

---

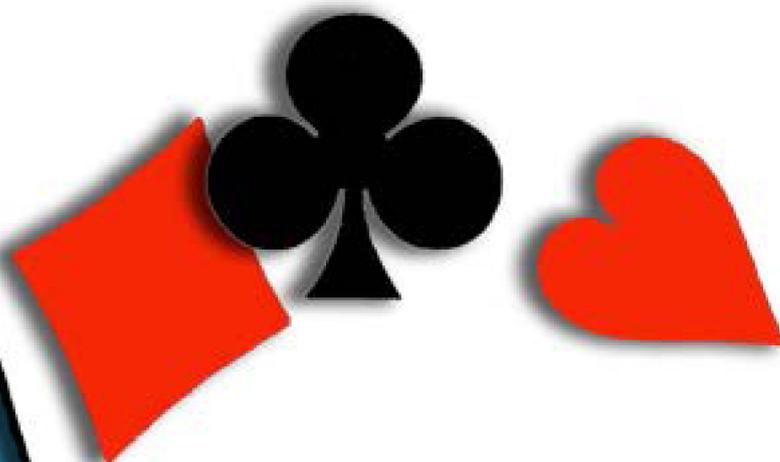
**Roberto Giobbi's**

# **Introduction to Card Magic**

---



**IBM Special Edition**



## © Copyright Notice

**Copyright © 2012 Roberto Giobbi. All rights reserved.**

For personal use only. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or utilized by any information storage or retrieval system, nor shall this publication or any part of it be used commercially, or associated with any product or service, or distributed by itself or with other products or services without written permission from the copyright owner. For information about permissions contact:

Roberto Giobbi  
Schlossbergstrasse 5  
4132 Muttenz  
Switzerland  
Tf:++41-(0)61-463 08 44  
e-mail: giobbi@bluewin.ch

## Donation

This book is being distributed at no charge to encourage the art of magic. If you enjoyed it and can afford it please make a small contribution. \$5 is fine, that's how much many an app costs, \$10 is much appreciated, and if you are a millionaire you may put me in your will. Thank you for letting me know that you appreciated this work and that you would like me to do more. Please click the „Donate“ button below now. THANK YOU!





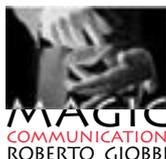
# Introduction to Card Magic

by Roberto Giobbi

---

Conceived and written by Roberto Giobbi  
Design and layout by Barbara Giobbi-Ebnöther  
Photos by Magic Agora & Barbara Giobbi-Ebnöther  
Film Clips by Miro A. Giobbi

---



Copyright 2012 by Magic Communication Roberto Giobbi  
IBM Special Version, December 2012



## Read Me

This PDF is meant as an electronic publication, but you may also print and bind it and use it as a book (obviously without the benefit of film clips) – print-on-demand services such as lulu.com do this at a very reasonable price.

### Best Use

The best way of making use of this PDF is to load it on an iPad or similar device. In order to take advantage of its multi-media features you should have internet access. Working off-line will still allow you to read the text and use the photographs, like any other PDF, but you won't be able to activate the film clips. Although imbedding the clips into a document is now possible, it would make the PDF very heavy, less comfortable to handle and problematic on Apple products which at the moment don't support flash applications. In the near future this may change and we may then send out an updated PDF to all those who have sent us their email address (if you haven't yet, please send me your email address and say that you would like to be put on my list - the list is treated confidentially and you will only hear from me when I have a pre-publication offer related to a new book or product).

### Operating Systems

We have tested this PDF on PC, iMac, iPhone and iPad and have no reason to assume that it won't work on other devices as well. If you use iPhone or iPad, download the PDF to iBooks, GoodReader or Acrobat Reader – all of these apps will allow you to use the film clips without problems.

### User Advice

To view the film clips, the device will exit the PDF and access YouTube (although no longer installed by default on devices running under iOS6, the YouTube player can be downloaded free from the App Store; also, it will run on an iPad without doing anything). If using an iPad, in order to come back from YouTube to the PDF, swipe upward on your screen and re-activate the app that stores the PDF. On PC a window will open that can be closed with a click after having viewed the film clip.

### Hyperlinks

The titles in all tables of contents are hyperlinked, so that clicking on any title will take you directly to the desired chapter. Also, the PDF is fully searchable so as to make an index superfluous.

Everything should be easy and intuitive, but if you experience any difficulties, let us know. If you find any bugs, typos or have a good idea of how to improve this product, please let us know by emailing us at [giobbi@bluewin.ch](mailto:giobbi@bluewin.ch).

And now...enjoy!



## Thanks!

Several people have offered invaluable help in making this work come true. I would like to extend a sincere THANK YOU to ...

...my wife and best friend Barbara for the many, many hours she has put into the design and layout of this course – her help has been invaluable in every sense.

...our son Miro, who did all the film clips on his iPhone4 and who did much of the technical support necessary to obtain a working electronic document.

...Stephen Minch and his Hermetic Press, for graciously allowing me to use passages from our own books, to which we share the copyright.

...Chris Wasshuber and his lybrary.com for letting me use his electronic conversion of some of our E-book texts.

...Richard Hatch for the translation of the passages taken from *Card College*.

...Nicolas Jeker, for technical consulting and assistance on issues we didn't even know existed.

...Marco Caviola, for more technical support and answering too many questions.

...Gustavo Otero, artist and magician, who has provided the chapter illustrations, which – inspired by Picasso and an entry of mine in my book *Secret Agenda* – are all made of one single line, making them look remarkably simple, however, anything but easy to do – just like good card magic.

...Salvador Pellicer, Pepe Monfort (special thanks for his idea of using photograms) and their Magic Agora team for initiating the project and letting us use the photographs in this course.

...Jamy Ian Swiss, Erik Arfeuille, Daniel Horn and Austin Gannon, who have kindly pointed out flaws and typos.

...Bob Farmer for precious legal advice and other related matters.

...Richard Vollmer for letting me use some his ingenious creations.

...those who I have forgotten, and to whom I sincerely apologize, but whose names I will be glad to add in future revisions, if they let me know.

And thank you, dear reader, in the name of magic and all magicians past and present, for always trying to do your best when you use the material here described, performing magic with dignity and respect towards magic and the audience. I wish you best of success.



## INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF MAGICIANS

Through its official publication *The Linking Ring* it links the world

WILLIAM E. "BILL" EVANS, INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT-ELECT, 2012-2013  
2805 S. Ingram Mill Road • Springfield, MO  
wevans@cecb.com • Office: 417-447-4400 • Cell: 417-839-0929

### An Open Letter To All I.B.M. Members

Who knows what attracts us to magic, or more specifically, card magic. For me, it was on a beach in Hawaii when I was about 10 years old and a vacationing magician showed me wonders with a deck of cards. I wish I knew who he was for he set the hook and I have been a student of card magic ever since. It's been an enjoyable and satisfying journey.

I wish back then I could have had access to what you are about to experience. If you are thinking about concentrating on card magic, Roberto Giobbi's Introduction to Card Magic (the "Project") will save you years of wandering around developing bad habits and then spending even more time getting rid of them. To paraphrase Dai Vernon, you can practice 8 hours a day for a year, but if you have poor technique, all you are doing is mastering poor technique. This Project will save you from heading down that path. Moreover, mastering the contents contained therein will enable you to present a card magic program even if you have never touched a deck of cards in your life. I am not telling you that it will be easy, but I am telling you that it is doable.

This masterpiece of beginning card magic is brought to you here through the courtesy and generosity of Mr. Giobbi. His contact information is located on page 2, so if you enjoy this material and find it useful, I would encourage you to drop him an email and thank him for the years that this Project will save you. After you have mastered this material, you will be ready to expand your knowledge, and I know of no better source for you than Mr. Giobbi's Card College books.

There are those few professionals who are extremely passionate about card magic that they live, eat and sleep thinking about these things. Roberto Giobbi is from that mold. Were it not for Roberto's passion for card magic, you would not be reaping the benefits of this Project. Let me be the first to say, "Thank You!" Roberto for this magnanimous and valuable contribution to our members.

Sincerely,

*Bill Evans*



## Foreword

Welcome to this introductory course into the science and art of manipulating a deck of cards for the purpose of artistic magical entertainment.

### Genesis

In early 2012 I attended a youth congress in Germany where I gave several workshops on the subject of card magic. I was very pleased at the interest and passion almost all youngsters displayed, but I was also surprised, if not to say a bit shocked, at the discrepancy between the fairly advanced material they were using and their personal artistic immaturity.

I've witnessed for the first time in its entirety and on a big scale what many of you already know, namely that most of those joining magic nowadays do so over the internet, having learned from "tutorials" on YouTube and similar sources, and are doing some advanced magic, not always badly, but completely lacking the basics in technique, presentation, and theory. They have started to build the house, so to speak, on the third floor, and the slightest earthquake will bring it down, as it lacks a fundamental support.

Although my previous works – the *Card College* and *Card College Light, Lighter* and *Lightest* books and related *DVDs* - address the issue and provide a remedy, I'm told that the young generation is used to getting information free from the web and don't even have the little money required to buy the basic tools, both being admittedly debatable topics.

At about the same time I was approached by Pepe Monfort and Salva Pellicer from Magic Agora, an on-line magic academy, to create an interactive, multi-medial basic course of card magic. This I did and you can check it out on their site [www.magicagora.com](http://www.magicagora.com).

This is the electronic PDF version of it, a multimedia course in 14 lessons teaching the basics of card magic with text, photographs, and film clips. This new project is dedicated to all newcomers to magic, but I hope that it will also meet with the approval of my more experienced readers, because they might find their own insights and experience put into hopefully well-structured and adequate words.

### How to Make Best Use of This Course

I have conceived this course to be used in chronological order. Those among you who are at the ready and can't wait to do something hands-on may jump ahead to Lessons 2 and 3, but after that are invited to come back to Lesson 1 which gives an overall meaning to the rest.

And now let's start together our pleasant journey into what the great Viennese card virtuoso Johann Nepomuk Hofzinsler called the "poetry of magic". Follow me along with a deck of cards into the wonderland of card conjuring.

Yours sincerely,



## Contents

**Lesson 1:** The History of Playing Cards & Some Famous Card Conjurors

**Lesson 2:** Tools and Instruments

**Lesson 3:** Getting Acquainted With Your Instrument

**Lesson 4:** Your First Techniques: Basic Shuffles

**Lesson 5:** Your First Card Trick: «The Mystery of the Triangle»

**Lesson 6:** Ordinary Cuts

**Lesson 7:** A Small Card Miracle: «The Cards Knew»

**Lesson 8:** More Auxiliary Sleights & Review

**Lesson 9:** A Few Simple Flourishes

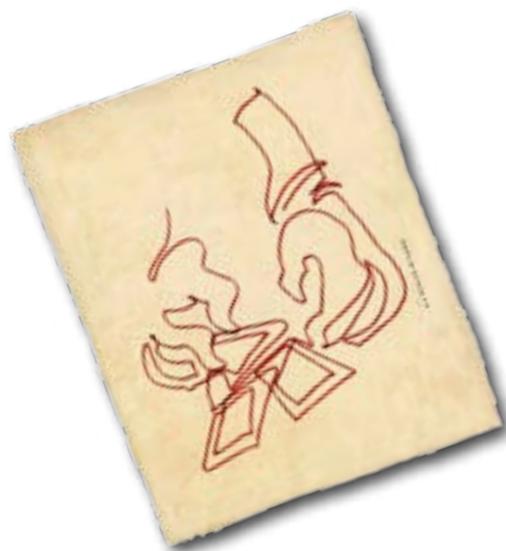
**Lesson 10:** Audience Management & «The Open Prediction»

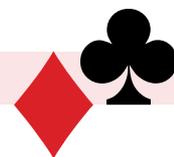
**Lesson 11:** Creating a Program

**Lesson 12:** Techniques Without Sleights

**Lesson 13:** Bonus Lesson

**Lesson 14:** Your Next Step





# The History of Playing Cards & Some Famous Card Conjurers

*«Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler.»*  
Albert Einstein





## Contents

### Learning Goals

**Why You Should Know More About Your Instrument**

**The Probable Origin of Playing Cards**

**Playing Cards – A Complex World of Mystery**

**Symbols Unveiled**

**Cards & Gambling**

**The First Conjuring With Cards**

**The First Books on Card Magic**

**Famous Conjurors and Authors of Card Magic**

**Card Magic is the Poetry of Magic...and a Science**

**You Are a Part of This Rich History**

**Further Reading**

**Useful Links**

**Acknowledgements**

### Golden Rules

#### Golden Rule Number One





## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...that a deck of cards is not just a prop, but an instrument, with which the most fascinating stories can be told and the most incredible things can be done.
- ...about the origin of playing cards and some of their astonishing characteristics.
- ...the name of the first conjuror to perform a card trick in the history of civilization.
- ...a lot of additional curious facts pertaining to a deck of cards.

### Why You Should Know More About Your Instrument

Rather than calling playing cards a prop, as it is often done in the technical literature, I would like to consider them to be an *instrument* of the card conjurer, like the piano or the violin is an instrument to a musician, and I would even dare saying that cards are the most important and most widely used instrument in all of conjuring.

The more you know about your instrument, the more sensitively you will handle it and the more expressively you will master it, making it an extension of who you are. It is therefore imperative that you learn some facts (and speculations) regarding the origins and symbolism of playing cards. In addition, the material presented here can form the basis for both intelligent conversations with your spectators as well as presentations for card routines.

### The Probable Origin of Playing Cards

There are as many theories about the origins of playing cards and their introduction into Europe as there are about the origins of the Easter bunny. A plausible thesis maintains that Arabs brought cards from the Middle East in the 14th century and introduced them to Europe via Spain and Italy. Egypt is often cited as the country of their origin, and Egyptian playing cards do bear a remarkable resemblance to the earliest Spanish and Italian decks. The oft-heard claim that gypsies were responsible for their introduction is not supported by the fact that cards were present in Europe before gypsies.

In the *Journal of the International Playing Card Society* of February 1989, Luis Monreal tells us in his article “Iconographia de la Baraja Española” that the first known mention of playing cards occurred in Spain in 1371. We know of no earlier reference, and their absence is telling in the works of both Petrarch and Boccaccio. In Italy, a Florentine city ordinance forbidding a newly introduced card game called “Naibbe” is dated May 23, 1376. Cards are not mentioned in England until the 15th century, but seem to have first appeared in central and southern Europe at the end of the 14th century, lending support to the theory that they were imported, though their exact geographical origins remain obscure.

### Playing Cards – A Complex World of Mystery

The expertise of artisans and the ingenuity of the human spirit are wedded in the mysterious deck of cards, making it not merely a mathematical labyrinth and chaos of symbols, but—in the skillful



hands of a card magician—a proper stage on which 52 actors can be brought to life to represent the entire human condition. There are, in fact, incredible parallels between the world of man and the microcosm of the deck.

The duality principle of life is symbolized by the colors red and black—day and night, good and evil, etc. The court and spot cards represent the hierarchy underlying the organization of primitive and civilized societies. The four suits symbolize the four seasons, the 13 cards in each suit represent the 13 lunar cycles of a full year, the 12 court cards correspond to the 12 months of the Gregorian calendar (1582), the 52 cards are the 52 weeks in the year, the sum of all the pips equals 365, the number of days in the year (364 plus one for the Joker, and a second Joker for leap years!). It is particularly curious that, if you spell out the names of all 13 values, from Ace to King, dealing one card for each letter, the final card of the deck will be dealt on the "g" of King. More astonishing still, this works even in several other languages, such as French or German (check your native language right now!). In my book *Card College Volume 5*, pp.1253, you will find a piece called "The History of Playing Cards" that uses this idea as the plot for what I think is an interesting effect.

There is no evidence that the inventors of cards intended these characteristics, though the Alsatian master Ingold explained in his *Das guldien spiel* that the 52 cards represented the 52 weeks of the year and the four suits corresponded to the four sins of humanity. Thus began a compelling myth, which should not be construed as an accurate analysis of the original allegorical meaning of cards.

## Symbols Unveiled

In 14th century Spain, the four suits represented the four dominant principles of the prevailing society. Diamonds (*oro* = gold, money) stood for capital, Hearts (*copas* = cups, goblets) for the church, Spades (*spadas* = swords) for nobility and Clubs (*baston* = clubs) for political power. The French followed this pattern closely, calling the suits *carreau* (Diamonds), *coeur* (Hearts), *pique* (Spades), and *trèfle* (Clubs).

According to a treatise by Johannes von Rheinfelden, a German Dominican priest, the 14th century deck already consisted of 52 cards, divided into four suits of 13 cards, just as we have today. Shortly after, a new game, Tarocchi, was introduced in Italy using an expanded deck. One card was added to each suit, along with 22 additional cards, the *Trionfi*. These cards were used for gambling and still serve that purpose today in certain parts of the world. It is not hard to see that this is the famous Tarot deck, which French occultists first used for fortune-telling at the end of the 18th century. Only later were the Tarot cards—previously used only for play—introduced into countries with no gambling tradition, likely creating the myth that Tarot cards were created for fortune-telling. Decks with less than 52 cards are convenient for some games (Piquet, Skat, Jass, etc.), but are basically incomplete.

## Cards & Gambling

Numerous edicts prohibited playing with cards on both economic and religious grounds. From the beginning they have been the objects of play, which in one form or another involved money as the winner's reward. Those gamblers who wanted to increase their chances of winning likely developed the first trick techniques with cards. The earliest known reference is dated 1408 in Paris and describes a card cheat who took advantage of his contemporaries with a game bearing a psychological resemblance to Three Card Monte.

Looking at the modern day card conjuror and his methods, we find that most of the techniques used today are based to a large part on the technical deceptions invented centuries ago at the card table to



help “corriger la fortune”. A knowledge and understanding of them facilitates a better transfer to the field of entertaining card magic.

## The First Conjuring With Cards

The first card tricks were likely created by people who enjoyed performing. The earliest known description of a card trick also dates back to the 15th century. In his book *De Viribus Quantitatis* (ca.1493) Luca Pacioli, the father of modern accounting, describes a performance in which Giovanni de Jasonne de Ferrara divined a chosen card. Although the method is not explained in detail, the text says that a boy is blindfolded, a card is then selected by a spectator and the performer lets the boy know by means of words, gestures, coughing, and the position of the feet the identity of the chosen card. This historic tidbit, discovered by Vanni Bossi, appears in an unpublished manuscript co-authored by Leonardo da Vinci, and is also the first known mention of “Second Sight.”

The first card effect to be described *and* explained in print appears in 1550 in Girolamo Cardano’s *De subtilitate*. This effect was the location and identification of a selected card. Three methods are mentioned: the break, the key-card principle and a reference, bereft of detail, to mathematical methods. In a later, expanded edition of this work, Cardano added an anecdote describing the wonderful card effects of Francesco Soma, a Neapolitan lute player. Dalmau, a Spanish magician of this period, was renowned for having performed card tricks in Milan for Emperor Charles V.

## The First Books on Card Magic

Although the 16th century saw numerous descriptions and explanations of card tricks, the first detailed exposition was in Reginald Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft* in 1584. In 1593 Horatio Galasso published *Giochi di carte bellissimi di regola, e di memoria* in Venice. Rather than describe tricks dependent on sleight-of-hand, as Scot had, Galasso described tricks having as their basis intelligent applications of mathematical principles, including a stacked deck, possibly the first description of this principle. Scot and Galasso thus laid the foundations on which card conjuring would build during the following two centuries.

## Famous Conjurers and Authors of Card Magic

Any brief sketch of the history of card conjuring would have to make mention of the following individuals, who profoundly influenced all who followed them: Pinetti of Italy, Robert-Houdin of France, Johann Nepomuk Hofzinsler of Austria, Charles Bertram of England, and S.W. Erdnase of the United States. The latter wrote the first detailed and precise descriptions of card-cheating methods. His book, *The Expert at the Card Table* (1902) was at first only understood by a few, chief among them Dai Vernon, who must be cited as a truly outstanding influence on the art and who was responsible for the transition between ancient and modern card conjuring.

In the first half of the 20th century many important contributions were made by performers and authors such as Carlo Rossetti, Padre Wenceslao Ciurò, Theodore Annemann, Frederick Braue, Jean Hugard, John Northern Hilliard, Professor Hoffmann (Angelo Lewis), August Roterberg, Ottokar Fischer, Conradi-Horster (Conrad A. Horster), Camille Gaultier, and Jules Dhotel. More recently the art and literature of card conjuring have been enriched by Arturo de Ascanio, Derek Dingle, Alex Elmsley, Lewis Ganson, Frank Garcia, Phil Goldstein, Bro. John Hamman, Richard Kaufman, Harry Lorayne, Edward Marlo, Stephen Minch, Juan Tamariz, and Roy Walton, to name just a few.



## Card Magic is the Poetry of Magic...and a Science

Without doubt, playing cards are the most fascinating instrument employed in the art of magic. No less a performer than Hofzinsler designated card conjuring the "poetry" of magic. Cards have produced a palette of sciences, from their symbolism of humanity to their numerical properties and all the mathematical possibilities embodied therein. They serve at play and strategy, for fortune-telling and occult practices, and as a vehicle for social communication. They permit an expression of skill and intelligence. Everything is brought together in card conjuring, for there is no effect, no emotion, that can't be expressed with a deck of cards. They are a microcosm reflecting the "human condition," to use Rousseau's expression, mirroring the fate and reality of mankind. Card tricks unite the principles of nature (natural material), of art (creativity, interpretations, self expression, talent), of science (psychological and mathematical principles) and of spirituality (symbolism, personal growth, therapy).

