

What is a “Sumble”?

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For many new to Heathenry, the idea of bragging about our deeds and accomplishments can actually be a pretty scary thing. We are conditioned to avoid bragging as we are taught that being humble is the best way to go in life. While there is some merit to being humble, Heathens also recognize that there is a time and a place to brag. There is a time set aside where Heathens can voice their accomplishments, feel proud of those accomplishments, and get a pat on the back from their fellow Heathens. The time set aside for this is called the “sumble”.

The sumble is usually a social gathering for a kindred in which every one gets together and passes around a mead horn or chalice. The idea is that each member of the kindred gets a chance to either brag about an accomplishment they did, toast a god or goddess as a form of veneration and thanks for their divine help, or venerate an ancestor or the landwights. This is also a good time to swear an oath before the gods, the kindred, and one's ancestors. Some kindreds also hold potlucks beforehand to further add to the social aspect of coming together as one large family. Sumbles can either be presided over by a Godi or a Gythia but most of the time the person who goes first is the one whose home the sumble is being hosted in. Some kindreds take turns hostingumbles in their homes and some kindreds usually hold sumble at least once a month to keep up with fellowship.

So how does one host a sumble if one is solitary? In today's world, there are many ways to engage with our religion of Asatru and in many of those ways, being a solitary practitioner is not a barrier to deep, spiritual experiences with the gods. Believe it or not, even if you're solitary you can still hold a sumble by yourself! This is accomplished in much the same way a regular sumble is within the context of a kindred. The only difference is that your audience is primarily the gods, your ancestors, and the landwights. I'm going to give you a short ritual below that has worked for me in the past whenever I hold a sumble alone. Before that however, I'm going to suggest a couple ideas that could make your solitary sumble even more meaningful for you!

To start, prior to filling the mead horn, consider making a meal to share with your ancestors, the gods, and the landwights. While meals and food offerings are normally shared with these powers during blots, there is no rule against sharing these items during a sumble. As a solitary, preparing a large meal and then setting aside some of the food can help create a deeper sense of connection with the powers that you're going to be calling upon to be a part of your sumble. After all, a sumble is a community gathering of friends and family so what's more intimate than sharing a meal with your community? Another idea you should consider doing before the sumble is to figure out what you're going to say. What accomplishments are you most proud of? Perhaps there isn't anything you really feel the need to brag about but maybe you want to toast the gods (or a specific god or goddess) or your ancestors and the landwights for their help in your daily life. Maybe you want to swear an oath before the gods and your ancestors. Whatever it is you want to say, it's always a good idea to have something in mind before calling on the powers that be.

So now that we have covered some ideas on how to deepen your solitary experience of a sumble, let's dive in! Remember this is a basic and short ritual. Feel free to add or modify this as you please!

- 1) Start by clearing the space where you're going to host the sumble. If this is indoors, make sure the area is not cluttered and full of trash. It doesn't have to be spotless but you are inviting guests into your home so it should have the appearance of being clean. If you are holding a sumble outside, the same rule applies in that you should pick up any trash or other debris that is in the ritual area.
- 2) Consider using a type of incense to energetically cleanse the space and set the mood. I prefer a nice sandalwood but any type of incense that you like will work for this ritual.
- 3) Consider lighting a candle (any color will work) and if you are calling on the gods to join you, consider adding pictures or statues to the space you are holding the sumble in. While this isn't a blot, it can't hurt to add physical representations of the powers you want to toast or boast with.
- 4) Grab your mead horn and fill it with mead or any drink of your choice. Wine, beer, fruit juices, milk, and water are also good alternatives.
- 5) Stand tall and proud, loudly ask the gods (or specific deities), your ancestors, and the local landwights to join you in your sacred space as you wish to commune with them. The wording you use for this is largely up to you. Some Heathens like set invocations that they can memorize and some prefer to make things up on the fly. I'm in the later category when it comes to sumbles as I find these to be very personal.

- 6) You should take a moment to reach out with your mind and your heart, you should feel the presence of the powers you called out too. Once you feel them, you will know and you will have their attention.
- 7) At this time, ask the powers to bless the drink you have in your mead horn (or cup).
- 8) After they have blessed your drink, take a moment to brag about your deeds. Alternatively, you could toast the gods, a specific deity, or your ancestors/landwights. You could also take this time to swear an oath to accomplish something in the future. For myself, I usually just toast the gods and give thanks for their continued blessings over my family. I also toast the ancestors and landwights afterwards, thanking them for their contributions to my life and the good of the world. This is a pretty personal part of the sumble so don't be scared to speak from the heart, the gods won't judge!
- 9) Afterwards, since this is a solitary sumble, take a drink from the cup or horn. Typically in a group setting a person would brag, make an oath, or toast then take a drink and pass the horn to the next person. Since this is a solitary version, you will take a drink and then pour a little into a bowl or cup set aside for the gods. This is their portion of the drink and is an offering. Repeat this action for the ancestors and the landwights.
- 10) If there is anything left in the horn after you have poured out some for the powers, save it as you can offer the rest to Nerthus, the Goddess of the Earth.
- 11) Once you have shared the drink with all powers that have gathered you can do a couple of things. You can spend some time in meditation, listening to any guidance the powers have to offer. Likewise, you can do a small rune pull, asking each power to bless you with wisdom and advice. I usually pull about 3 runes total, one for each power in attendance.
- 12) If you decide to skip step 11 or if you complete step 11, you have arrived at the end of the sumble. Thank the powers for their attendance and reaffirm the bonds of community and family by reiterating that while the sumble is over, these powers are always welcomed in your home and your life. Again, don't be afraid to speak from the heart as this can be as simple or complex as you want it to be.
- 13) Once you have said goodbye, snuff out the candle and take your offerings outside. Some Heathens have a special tree or part of a field or other area of their land that they place their offerings to the gods in. If you don't have this space that's fine, just pick a large tree and pour out the offerings one at a time. The order doesn't matter and don't forget that if you have left overs those should be poured out to Nerthus. The drink that flows back into the land is consumed by the gods who are also a part of nature.

While this ritual is short and straight to the point, it is a powerful and moving experience. Give it a go and don't be surprised if you feel like you're never alone after your first sumble! While this format can change depending upon your personal needs and intuitive directions, remember that the words you speak are your own and represent you. You can either memorize what to say or just speak from the heart. Word of caution regarding oaths. In a kindred setting, the kindred share wyrd together. This is part of being a family, we are interconnected to one another. That said, we also have our own individual wyrd that impacts us as well. When swearing an oath, it's always a good idea to make sure the oath is feasible. Don't swear to do something you are not prepared to do or that you know you can't reasonably do. The gods will hold you to your oaths and broken oaths impact one's wyrd. Likewise be careful which gods you swear oaths too as some gods will react differently from one another in regards to oaths not upheld or oaths being upheld too slowly.



References

Photo of drinking horns from:

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/de/6d/11/de6d1169f6f3d074722e7e4d2385f6d7.j>