

## Charms Lesson 1

### Introduction to Charms

The word charm comes from an old latin word meaning “song” or “ritual utterance”.

A charm is usually a phrase that is written down to achieve a particular magical effect. Harry uses “Accio Firebolt” to call his broomstick. Hermione uses “Wingardium Leviosa” to make a feather float.

As students in Professor Flitwick’s Charms class quickly learn, there are charms for almost every occasion. If you know the right words, you can charm your way into riches and fame, conquer your enemies, or capture men’s hearts. One Old English charm even confers protection from malevolent dwarfs. But charms are most commonly associated with medieval wise women, who used them for fairly humble tasks, such as healing the sick, protecting crops and livestock from disease, and defending the local villagers from curses.

Although a few charms involve combining words with actions (such as spitting or waving a wand), most require no special ritual or magical tools to be effective. Charms are even said to work in purely written form. Some of the earliest known charms were simply scraps of parchment or paper, inscribed with a magic word like abracadabra, and then worn as protective amulets around the neck.

Simple spoken charms became especially popular in Europe around the twelfth century, when the Catholic Church began to place great emphasis on the power of spoken prayers and papal blessings. Throughout the Middle Ages, it was common for witches, wizards and even local Church officials to adapt Christian prayers for magical purposes. The Lord’s Prayer was routinely rewritten and used as a charm against disease, pestilence and personal misfortune. One thirteenth-century French memoir actually describes how a parish priest used this prayer to “deliver Arnald of Villanova from the warts on his hands!” Other charms mixed magic words with the names of saints and were used to treat maladies such as snakebites and burns.

Some poorly trained witches and wizards – and most non-magical folk- also use the word “charm” to describe any small, portable object with magical properties. Rabbits’ feet, four-leaf clovers, and iron horse-shoes are all frequently called “lucky charms,” but any serious magician would scoff at such a claim. These sorts of magical artifacts can be more precisely identified as either amulets (objects that provide magical protection) or talismans (objects that endow a person with some new magical ability). The so-called charms that hang from modern “charm bracelets” are usually purely ornamental symbols of love or friendship, possessing no magical powers.

As Hermione would be happy to tell you, the best place to find authentic charms is in books. So if you find yourself wanting a cheering charm for a friend who’s feeling blue or a scouring charm to take care of a really nasty mess, just check the Hogwarts library for a copy of "Olde and Forgotten Bewitchments and Charmes". But make sure you’ve picked just the right charm for the job and that you know how to pronounce every word. Otherwise you may end up like professor Dumbledore’s ne’er-do-well brother, Aberforth, who was publicly humiliated for practicing inappropriate charms on a goat. 1

Let's get back to the charms we will be studying and performing in this class. We'll look at some simple charms, the origin of the words and what they accomplish. A majority of the wand charms used in the Harry Potter series are derived from Latin words.

Our first and one of the simplest of charms is Accio. It means 'send for' or 'summon' in Latin. This is a very handy charm! You can either pronounce the first 'c' as a hard c or combine the two for a soft 'c'. Ah-ksee-oh or Ah-see-oh. The emphasis is on the first syllable. "A"-ksee-oh. Say it out loud to yourself (but not while holding the wand, yet!) to practice. Add the object you're trying to summon after it, and this charm will bring it to you, and even from a long distance. But it's preferred that you know the general location of the article or it may not work how expect it to, if at all. "Accio Tissue" works wonders when you're about to sneeze!

Wingardium Leviosa using "wing" + "arduous" meaning high or steep and "levo", to raise up or levitate. This is a very simple spell, but as we learned from Hermione, must be pronounced correctly. win-GAR-dee-um lev-ee-OH-sa . Notice where the emphasis is and say it out loud. If you'd like to try this one with a feather, remember pronunciation and your technique will determine your own success. A flick with wand for winGARdium and a swish for the leviOsa, concentrating on the object you're trying to levitate. Good Luck!

Lumos is another very handy spell. Pronounced LOO-mos. It's from the Latin, "lumen", meaning light. This spell will create a beam of light that shines from the end of your wand. For most of these charms, you must be holding your wand, however, only in the instant of Harry during the Dementor attack did it work without being in contact with his wand. Interesting and does show the strength of Mr. Potter's resolve to win in the attack.

At some point, I'm sure you'll want that light to go out, so the proper charm would be Nox, pronounced -nocks- which will extinguish the beam completely.

The next spell is Alohomora, pronounced as AL-o-ho-MOR-a, from the words "aloha", a Hawai'ian farewell and "mora" which is Latin for obstacle. This delightful charm will open locked doors. Well, most locked doors as there are still special keys needed for certain locks.

And lastly, today, we'll talk about Prof. Liv's name. Rictusempra, pronounced ric-tu-SEM-pra from the Latin rictus, meaning gaping mouth or grin, and also sempra, meaning always. This particular charm will make your target laugh uncontrollably. Yes... you can make your target to laugh entire days away before able to control themselves! So behave with those wands or I'll be forced to use a full body bind on you all.