## You Are a Part of This Rich History

Thousands of human beings have influenced the history of card magic in small and large steps, and hundreds of thousands of magazines and books testify persuasively to this. At the beginning of the 21st century, at least one book on card magic is published each week. Perhaps reading this essay will start you on the royal road to card magic and help you become a part of that history. To complete this course *Introduction to Card Magic* - and maybe others to follow – will help you reach this worthy goal.

## Further Reading

The first three titles below are on the *general history of magic*. In my opinion a fair understanding of the major developments in magic as well as knowledge of its main performers, inventors, and authors will place into context the use and importance of playing cards as the conjurer's instrument.

- Christopher, Maurine and Milbourne, *The Illustrated History of Magic*, Heinemann, USA 1996. This is an updated version of the original 1973 edition and is in my opinion the best book for those who would like to get a rough idea of the origins and history of magic. It is a light and entertaining read with lots of illustrations, reproductions of playbills/posters, and photographs.
- If this is still too much for you, get Milbourne Christopher's *Panorama of Magic* in its Dover paperback edition—this is the essential history with more illustrations and photographs than text at a very affordable price.
- Clarke, Sidney W., *The Annals of Conjuring*, The Miracle Factory, Seattle 2001. Experts concur that this is the most complete of all books on the history of magic to date and within its 600 plus pages you will find answers to most of your questions about the history of our craft.

The following titles are on the history of playing cards:

- D'Allemagne, René, *Les cartes à jouer du XIVe au XXe siècle*, Paris 1906. Two huge volumes on the fascinating history of playing cards, beautifully illustrated. This is the best I've ever come across on this subject, but is hard to find, expensive, and written in French.
- Benham, W. Gurney, *Playing Cards - The History And Secrets of the Pack*, Spring Books, London (n.d.).
- Hargrave, Catherine Perry, *A History of Playing Cards And a Bibliography of Cards And Gaming*, Dover Publications, New York 1966 (unabridged reprint originally published by Houghton Mifflin Company in 1930).
- Morley, H.T., *Old And Curious Playing Cards*, The Wellfleet Press, New Jersey 1989.



- Taylor, S., *The History of Playing Cards - With Anecdotes of Their Use in Conjuring, Fortune-Telling and Card-Sharping*, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, 1973 (reprint of the first edition of 1865 by John Camden Hotten, London).

## Useful Links

- Try the homepage of the *International Playing Card Society* (<http://i-p-c-s.org/history.html>) and then go from here following whatever links your time allows.
- This link here takes you directly to a most extensive bibliography of books on playing cards: <http://www.cs.man.ac.uk/~daf/i-p-c-s.org/faq/books.php>.
- This link takes you to the Playing Card Museum in Vitoria, one of the most fascinating places on earth documenting the history of playing cards <http://watch?v=2o7c5ygCG-A>
- If you have an interest in the more esoteric meanings of playing cards, click here (“Decoding the Past – Secrets of the Playing Cards) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pU9WGyU4bnM>
- Link to Museo del Naipes Oropesa del Mar Castellon <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9GVQuotD3w>
- Link to Musée de la carte à jouer à Issy les Moulineaux (Paris) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrMWpv4Tq9o>

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my learned friends Vanni Bossi, sadly missed, William Kalush, and Richard Vollmer for contributing information that has substantially influenced this essay and, of course, I thank my friend and publisher Stephen Minch for editing the original text from *Card College* and agreeing to allow it to be published in this revised and updated form.



## Golden Rules

At the end of each *Lesson* you will find a box with a *Golden Rule of Magic*. Although it is true that there are no rules in Art, it is also true that in order to learn a discipline, regardless of what type, following certain guidelines will make the process easier. Inspired by Henri Decremps, who in 1786 wrote down thirteen “principles of magic” in his landmark book *Testament de Jérôme Sharp*, I have reviewed this advice based on my own experience of several decades as a performing professional and have formulated what I think to be thirteen thoughts, which will lead the aspiring magician to success.

Once you have reached the degree of a master in magic, you can safely break any one of these rules, but until then I’m confident that for once thirteen will be a lucky number for you.



### Golden Rule Number One

#### Understanding

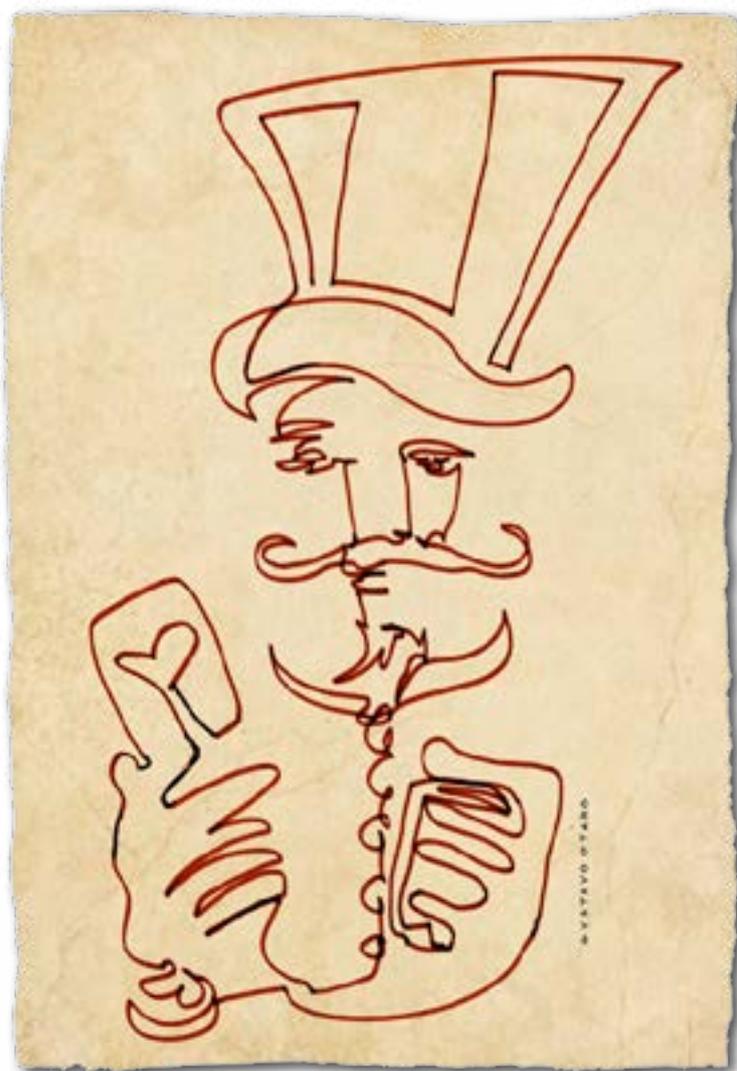
*Before you attempt to present a piece in front of an audience, make sure you fully understand its effect and method.*

You should be clear about what the effect exactly is and how it will be experienced by the spectator. Also, perfectly understand how and why the tricks works, its mechanics, mathematics, psychology or whatever the principles at work are.



# Tools and Instruments

*«The noblest trinity in any art consists of mind,  
hand and instrument.»*





## Contents

### **Learning Goals**

**Beginner's Mind**

### **The Hands**

**Hand and Skin Types**

**Hand Care**

### **The Playing Cards**

**Card Decks**

**Card Size**

**The Finish**

**Face and Back Designs**

**The Card Case**

**Treating the Cards**

**General Remarks**

### **The Close-up Pad**

**Pad Size**

**Material**

### **Cards & Card Case**

**Preparing the Card Case**

**Map of the Card Case**

**Removing the Deck from the Card Case**

### **Terminology**

**Map of Hands**

**Map of a Single Playing Card**

**Map of the Deck**

### **Golden Rule Number Two**



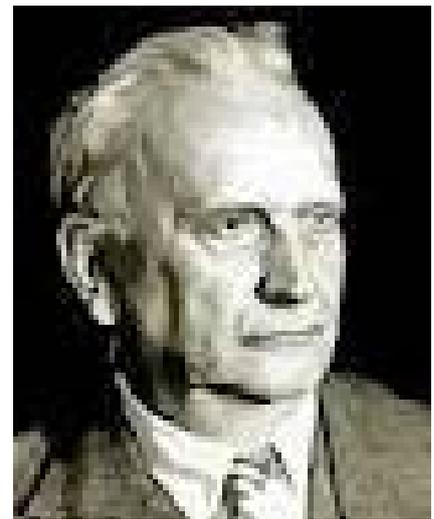
## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...to develop an attitude and vision that will guide you through this course.
- ...how to take care of your hands, your tools.
- ...facts about playing cards, your instrument.
- ...what supports to use when you practice your magic.
- ...how to treat a new deck and how to remove a deck from a card case like a professional.
- ...the basic terminology of a playing card, the deck, the card case and the hands.

### Beginner's Mind

German philosopher Karl Jaspers once remarked, "The hand is the extension of the mind", and Andreas Tenzer maintained, "The hand is the extended arm of the heart." To this I would add, that the instrument - in our case a deck of cards - is the extension of the hand. Mind and heart, hand and instrument are a unity that can create amazing experiences for a small or large group of people, if led by a skilled and inspired individual. This is very much in harmony with a belief expressed by the Japanese, who say that everything made by hand contains something of the person who made it. This is a beautiful thought and touches to the essence of any artistic endeavor, namely that the artist opens his inner world, his mind *and* his heart, or at least a part of it, and shares it with his audience for the duration of his performance.



(Karl Jaspers 1883 - 1969)

Now, that you enter the fascinating and mysterious world of card magic, starting out on a journey that will accompany you for a part or maybe even for the rest of your life, you may have doubts to consider yourself a magical artist just because you picked up a deck of cards and know how to do a few simple tricks. You are right, of course. The fact that somebody writes a poem doesn't automatically make him a poet, as little as buying a brush, paint and canvas makes him a painter. But don't worry about these things yet - if they are meant to be, they will come with time. Rather look at the thought expressed above as *your vision* that shall guide you on the pleasant, instructive and beautiful journey we are about to undertake together.

Similar to the concept of perfection, the artistic vision is like a star: you will never be able to touch it, but if you follow it, like the traveler in the desert, it will lead you to your destiny. If you accept to make this attitude your own, together with the responsibilities that go with it and that you will discover as we go along, I promise that all the seeming efforts necessary to become a competent card conjuror will magically be transformed into pleasurable experiences, and in the process you will grow as a person.



## The Hands

Together with the cards as your instrument, your hands are the most important tools that actually determine the success of the magic you are going to perform. And any work of art is generally only as good as the tools employed to create it. In any case, you can only expect the best results if you care for them properly.

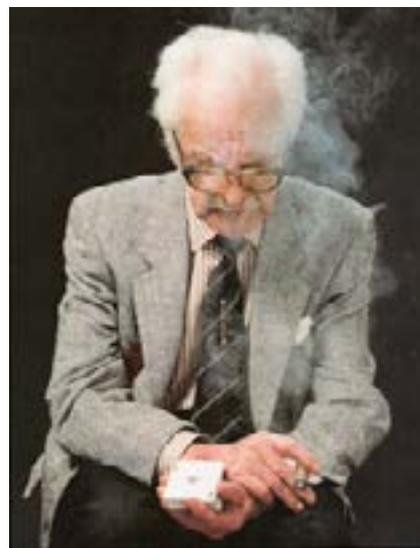
The coordination between your thoughts and the movement of your hands is extremely important. We will discuss this topic in more detail in future chapters. Here I am only concerned with the condition and care of the hands and their relation to the execution of techniques.

### Hand and Skin Types

The importance of your hand's skin type is relative. By this I mean that people with all types of skin can, of course, perform magic. But there are certain techniques that are easier for those having somewhat drier skin - for example, false counts or double lifts - whereas all false deals and some palming techniques are facilitated by a somewhat moister skin. The specific anatomy of your hands will make some techniques easier for you, while others will test your patience. Obviously, huge hands and long fingers better cover most sleight-of-hand. But such an attribute can also have its disadvantages, as even an unsophisticated spectator, upon seeing huge hands, might think, *"Those hands could hide anything."*

Once you know your hand and skin type, you will take note of this relationship and patiently spend more time on some techniques than on others; and you will naturally be happy when some techniques prove easy for you. From my own experience and the result of polling many experts throughout the world, I can assure you that you can learn every technique, independent of the kind of hand and skin you have, providing you motivate yourself to devote sufficient practice to it, which - as stated earlier - can vary from hand to hand. In the worst case you can console yourself with the knowledge that every technique may be replaced by another technique, or a principle, or a subtlety or ruse.

In this connection let me point out that the anatomy of your hand will change very little during your lifetime - unless you are reading this book as a child. However, several factors, such as age, environment, climate and stress, are responsible for a change in skin types. From birth to my mid-twenties, I had very moist hands. Around age twenty-six, my skin got drier. This can also be measured in terms of one's use of decks: I used to need three to four decks each week. Now I need only that many a month.





## Hand Care

This is not a short course on manicure, but the topic must be addressed. Your hands will be on constant display during performance. Can you risk having them not look their best? Here I shall outline a few of the basic principles of hand care. Pay attention to your hands, for they represent your greatest investment in the art of performing magic with cards. Well groomed hands will give you the same feeling of well being as wearing a freshly laundered and pressed shirt.

Your hands will quickly become soiled as you practice. The dust all around us will stick to the sweat and oils of your hand to make them dirty. Soiled hands in turn shorten the lifetime of your deck, even with plastic coated cards, which otherwise last a long time. Before practicing and, of course, before every performance, wash your hands with a mild soap. I personally use an alkali-free pH 7 liquid soap. Such neutral soap removes dirt without harming the natural oils of the hands. This keeps the hands from drying out after washing, and leaves you with practically the same feeling in your fingers after washing as before, so that your practice session can continue unimpeded. Try different soaps and, when you find the one that is best for you, stick with it. If you have very moist hands, you can find dehydrating creams in drugstores that will keep your hands dry. This can be a great help during practice and performance. I used them for years.

If you have normal or somewhat dry hands, I recommend that you apply a cream after each washing. Use a formula that is quickly absorbed and non-greasy - your cards will thank you. You can skip the cream after the practice-session washings. Office supply stores sell so-called fingertip moisteners used for instance by bank tellers to count paper money. "Sortkwik" is one such product which is common in the USA, but you can find similar products in every country. Dai Vernon and other experts used a hand lotion called "Chamberlain's Golden Touch Lotion" - it is still available and you can find it over the internet. Both these products are applied just before performing, and with a little ingenuity you can make their use even part of your presentation.

The appropriate length of your fingernails is partly a matter of taste, but short nails facilitate the execution of most techniques and generally look better. Nail biting is absolutely taboo - break the habit, even if it means visiting a therapist. Pay just as much attention to your cuticles. My advice: Go at least once to a professional manicurist, paying close attention to the procedure and getting professional advice on the proper care of your nails. Then buy a good pair of nail shears, a cuticle remover and a good cream, compatible with your skin type.

## The Playing Cards

Let me state right away that the perfect card does not yet exist. And most likely it never will, for not only do numerous objective and often conflicting criteria enter into the equation, but also one's personal tastes and sensibility. It may well take you years to find the cards you like best.

There are as many brands of cards as there are grains of sand on the proverbial seashore. A good card consists of three layers: a thin face layer with a treated outer surface, a center layer for stiffness, and a thin back layer that also has a treated outer surface. The quality of the card is determined by the quality and grain of the paper, the glue, the treatment of the outer surfaces called "finish" as well as the precision of the all-around cut.





## Card Decks

For your own use and in performance, use a standard fifty-two card deck plus the accompanying jokers. If you can do magic with a fifty-two card deck, other decks will pose no problems, whereas the reverse is certainly not the case.

Smaller decks, such as the French Piquet pack or the German Skat deck, each of which has only thirty-two cards, or the Swiss Jass deck with thirty-six cards or the Spanish and Italian decks with forty, are best reserved for special routines centering around games using those cards, or if you perform in one of those countries.

## Card Size

The fundamental distinction here is between poker- and bridge-size cards, although there are also miniature decks and jumbo decks. Poker-size decks are somewhat wider than bridge-size decks. Many card-conjuring hobbyists favor the bridge size. Various reasons are given; for example, the smaller cards are more easily concealed in the palm. Truth is, poker- and bridge-size cards are equally easy to palm, independent of your hand size. The determining factor here is technique. Many amateur and professional card conjurers use poker-size cards. Here I shall outline the pros and cons of each, so that you may make your own decision.

- The faces of poker-size cards are larger and their design more generous, less cramped, therefore, more aesthetic. Their proportion is closer to the golden ratio (section aurea) and Phi, which is 1.61803.
- Poker cards have more surface area available to press against.
- Poker cards are more pliable thanks to their greater width. This makes techniques like the double lift and riffle shuffle easier and more attractive to execute.
- If you practice with poker-size cards, you can always perform with bridge-size cards if offered a borrowed deck. This is analogous to practicing with large coins, then performing with smaller ones, or warming up with a medicine ball for a basketball game. The reverse situation may produce great difficulties. How will it seem to your audience if you said, "Oh, I'm not used to these wide cards."
- Poker-size cards are better for many tricks and techniques: providing cover for false and controlled riffle shuffles, coin transposition tricks under cover of cards, etc.
- Poker-size cards are more widely used throughout the world. In Europe, however, laymen prefer bridge-size cards.
- Poker-size cards are generally manufactured by companies who also supply casinos with decks. They must be trustworthy brands or they would not be used by gambling establishments. This is your best defense if someone accuses you of using marked cards. The U. S. Playing Card Company formerly of Cincinnati, Ohio, now in Erlanger, Kentucky - the manufacturer of Bicycle, Bee and Tally-ho decks - supplies most of the U.S. casinos with their cards, and the Spanish manufacturer Fournier is supplier of many European casinos.
- Bridge-size trick decks are widely available to the general public. But only the most sophisticated laymen know that poker-size trick cards exist. Even some magicians fail to suspect trick cards when poker-size cards are used.
- In my experience, poker-size cards are generally better quality and have more attractive back designs. Would you want to work with less than the best and most appealing?
- The use of poker cards has become a status factor in the profession: experts use poker-size cards. This is, admittedly, a debatable point.

My advice is to use poker-size cards from the very beginning, for practical reasons. You can easily switch to bridge-size cards at anytime, but to do the reverse would be quite difficult.



## The Finish

Among the many designations used to categorize the treatment of the outer layers of playing cards, the most commonly seen are plastic coated, linen finish, resilient linen finish, air-cushion finish and Nevada finish, but there are several more.

Buy one of each of these decks and experiment with them. But be prepared to change your preference in the course of time. Criteria that seem important to you when you begin your study may seem less so as you become more expert.

The advantage of plastic coated cards is that they last longer and generally stay flat. But they also cling less to one another, which can make them more difficult to fan evenly. Some advanced techniques, though, like second, bottom and center dealing, as well as pull-through shuffles, are made easier with reduced friction between cards.

## Face and Back Designs

The best back designs for the card conjurer have a white border. Prominent examples are Bicycle Rider Backs and Tallyho Circle Backs. Borders are more pleasing aesthetically. They also relax the eye and facilitate the execution of many techniques in which a card is reversed in the deck.

For gambling routines, though, cards with an overall back design, particularly the Bee and Steamboat brands, are recommended, as such cards are generally used in professional gambling. This is because of the widely held belief that such cards are more difficult to mark on the back - which is a total myth.



## The Card Case

Use cards that come in a cardboard case. Aside from the fact that these cases are the most common with better brands, the case itself has many magical uses. Some cards will also be wrapped in foil or wax paper inside the case, an additional sign of quality.



## Treating the Cards

Some magic books tell you that the cards must be specially treated. Generally this is in reference to cards for the stage manipulator. Cards for close-up performances *need not be treated*. Forget about fanning powder or zinc stearate - simply use a good quality new deck. Decks with rough edges, or ones that do not spread evenly, must be broken in by handling them for several minutes, shuffling, cutting and dealing them. But stop before your perspiration penetrates the edges of the cards.

Here is a simple, quick and cheap remedy for rough edges. Take a piece of relatively rough cardboard, larger than the deck. Grip the deck firmly and rub its ends and sides quickly back and forth a few times on the cardboard while pressing hard. You can also bevel the sides slightly and repeat



the rubbing, doing so as you bevel the deck first one way and then the other. The cardboard acts like a very fine sandpaper and quickly smoothes the edges, making them amenable to faro shuffles and other expert handling.

### General Remarks

Once you have found the cards that work best for you, stick with them until you have a compelling reason to switch. Work exclusively with these cards. You can put together most trick decks yourself or - for certain popular brands - order them from a magic store. You can also make trick cards to match most decks yourself or have them made for you.

Whether performing for a large or small audience, always use a new deck or one in new condition. New cards guarantee optimal execution of techniques and identify you as a polished artist, one who pays attention to detail; so don't try to skimp on this. Never forget that the deck of cards is your instrument.

## The Close-up Pad

When you perform, you should be able to do certain tricks on any surface. Whether you have a special pad or mat, a padded or unpadded table cloth, or the bare table, as a magician you should not be dependent on the surface.

