present in the rune. Seal the energies into each Rune by vibrating "ALU!" into it internally. Remove the pair of Runes from your vagina and set the wet Runes on the stainable cloth to dry. Repeat in pairs until all twenty-four are stained. Take down the sacred space and wait for your Runes to dry.

6. Until your Runes are dry, keep in a dust free environment. Pets will be attracted to the blood as will ants; keep the drying Runes in an inaccessible place, under a

bowl, large strainer or other cover that will not touch their surface. When the Runes are dry, erect the sacred space once more and seal the paint or blood in by rubbing the wood with a quarter cup of olive oil with ten drops of lemon oil in it. You can further this recipe by adding a teaspoon of melted beeswax and beating until incorporated. This is a basic old furniture polish recipe and works well to seal handmade wood products. Furthermore, add a few drops of the oils of the plants that are known to provoke visions such as mugwort, vervain, viper's bugloss, buckthorn, house leek, parsley root, sage and others. Add these oils to the olive oil base prior to adding the beeswax and stir (don't shake) them into the mix. I have a lovely polish made with the addition of amber perfume resin and a bit of a melted brown crayon which added a slight, lovely walnut color to the wood. Work the polish into the wood of each rune with a cloth. As you do so, mentally galdor each rune and think about its meaning as you rub. The finished runes should have no trace of polish on their surfaces, but should be buffed to a satin finish.

7. After sealing, hold each Rune over your heart and vibrate the sound of each through your heart chakra and into the individual Rune. Finish with "ALU ". When you have done this with all of your runes, they are ready to use. Dedicate them to the main purpose you wish to use them for e.g.: "By Iaer and Urdh, I dedicate these Runes to acts of Healing and Divination!" or "By Odin and Freya, I dedicate these Runes to the learning of Deep Magick!". Whatever God/desses you invoke will be sealed to the Runes for their lifetime, so make sure you know what you want before you speak. Spend some time thinking about it before you dedicate the set. Go and do your first Rune reading for yourself; your Runes are now irrevocably and personally sealed to you and their energies will never run higher - you have earned the right of first usage.

## **4. Divination**

Now, take your brand spanking new Runeset out for a test drive. Your first Divination should be for yourself, for your Runes will be glowing with the energies of your own Wyrð. For your first reading, concentrate on a general portrayal of your own life to present, then on the present itself, then on the future. These would ideally be done as three separate readings, completed in one sitting. Don't forget to record your experiences. One new to the runes should generally do no serious readings for other people until they have spent at least a three or four years in intensive study of the runes as individual Mysteries. Study Divination from your second or third year onward. Be careful in what you tell people; the runes are not a panacea and their message is not meant for everyone.

## **5. Galdor**

Galdor (galdr) is defined as "the singing of runes and runic combinations in spell work, healing and other applications". Learning to galdor is like learning to sing. There are for the most part an infinite number of combinations of runes that can

be concatenated within any given galdor. You may choose to sing one rune over and over or a combination of five, ten, fifty, several hundred in differing permutations to infinity. The numerical implications of this are somewhat interesting and form the basis for the decoding and encoding of runic structures found in nature, the sciences and pure mathematics. There are 24 runes in the Common Germanic (Elder) Futhark and any number of ways to put them together. Repeats of one or of a sequence of nine are the most frequently seen in workings of magickal significance. Work with spreading out the sound of each rune and engaging as many consonant/vowel combinations as you can. The first rune: "Fehu" can be galdored: "Feeee, Faaaa, Fuuuuu, Faaayhuuuuu!" (now you know what "fee-fi-fo-fum" really means!) Draw out the vowels as much as possible, exploring all registers and resonances in your voice. Find the place each rune fits the best in your vocal register and bodily vibrancy. Each rune might feel more correct to you being sung as a song in and of itself, complete with a beginning, middle and an end. Or you might just hold one note for each rune. Most of the runes will have slightly to vastly different tones. Explore them all. Each person will have different notes for each rune; there is no "one correct way".

## 6. Beyond Runedom

As the Master Runester Edred Thorsson says: "Reyn til Runa " - meaning to explore, study and quest until you find the Mystery. Go into the heart of Mystery (Runa ), until you can go no further. Go even further than that. Then you will no longer need a runeset...

