

Making Sacred Space - Home Altar Guide

Contributed by [Custom & Craft](#)

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Making Space - Instructions for Making a Home Altar

Altars have been part of Jewish life since Noah arrived on dry land. And at times when our home spaces must adapt to accommodate a range of uses, we can also transform them into spiritual sanctuaries. Altars are a physical space for us to focus our prayers and can be made of any materials. Improvise. It's what your ancestors would have done.

Step 1: Find a flat surface in your home. Bookshelves, tables, tv trays work great. If you have pets, make sure to work around them. If you have family members who will use the altar with you, make sure there's enough space for everyone to gather. Use multiple surfaces if different family members need the altar at a different height.

Step 2: Place a cloth on the altar, like setting a table. White is a color often used during the High Holidays, and blue appears throughout Jewish tradition. Prefer patterns? Afraid of getting white dirty? Get creative, it's your altar.

Step 3: Make the space sacred. During Havdalah, we say a prayer separating the holiness of Shabbat from the ordinariness of the rest of the week. You can say this prayer standing in front of the altar as a way of making it special and distinct from the rest of your house.

Baruch atah Adonai, hamavdil bayn kodesh lechol.

Blessed are You God, who separates between the holy and the ordinary.

Step 4: Add objects to your altar. Include objects tied to your past, like photos of your grandparents. Objects representing your intentions for the coming year. Objects inspired by the four elements (earth, fire, water and air) or by the five senses (sight, sound, taste, smell and touch). Beloved trinkets, family heirlooms, items from nature, favorite books or religious texts. Slips of paper in a jar with your intentions written on them. If you're creating your altar right before a Rosh Hashanah meal, you can include a plate of symbolic foods like apples, honey, beets, pomegranates, dates and carrots.

Step 5: Visit your altar. Throughout Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and beyond, come to this space in your home to bless your family, pray, meditate, mourn, dance, reflect, forgive, celebrate, heal and listen.