Nevertheless, in practice sessions and in most performances - certainly in formal performances - you should arrange for every possible advantage. In addition to warm, well-cared-for hands and a new deck, a proper pad to perform on belongs in your arsenal.



### Pad Size

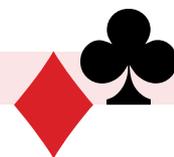
Use as large a pad as possible, since this permits larger motions. The smallest pad you should consider is sixteen inches by twenty. A pad smaller than this will produce cramped handlings and prevent clear and attractive displays when cards are set out. Small pads are only practical to carry on trains and airplanes, or to practice on small tables, but don't even think of using them to perform. I personally use a wooden card table with folding legs, its top measuring thirty inches square and covered with velvet, for my performances.



### Material

The underside of the pad should be made of slip-proof rubber, the top side of velvet or velvet-like material. Avoid felt, which becomes fuzzy, gets under your fingernails and soon leaves the top looking used. Between the top and bottom layers of the pad there can be an interface of sponge rubber to provide necessary softness, in technical parlance called "give".

Some experts swear by very soft pads, though I personally prefer a somewhat firmer surface. A



variety of pads are available through magic stores, or you can make a very nice one yourself. But don't skip here either. This is one of your primary tools and all your tools should be of the finest quality.

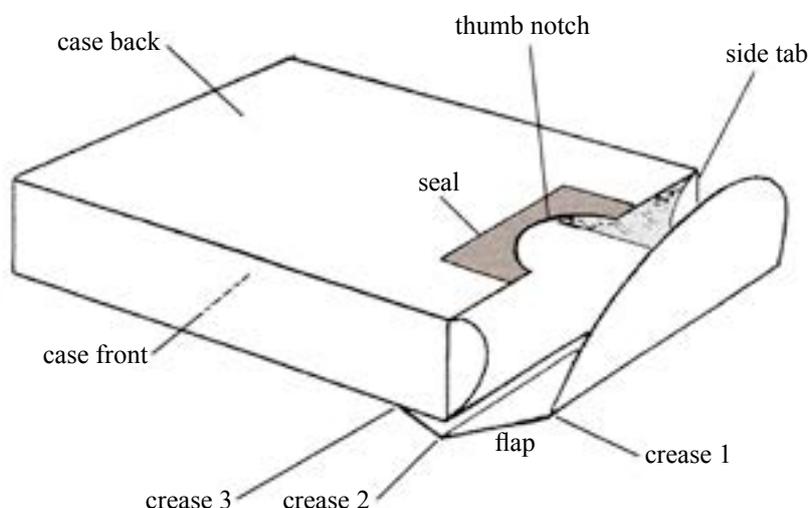
Color – Green is considered a calming and neutral color, which is why many surfaces made for card playing are green. I prefer a pure, dark blue, since I generally work with red cards. Black is also good when using red cards, and can look striking with silver coins, cups and other pretty props as well. A deep, dark red or an elegant mustard yellow is also viable. The color is surely a question of taste, but you should avoid bright colors, which irritate the spectators' eyes.

## Cards & Card Case

The card case is not only a natural protector of the deck, but can also serve as a prop for tricks. Not all cases are the same. Nonetheless, I shall give some suggestions here on how to prepare the case so that the deck can be removed from it without unnecessary fumbling and used in a trick if necessary. Furthermore, a well prepared case looks better and as an adjunct to the performance is one of many details that serve to support the performer's image, whether he or she cultivates an elegant or informal style.

Opening the case and removing the deck can even be treated as a tiny ritual, a theatrical vignette for the audience. This can be very effective, particularly if one considers that many laymen believe magicians are using marked cards and other prepared decks. By opening the case and removing the deck in full view of the audience at the very outset of the performance, such suspicions are nipped in the bud. One thing is quite clear: if you begin your program with a new deck, the case still sealed and wrapped in cellophane, then the deck must be an ordinary, unprepared deck – only we know that is not necessarily the case, but this will be the subject of an advanced course.

### Map of the Card Case



The illustration above shows a typical card case and the terminology used in this course.



## Preparing the Card Case

Let's now open and prepare a card case one step at a time. I like to do this using a pocket knife that has both a sharp blade and scissors.

Most cases are shrink wrapped in cellophane. My preference is to remove the cellophane completely and throw it away. But you can also leave the cellophane on the case, removing only the upper portion which can be separated from the lower portion by a not always user-friendly tear ribbon. This allows you to insert one or more cards between the case and the cellophane, either in front or in back of the case. They are generally inserted in back of the case, the side without the flap, as many brands of cards have the back design printed on the back of the case. This allows the case to be displayed casually, without anyone noticing that one or more cards are secreted face down between the cellophane and the back of the card case.

Next the seal must be broken. This is generally done by inserting the blade of a sharp knife between the front of the case and the flap and then cutting through the seal. The flap is then pulled open.



As shown in the “map of the card case”, the flap consists of three parts, defined by creases 1, 2 & 3.

Reinforce these creases by running your thumb nail along them several times. The third crease is particularly important. On the right and left sides of the card case, the flap is separated from the card case by slits of about 1/4 of an inch. Thanks to this third crease, the flap has a flexibility that allows for the effortless removal of the deck from the case. If you leave the deck inside the case, the reinforcing of the flap creases is rendered easier.

Once the creases have been reinforced, remove the deck from the case.

Next remove the remnants of the seal that project above the semicircular cut in the front of the case (the „thumb notch“) – this part is shown shaded in the illustration. The seal remnants can be stuck to the discarded cellophane and both may then be disposed of, magically or otherwise. If these remnants are not removed, then the top card of the deck may stick to them once the flap of the card case is opened. This is generally a liability, though in some cases it can be put to good use to keep one card secretly in the card case. So even the seal can serve in a trick technical capacity. In future courses we'll learn how to secretly retain one or more cards in the card case without resorting to the seal.

Many experts now favor the removal of the side tabs, either by tearing them off cleanly or cutting them off with scissors – they serve no useful purpose and can hinder and delay the replacement of the deck in the card case.

You are ready to begin your performance. Or you can replace the deck in the card case, after you have worked in the deck a bit, as explained in the sub-chapter above “Treating the Cards”, leaving it ready to remove as described in the next section, at the beginning of your next practice session or performance. The cards should be replaced in the deck with the back of the deck facing the thumb notch. Whenever you remove a face-down deck, you'll know that it is „normal“, but if you have a special deck or one with a particular set-up, put it face up into the case. This excellent idea comes from Sweden's maestro Lennart Green.



## Removing the Deck from the Card Case



One might think that removing the cards from the card case is such a trivial handling that no explanation is necessary.

Nothing could be further from the truth, as even in this phase of the performance, when apparently nothing is happening, signals are being transmitted to the observant spectator that reflect on the performer's competence and virtuosity.

Let's assume that the deck is in a case that has already been prepared as described above. The cased deck is in the outer right pocket of your jacket. Take the cased deck in right hand dealing position with the thumb notch towards your palm and remove it from your pocket. You will now remove the cards from the case in order to perform your first miracle.

Turn your right hand inward at the wrist to bring it back up. Place your left thumb directly onto the flap of the case at the thumb notch and begin to pull the flap out.



Your left index, middle and ring fingers bend the flap under the case, bringing your fingertips in contact with the face of the bottom card of the deck at its outer end. Place your left thumb on the top card of the deck near the outer end at the thumb notch.



With your left hand, pull the deck about two-thirds of the way out of the case. By now you will have realized the importance of an unobstructed thumb notch and a reinforced third flap crease. These preparations of the case allow you to grasp the cards quickly and securely and to pull them from the case. You'll begin to note how often others amateurishly shake the cards from the case.



Now adjust your left hand grip as shown in the illustration, keeping the tip of your left index finger at all times in contact with the bottom of the deck, serving as a pivot point for your hand. During this adjustment – which takes less than a second – use your right fingers to apply a light pressure on the cards through the case to prevent them from shifting or sliding back into the case.



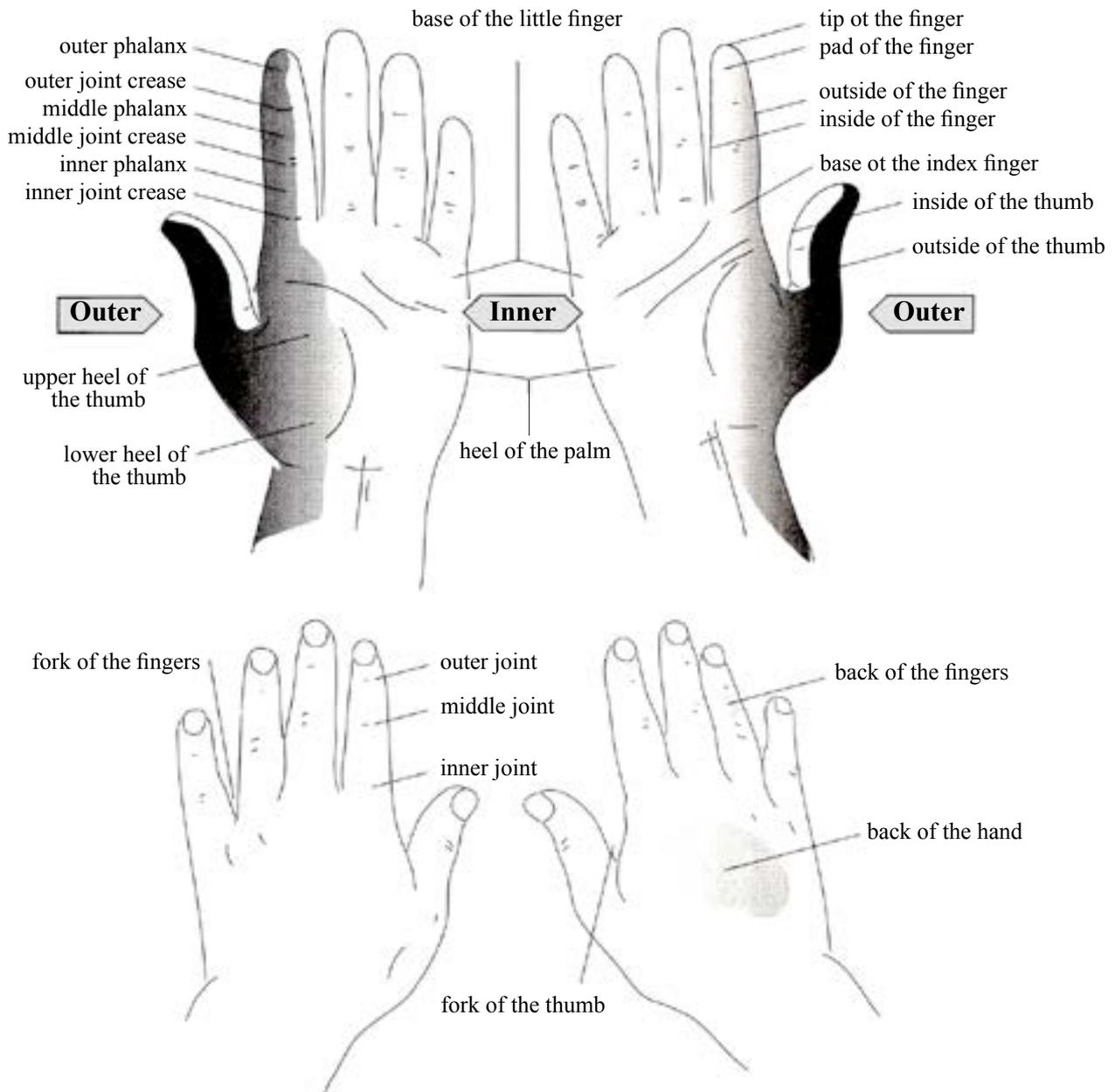


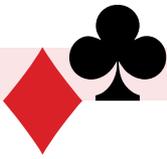
With your left hand, pull the deck completely out of the case and let the cards fall into open left-hand dealing position. You can now reinsert the flap into the case with the help of your left thumb, then set the empty case aside with your right hand. Or you can simply set the empty case aside with the flap open. This will be determined by your future use of the case in your performance.



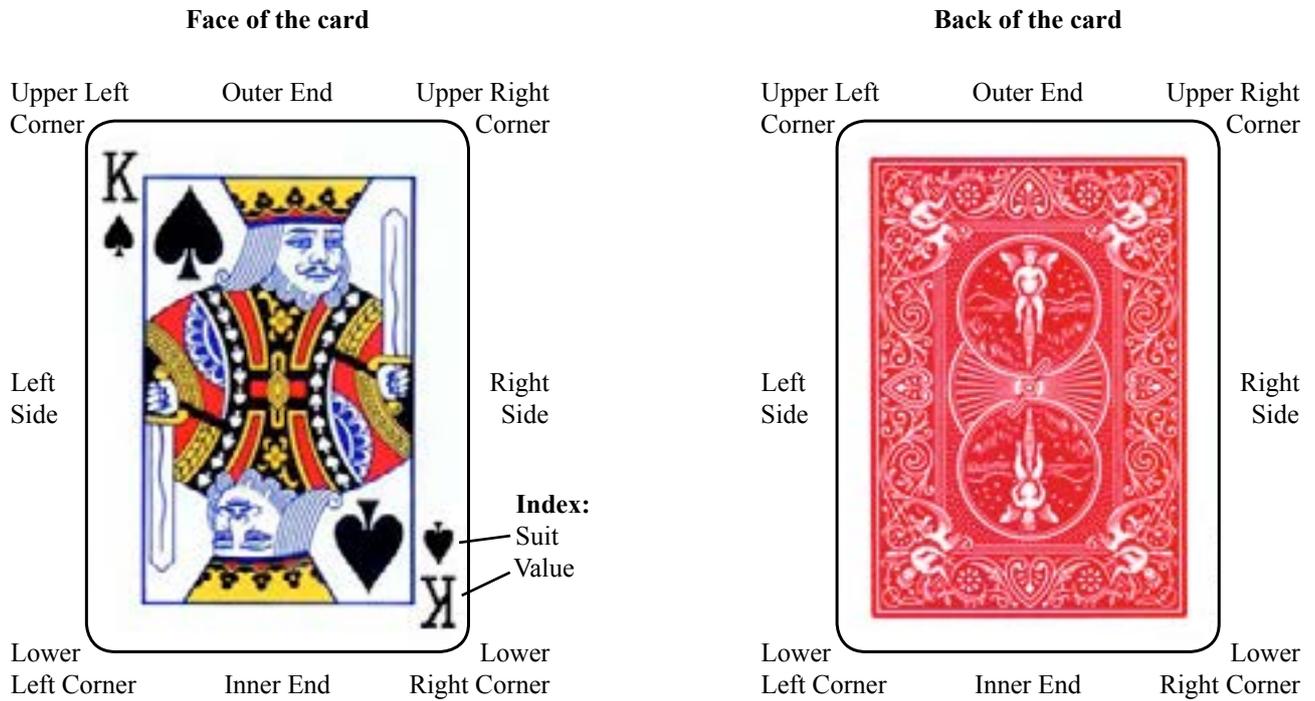
## Terminology

### Map of Hands

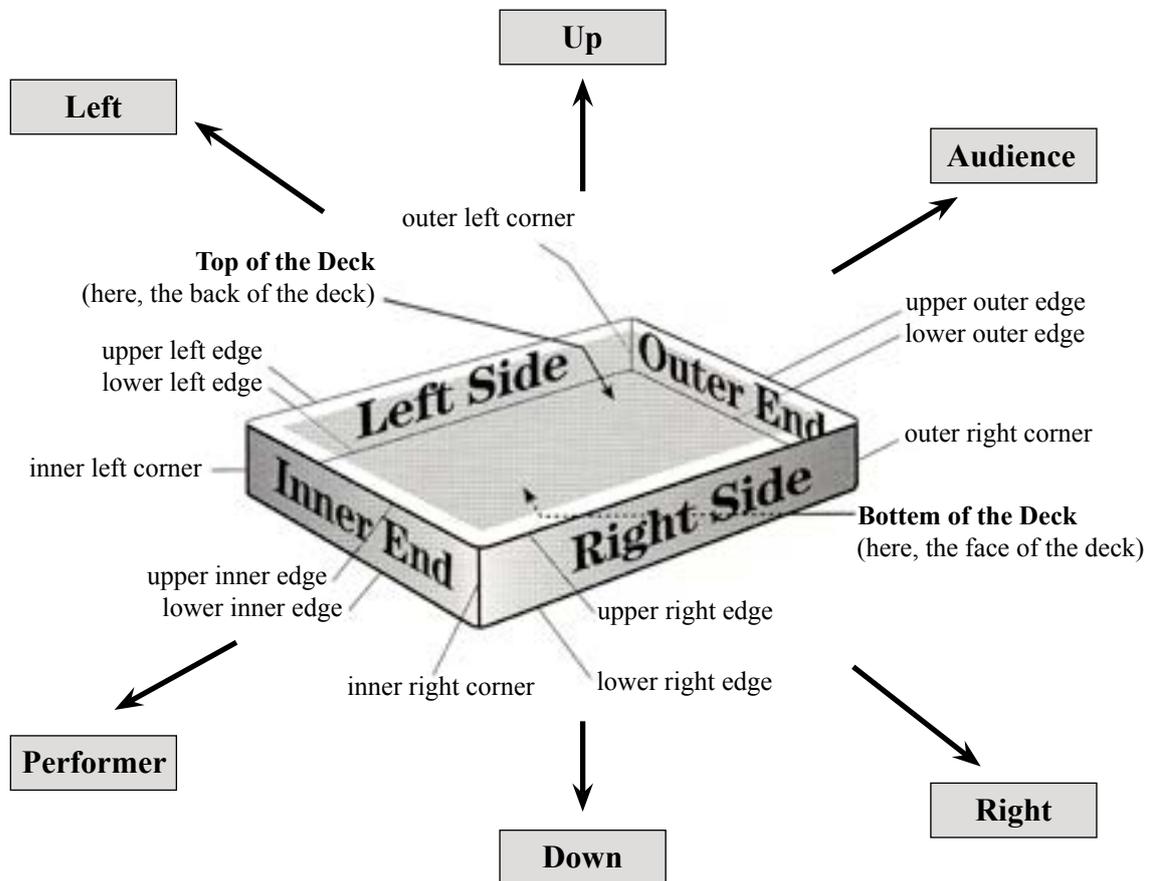


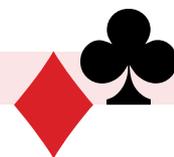


### Map of a Single Playing Card



### Map of the Deck





## Golden Rule Number Two

### Practice

*Never perform a trick that you haven't thoroughly practiced and rehearsed.*

Be sure to know what to do, in which way and for what reason. Practice the parts of the trick depending on digital dexterity several times a day, for several days.

Once you have mastered the mechanics and the complete procedure of the trick, run through the trick several times, using the complete text and pretending to speak to real people. Do this at least twenty times before attempting to perform the trick for the first time. This is called “rehearsal” as opposed to “practice”.

There is a great temptation to be personally fascinated by the cleverness of a method that makes you want to perform the trick as soon as possible to whoever is around. Resist this first impulse and wait until you are ready.



# Getting Acquainted With Your Instrument

*«The great difficulty in magic is  
to preserve the intrinsic quality of an effect.»*





## Contents

### Basic Grips & Handlings

#### Learning Goals

The Standard Dealing Position

Variations on the Standard Dealing Position

Elevated Dealing Position

The End Grip

Squaring the Deck

The All-around Square-up

### Dealing Cards

Dealing Cards Face Down—The Draw Method

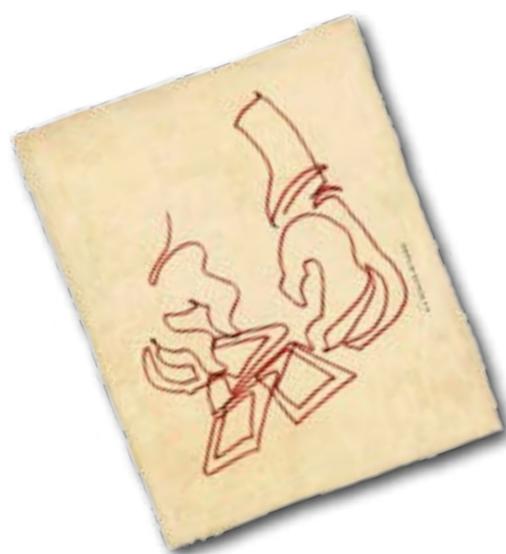
Dealing Cards Face Up—The Stud Method

Sail Dealing Cards Face Down & Face Up

Outjogging Cards as They are Spread Between the Hands

Spreading and Dealing Cards in the Other Hand

#### Golden Rule Number Three





## Basic Grips & Handlings

This chapter should be studied first, as it defines and details essential card techniques on which everything is built. The terms and handlings taught here are used repeatedly in the lessons and in the courses to follow. A thorough understanding and mastery of this material is necessary to grasp and attain all that is to come.

### Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn the fundamental grips and moves with a deck of cards that will be used in all of card magic.

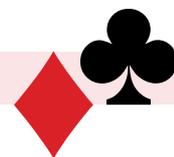
#### The Standard Dealing Position

This is the basic and most important of all positions. The cards are generally held in this grip when they are in your possession but not in active use or, as the term implies, when you are dealing the cards.

Study the exact position of each finger in this and the following photographs, as each has a specific function in certain techniques.