## 7. Meditations & Exercises

1. Draw the rune you are studying on your forehead in an aromatic oil. Dragon's Blood perfume is good for this as are pine, mugwort, lemon and sage essential oils. If using essential oil, be sure to mix one drop of essential to five or six drops of carrier oil which can be any salad oil you have on hand. Feel the rune's essence soaking into your forehead and smell the scent of the oil. (If you use the same oil each time to enrune yourself, you will develop a Pavlovian attachment to it which will facilitate your entry into the 'other world' of the Runes very swiftly. I use a very light mixture of mugwort and pine in grapeseed oil.) Allow yourself to go into a very light trance, or meditative state. Note what emotional associations and images come to you. Write them down when you come out of your meditation. Compare notes over time and across the runes you study.

2. Draw the rune of your study onto the palm of your dominant hand and galdor (meaning "to chant with purpose") the rune with your lips very close to your palm. Your hand should feel the resonance of your voice. This is called "loading" the rune. (Which brings forth all sorts of associations and droll warnings against going off 'halfcocked' that we won't go into...{grin}) Transfer the "loaded" runic energy from your dominant to your non-dominant palm by beginning to slowly chant the

rune. As you begin to chant, raise the loaded palm upwards into the air, gathering energy and force. When you feel you have gathered enough energy and are at the high point in your chanting (Wiccans: when the energetic "cone" has been formed) slam the loaded palm down onto the other hand and abruptly, explosively, extend the last breath of your rune chant into it. The "slam" of the palm needn't be physically forceful; you are 'slamming' the force of the rune, not your own main. Feel now the non-dominant palm. How does it feel, what emotion, color or scent can you attach to it? Try this exercise on other parts of your body, on a plant or tree (ask first!), familiar, etc. This is one of the ways of using runes in healing. Make copious notes of your impressions and compare over time.

3. This is a couples exercise. Get together with another classmate for this one. Both stand facing one another. The "Sender" holds his or her hands out at waist-height, palms facing downward. The "Receiver" holds his/her hands underneath the Sender's hands, palms facing upwards with about a three to four inch airspace between them. The Sender then 'loads' a particular rune into his/her hands by visualizing, feeling the rune internally, perhaps with chanting (which can be silent and mental) until the rune's energy has peaked and then without touching, 'slams' the runic energy down into the Receiver's hands. The Sender then backs off and grounds by touching the floor if s/he needs to. Receivers should remain stationary until the last impression, sight, sound, smell, color, vision etc. is received and noted. Then, switch places and the previous Sender now receives. Do this with all runes you study. Note the different energy signatures the runes give off when channeled through different people. Switch partners if you are able.

4. Draw one rune from your bag (or by placing your finger on a rune chart in random fashion) to begin each day. Read a small snippet from one of the recommended books and spend five minutes in meditation on your rune for the day. Often, your rune will be amazingly predictive of the day's situations. Do the same with the last few moments of your evening.

5. As many runesters have done, bake and eat your own rune bread, cookies or cakes. Any sort of small baked cake or cookie will do; enrune them by risting (writing) one rune per cake with clear, red icing or food coloring. Ingest one cake per day for twenty-four days in sacred space using loading of the cake and galdor before ingesting it, noting any and all effects. I like to do this exercise along with #4 above, before heading out the door.

6. Work on your practice of galdor, or singing the runes with intent. Work from Fehu to Othala and galdor a rune circle around yourself daily. This is an excellent form of protection and self-defense and will fool the wiliest of elf-shot archers among other things. I credit daily runagaldor with bettering my good health.

7. Choose an English language word that derives from your daily rune choice. An example is "Ride" from Raidho, "The" from Thurisaz, "Any" or "All" from Ansuz etc. Meditate on how you relate to that word in your own life. If using "Day" from Dagaz then how do you relate to your day-night cycle? Are you a 'day' person?

How do you use your day? What do daylight, daybreak and day's end hold for you? Use your notes of all of these associations to make your own word/rune association charts to replace those found in the works of others.

8. Keep a journal of your efforts, without fail. Even if it's a few shakily penned lines upon awakening, note down every thought, dream, sound, scent or emotion that relates to your study. Immerse yourself in a sea of runes.

Wassail!

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For another description, visit [Irmisul Aettir](#), an outstanding site on runes and Ásatrú, by Susan Granquist and Mike Mohilo. Mike demonstrates how to use a Dremmel tool to create an intricately carved rune set. Start with the runes section and stay to explore the rest of this truly beautiful website.

To purchase a runeset or the supplies needed to make your own, visit the [Commercial Rune Links](#) page of this website.

 