The deck „floats“ in the left hand. It neither rests on the palm nor is it clutched by the fingers. The lower right edge of the deck rests on the outer joints of the middle, ring and little fingers. Thus only the outer phalanx of each of these fingers touches the right side. The index finger prevents the cards from sliding forward. The lower outer edge of the deck contacts both the outer and middle joints of the index finger. The lower, inner left corner of the deck rests near the lower heel of the thumb. The thumb can rest either along the left side of the deck or on top. The deck is slightly beveled to conform to the anatomy of the hand. The degree of the bevel will depend on the technique that will be used starting from this position





This next position is a very useful variation of the above dealing position and shall be referred to as the *open dealing position*. Extending the thumb to the left and the fingers to the right expresses non-verbally that everything is fair and above board - the hand looks relaxed.

*This position should be taken whenever possible*, but without appearing contrived or trying to prove something. It should simply encourage the impression that you are exerting the barest minimum of control over the cards.



### Check Points

1. How firmly should you hold the deck? Imagine the deck is a bird: Hold it firmly enough to keep it from flying away, but not so firmly as to crush it.
2. To obtain a smooth bevel of the deck, slide the left thumb lightly over the left side of the cards, from bottom to top.
3. Don't make the mistake of assuming that you already know this technique. Yes, you've held cards in your hand all your life, but where was your index finger? It's like the fourth string of a violin: Without it, there's no symphony. Never forget the index finger!
4. Deviations from this dealing position will be required by certain techniques and will be detailed in the relevant descriptions.

### Variations on the Standard Dealing Position

This position will be referred to as the *straddle dealing position*. In contrast to the other positions, the little finger is at the inner end of the deck.

This grip offers the firmest and securest control of the deck and is required for the successful execution of certain techniques we will learn in later courses. This position should only be taken immediately prior to the execution of those techniques.

This position is a hybrid between the standard dealing position and the straddle dealing position, both explained and illustrated above, and is called a *semi-straddle dealing position*.

Note the position of the little finger at the inner end – the other three fingers are comfortably held in a relaxed position at the deck's right side.

This position is usually taken when the deck is slightly tipped towards the performer, the little finger preventing the cards from sliding backwards.





## Elevated Dealing Position



This position should always be used when the deck needs to be displayed with particular clarity. The emphasis achieved draws greater attention to the deck and should, therefore, only be used when such attention is desired. The fact that the deck is held at the fingertips, away from the palm, makes it appear less firmly held and controlled. As a result, this position gives an impression of extreme fairness.

Hold the deck in the left hand, as shown in the illustration. The index finger is bent under the deck, with the fingernail touching the bottom of the deck.

The weight of the deck is actually supported by the index finger. The other fingers only hold the deck lightly.



This photograph shows the deck in elevated dealing position, *but with the left forefinger at the outer end of the deck*. The situation is depicted from a slightly angled point of view to show how the deck „floats“ above the palm, held by the outer phalanges of the left fingers.



To reach this position, start out by holding the deck in standard dealing position. Seize the deck in right-hand end grip – see below - while moving the left index finger underneath the deck to the face of the bottom card. Lift the left side of the deck with the right hand, sliding this side along the inside of the left thumb and stopping at the center of the thumb's outer phalanx. *The right side remains where it is, acting as a pivot point*. The deck is now in the elevated dealing position.



This position can also be reached without the use of the right hand, using the curled left index finger to raise the left side of the deck by just pressing upward on the bottom of the deck.





## The End Grip



In the literature you will often find this grip being referred to as „Biddle Position“ or „Biddle Grip“.

This position is often used when the right hand cuts the deck or lifts it from the table or the left hand. The photograph shows the *open end grip*. The deck is held near its right corners between the thumb and middle finger. The ring and little fingers rest neatly alongside the middle finger, and the outer phalanx of the index finger is bent in, so that the fingertip rests on top of the deck.



This photograph, shown from a front view, shows the *covered end grip*. Here the deck is held by the right thumb, middle, ring and little fingers. The ring finger touches the outer right corner of the deck. As in the open end grip, the outer phalanx of the index finger is bent and the fingertip touches the top of the deck, practically at the left border. The bent in forefinger gives the hand a neater and more natural look. Besides, in palming techniques, to be taught in more advanced courses, it will be very helpful in creating the illusion of an empty hand.



### Check Points

1. Although this might look like something you've always done, look again. The fingers are held at about a 45 degree angle towards the cards. This makes the hand look natural and it will also feel right for you.
2. Whenever possible use the *open end grip* as it will display as much of the deck as possible, thus adverting the thought that you are hiding something. However, note that due to the 45 degree hold, even the closed end grip looks good and displays as much as possible from the top of the deck.

## Squaring the Deck



You will find this term often in this course, so we will define the handling precisely. It will later be used in advanced applications together with a break, a step or an injogged card.

Using the right hand, bring the deck from dealing position to elevated dealing position as previously described. Continue to hold the deck in end grip. The right hand controls the cards during the initial phase of the squaring. The left fingers and thumb slide inward along the sides of the deck, then outward. This action can be repeated several times. Each time the thumb slides from the outer left corner to the inner left corner and back again, the middle, ring and little fingers follow along at the right side, the forefinger curled in and touching the bottom with its nail.





Lower the deck once again to standard dealing position and slide the right thumb and fingers from left to right along the ends. Thus the deck has been squared along the sides as well as the ends.

You may also square the sides and the ends at elevated dealing position and only then lower the deck to standard dealing position.

Either way looks good and serves the purpose of squaring the cards and making the action look fair and above-board.



### The All-around Square-up



This technique is yet another way of squaring the deck in the hands, but it is also a prerequisite for numerous advanced techniques.

Hold the deck face down in left-hand dealing position. The right hand takes it in end grip and lifts it to elevated dealing position. The left index finger is bent under the deck, so that its nail contacts the bottom, similar as in the handling described above.



The right hand begins to turn the deck clock-wise. The bottom of the deck pivots on the nail of the left index finger. Simultaneously, the left hand turns counter clockwise. After the deck has been turned about ninety degrees, the left thumb will be on what was the right side of the deck and the left middle, ring and little fingers will be on what was the left side. The deck at this point is practically vertical. This position is held for only a fraction of a second.



The left fingers and thumb take control of the deck and continue its clockwise rotation. This returns the cards to elevated dealing position. They are briefly squared along the sides and ends, and finally lowered to normal dealing position.

During this square up, the deck has been rotated a hundred eighty degrees.





## Dealing Cards

Dealing cards would seem to be so elementary a topic, the reader may wonder why it is necessary to discuss it at all. But once again there is a right way and a wrong way to do things. Initially, either would serve the purpose equally well, but for advanced techniques precise positions of the fingers are critical. We will describe five methods of dealing: the draw method, two stud methods and two sail methods. Most of the other variations follow from these techniques.

### Dealing Cards Face Down - The Draw Method



As dealing techniques generally originated at the gaming tables, it is not surprising that their nomenclature comes from that source. The *draw method* refers to the manner in which cards are dealt in draw poker.

Hold the deck face down in left-hand dealing position. The heel of the palm rests lightly on the table or „floats“ very slightly above it. As the right hand approaches the deck, the left thumb pushes the top card slightly to the right. The right middle finger enters the gap between the left index and middle fingers and contacts the index of the top card with the outside of the outer phalanx rather than with the fingertip. Grip the outer right corner of the top card between the right thumb (on the back) and middle finger (on the index).



With the right hand, carry the card *diagonally forward to the right*, and place it on the table. Note the position of the right forefinger at the outer end of the card dealt, near its outer right corner. The card is controlled at three points by thumb, middle finger and forefinger.



### Check Points

1. As the right hand approaches the left to take a card, the left hand rolls slightly inward to the right on the heel of the palm, then rolls back. This is repeated throughout the dealing. This small, natural, rocking motion makes the deal more pleasing to the eye while it aids the right hand in grasping the top card.
2. The angle of the deck with respect to the horizon is between twenty degrees (in rest position) and forty-five degrees (in dealing position).
3. When the card is placed on the table, it should not be done with a noisy *click* or *snap*, but with a gentle firmness. The only sound one should hear during the deal is the quiet sound produced by the cards as they slide over the top of the deck.



## Dealing Cards Face Up - The Stud Method (2 Methods)



*Stud method* refers to the manner in which cards are dealt in the game of stud poker, the poker variant in which some cards are dealt face up.

The least ostentatious way of dealing the cards face up consists in initially grasping the top card as in the previously described draw method, with your right thumb on the back, middle finger on the face and forefinger at the outer end. As you bring this card to the tabletop with your right hand, turn your hand inward at the wrist, bringing it palm down and the card face up.

This can be rendered somewhat more elegant by curling your right ring and little fingers slightly into your palm as you grasp the card. As you rotate your hand palm up, extend these two fingers onto the back of the card, further accelerating and supporting the turnover. This sharing of the action is an important principle in the creation of an aesthetically pleasing action.



This is the stud deal used by most casino croupiers and looks a tad more elegant than the handling described above.

Hold the deck face down in left-hand dealing position and push the top card to the right with the left thumb. Grasp the card with the right hand as shown in the illustration. The index and middle fingers contact the back of the card at the outer right corner, while the thumb lies on the face at the index.



Push up with the right thumb as you push down with the fingers. At the same time, rotate the right hand a quarter turn outward at the wrist. This turns the card end over end and face up. From this position place it on the table.



### Check Point

1. Whether you use the draw or one of the stud dealing methods, make the deals look light and effortless. This will translate in elegant card handling and will take a bit of practice.
2. Remember to keep the deck away from your body, about 20 cm or more, and also avoid clutching your elbows to the side of the body. This point is often neglected by the beginner as he has to concentrate on so many other things. However, it is of utmost importance, as the body language should at all times convey innocence, but at the same time confidence and command over the situation. This will be particularly useful later, when your dealing will not be as innocuous as here...



## Sail Dealing Cards Face Down & Face Up



This way of dealing cards is referred to as *sail dealing the cards*, or simply *sailing the cards*. You might have seen this type of handling cards in movies or in casinos where the dealer still deals from the hand, rather than from a shoe or dealing machine. Not only does it look good, even a bit fancy, it is faster to deal for the croupier than bending forward and stretching out his dealing arm to deal the card to the player sitting further away.

Hold the deck face down in left hand dealing position. Push off the top card as already explained in the methods above and take it with the right hand, but curl the right middle and little fingers into the palm.



Take the card a bit to the right, but then, instead of dealing it directly to the table, “sail” it to the table by extending your ring and little finger.



This will inflict a forward movement to the card, and since it was held by the right thumb and middle finger the card will leave the hand with a rotation and “fly” to the table.



To sail deal cards face up on the table, simply use the second stud deal method described above and then sail it exactly like a face down card.

### Check Points

1. What makes the sail deal look good is the fact that the dealing right hand doesn't move much. Therefore avoid making “throwing rotational motions” with your right hand. Holding the card correctly to begin with and then lightly extending your ring and little finger is all that is needed to make the card elegantly fly through the air as if powered by an invisible magical force.
2. Practice sailing several cards one after the other to specific spots on the table. This is what the croupiers do and it takes quite a bit of practice to hit the wanted spot.
3. In most magical applications, however, there is no need to hit specific spots, as the sail deal is simply used as a slightly flourish way to deal cards – it looks elegant and open.



## Spreading the Cards between the Hands



This technique will be used often with the cards either face up or face down. Once again we are analyzing a procedure with which you may feel you are already completely familiar, for who has not spread the deck between the hands when picking out cards? But pay attention here to the positions of the fingers and the manner in which cards are pushed from hand to hand. This technique is the foundation on which such sleights as the classic force and spread cull, among others to be taught in advanced courses, will be erected.

Hold the deck in left-hand straddle dealing position. Tip the outer end of the deck up about thirty degrees, so that the inner end rests on the inside of the little finger. With the left thumb, begin to push the top few cards to the right, where they are received by the palm-up right hand.



Simultaneously, shift the left index finger from the outer end of the deck to a position beside the left middle finger, so that the deck is now in semi-straddle dealing position. Also note the position of the right little finger at the inner end of the deck. The hands form mirror images of each other.



The right hand grasps the right edge of the top card in the fork of the thumb and moves to the right, while the left thumb pushes more cards to the right.

The right index, middle and ring fingers work under the resulting spread to keep the cards flowing from left to right. The index finger alternates with the middle and ring fingers (these two acting as a unit) to pull cards to the right. This photo from below shows the index finger just after it has pulled a few cards to the right, while the middle and ring fingers are being extended.

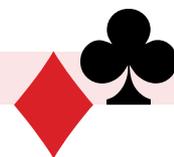


Here you see the right middle and ring fingers contracted, having pulled cards to the right, while the index finger extends to receive the next batch of cards. The fingers under the spread may be imagined to be the legs of a tiny man walking across the underside of the cards.

Remember that as the left fingers pull cards over on the underside of the spread, the left thumb pushes those cards over to the right in a rhythm synchronized with the movement of the right fingers. It's a "giving and taking" situation.

*The hands can move together and apart, „accordion“ style, or remain stationary.*





## Check Points

1. The position of the little fingers at the spread's inner end is critical. They not only give the spread stability between the hands, but permit the cards to be extended in a wider and more attractive spread.
2. The "flow" of the spread between the hands results from the alternating push of the left thumb and pull of the right index, middle and ring fingers.
3. Viewed from above, the motion of the cards resembles that of a conveyor belt that moves along without apparent cause. This makes an aesthetic and even somewhat magical impression on the viewer.

## Outjogging Cards as They are Spread Between the Hands



The purpose of this technique is to pick cards out of the deck, then place them elsewhere in the deck or on the table. Let's assume we want to remove the four Aces, which are distributed evenly in the deck.

Spread the cards face up between the hands, using the spreading technique just described. As soon as you come to the first Ace, place the left thumb on its left side.

Move the right hand inward with its cards and the left hand outward until about three-quarters of the Ace is exposed. Contact the back of the Ace at its inner right corner with the right index finger and press it against the card directly above it.

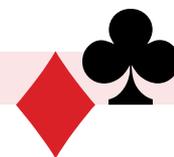


Now move the right hand forward, so that the cards spread in the right hand are even again with those in the left. The Ace now extends from the front of the spread for about three quarters of its length. (This position is called an *outjog*.)



Resume the spreading of the cards until you come to the next Ace. This is outjogged in the spread in the same manner as the first Ace. The procedure is repeated two more times, until all four Aces project from the deck.





With the cards still outjogged from the above position, push the spread together towards the left and take the deck with the protruding cards in semi-straddle dealing position.



How you proceed from this point depends on the requirements of the effect being performed. The various handlings will be detailed in the context of the trick descriptions, but we will give an example here that will cover most situations.



The right hand moves over the outjogged cards to their left side...



...and turns them to the right clockwise. This will result in the protruding cards turning 180 degrees – end for end – around the left forefinger, which acts as a pivot.

The cards are now held by the right hand, thumb on top, fingers on bottom, at their right side and may be placed on the face of the deck, dropped on the table or handed to a spectator for further proceedings.



## Spreading and Dealing Cards in the Other Hand



The purpose of this technique is to hold the deck in left hand dealing position and to reverse count cards from the top of the deck individually into the right hand, which takes them in a kind of dealing position.

This is useful when you want to openly count cards, look for a particular card or many other situations. It is also the kind of handling required to execute “The Cards Know”, a trick taught in Lesson 7 of this course.



Let's assume that you want to reverse count the top ten cards of the deck into the right hand.

Hold the deck face down in the left hand semi-straddle dealing position. The left thumb pushes the top card over to the right for about half its width, as the right hand simultaneously approaches the deck and start to take the pushed-over card as shown in the photograph.



The right hand moves away to the right, taking the card in semi-straddle dealing position, similar to the left hand's grip, and counting "one".



The right hand comes back, as the left thumb pushes over the next card, and takes it on top of the first card in the same grip as before.



Once again move the right hand away to the right, counting "two". Repeat until you've counted ten cards.



### Check Points

1. Although the count can be done from standard dealing position, using the semi-straddle position will allow for a more ergonomic and comfortable handling.
2. For the ergonomics just mentioned, you will want to tip the deck slightly towards yourself. If you are counting the cards from a face up deck and you don't want your audience to see the faces, you can hold the deck in an almost vertical position – due to the little fingers at the inner end, the cards will at all times be under your perfect control. However, should you want them to see the faces, or should you count the cards face-down and want your audience to clearly follow how many cards you are taking, the deck can be brought to an almost horizontal position, allowing best view on the top of the cards.



### Golden Rule Number Three

#### Announcing

*Do not announce beforehand what you are about to do.*

If your audience knows what to expect, there will be no surprise. They might then watch what you are doing in a different and more critical way.

Announcing a trick also implies an element of challenge, which you want to avoid as a rule. Once you have reached a master degree in magic, you can occasionally break this rule, like any other rule.



# Your First Techniques: Basic Shuffles

*«A man without a foundation is like a ship without a rudder and compass,  
buffeted here and there by every wind.»*

Samuel Smiles





## Contents

### Introduction

#### Learning Goals

The Overhand Shuffle

The Riffle Shuffle

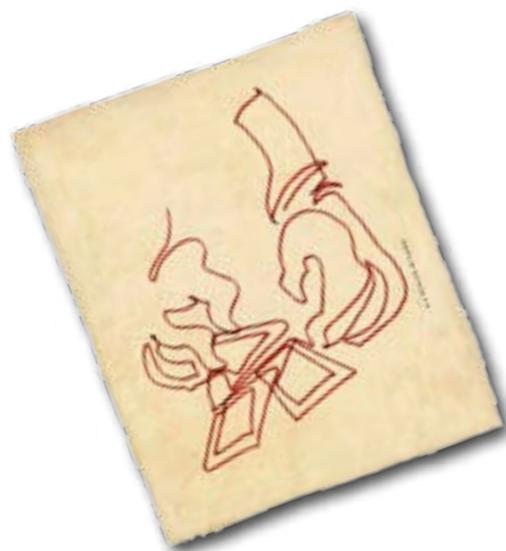
The Closed Riffle Shuffle

Squaring After the Shuffle

The Open Riffle Shuffle

The Waterfall Riffle Shuffle

Golden Rule Number Four





## Introduction

This chapter deals with some of the best ways of shuffling a deck of cards in the hands, on the table and in the air.

Even though you may think you already know how to do these moves, and indeed have probably been shuffling cards for a long time, the methods presented here are the way to professionally do it.

These methods are elegant because they are efficient and economical. However, they also use precise fingering which will become important when you want to learn more advanced sleights based on these grips.

*It is important that you learn to do these moves properly, even if this means unlearning some handling habits. At the beginning some of the new “ways” will feel strange, but within a few days you will feel at ease with them and recognize how well they allow you to control the cards.*

## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...to do a correct overhand shuffle.
- ...how professionals do riffle shuffles on the table.
- ...how to square a deck after a shuffle and make this look good.
- ...how to riffle shuffle cards in the air and end with a pretty flourish that will impress your audience.

## The Overhand Shuffle



Overhand shuffling is a basic tool of card conjuring. Even if you have been performing the overhand shuffle since you first learned to play cards, you will soon recognize that the method described here employs a technique that feels somewhat different. The grip will probably seem a bit unconventional, and you may wonder why this retraining is necessary, since your present overhand shuffle technique is more than adequate to mix the cards.

However, as soon as we get to the first actual techniques using the overhand shuffle, such as control of top and bottom stocks or the control of selected cards, you will realize that the “family style shuffle” is totally inadequate for a precise and secure execution of such sleights.

The basic method taught here is a prerequisite for successful execution of all subsequent overhand shuffle techniques. Of particular importance are the positions of the forefinger and the little finger of the left hand, as well as the way the cards are shuffled off. With a little patience and perseverance the technique described below will open a door to a big room you probably didn't know even existed; it is the room to artistic and expert card handling. Please believe me if I say that it is worth mastering.



Hold the deck face down in left-hand dealing position, then grasp it in right-hand end grip with the right thumb and second finger near the inner and outer right corners. At the same time, move the left index finger from the outer end, curling it beneath the deck.



Bring the deck to a vertical position with the right hand. As you are doing this, the left side of the deck slides to the right for about 2cm, along the palm of your hand, from its original position to a position near the base of the fingers. The deck's outer left corner will now snugly fit in the fork between the forefinger and middle finger.



The deck is not perpendicular to the horizon, but at an angle of about fifty degrees, at an ergonomic position for the shuffle. It is held lightly between the right *thumb* and *middle finger*. The right index finger rests on the raised right side of the slightly beveled pack, the bevel forming naturally when the cards are held loosely. The ring and little fingers lie next to the middle finger.

The left hand's grip is very important and is shown in this photo and the one following. It is important that the pad of the index finger rests on the outer end of the deck. The forefinger's outer phalanx will contact the upper outer edge of the deck, the exact point of contact depending on the anatomy of your hand. The outer left corner of the deck comfortably rests in the fork of the forefinger and middle finger.



(Right hand removed for clarity.)

The outer phalanx of the little finger extends for about half its length beyond the lower inner edge of the deck. The ring and middle fingers lie relaxed against the bottom of the deck, neither stretched out, nor bend in, just so they look at ease and feel comfortable. The tips of the index, middle, ring and little fingers contact the upper half of the pack, at roughly the same level. The thumb lies along the upper right side of the deck.



(Right hand removed for clarity.)

The right hand now begins the actual shuffle, lifting the deck as the left thumb holds back the top few cards, shuffling them off, to use the technical term. This action will be called a shuffle action in the following descriptions.





Bring the right hand's cards over the packet just shuffled off. With the left thumb, pull a comparable number of cards (about ten) off the right-hand portion (called the stock) onto the cards in the left hand as your right hand lifts the remainder of the deck. This procedure is repeated until the right hand's stock is exhausted, which generally takes five to seven shuffle actions.

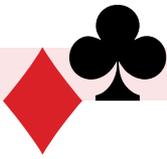
The shuffling off is a combination of letting cards drop from the right hand and pulling them off with the left thumb. The drop from the right hand is accomplished by relaxing pressure between the right thumb and middle finger.



A single overhand shuffle of the deck, as just described, will be designated a *shuffle* in the following descriptions.

### Check Points

1. More likely than not, most readers will already have mastered a version of the overhand shuffle before reading the above description. This can lead to an “all thumbs” feeling; for in analyzing an action that is already familiar, often you will find that nothing works anymore! Probably you can retain most of your present handling. But *pay strict attention to the positions of the left index and little fingers*. They will provide the actual control over the cards. These fingers play a decisive role when cards project from the outer and inner ends of the deck.
2. Pay attention to the rhythm of the shuffle. As a general rule, try to make no more than six or seven shuffle actions in the course of a shuffle. That is neither too long nor too short, and is accepted by the audience as natural. There are, however, situations in which it is necessary to exceed this limit. In such cases, the longer shuffle may be justified with some comment pertinent to the trick; for example: “*When I ask some people to shuffle the cards, they are very thorough about it and shuffle like this. Of course, this isn't really necessary. You can shuffle like this just as well.*” Another approach to disguising an extended shuffle is to interrupt it as you make some remark and gesture with your right hand and its cards; then resume the shuffle. Other strategies can be derived from the particular circumstances of the trick being performed.
3. The shuffle actions should not be jerky, but harmonious, symmetrical and “round”. By “round” I mean that the right hand does not move up and down in a straight line, but *describes a gentle arc*.
4. In principle, the right hand is the only hand that moves in the overhand shuffle - the left hand appears motionless to the observer. In fact, the left hand moves *just a little* for it acts as a “shock absorber”, preventing brusque motions.
5. Very important: *Be generous in your movements*. Hold both elbows away from your body and keep the deck at least eight inches from your chest. Do not use your chest (or belly) as a “safety board” to catch cards that slip inward during the shuffle. Control the cards entirely with your hands. Always exaggerate this posture as you practice, gradually approaching a more normal position. All overhand shuffle techniques will take place at roughly the height of the solar plexus, whether you're standing or seated.
6. Rather than looking at the cards as you shuffle, *look at your audience* and converse with them.



## The Riffle Shuffle

The riffle shuffle is the shuffle preferred at gambling tables. This is primarily because it was once thought that the riffle shuffle made cheating more difficult. Today there is more literature devoted to various riffle shuffle techniques than to any other shuffle. Anything you can do with an overhand shuffle can be done with a riffle shuffle, and much more besides.

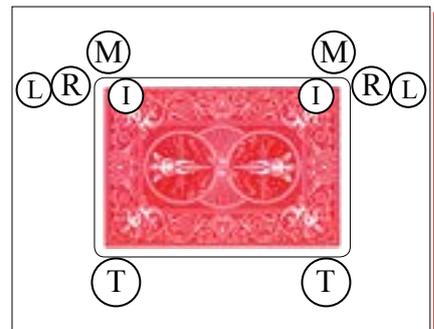
Although most card players know and use the riffle shuffle today, many people still find it fascinating when it is neatly performed, perhaps partly because of its association with gambling and its lore. You should therefore include in your performances tricks using the riffle shuffle. In this lesson we will become familiar with the basic riffle shuffle techniques. Don't neglect to master these basics from the outset, as they will be the foundation for more advanced techniques you will encounter later.

### The Closed Riffle Shuffle

Position the deck on the table with one side facing you and grasp the cards as shown in the photograph. *The bases of the little fingers and the heels of the palms contact the table*, giving the hands a relaxed appearance. The thumbs are at their respective inner corners. The outer phalanges of the ring fingers are bent so that their outer sides contact the ends of the deck at the outer corners. The little fingers lie next to the ring fingers. Finally, the outer phalanges of the index fingers are bent and contact the top of the deck.

This is a finger diagram, showing the positions of the fingers with respect to the deck. Such diagrams show the exact positions at which the individual fingers contact the deck, and are often used to illustrate riffle shuffle techniques. This position will be referred to as the *riffle shuffle starting position*. Remember that the fingers are at an angle to the deck, *not* perpendicular as the diagram might suggest, and that *the hands rest relaxed on the table*.

We now begin the actual shuffle. Using your right thumb, riffle off about half the cards from the bottom of the deck. To facilitate this, press the right index finger lightly down on top of the deck. The inner side of the deck will open along its entire length, but no break should be visible at the outer side.





Grasp the lower half of the deck between the left thumb and middle finger and pull it half the length of the deck to the left – this is called *undercutting the deck*. Mirror this action with the right hand, pulling the upper half to the right – this is called *uppercutting the deck*.

Since both hands move, the cut takes half as much time as it would otherwise. The symmetrical action is both efficient and aesthetically pleasing. The halves of the deck lie flat on the table in a slight V-formation, the inner corners touching lightly. *Take care that the finger positions remain unchanged during the cutting.*



Only now do the hand positions change. Grasp each half with its respective hand as shown in the photograph (a front view). The bases of the little fingers and the heels of the palms continue to maintain contact with the table at all times.



With the thumbs, lift their respective corners of the packets about half an inch, and press lightly down on top of the deck with the index fingers in preparation for letting the cards riffle off. When they do so, the inner corners will interlace. Begin the riffle by releasing a few cards from the right thumb, then riffle the cards evenly, releasing the left hand's top cards last.

This shuffles the original top and bottom cards into the deck and is considered a standard riffle shuffle.



You will next push the halves together. This requires another change in hand positions, which amounts to resuming the starting position, but with the cards now interlaced. With your ring fingers, push the halves together. The little fingers assist by pushing gently behind the ring fingers. No force is applied by the other fingers: they merely guide the cards.



Only when the halves have been securely interlaced for an inch or more do you straighten them from their slight angles and push them flush. The shuffle is concluded by squaring the deck neatly, using the technique that immediately follows (Squaring After the Shuffle).

*In practice the shuffling and squaring procedures form a single smooth sequence of actions.*





## Check Points

1. This technique in particular is easier at the outset if you work on a padded surface. But practice it and all the other riffle shuffle techniques on a hard surface as well, so that you will be prepared for any conditions.
2. Don't forget to keep the bases of the little fingers and the heels of the palm in contact with the table-top throughout the shuffle. Only in the final phase of the shuffle—as the halves are pushed together and just before they are squared—is it permissible to lift them from the table. Even then it is not necessary—you can perform all the actions with the hands resting on the table.
3. Carefully study the finger diagram for the riffle shuffle starting position and memorize it. Keep the fingers at an angle, not perpendicular to the deck – this will be automatic, if you keep your hands on the table. Don't fall back on old habits, in which the deck may have been held quite differently.
4. When riffling the cards to interlace them, they are barely bent. Though one often sees the cards bent severely during the shuffle, it is not necessary, may damage the cards and does not look good. *Performed properly, the riffle produces the sound of a softly purring cat, not the noise of an icebreaker.* Mastery of the riffle shuffle requires technique, not strength.
5. In pushing the halves together, the cards may bind. If you experience this, relaxing your grip on the cards should make it easier to proceed. If necessary, the packets may also be gently “scissored” back and forth to loosen them.
6. This version of the riffle shuffle is referred to as “closed” because a portion of the deck is hidden during the shuffle. This is useful in hiding the condition of the deck when, for example, some cards are secretly face up in a deck that is supposedly face down.

## Squaring After the Shuffle



After each riffle shuffle you will want to square the cards. This method, one first recommended in print in 1902 by the mysterious card sharp S. W. Erdnase <sup>1)</sup>, is a particularly efficient and elegant method of doing so.

After you have executed the riffle shuffle, the deck will be in a slightly unsquared condition and you will be holding it with your hands in the riffle shuffle starting position.





Extend your thumbs toward the center of the inner side, until the thumb tips lightly touch, and slide the middle fingers around the outer corners to their respective ends. The ring and little fingers move aside a short distance to make room for this action. The photograph shows a view from above.



Slide both thumb and middle finger of each hand toward their respective inner corners, the index fingers following passively over the top of the deck. This stroking of the ends and inner side squares the deck.

You then either remove the hands from the deck or resume riffle shuffle starting position, depending on the requirements of the particular routine.



## The Open Riffle Shuffle



This riffle shuffle, in which most of the deck remains visible, differs from the closed riffle shuffle in only a few details. Because of its “open” appearance, it looks fairer and is preferred to the closed shuffle. But it is a bit more difficult and requires greater coordination. In the beginning you will also think it requires greater strength, but - as with most techniques - this is just a temporary misconception. The true secret lies in properly coordinating the actions.

Hold the deck in riffle shuffle starting position. Divide the deck as previously described (see the first four photographs of the closed riffle shuffle). However, at this point you *do not* change the position of the hands, but maintain them in their positions.

Begin to riffle the cards with the thumbs, interlacing the adjacent corners as shown in the photograph. Push the interlaced halves together and square the deck as previously described.



### Check Points

1. This technique is not only more open, but obviously more efficient, since it does not require as many changes in hand positions.
2. The outer, lower edge of the left half of the deck maintains constant contact with the table top. Also keep the outer phalanx of the right middle finger in contact with the table top during the cutting. And don't lower the right thumb to the table after dividing the deck; rather keep it elevated, so that it can immediately begin to riffle the cards. Keeping the thumb raised eliminates the need to set down, then immediately pick up the right half of the deck again. This concept of *economy of movement* is omnipresent in intelligent card handling. It is not only more artistic, but also makes the actions look natural, innocent and free from trickery.



## The Waterfall Riffle Shuffle



This technique is not only impressive to spectators, it is also very useful when no table is available. In those countries where cards games are popular, like the USA and England, this shuffle is quite common. But you should be aware that in other latitudes it is often regarded as a flourish, and if you find yourself working these climes you might consider prefacing the shuffle with a remark such as “I’ll shuffle the cards like the American gamblers do,” to give your use of the shuffle a presentational motivation.

Hold the deck face down in left-hand dealing position. Then take it into right-hand end grip and raise it to elevated dealing position. The outer phalanges of the right middle, ring and little fingers extend over the outer end of the deck, the pads of these fingers contacting the face of the bottom card. Press against the top card with the back of the outer phalanx of the curled right index finger.



Rotate the deck about forty-five degrees clockwise until its length is parallel with your left fingers. You now control the deck entirely with the right hand. With your right thumb, bend up the inner end of the deck and allow about half of the cards to riffle off it. At this moment you are holding the released cards exclusively with the right middle, ring and little fingers. The bottom card of the riffled half lands on the pads of the left middle, ring, and little fingers. The left index finger is curled in to avoid contact with the underside of the packet.



Uncurl the left index finger and place it on top of the released half. Next move the right hand upward, so that you can place your left thumb at the outer end of the lower half, using the pads of the right middle, ring and little fingers to facilitate this.



The hands hold their halves in the same grip, forming mirror images. This position is maintained for barely a second. The transition between the previous phase and the following one should be smooth.





Riffle the cards uniformly off the thumbs, interlacing the two packets. As you do this, grip the cards securely with the middle, ring and little fingers of both hands underneath the packets, and the forefingers on top. Once the cards are interlaced, they are ready to be sprung together using the waterfall flourish.



Place both thumbs on top of the interlaced cards at their approximate center. Move the index fingers next to the middle fingers under the deck. Then bend the outer ends down, gripping them securely with the outer phalanges of the curled index, middle, ring and little fingers, which prevent the cards from springing down prematurely. Counter-pressure from the thumbs on top prevents the cards from springing upward.



Now gently relax your grip on the cards. The cards will automatically spring together in a cascade that is pleasing to both eye and ear. Keep the thumbs on the crest of the arch, preventing the springing cards from sliding off the deck at the end of the shuffle. With the right hand, rotate the deck forty-five degrees clockwise, take it into elevated dealing position and square it. If you lower the deck into normal dealing position, you'll have brought an aesthetically pleasing sequence full circle.



### Check Points

1. Grasp the cards gently, but securely. Keep in mind that as you riffle the halves together you hold them only by the middle, ring and little fingers on the face of the bottom card and the index finger on the back of the top card.
2. All these individual steps should flow together without interruption, forming a harmonious whole. The shuffle should not be noisy, but produce a soft rustle.
3. Obviously this technique, like the tabled riffle shuffles, can be used to control the top and bottom stocks of the deck.

### Footnotes

- 1) See *The Expert at the Card Table* by S. W. Erdnase, Magic, Inc.: Chicago; 1902, page 38. Available as ebook from [Lybrary.com](http://Lybrary.com).



## Golden Rule Number Four

### Repetition

*Avoid repeating the same trick in front of the same audience on the same day.*

After you've done a good trick, one of the most common reactions will be, "Do it again!" Well, don't! It is said that the first time the audience looks *what* you do, the second time *how* you do it. Once you have attained a certain degree of proficiency, you may respond to the request by doing a trick that looks similar, but really is different, or by doing the same effect, but with a completely different method.

Be aware that you are not a trained dog that needs to do a trick when asked, you can say 'no!' at any time. If you don't want to decline directly and be polite, simply say that you never repeat a piece, but that you are going to show them something even better. Then proceed to do another very good trick. Or say that you will be happy to do it again, but later. Then forget about it. Or if you want to give an amusing answer, ask them, "Do you know the Bible?" Regardless of what they answer, tell them, "Therein it says 'miracles only happen once'."



# Your First Card Trick: «The Mystery of the Triangle»

*«It is imagination that makes reality an experience.»*





## Contents

### **Introduction**

#### **Learning Goals**

**What is Close-up Magic**

**Trick vs. Effect**

**Audience Management in Close-up Magic**

### **The Mystery of the Triangle**

**Effect**

**The Mystery Starts**

**The Selection**

**The “Automatic” False Shuffle**

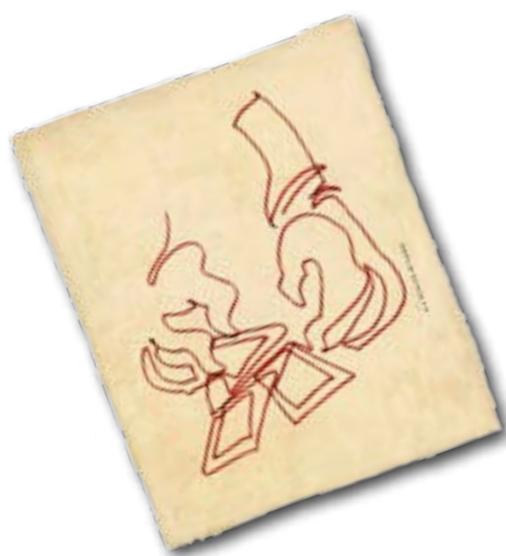
**Three!**

**Remember...**

**The Denouement**

**Lest I forget...**

**Golden Rule Number Five**





## Introduction

Now that you know how to shuffle, cut and basically handle a deck of cards, it is time to learn your first close-up card trick. The first thing that you will become aware of is that a card trick is far more than its secret, more than just knowing how it's done. You'll notice this when you start understanding and practicing the various steps of the trick, and then perform it.

## Learning Goals

In this Lesson you will...

- ...learn what close-up magic is and how this relates to audience management.
- ...learn what a trick and what an effect is.
- ...learn a few synonyms for the word “trick” that you will be able to use in your performances and when talking to people outside of magic.
- ...understand, practice and perform a card trick, “The Mystery of the Triangle”, which is easy to do, but has an excellent impact, and thus gain your first performing experience.

## What is Close-up Magic?

Close-up magic, as opposed to parlor or stage magic, is *a genre of its own* in the panorama of magic. It refers to the kind of magic performed before a restricted group of people, from one single spectator to about a dozen. Typically the situation is informal and happens without particular previous setting, very often arising out of a situation, such as after dinner sitting with friends at a table, or similar circumstances. If you start in magic, this will be the situation you will do your magic most often.

Professional close-up magicians, given the proper location such as tiered seating and good lighting, can extend their performances so that 30 or even 40 people can attend. And using the medium of camera and a projection screen, or that of a television studio, close-up magic can reach hundreds and even thousands of spectators in a theatre, or millions at home.

It should be understood that close-up magic is not just taking a magic trick that is usually performed in a small theatre or on the big stage and doing it very close to a small audience. Close-up magic, being in a category of its own, has its own tricks, instruments, and methods, as well as its own theatrical and communication grammar. As you progress, you will learn the complex structure of magic in general and close-up magic in particular.

## Trick vs. Effect

Before we proceed, let's define our terms. The word “trick” is a *technical term*, i.e. one used by those practicing magic, and refers to the complete piece of magic we perform, a *performance piece*. We are therefore talking of “The Mystery of the Triangle” trick (discussed in this lesson), or “The Open Prediction” trick (taught in Lesson 10), or we might say, “What tricks did you perform for your friend yesterday?”

In my opinion, however, “trick” is not a good word to use when we talk about what we do *to laypeople*. It belittles what we are doing and reduces a complex thing to something that merely relies



on a secret, implying that once you know the secret you know it all. Of course that's as silly as saying that you know how to play the piano and know what music is, if you know how a piano works: you hit the keys, which activate little hammers that hit a cord hidden inside the piano, and you do this in the correct order. That doesn't make you a piano player, as little as knowing a magic secret makes you a magician.

Yet, it cannot be denied that "trick" has become a convenient term to be used among insiders; besides it would be pretentious to think that we can change history, as practically all of the technical literature and people practicing magic refer to what they do as "tricks". We will therefore retain the term "trick" in our courses, with the understanding that it is a technical term to be used among ourselves.

The dissatisfaction with "trick" has often led to the use of other terms, chief among them is "effect". However, the "effect" is also something else and this creates confusion. The "effect" as a technical term is *how the audience experiences a trick*. We might therefore say that the effect of "The Mystery of the Triangle" is that the spectator has mysteriously located four cards of the same value. Or we say that the effect of the "Ambitious Card" is that a freely selected and signed card keeps rising to the top of the deck after it has been put in its center. Or in "Card to Wallet" the effect would be that a signed card vanishes from the deck and reappears inside the zipper compartment of the magician's wallet. We may say that *the effect is how a spectator would describe the trick we did for him in one or two sentences to someone else*.

Here are a few suggestions for terms you can use instead of "trick" when you talk to your audience:

Amazement	Exhibition	Mystery	Triumph of Mind Over
Amazing Thing	Experience	Performance	Matter
Brainteaser	Experiment	Phenomenon	Triumph of Skill Over the
Challenge	Experimentation	Piece	Impossible
Conundrum	Exploit	Problem	Unexplainable
Curious Bit	Feat	Puzzle	Occurrence
Deep Secret	Illogical Happening	Quest into the Unknown	Unexplored Act
Demonstration	Impossibility	Riddle	Unusual Accomplishment
Display of Skill	Magic	Scientific Finding	Wonder
Effect	Marvel	Strange Incident	
Enigma	Miracle	Test	

## Audience Management in Close-up Magic

The fascinating thing about close-up magic for you, but above all for your audience, is that it takes place in front of their eyes and under their very noses. This has manifold implications in method and presentation.

The great appeal for your audience is the proximity and the immediacy which makes the experience so personal. This allows them to believe that their presence and their decisions are a variable in your tricks, and that being so close they would have to see how it is done. Of course, that's just the way it should look, because although you will allow them to shuffle cards, name numbers or deal cards in any way they want, their actions and decisions will not change the outcome of your pieces. The reason is, that their decisions and actions are either flexible, so that there is enough leeway in what they do, or that they have no influence at all.

In spite of these tolerances, you will have to control the audience's attention at all times. Especially when you interact with them *you* are responsible for *their* actions. If they say or do something they shouldn't have said or done, that is entirely your responsibility - this is just a part of what we'll call "audience management". Remember: *The audience has to be managed at all times, not just their*



attention, but also their actions. If you fail to do so, they might later forget or misinterpret specific moments in the execution of the trick, or worse, they might start to talk among themselves, distracting other spectators from your performance and even interfering with specific actions. We will therefore endeavor to point out such potentially critical moments in the performance of a trick and also give you resources to avoid them.

## The Mystery of the Triangle

### Effect

A spectator chooses a card which happens to be a Three. Therefore another three cards are freely selected from the shuffled deck and arranged around the previously chosen card in a triangle formation, creating a *Triangle of Mystery*. When the other three cards are turned over, they are seen to be the other Threes!

It is essential to keep the effect as *the spectator is supposed to experience it* at all times in your mind. Understand that the performance of a magic trick is the creation of a false reality in the audience's mind. You are doing something, but they must believe you are doing something else. This split-reality – yours and that of the audience – is one of the great difficulties of any magic performance.

Here is the effect again as a photogram to help you visualize the procedure and effect.



A first spectator shuffles the cards...



...and four of them are taken out to form an arrow.



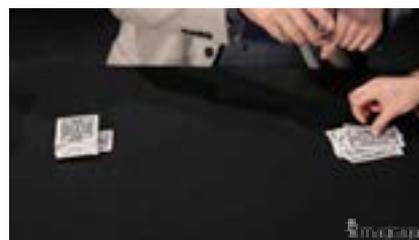
The spectator designated by the arrow takes any card,...



...which is momentarily placed aside under the card case.



A second spectator deals cards from any part of the deck...



...face down in a packet on the table, and stops anytime.



The card previously selected turns out to be a Three.



Therefore the cards of the second spectator are dealt in...



...three packets. The top of each packet is another Three!



## The Mystery Starts

Have someone shuffle the deck and then hand it to another spectator to be cut and complete the cut.

Having a spectator shuffle the deck and another cutting it, is a very simple but effective way of involving the audience and securing their attention from the outset. Everybody will wonder, “What’s going to happen now?” You can introduce some type of humorous remark, if this is your style, as the spectator is shuffling, such as, “Oh, I can see you shuffle like a professional gambler from Las Vegas.” This is particularly amusing, if the spectator does an obviously clumsy shuffle, something which will happen quite often.

However, whatever you say, take care of *never* making fun of a member of the audience – he’s helping you after all - but treat each one as if he or she was a part of your family. If you create a humorous situation, laugh *with your spectator*, *never at a spectator*. Be especially patient and courteous with older people. This is your best protection against spectators sabotaging your performance and making them forgive you in case something goes wrong. The legendary Nate Leipzig (1873-1939) used to say, “The audience likes to feel that they have been fooled by a gentleman.” Although he said this in the past millennium, it still holds true today.

Take the shuffled and cut deck back, spread it between your hands and, *without letting the audience see their faces*, upjog the four Threes.



Close the spread in your hands.

Strip out the upjogged Threes.



Place them face down on the table in the configuration of an arrow.

Explain, “I will place a few cards here on the table. They will show who is going to be the protagonist of this experiment.” Deal the cards so that the arrow clearly points at one person at the table. Look at the individual. This invariably produces a laugh.

Notice how placing the cards in the configuration of an arrow gives a meaning to the cards and doesn’t make them think about why you removed just four cards.

The laugh will help to make the audience forget that you took specific cards from the deck, and at the end many will misremember that this card was one *freely chosen* by them *from the complete pack*. A little later we will make sure they really believe this.



## The Selection

Ask your “protagonist” to point to one of the four cards. I suggest taking a woman for this task and a man later for the dealing. Make sure she just points to it and doesn’t take it; otherwise she might turn it over, which is undesirable at this stage of the trick. Place this card face down before her and place the card case on top of it so that nobody can tamper with it. Explain that the card she has chosen will determine what will be done in just a minute.



You have just performed what magicians call a “force” by “forcing” your spectator to take a Three, whereas she thought to have a free choice. A “force” is a technique that leads a spectator to choose a particular card without her noticing that you are manipulating her choice. The truly masterful methods require technical skill, sensitivity for the complex lines of communication between performer and spectator, and finally a good understanding of psychology. Such techniques are taught in my *Card College* books.

## The “Automatic” False Shuffle

Gather the other three cards and replace them on the deck, *taking care not to show their faces*.

You will now give the deck a false shuffle that retains the three Threes on top. To do this, hold the deck in overhand shuffle position, *but with the faces of the cards pointing to the left* – that’s the opposite of what you’ve learned in Lesson 4. Start an overhand shuffle, shuffling the cards off from the face.



Look at the faces of the cards yourself, as they keep changing in the course of the shuffle, and say, “Good – from this well shuffled deck, you have selected one, which is resting under the card case.” As you are approaching the end of the shuffle, change your look from the deck you are shuffling to the card case. The audience’s attention will follow your gaze. Look up and ask a spectator, “Do you know which one it is?” You are left with a packet in your right hand that should contain at least three cards – throw these *behind* the cards already shuffled off.



Smoothly turn the deck face down, where the left hand receives it in dealing position.





The *change of look* and the *question* will lead the audience's attention away from the deck, or at least split their attention. We will elaborate on these two great *principles of attention control*, also called *misdirection*, as we proceed with the course.

### Three!

If you've done everything correctly, the Threes will be back on top of the deck. Hand the deck to a spectator and ask him to deal cards one by one into a face-down pile. The first three cards of his deal will be Threes. Let him deal another card or two, and then explain that he can take cards from the *center* of the deck or even from the *bottom*, and emphasize that he can *shuffle* the cards at any time. After he has dealt about fifteen cards, tell him to stop whenever he wishes. He then puts the remaining cards aside, as they are no longer needed.

Point to the card the lady chose earlier and ask her to turn it over – it will be a Three. “Ah, a three, a magical and mysterious number. Its symbol is the triangle.” Since it is a Three, the fact of now dealing three piles makes perfect sense.

Pick up the dealt pile *yourself* and redeal its cards into three packets forming a triangle.



Distribute the cards one by one in a triangle configuration. Continue like that until you run out of cards. Since the three Threes are on the bottom of the packet you're holding, they will eventually become the top cards of the tabled piles, regardless of the number of cards you are holding.



Emphasize that if a Nine or a Five had been selected, you would have dealt nine or five piles, getting a completely different distribution. This statement is certainly correct, but it wasn't even an option...

### Remember...

Recapitulate what has been done so far by addressing the spectators who initially shuffled and cut the deck, “You have thoroughly shuffled and cut the deck...” Then turn to the lady who chose the card, “...and you have selected one card – it could have been any other card – which determined how many packets were dealt.” Point to the packets.



Notice how you are making two correct statements (“...you have shuffled and cut the deck...”) and one that is a generalization (...and you have selected one card...), which is also correct in a wider sense, but which doesn’t specify *how* the card was selected. Since the audience will accept the first two, and since the third makes sense and matches the final situation displayed now (three dealt packets), it will be accepted. However, by accepting it, they will adjust part of the information in their memory to fit this newly created belief. You have practically erased an image of their past and replaced it with a new one which never existed. This is just one of the many psychological strategies that will make your tricks more deceptive and thus more astonishing.

Turning to the spectator who dealt the packets continue, “And remember that you have dealt as many cards you liked...and from where you liked...and that you have stopped wherever it pleased you.” He will have to agree to all of this.

### The Denouement

Pause for a beat, and then lead over to the climax by saying, “The Mystery of the Triangle...” Turn over the top card of the first pile, revealing a Three.



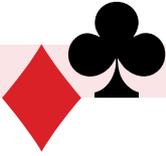
Pause for two or three seconds, not more. Then, using *both hands*, turn over the top card of the other two piles *at the same time*. An amazing coincidence!



There is a rhythm to the turning over of the three top cards of the piles. At first one might be tempted to turn each card over slowly and savour the reaction, maybe even applause, as each card is turned over. After many years of professional experience, however, I can tell you that the way I described it is the way to go: “bam...bam, bam!” *Now* they will react, and it will be a stronger reaction than the smaller ones taken together.

### Lest I forget...

1. Initially you might feel uncomfortable with letting the spectator deal the cards in the first part of the trick, therefore you might do it yourself. Simply deal the first three cards - the Threes - from the top, and then deal from different parts of the deck. You may even have a spectator tell you from where to deal and whether you should reshuffle the cards or not. Ask the spectator to stop the deal at any point. From here proceed as explained above.



2. Once you have gained a bit of experience with the performance of this trick, you might want the spectator to perform all the dealing actions. This is not difficult at all, but you must carefully manage the spectator's action from the very beginning. As we know he has almost total freedom in dealing the cards, but *four things* should be taken care of. First, that he deals the cards *face down* and not face up, otherwise the Threes will be seen and no deception will occur at the end. Second, that he deals the first three cards *from the top* and not from another part of the deck. Third, that he deals them *one on top of the other* in a packet. Once this is done, he can shuffle the cards to his heart's content and deal them from anywhere he likes. Fourth, that he deals the cards into three packets *in a regular fashion*, so that the Threes on the bottom will end up on top of each packet. Until you don't have the confidence, it is preferable to do the dealing yourself.
3. In magic, psychology is as important as sleight-of-hand, and you will learn more about its many principles, strategies and techniques as we proceed with this course. Meanwhile go through the trick once more and try to identify where and how psychology is used. Remember the principle and put it in your toolbox.

### Credits

The forcing principle involved in the dealing procedure – used in the present trick to force the three Threes – is probably a very old one. It was first brought to my attention in a trick published by Al Leech titled “Spectator Does a Trick” in his book *Cardmanship*, (Ireland Magic Co., USA 1959). This, however, is predated by Bill Simon's “The Mathematician” in *Slightly Sensational* (p. 8, Louis Tannen, USA 1954). As Max Maven, a master magician and scholar, tells me, the subtlety of having cards dealt from various parts of the deck once the force cards are on the table, is from Ray Goulet. The idea of having the cards still in hand reshuffled various times, which makes for a nice and memorable “running gag”, is an extension of Goulet's concept and is mine.



### Golden Rule Number Five

#### Less is More

*Don't try to do too many tricks.*

It is better to do a few tricks very well and in an entertaining manner, rather than going on too long and having people think, “Whew, good, but I'm glad it's over...”

For centuries entertainers have abided by the rule: *leave them wanting more.*



# Ordinary Cuts

*«In order to cut ham you need attitude,  
concentration and technique - as well as a sharp knife...»*  
Anonymous Spanish jamonero (ham cutter)





## Contents

### Introduction

#### Learning Goals

Four Ways of Cutting the Deck

Cutting a Deck in the Hands

Cutting a Deck in the Hands: The Swing Cut

Cutting a Deck From the Hands to the Table

Cutting a Deck on the Table

Cutting a Deck From the Table to the Hands

Practicing Your Cuts – The Cut Kata

Golden Rule Number Six





## Introduction

After being shuffled a deck gets cut, usually by another person than the one who shuffled. Although this is true with any card game, when performing magic it is acceptable and common practice that the performer shuffles *and* cuts the deck. So it is imperative that we look at how this can be achieved effectively and elegantly.

In more advanced courses we will see how the performer can shuffle and cut the deck and still control small or larger sets of cards, even the deck's complete order. As a matter of fact, in the last lesson of this course you'll learn how to do this without having to resort to any sleight-of-hand whatsoever, but simply using the tools and skills you have acquired in this course.

## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...various ways of cutting a deck.
- ...considerations about elegant card handling.
- ...how to apply the concept of “economy of movement” to even the apparently simplest actions.
- ...your first “practice kata”, a very practical and polyvalent way of practicing procedures and sleight-of-hand.

## Four Ways of Cutting the Deck

Let's start by looking at how a deck can be given a basic *single cut* (as opposed to multiple cuts). There are four ways of doing this:

1. The deck is cut in the hands and stays in the hands all the time.
2. The deck is held in the hands to begin with and is cut from the hand to the table, where it is completed.
3. The deck rests on the table and is cut and completed, while staying on the table all of the time.
4. The deck starts out on the table and is cut from the table to the hand, being completed and ending up in the performer's hands.



## Cutting a Deck in the Hands

Hold the deck face down in left-hand dealing position; then bring the right hand over the deck, grasp about the upper half in end grip, lift it and move to the right with it.

Replace the cut-off portion underneath the one that remained in the left hand. In order to do this smoothly and elegantly, the portion that stayed behind in the left hand is lightly gripped by the thumb and forefinger, as the middle, ring and little finger are gently stretched out

This leaves the space necessary at the right side for the cut-off portion to be inserted without hesitation in one flowing motion.

To finish square the deck at elevated dealing position, and then lower it back to standard dealing position. If you like you can give the deck an added all-around square-up when you are holding it at elevated dealing position, and only then lower it back to standard dealing position.





## Cutting a Deck in the Hands: The Swing Cut



This is the cut that you will be using most of the time. Used as an innocent in-the-hands cut it is fast, clear and elegant. However, at a more advanced stage, this handling of the cut will allow us to solve several operational problems, such as performing single and multiple false cuts, glimpsing cards and setting key cards, to mention just a few.

For the moment let's look at the basic swing cut, which looks quite pretty in itself, if ably executed.

Hold the deck in left-hand dealing position. Move the left index finger slightly away from the deck to make room for the right hand, which grasps the cards in open end grip, i.e. between middle finger and thumb, these two fingers being *very close to the outer and inner right corners* respectively. Extend the right index finger to contact the outer end of the deck with its outer phalanx, and lift approximately half of the deck, raising it simultaneously upward and to the left. Care should be taken that the outer right corner of the lifted-up portion does not become caught on the right middle finger.



Grip the outer left corner of the upper half in the fork of the left thumb, near the base of the index finger. Then move the left hand to the left with the upper half of the deck and assume an open dealing position.



Set the right hand's portion on top of the left hand's cards, or simply let the packet drop onto them. This completes the cutting sequence.

Square the deck using both hands.



### Check Points

1. By taking the deck in open end grip, the right middle finger shouldn't interfere with the leftward swing of the upper half of the deck. Nevertheless, in lifting the upper half at the outset, the outer right corner of the packet can get caught on the middle phalanx of the middle finger. To prevent this, the right middle finger is placed *as far as possible to the right at the deck's outer right corner*. Now concentrate on lifting the cards *diagonally upward and to the left*. Once you get the feel for this movement, the deck can be held in a normal or even closed end grip, and the swing cut can still be executed.
2. You may also bring the deck from standard dealing position to elevated dealing position just as the right hand approaches the deck for the cut. Then use the fingering exactly as described to give it a swing cut. Functionally nothing changes, but it looks a tad more artistic.
3. As mentioned in the introduction, the swing cut has many applications and can be handled in various ways – we'll see a few of these in the upcoming tricks in this course.



## Cutting a Deck From the Hands to the Table

Hold the deck face down in left-hand dealing position; then bring the right hand over the deck, grasp the upper half in end grip, lift it and place it on the table.

The right hand returns to the left hand, where it seizes the portion of the deck left back...

...and places it on top of the portion already on the table.

Depending on your style, this packet can be placed gently, dropped from a height of a few centimeters or slapped firmly with an audible 'plopp' on top of the tabled portion.

Eventually square up the cards. The deck has been given one complete cut.

If you want to emphasize the cut and make the fact that the deck was cut stay longer in the audience's memory, you can resort to the following visual aid:

When placing the portion on top of that already on the table do so by leaving them at an angle, as shown in the photograph.

You can now say a few things pertaining to the trick you are about to perform, and when you reach for the deck to pick it up again, clearly and slowly square the deck. This will remind the audience that the deck was cut, and by implication will also recall the fact that it was *shuffled before it was cut*, since both actions belong together in the audience's treasure trove of experience.





## Cutting a Deck on the Table

This is the most basic way of giving a deck that rests on the table a single cut:

The deck is face down on the table with the short ends towards you. With your right hand lift off about the top half in end grip and place it on the table, to the left of the lower portion.

The right hand returns, picks up the lower portion, also in end grip...

... and places it on the former top portion.

As already mentioned in the previous description, the packets can be placed softly or sharply on the table or on the other packet respectively, or they can be dropped from a little height. Each one of these handlings will give a different impression. Experiment with the various styles and experience the distinction.

Remember that by placing the packets at an angle, you can extend the cut in time.

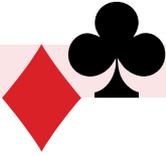
The cut can also be made by starting out with the deck in standard riffle shuffle position, so that you will cut by the sides rather than by the ends.



## Cutting a Deck From the Table to the Hands

The deck is resting face down on the table with the ends towards you. The right hand takes about the top half of the deck in end grip and places it into the left hand, which receives it in standard dealing position.





The right hand returns to the tabled portion, picks it up in end grip.



... and drops it on top of the one already in the left hand.

Eventually the deck is squared, either in standard dealing position, or by first lifting it to elevated dealing position, maybe even doing an all-around square-up here, and then lowering it again back to standard dealing position.



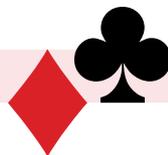
## Practicing Your Cuts – The Cut Kata



Now that you have learned five different ways of giving a deck a straight cut, let's put these moves together to form a very short practice kata. In Lesson 8 you'll learn more about practicing with katas, meanwhile take a deck and go through the following *five-phase practice ritual*:

1. Hold the deck face down in left hand dealing position. Give it a straight cut, as you've learned in "cutting a deck in the hands".
2. Cut the deck to the table, using "cutting a deck from the hands to the table".
3. Once the deck is squared on the table, give it another cut there, using "cutting a deck on the table".
4. Using "cutting a deck from the table to the hands" cut the deck from the table into your hands, where you square it.
5. Immediately give the deck a final swing cut, lift it to elevated dealing position, give it an all-around square-up and lower it again to standard dealing position, your initial position.

Start all over again. Do this three times in a row. This ends the "cut kata".



## Golden Rule Number Six

### Audience Management

*Treat your spectators as you would like to be treated by them.*

Every performer really gets the audience he or she deserves. It is a good idea to never underestimate your fellow human beings, but rather to treat them the way you would like them to be, and it is an almost certainty that they will behave that way.

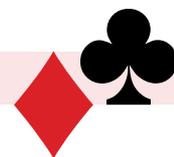
The legendary vaudeville magician Nate Leipzig used to say, “The audience enjoys being fooled by a gentleman.”



# A Small Card Miracle: «The Cards Know»

*«A little better is much better.»*





## Contents

### **Introduction**

#### **Learning Goals**

### **The Cards Know**

#### **Effect**

#### **Prologue**

#### **Making the Packets**

#### **Making Procedures Interesting**

#### **Aces on Packets**

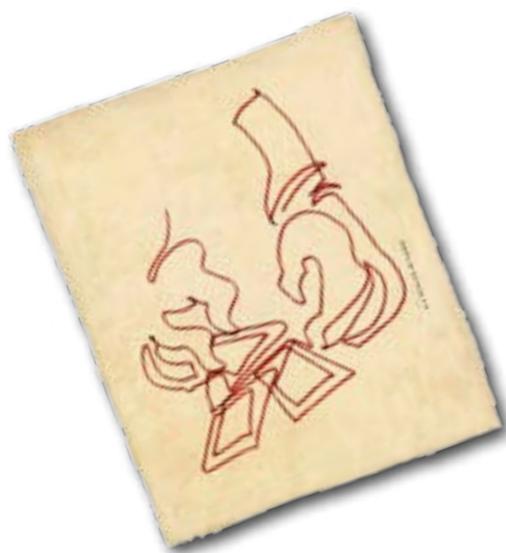
#### **Deus Ex Mathematica**

#### **Epilogue**

#### **Lest I Forget...**

#### **Extra Information**

#### **Golden Rule Number Seven**





## Introduction

In this lesson we will discuss a card trick which is based on an ancient mathematical principle. In “Lest I forget...” I will give you some background information on this. It is an ideal prelude to a trick or routine that will demonstrate the strange properties of a deck of cards.

## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...a simple, yet mystifying card trick.
- ...yet another example of how to give meaning to an otherwise lifeless mathematical curiosity by adding a plot.
- ...how to deliver a text and use pauses for maximum effect.
- ...how to perform procedural operations, such as dealing and counting cards, while making them interesting and appealing to the audience.
- ...the clever mathematical principle that makes this trick work, plus a little about its history.

## The Cards Know

### Effect

After someone has scrupulously shuffled the deck, the performer divides it into several small piles, four of which the helper freely selects by laying the four Aces onto them. It turns out that a number obtained from the cards in the four chosen piles corresponds exactly and without fail to the number of cards in the remaining piles.

To give you an idea and a feeling for the trick and the effect it can have on an audience, here is a photogram illustrating the proceedings:



A borrowed deck is thoroughly shuffled and cut.



The Aces from the deck are handed to the spectator...



...and the balance of the deck split in several packets.



The spectator is asked to take the Aces, and place one...



...on each packet, thus selecting four and eliminating the rest.



She does so...



...and the eliminated cards are put in the card case.



The top card of each packet is turned up and their values added.



The cards from the box are counted and match exactly!

## Prologue

*“We don't know for sure where playing cards come from; only that the first printed mention of them was made in Spain in 1371. We do know, though, that they have diverse uses and strange properties.”* Depending on your performing situation, your audience, your own interest and your knowledge, you may follow this opening with a (very!) short lecture on the fascinating characteristics of the pasteboards. End by explaining, *“Let me demonstrate one of the pasteboards' most unusual peculiarities in the following experiment.”*

It's a good idea to occasionally let some information about the complex and beautiful world of magic flow into your presentations, sort of open a window for your audience to your magic world. It is not necessary to make a talk out of it, but saying *just one or two sentences*, sometimes even just mentioning the name of a concept, might show the intelligent spectator that there is more behind what you do than just an amusing card trick.

In the case of the history of playing cards you can rely on the information given in Lesson 1. I do not recommend that you go into too much detail at the beginning of this particular trick, as the history of the cards is not the main plot, the subject being merely used to lead to the concept that cards have multiple properties. However, it could well be that an interested spectator comes back to this mention *after* your performance. Then it will do you a lot of good if you are able to competently answer his questions. As a general rule: Have enough background knowledge to be able to intelligently talk about the subject of your presentations. So don't say that whatever you did is based on the Principle of Heisenberg, if you don't even know who he was and what quantum mechanics is about...



Upon finishing this little prologue, which should arouse your audience's interest, take the four Aces from the deck and place them face up to one side on the table. Better still, make the Aces magically appear at the end of a preceding trick, and continue to use them for this one. Hand the remainder of the deck to someone and ask that she thoroughly shuffle the cards and conclude the mixing with one or several cuts, at her discretion.



As already mentioned in "Mystery of the Triangle", note how you are involving your audience by having the deck shuffled and cut. Furthermore much of the astonishment caused by this trick is due to the fact that the deck was *shuffled by the spectator* herself and could therefore not have been in any particular order. You are going to duly emphasize this a little further down in your presentation.

## Making the Packets

Take back the shuffled deck. You are going to form several packets of different sizes by transferring the cards one by one from the deck to a face-down pile on the table. In doing this, you follow a specific formula. Noting the card on the face of the deck, you will take off as many cards as necessary to arrive at eleven, starting your count with the value of the noted card. This is easily remembered as the Aces, now on the table, in the game of Blackjack count as eleven.



Let me guide you through the process with an example: As you take back the deck, hold it face up in semi-straddle dealing position. Assume that the card on the face of the deck is the Five of Hearts.

The left thumb pushes over the Five into your empty right hand, which takes the card also into semi-straddle dealing position.



This is exactly the technique "Spreading and Dealing Cards in the Other Hand", which you've learned in Lesson 3. As you take off this first card, *count silently to yourself*, "Five", because the card is a Five. Deal off the next card, taking it onto the Five and mentally count, "Six". Continue like this, taking one card face up onto the previous one, until you have counted to eleven. Deposit the counted packet *face down* on the table - in our example, this packet consists of exactly seven cards, the top card being the Five of Hearts.

Always count court cards as ten. Look at the next card on the balance of the face-up deck and repeat this silent counting procedure. Here is another example: If this card is a Nine, begin taking



cards from the face, starting your count with nine. Take the next two cards as you think, “Ten and eleven,” and deposit this three-card packet also face down on the table, forming a second pile with a Nine on top.

Go through the deck in this manner until you find you no longer hold enough cards to reach eleven. As an example: should you end up with a Four on the face of your last packet and see that you have less than eight cards – the number needed to reach eleven - you know this is the end. But even if you started counting eight cards and then run out of cards, that would still be OK. Simply say, “Oh, let’s put these aside.”

Please remember to *count the cards silently*; you do not want your audience to know what you are doing. Hand this final packet to a spectator and ask him to put it into the empty card case. Should it happen, as it occasionally does, that the final count ends on the last card you hold, place this packet face down with the others.

You will notice that this way of handling the cards, not only enables the count to be done quickly, it is also safe, as there is almost no possibility of a miscount, even with older cards that may be sticky. Notice in the photos the position of the little fingers at the inner ends of the packets. This allows you to hold the cards securely while inclining their faces toward yourself. That’s important, as you always want your card handling to look neat. After all, your cards are your instrument.

## Making Procedures Interesting

To avoid boredom during this counting procedure, prepare several things to say between counts. Most people don’t find it easy to speak and count at the same time, although a few readers will have this “multitasking” ability. Generally it’s a good idea to count a couple of packets, then look up and make a comment, continue counting one or two more packets, then look up and make an amusing or interesting remark, and continue in this fashion until you have counted through the deck.

Here are a few comments you might make: *“I’m going to take cards from your shuffled deck and place them here on the table... Notice that I’m not changing the order of the cards. I am simply reversing them while I keep the random sequence you created through your shuffling... Had anybody else shuffled, the cards would be in a completely different order... You realize that the different possibilities for the arrangement of these cards is fifty-two factorial... By the way, that’s a huge number - an eight with sixty-seven zeroes... As I’m doing this, would you please make sure there is nobody in the card case.”* Something along this line, or anything else that suits you while fitting your staging of the effect, will also maintain interest and psychologically shorten the counting time.

## Aces on Packets

You now have five to ten face-down piles of cards on the table and have probably a few last cards in the card case, which rests also on the table. Ask your helper to choose any four piles, marking them by setting an Ace onto each.





Collect any piles that have *no Ace* capping them, and place these with the cards already in the card case, *or have a spectator perform these actions*. This gathering can be in any order. Place the case in clear view on the table; or give it to someone to hold. Stress that no one can know the order, the identity or the exact number of these cards.

Everyone will have to agree this is true. Only the number of the cards will become important, but *emphasizing three things increases the seeming impossibility of the effect*. More important, it will raise the audience's curiosity about where all this is going.

### Deus Ex Mathematica

Point out that the piles have been arrived at by pure chance, just as the order of the cards has been determined by the shuffle of your helper. All this is obviously so. Nevertheless, within these apparently independent factors is hidden a mathematical relationship that will ultimately lead to a surprising and inexplicable finale. Explain, *“Due to the mathematical properties inherent in this deck, the values of the cards on top of the piles you have freely chosen bear a strange affinity to the cards you have decided to eliminate.”*

However you choose to state this idea, use a sentence structure and technical-sounding vocabulary that express some complex relationship within the cards. That is the ultimate effect we want to achieve.

Suiting action to word, remove the Aces from the piles, and then turn up the top card on each of those four piles. As you turn each card face up, openly add its value to the value of the next card turned over. For example, *“Five, plus this Nine is fourteen; plus a King, which counts as ten, is twenty-four; plus this Three makes twenty-seven.”*



Adding *as you turn up the cards*, rather than after all four are turned over, creates a rhythm while adding new information with each action, thus pushing the curve of interest upward. Remember, court cards are counted as ten.

Announce the final result and repeat it. *“Twenty-seven! Not twenty-six, not twenty-eight, but exactly twenty-seven!”* Look into the audience with great expectation. Everyone will wonder what you're getting at. After giving them three seconds to organize their thoughts, they will still be perplexed.

Rather than keeping up a constant flow of chatter to maintain the audience's attention, as it is often suggested in bad textbooks, it is much more important to *first choose a trick with a solid structure*, that is inherently interesting, *then have a capably delivered intelligent text*, and occasionally make a *dramatic pause*. These pauses allow the audience to sort their thoughts and to *fill in the blanks with*



*their imagination.* Occasional pauses are an important part of any fascinating presentation.

Immediately proceed to the revelation of the mystery: Pointing to the card case, which houses your helper's discards, you build to a crescendo and the climax by firing three questions at them: "*Could I have determined the order of these cards? Could I know the identity of these cards? Could I know the exact number of cards you were going to eliminate?*" The audience must truthfully answer "no" to each of these questions. "*I agree. There is no way I could have known; there is no way anyone could have known.*" Pause a beat; then add dramatically, "*But the cards know.*"

Don't neglect to say this, as it brings a new twist to the plot, it actually *is* the core of the plot, namely that *the pasteboards know* - for some mysterious reason we don't comprehend and therefore don't explain - what and why things happen to themselves.

Have someone extract the cards from the card case and hand them to you. *Make him look inside the case and confirm that he gave you all the cards.* Don't rush this. Strive for clarity in each action, but maintain a steady rhythm, perhaps even increasing the tempo slightly to make it obvious you are nearing the end of the effect.

Count the cards one by one as you *drop them from a short height* to the table. Don't count the cards from hand to hand, and don't deal them in a normal manner to the table - *drop* them, as this makes a small sound and looks more dramatic. Slow down as you reach the last few cards, look up at the audience as you briefly stop the deal, then look back down at the cards as you slowly finish the count: "*Twenty-five, twenty-six— twenty-seven. The cards knew; exactly twenty-seven!*" Leave the cards on the table, letting anyone who wishes to recount them do so.



I strongly suggest that *you count the cards yourself* and don't let a spectator perform this action, although you might at first be tempted to do so for more audience participation. The counting is actually the denouement of the trick and needs to be controlled for maximum impact. If you give the cards to a spectator, you won't be able to control his rhythm – an important factor – and you take the risk that he counts with a low voice, or even miscounts the cards. However, by leaving the cards on the table, after the climax of the trick has been reached and the audience has acknowledged the effect, they are free to count them again if they wish.

## Epilogue

As an epilogue you might add, "*I don't know why this happens each time - but I'm glad it does.*"

This brings the plot of the trick full circle, with a prologue that introduced the story, the story itself of the "cards who knew", and closing with an epilogue that ties loose ends together, here very briefly and in a humorous way. This is the formula for the successful *dramatic construction* of any magic piece. We will learn more about this in Lesson 12.

Despite its simplicity, this trick makes a surprising impression on people. The more intelligent your audience, the more this little mystery will bother them.



## Lest I Forget...

1. This may not be a trick you will perform all the time, but done at the right moment for the appropriate audience it will never fail to create a very pleasing reaction. It is vital with this type of trick, when it is not a piece you use frequently, to create a mnemonic aid for the procedures. After many years of experience (and unnecessary mistakes) I've found there are really only two problems: You must remember how many cards to take off the face of the deck, and whether to use the top or the bottom card of each pile for the addition. Here's a simple mental crib. As mentioned earlier, when you set aside the Aces, they will remind you of their value in Blackjack: eleven. *So you must count to eleven as you form the piles.* Again looking at the Aces, they will remind you that, since they are the *highest* cards, you must *turn over the top cards of the piles*, rather than the bottom cards. Because this is so silly and simple, like any good mnemonic, it will stay in your mind for the rest of your life.
2. Since this piece needs the four Aces, you can use it right after another introductory effect at the end of which the Aces are produced. In this particular case you could lead from one effect to the other by saying something like, *"Many of you might say that what you've just seen was the result of extraordinary skill, of pure sleight-of-hand. However, I can assure you it's pure mathematics. Honestly. Let me demonstrate what incredible mathematical affinities lie within a simple deck of cards."*

## Extra Information

I mentioned at the beginning that the mathematical principle, on which this trick is based, goes back a long time – it can already be found in writings of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. There they would use a deck with thirty-two or forty cards and it was shown as a mathematical curiosity.

To understand the mathematical basis, turn four cards from your fifty-two deck face up, let's say these are a Five, a Seven, a Nine and a Queen – we shall call these "indicator cards" [photo 8]. Behind each indicator card deal as many cards face down to bring its value to twelve. In the case of the Five, you would simply deal seven cards, saying, "This is a five. So we count six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve." Behind the Seven you would count, "eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve". Repeat this with the other two indicator cards, counting the Queen, or any picture card, as ten. Now add the values of the face up indicator cards, which in our case will result in thirty-one ( $5+7+9+10=31$ ). Count the yet undealt cards you still have in your hands, and you might be surprised to find that you are holding exactly thirty-one cards.

Those mathematically minded among you will immediately understand why this has to be so. First of all you will need a complete deck – if your deck is short, this won't work. But you can adapt it to work with a deck of 32, 36 or 40 cards. (Once you fully understand the work behind it, you can actually adapt it to any number.) For this example let's assume we have fifty-two cards.

Take the Five, which is the first card in our example. Count seven cards behind it, face down is fine since their faces won't matter, "six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve". You'll notice that the face up Five *plus* the seven cards counted will add up to thirteen – this is the number of cards in one suit, and four suits make a complete deck. Aha! If you repeat this with the other three face up cards, their value and the number of cards behind them will also add up to thirteen. Therefore the value of the face up card in front of each packet indicates the number of cards that would be needed to bring that packet to thirteen, including the face up card. And if you do this for four packets, four times thirteen will result in fifty-two, the full deck. The reason, though, you have to count to twelve rather than to thirteen, is that you must deduct the face up card. So in the case of a deck with fifty-two cards, you have to deduct four (because you use four "indicator" cards), giving you forty-eight, and divide this by four, resulting in twelve.



But if you do it as described, what is the effect? It is simply stated that four randomly chosen cards, which have undergone a specific procedure, added up indicate the number of cards that have not yet been dealt. Albeit unusual, this is not magic, it is simply a curiosity which smells the mathematics. In order to make it fascinating, i.e. appealing to the emotions, and interesting, i.e. appealing to the intellect, the obvious mathematical method should be camouflaged and a plot and an engaging presentation be added.

The smart thing about “The Cards Know” – and that’s Richard Vollmer’s idea - is that by using the four Aces the packets are selected in a most logical way without need to explain why.

## Credits

In the second volume of *The Vernon Chronicles*, an excellent book on the magic of master magician Dai Vernon, there is a curious item titled “Affinities”. My good friend Richard Vollmer, whose talent for this type of card magic is far above average, came up with the interesting variation you just read. In performing it for magicians and the public, I added a few subtleties, as well as a solid presentation.



## Golden Rule Number Seven

### Keep the Secret

*Never ever tell anyone how your tricks work.*

Maybe the question you will be asked most often is, “How did you do that?” As a beginner you might believe that by telling the secret of your little miracle you will gain the admiration of your interlocutor. However, quite the contrary will happen. By telling the secret you will reduce a fascinating piece of magic to the level of a puzzle, a mere curiosity. Your audience will say, “Oh, that’s how it’s done! I didn’t think it was so easy!” Of course they don’t know of the hours, days, maybe weeks and years of thought and practice you have put into a particular trick, they have no idea of its beautiful internal complexity, of its ingenious implications, of the wonderful ideas generations of magicians from different cultures have put into what you just did.

Revealing the secret is like opening a piano for somebody who ignores how a piano works, and showing him that little hammers are striking cords because you hit a key, and the person saying, “Oh, that’s how easy it is to play the piano.” They mistake “easy” with “simple”. Although the “secret” is the least important thing in magic, don’t tell them anyway, they wouldn’t understand.

Once you are a master, they will no longer ask, “How did you do that?”, but exclaim, “That was beautiful!”



# More Auxiliary Sleights & Review

*«The art of magic, like all other arts,  
is about creating a connection with an audience.»*





## Contents

### Introduction

#### Learning Goals

### Dribbling Cards

#### Dribbling the Cards from Hand to Hand

#### Variations

#### An Excellent Application

#### Review - Katas

#### Practicing Magic Using Katas

#### About the Structure of a Card Study

#### Golden Rule Number Eight





## Introduction

This lesson will introduce you to a few techniques that you will find helpful in many performing situations. They are polyvalent moves that will turn into powerful assets and allow you to solve various procedural problems. We will discuss how to handle their basic forms, so that later you can upgrade to more advanced techniques with the least effort and in the shortest time possible.

## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...the dribbling of cards, a very practical way to have cards selected, replaced, controlled, and just a neat way of showing you have no apparent control over the cards.
- ...a more complex card kata, that will allow you to review and practice what you have learned so far.
- ...some general remarks on practice and rehearsal that will help you install the necessary skills.

## Dribbling Cards

This technique has numerous uses. Among them are: as a flourish, as a method for having a card chosen and replaced, as a demonstration of the performer's lack of control over the cards, as a way to prepare for a palm and much more.

To start you out, let's look at a few basic handlings.

### Dribbling the Cards from Hand to Hand

Start out with the deck in left-hand straddle dealing position. With the right hand take it in end grip, lift it about four inches above the left palm, and then bring it back down.





During this up-and-down motion, let the cards fall singly or in very small packets from the bottom of the deck. Begin this “dribble” as you raise the cards, facilitating their release by a light but firm downward pressure of the right index finger on the deck. The cards should be released at an even speed, producing a soft riffling sound.



### Check Points:

1. Dribbling cards looks like an easy to do move, but it is not. It may take you a week or so of regular practice to get the feel of how to handle the cards properly so that they dribble off in a manner pleasing to look and to listen at.
2. At first the cards will drop off in small blocks and the cards be exhausted almost as soon as you start the dribble. Don't get discouraged. Strive for a *light touch*, rather than a strong grip, and let the cards escape from your fingers delicately. To achieve this, the right forefinger only lightly presses on top of the deck.

### Variations



Here are two variations of handling the dribbling of a deck of cards.

Dribbling the cards from the hand to the table:

Start out with the deck in dealing position. The right hand seizes it in end grip and dribbles the cards on the table. The best thing is to start the dribble fairly close to the tabletop, lift the hand as the dribble evolves, and then lower the hand once more when the last few cards are dribbled off. Square the deck as you would after a riffle shuffle.



Dribbling an already tabled deck on the table:

Yet another slight variation consists in the deck being set on the table to begin with. The right hand seizes it in end grip ...





... and dribbles the cards on the table. The cards are then either squared or left in an unsquared condition, as explained above. Leaving them unsquared is useful if you want to emphasize that you have no control over the cards, such as when a selected card has just been replaced into the deck, “Your card is completely lost in the deck.”



### Check Points:

1. After you’ve dribbled the cards on the table, you might want to *square them with just one hand*. To do this place your right hand “spider-fashion” over the deck, thumb at the inner end, index finger at the left side, little finger at the right side, middle and ring fingers at the outer end. Now simply press towards the center of the deck, slightly wiggling your fingers to obtain a well-squared deck.
2. You can also dribble the cards face up on the table, in order to show “a well shuffled deck”. Due to the irregular fashion in which the cards are released during the dribble, an otherwise easily recognizable order – such as red and black cards alternating – will be effectively hidden. You’ll find this simple handling very useful in more advanced applications.
3. A pretty and useful extension of the idea above is to move the hand doing the dribble from left to right, so as to obtain a sort of *card spread*, but again, due to the irregularity of the dribble, the cards won’t be exposed in sequence, so that an otherwise obvious arrangement can effectively be hidden.

### An Excellent Application

All these handlings of how to dribble cards either on the hand or on the table are very useful when it comes to having for instance a card selected. In such a case start dribbling the cards as you ask a spectator to call ‘stop’ whenever he pleases. When he does so, stop the dribbling and ask him if he would like the last card dribbled or the bottom card of the cards still held undribbled in your hand. You may then add, “Or any other card”. This way of first giving him two options, and then to extend the offer to the entire deck looks and feels very innocent and there will be no doubt in the audience’s mind that the selection was an entirely free one. At the moment this is indeed the case, but in more advanced applications we will see that this needn’t necessarily be the case...

### Review - Katas



First watch a demonstration on the clip, then follow along:

- Take the deck out of its case, place the case aside, and then square the deck in dealing position.
- Give the deck one overhand shuffle.
- Square deck at elevated dealing position
- Give the deck one cut in the hands.
- Cut the deck to the table and complete the cut.
- Square the deck on table.



- Dribble the cards from hand to table and immediately square the deck.
- Cut the deck from the table to the hands.
- Do an all-around-square-up.
- Give the deck one swing cut and square.
- Deal five cards face down on the table in a pile.
- Deal five cards face up on the table in a second pile.
- Deal one card face up and use it to scoop up the face up pile, flip this face down on the face down pile and then place the balance from hand on top – leave deck on table.
- Give the tabled deck two riffle shuffles and square up.
- Take the deck and put it back into the card case.

Start all over again. Do this three times with a one minute break between each set.

## Practicing Magic Using Katas

What I call „Katas“ is a procedure related to the practice of card magic, which has served me very well indeed in the past 20 years. You can use it for cards, but for other instruments as well, as you will recognize as we go along.

The story began with me sitting in a movie theater, practicing sleights with a deck of cards as most of us do. On taking the pack from its case I noticed I had brought with me a completely stacked deck. Since I didn't want to destroy the arrangement of the cards, because I knew I might be using it in a session after the film, I started to think about what sleights could be practiced that wouldn't disturb the cyclical order of the cards. I started with some obvious choices, such as the pass and the palm. Gradually it dawned on me how many sleights could be used or adapted so that they wouldn't change the order of the cards while they were being executed. And while the film music was playing I realized that this kind of practice, with a structure and a superposed aim was used there, too, and called „study“. It immediately hit me that other art forms that depend heavily on technique have similar approaches, such as martial arts, where *katas* are used elegantly to tie together several techniques in a fight against an invisible adversary. From here on, the rest seemed obvious.

## About the Structure of a Card Study

As you will notice yourself when trying to come up with studies of your own, there are endless possibilities to tie technical actions together. Let's look a little closer at some structures.

**THE SPONTANEOUS STUDY:** Sleights can be linked without consciously thinking about priority or order. In this sense, studies have been made since sleight-of-hand magic came into existence. Most of us regularly practice without concern to a particular pattern or linkage of sleights. Such intuitive studies, however, are focused only on the sleights that are currently absorbing us. Rarely are more than three to five sleights practiced together.

**THE PLANNED STUDY:** A planned study with an established structure allows you to link techniques according to defined criteria. For example, I have a study where I set myself the restriction of practicing only sleights that can be executed while apparently merely squaring the deck. This is particularly practical when you are in surroundings where someone who might be observing you, such as in a movie theater or in a concert. All your neighbor will see is that you are holding and “caressing” a deck



of cards all of the time. A short study of this type - I call it the No Move Kata - might be this (the text in parenthesis refers to the respective *Card College* volume and page for those who have the books):

1. Obtain a break somewhere in the center of the deck as your right thumb gently riffles up its inner end, and transfer it to the left little finger.
2. Lift the deck to fingertip position, still maintaining the break.
3. Lower the deck back into left-hand dealing position and, with the one-card middle pass (*Volume 1*, page 77), bring it to the bottom.
4. Use an all-around square-up to glimpse the bottom card (*Volume 2*, page 357).
5. Execute a buckle (*Volume 1*, page 212) to obtain a break above the bottom card.
6. With your left hand, bottom palm the face card (*Volume 3*, page 713).
7. Replace it on the bottom, using the Erdnase technique (*Volume 3*, page 729).
8. With a side steal, bring this card to the top (*Volume 3*, page 759).
9. With a top-card riffle glimpse, glimpse the card you already know! (*Volume 2*, page 355).
10. With your right hand, top palm this card (*Volume 2*, page 273).
11. Replace the card on top (*Volume 2*, page 285).
12. By means of the classic pass (*Volume 2*, page 297) or a variation of it, bring the card again to the approximate center of the deck, maintaining a break above it.
13. Start all over again.

Another example: Take any technical subject, such as the handling of multiple cards, and link various double lift and turnover techniques into a study. Not only is this an excellent way to practice them, but a study of this type serves as a mnemonic aid for remembering all the variations you have read and devised.

Or try to come up with twenty techniques that can be gracefully linked with each other and that maintain the cyclic order of the deck. I call this the Endless Loop Kata.

It might be very practical to have a Small Packet Kata with say just five cards. The easiest Small Packet Kata most cardicians have been using all their life is linking an Elmsley Count to a Jordan Count, thus repositioning the third card from the top again at the third position. Now try to bring in further techniques such as Hamman's Double Lift from a Small Packet (volume 3, page 577), but also false display techniques such as an Ascanio Spread and several of its interesting variations, the Flushtration Move, Showing four cards to be all the same and several more, which you will find after little research.

Starting from these suggestions, you will easily be able to come up with as many Card Technique Studies as you need.

It was only after I had used the above mentioned concepts for a few years that I realized this idea had in a similar and maybe more rudimentary form already seen print before I was born. Check page 25 of Hugard's and Braue's *Royal Road to Card Magic* – I have the seventh impression of the Faber and Faber edition.

There you can read what the authors call an "Overhand Shuffle Practice Routine", where they link a few simple overhand shuffle techniques that have been taught in the first chapter dealing with the Overhand Shuffle.

Several years ago the most knowledgeable David Roth came to Switzerland. Talking to him over dinner - with a nice bottle of Sassicaia 1985 - about this idea, he said he had not heard of this practice concept in magic before, and he found it an obvious idea to apply it to coin magic. Of course it can be applied to any object with which several sleights exist, such as knives, handkerchiefs, ropes and so on.



## Golden Rule Number Eight

### Vary Effects and Methods

*If you perform several tricks, make it a point to use various categories of effects, as well as different methods - avoid using the same procedures or principles repeatedly.*

Combine tricks that demonstrate a different phenomenon, such as productions, vanishes, transformations, predictions etc.

As for methods, do a trick that depends on sleight-of-hand, and when your audience starts to look out for some kind of manipulation, use a trick based on a mathematical or a psychological principle. Your spectators will then eliminate one by one their possible solutions and experience true wonderment.



# A Few Simple Flourishes

*«I have my principles, but if they don't fit, I have others.»*  
Groucho Marx





## Contents

**Introductory Considerations**

**Learning Goals**

**The Ribbon Spread**

**The Riffle**

**The Swivel Cut**

**The Charlier Cut**

**Turning Over the Top Card I**

**Turning Over the Top Card II**

**Turning Over the Top Card III**

**Golden Rule Number Nine**





## Introductory Considerations

Flourishes are essentially overt techniques in the service of showmanship. The “card tricks” of stage manipulators often consist largely of *flourishes*, such as one- and two-handed fans, springing and cascading the cards, tossing a ribbon of cards into the air and catching it again, throwing and catching individual cards like boomerangs. There are also *flourish effects*, such as the bare-handed production of single cards or even fans of cards, the diminishing and expanding of cards, etc.

The distinction between *flourishes* and *flourish effects* is critical for the close-up card worker. Flourish effects will not be taught in this course. By “flourish effects” I mean those manipulations producing a magical result and having choreographic or aesthetic pretensions, but insufficient theatrical substance. They generally have almost no dramatic plot, although they provoke astonishment in a magical sense. Their effectiveness is based primarily and often exclusively on their visual attributes, in contrast to the more usual card effects, which - no matter how short - are built around a more complex plot with dramatically structured interactions.

“Flourishes” proper, on the other hand, showcase the performer’s skill, whether at the table or on the stage. The goal is not to mystify by performing something inexplicable, but to handle the cards in an unusual, yet aesthetically pleasing manner. Flourishes serve not only to underscore the performer’s skill, but also to create psychological and dramatic accents in the course of the routine.

Many competent performers have expressed their opinions on the use of flourishes, resulting in three basic schools of thought on the subject.

- At one extreme are those who maintain that the performer should handle the cards clumsily, so that the subsequent trick appears as miraculous as possible. With no apparent skill involved, it can only have been accomplished by magic.
- At the other extreme are those who believe this is nonsense and that the performer should appear as skillful as possible, dazzling the spectators with displays of manipulative bravura.
- Between these two extremes lies a third school, which follows the philosophy of naturalness championed by Dai Vernon, universally and respectfully known as the “Professor”. This school teaches that the cards should be handled so as not to arouse suspicion. Above all, they should be handled neatly and nonchalantly, with the ease and casualness that defines the true master. Doesn’t one expect a violin virtuoso to hold the violin securely and guide the bow precisely, with complete ease and confidence?

A discretely introduced flourish, such as the dribbling of the cards after the return of a selection to the deck, helps to underscore the fairness of the procedure. Using Charlier’s one-handed cut, taught below, in a humorous fashion - performing it just as you ask the spectator to cut the cards, then saying, “*Thank you, that’s enough,*” - adds situation comedy to the performance. An unusual way of turning a face-down card face up to reveal the chosen card can strengthen the effect. Using an elegantly made fan to display the cards as all different imbues the handling with an aesthetic quality.

This chapter gathers together a number of relatively easy flourishes. They give the impression of above-average dexterity and - properly applied - can make an effect considerably more memorable and impressive for an audience. Introduce them into your performances with care and intelligence, and they will contribute disproportionately to your success.



## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...what a flourish is and how to use it for best effect.
- ...several pretty flourishes that are easy to do and that you can use in many different tricks.
- ...a few elegant handlings for doing apparently normal actions, such as displaying the cards or turning a card over to show its face.

### The Ribbon Spread



This technique is a flourish but also a utility move that serves many purposes, such as having cards selected and replaced, showing that all cards are different and mixed, and a large etcetera. You will be astonished at the incredibly strong impact this gesture with the cards has on laymen. Somehow the technique appears much more difficult than it is. Knowing it has such an impact, *use it sparingly*, acknowledging that you are accomplishing something extraordinary.

Hold the deck in left-hand dealing position; then take it into right-hand end grip and place it on the table without releasing the right fingers' grasp. Move the index finger to the left side of the deck.



Sweep the right hand from left to right, using the fingertips to guide the deck with a light but definite pressure, so that the cards escape singly and each card is exposed. The thumb and middle finger act as guideposts. The index finger is *progressively extended* during the spread, so that the cards slide under the pad of this finger and end up in a controlled arrangement as a *ribbon spread* on the table.



Here is a variation: Again hold the deck in left-hand dealing position. Then take the deck into the right hand from above by the *sides*, as shown in the photograph, and place it on the table.





Spread the deck in a ribbon from upper right to lower left. This creates an asymmetrical picture, which is aesthetically pleasing.



### Check Points

1. This technique is best performed on a close-up mat or covered surface that doesn't slip. On a smooth surface, like a bare tabletop, it may be necessary for the left thumb and middle finger to hold the lowest cards in position as the right hand spreads the deck. If this is not done, the bottom card will not cling to the slick surface. In such cases it may also be necessary to apply heavier pressure with the right hand.
2. The ribbon spread first described should form a gentle curve. This is more attractive than a straight line from left to right.
3. The ribbon spread can be used to effectively hide a small arrangement of cards. Assume you have the four Aces under a cover card on the face of the deck. Simply ribbon spread the cards face up, but don't spread the last few cards – the Aces will remain hidden under the visible face card.
4. In principle, the ribbon spread technique can be used to make almost any figure, which can then even serve as the starting point of a trick. Experiment for yourself with a variety of shapes, such as a wave, a zigzag line, a circle, and eight or a square.

### The Riffle



This little flourish, like all flourishes, should be used *sparingly and deliberately*. I emphasize this here because the riffle can become a nervous tic, subconsciously repeated without realizing that it annoys the spectators. In such circumstances it communicates an impression of clumsiness. Yet, if introduced judiciously, it can underscore dramatic moments, providing an artistic highlight.

From standard dealing position: Hold the deck in left-hand dealing position with the left thumb stretched across the top near center. Now grasp the deck in right-hand end grip, pull upward with the right middle finger to bow the outer end of the deck up, and allow the cards to riffle off the pad of the finger. The resulting sound can be pronounced or soft, depending on how acutely the cards are bent.





From elevated dealing position: The same effect can be achieved with a somewhat softer riffle sound by holding the deck in elevated dealing position. In fact, it looks more elegant in this position.



### Check Points:

1. If a card is on the table and you riffle the deck about four inches behind the end of the card, the resulting gust of air will move the card. This action can be used to dramatize a moment when a magical event is perceived to happen.
2. You can also employ the riffle prior to the revelation of a transformation or use it to indicate that a card has invisibly left the deck and magically entered the card case on the table. Or you can hold the deck up to your ear and riffle it, claiming that the cards are telling you something. In any case, this adds a dynamic and audible element to your presentation, making it more interesting.

### The Swivel Cut



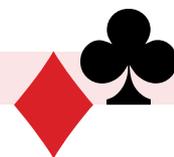
The swivel cut is the creation of the American vaudeville legend, Nate Leipzig<sup>1)</sup>. It is a two-handed flourish that has many possible applications to trick techniques.

Hold the deck in left-hand dealing position. Then take the deck into right-hand end grip. Immediately place the tip of the left index finger against the inner end of the deck.



Lift the upper half of the deck slightly with the left index finger and begin to pivot this packet to the left and forward in a clockwise arc. If the right thumb had been holding a break, the cards above the break could be pivoted by the index finger.





Continue the clockwise pivoting of the upper half, using the right middle finger as an axis, until the cards have swiveled a hundred and eighty degrees; that is, end for end. As a consequence of this action, the left hand naturally turns palm up as it carries the packet outward.

Once the hands and cards have reached the position shown in the photograph, let the rotated packet fall into left-hand dealing position. Toss the right hand's cards onto the left hand's packet and square the deck.



## The Charlier Cut



Although this cut can be used as a one-handed pass - that is, a secret cut not intended to be seen by the spectators - it is described here as a visible flourish. It is the invention of the nineteenth century enigma, Charlier<sup>2)</sup>.

Begin with the deck in left-hand dealing position, then adjust the fingers to semi-straddle dealing position. Next curl the index finger underneath and press upward, bringing the deck into the position shown, which could be called an "elevated semi-straddle dealing position".



Release the lower half of the deck from the thumb. Guided by the index finger, this packet falls onto the palm. Now move the pad of the index finger onto the face of the bottom card, near the outer right index corner. Also note the position of the little finger at the inner end, which keeps the cards aligned and prevents them from falling.



With the index finger, press the lower packet up against the thumb. This causes the right side of this packet to slide along the face of the upper half until the packets separate. At that moment the unsupported upper half falls onto the curled outer phalanx of the left index finger.





With your thumb, push the former bottom half over to the right and down as you move the index finger to the outer end and the little finger to the right side.



You should now be holding a squared deck again in standard left-hand dealing position as in the beginning, bringing the action full circle.



### Check Points

1. Part of the elegance of this handling of the Charlier cut is that you start with the deck in standard dealing position, push it up to elevated dealing position, execute the cut, and then lower the deck again to standard dealing position.
2. Note the exact position of each finger. The little finger in particular serves to keep the cards from sliding out of the hand during the flourish.
3. The Charlier cut can be executed fast or very slowly, obtaining two different effects.

### Turning Over the Top Card I



This method is well suited for turning over a previously selected card at the climax of a trick, or simply to show the spectators a card that will be used subsequently.

Hold the deck in left-hand dealing position and, with your left thumb, push the top card to the right. Place your right index finger on the face of the card and the right middle finger on its back, near the inner right corner.





Push down with the middle finger and up with the index finger, while releasing the left thumb's pressure. Doing this turns the card face up almost automatically, and it can then be gripped for display between the right thumb and middle finger.



Should you wish to return the card face down onto the deck, simply continue the rotation of the card by turning the right hand palm down and softly depositing the card face down onto the deck.



## Turning Over the Top Card II



This flourish is of unknown origin and was shown to the famous American “cardician” Edward Marlo by a ship’s cook<sup>3)</sup>.

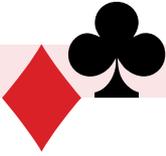
Hold the deck in left-hand dealing position and use the left thumb to push the top card to the right for about half its width. Bring the right hand under the card and place the back of the right thumb against the face of the card.



Thrust the right thumb upward and to the left. The card will pivot swiftly face up between the thumbs. As soon as this happens, place your right index finger on its back and grip it between the right thumb and index finger. Then place the card on the table.

This method can also be used to count cards.





## Turning Over the Top Card III



This one-handed technique for turning over the top card is a flourish devised by Dai Vernon. It is useful when, for example, you are already holding a card in the right hand and you want to turn both cards over simultaneously.

Hold the deck in left-hand dealing grip, and then change the position of the left index finger so that it presses against the deck's right side. At the same time, use the left thumb to push the top card to the right, so that it slides over the nail of the index finger. Immediately curl the outer phalanges of the middle, ring and little fingers onto the right edge of the extended card.



Release the thumb's grip and press down with the middle, ring and little fingers as you extend the index finger. This flips the card face up and it ends up gripped between the outer phalanges of the index and middle fingers. By adjusting the positions of these fingers, you can bring the card to a vertical position, so that it can be seen by spectators seated at a distance.



*If you are also holding a card in the right hand, you can turn it over simultaneously using the same technique.*

By repeating this procedure several times, you can count cards from the left hand into the right in a rather eccentric, but effective manner.

### Footnotes

- 1) See *Dai Vernon's Tribute to Nate Leipzig* by Lewis Ganson, Supreme Magic Co.: Bideford 1963, page 170.
- 2) See *More Magic* by Professor Hoffmann (Angelo Lewis), George Routledge And Sons, London 1890, page 9. Available as ebook from [www.lybrary.com](http://www.lybrary.com). Further information on the life and work of the mysterious Charlier may be found in: Dawes, Edwin A. *Charles Bertram - The Court Conjurer*, p. 24ff, Kaufman and Company, USA 1997, and in the new reprint of Sydney Clarke's *Annals of Conjuring*.
- 3) See *Off the Top* by Edward Marlo, Magic, Inc.: Chicago 1945, page 6.



## Golden Rule Number Nine

### Art of Conversation

*Whenever you are using a particular presentation, be able to intelligently converse about the subject after the performance.*

If you use facts and names in your presentations, have at least a basic knowledge about them. Also know something about the history of magic, some of its most important representatives and an anecdote or two about them, as well as why magic works. Can you for instance answer the question, why an intelligent adult can be deceived by a relatively simple magic trick?

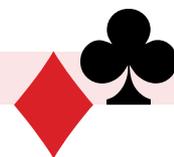
What you say before and after a performance will have an influence on how the spectators to whom you talk perceive you as a person and artist, as well as on how they perceive and remember your performance in particular and magic in general – be prepared.



# Audience Management & «The Open Prediction»

*«If you understand something, you don't have to remember it.»*





## Contents

### **Introduction**

#### **Learning Goals**

### **More Audience Management**

#### **Break the Ice**

#### **What Kind of Spectator?**

#### **Ladies or Gentlemen?**

#### **What Age?**

#### **They Make a Mistake**

#### **Conclusion**

#### **Hecklers**

### **The Open Prediction**

#### **Effect**

#### **The Effect in a Photogram**

#### **Prologue – The Prediction**

#### **Double Intelligence**

#### **Dealing to the Finale**

#### **Perfect Match!**

#### **Epilogue**

#### **Lest I forget...**

#### **Golden Rule Number Ten**





## Introduction

You have now learned the fundamentals of elegant card handling. This lesson will allow you to put that acquired skill into practice with a beautiful trick that is in the repertoire of many a professional magician. We will also discuss important points of audience management which will help to make each of your performances a success.

## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...how to deal with your audience and what criteria to apply when you pick a spectator to assist you.
- ...an excellent close-up card trick.
- ...what a glimpse and a force are and how to use them.
- ...a few fascinating facts about the rich and intriguing history of magic, the origin of tricks and some of its colourful characters.

## More Audience Management

In lesson 5 we have looked at how to handle members of your audience. Before proceeding to teach you the trick in this lesson, let me discuss a few more things related to audience management, specifically *how to choose an appropriate spectator* to assist you in a trick.

Although there is no guarantee when it comes to human interaction, there still are rules that have stood the test of time and that will make success very likely. Here are a few of them with my comments.

### Break the Ice

To start with you want to meet your audience and let them meet you. What you say and do at the beginning will create a first impression and establish who you are. The first minute is therefore important. Experience has shown that people will judge you by four criteria:

- Your facial expression and the way you look at them.
- The tone of your voice.
- Your general body language.
- What you actually say and do.

You might be surprised to learn that there are more important things than the content of what you say, at least *at the beginning*. The simplest and most straightforward way of managing your signals is not through acting, but through *an attitude of sincerity*. If you are in tune with yourself, love and respect what you do because you have understood and practiced it, and if you enjoy being with other people, all the necessary unconscious signals will take care of themselves. This is especially true in close-up as opposed to parlor or stage situations.



There is no doubt that after a minute or less *it will matter* what you say and what you do. This is the reason why you should *thoroughly understand* the trick you are about to perform, what the effect is that you want to create in their mind and how you want to achieve this. There is no way around it: practice and rehearse your trick over a period of time, at least a few days, and know what you are going to say, *before* you attempt to perform it.

You want to calibrate your audience before you ask individual members to do things. This will allow you to observe your audience and allow you to pick the ideal spectator, rather than leaving this to chance.

As a general rule, which you can break once you have understood it and have enough experience, do not open with a trick that needs an assisting spectator. It is fine to have a deck shuffled or a card selected, but avoid having him follow complex instructions, such as dealing cards in various packets or similar procedures.

### What Kind of Spectator?

What kind of spectator should you ask to assist you in the execution of a trick? Make sure to take a *friendly* person, one who has been following along well and who has shown by his or her reactions that he or she is interested in what you do and that he or she likes you. These people will usually have an open body language and smile at you.

Do not by any means take a skeptic spectator and think that you can convert him or her with a particularly good trick. You can do this when you have accumulated enough experience. Leave them alone and let your magic speak for itself. If you do what you do well and if the other spectators react favourably and applaud you, this person will be converted automatically.

### Ladies or Gentlemen?

Usually it won't matter whether you take a man or a woman, although men seem to have more of an affinity for playing cards than women (unless you perform for the Ladies' Bridge Club...). However, if your presentations are intelligently thought out and emotionally appealing – and we will take great care to teach you that – your magic will please either sex.

### What Age?

The thumb rule is: take a good-natured person between the age of 25 and 55 and who you think can follow simple instructions easily.

Avoid taking very young and very old members of the audience. Children may not understand all instructions you give them. They may be too shy or too cheeky, either thing being undesirable. Teenagers, who are still fighting with finding their identity and role in adult-society, are often self-conscious and will convey a sensation of inhibition. The same is true, for different reasons, of VIPs. Old people may be hard of hearing and be handicapped in their motoric skills. It should go by itself that you *do not* take an obviously handicapped person, nor a pregnant woman or a mentally retarded individual. Also stay away from excessively obese people or such with some kind of blemish, especially in their face. All of these people might not enjoy being pointed out or standing in front of an audience.



## They Make a Mistake

If in spite of all your precautions an assisting spectator makes a mistake, or doesn't understand a piece of instruction that is otherwise clear to the rest of the audience, *try to help them rather than chastising them in front of the others*. Immediately take the blame on you and apologize for not having made your instructions clear – even if it wasn't your fault. Tell them that it's no problem at all. Normally you can just repeat the actions and all will be fine.

## Hecklers

You might occasionally run into a spectator that will heckle you. Most of these people just need a little attention and you can deal with them by simply looking at them for three seconds, smile and nod your head. If necessary do this again and say, "That's OK." Every intelligent person will understand, and most of the others, too. It's another of the complex subjects that I have dealt with in my books. Meanwhile the above strategy should get you out of most situations, or other spectator will shut the heckler up for you, provided they like you and what you do.

If, however, the heckling continues, finish the trick and stop your performance. You are doing this for fun and not for money, so there is no obligation on your side to proceed. Don't attempt to get into an argument with the heckler as there is nothing to be gained by showing your superiority. Simply put the cards away, smile and get on with another subject. If the others insist that you continue, say that you might do so, but a bit later and tell them to consider this as a break, like in a theatre. It's wise not to perform again on this occasion, unless the heckler has left.

## Conclusion

Use common sense and the experience you have built up during your private and professional life along with a healthy portion of intuition. Everybody has this and so have you.

Maybe the best piece of advice I can give you, is to *neither take yourself nor your magic too seriously, but still keep in mind that you are doing something important and do it as well as you can*. If you show respect towards yourself and towards what you do, this will automatically translate in respect for your audience. If you are nice to people, they will be nice to you.

Let's now see how you can apply this knowledge of *managing your spectators* in the performance of the following card miracle.

## The Open Prediction

Conjuring has a long and fascinating history, with many colorful characters. Throughout this course you will meet a few of them, learn a bit about their lives and above all about their outstanding contributions to the art of magic.

The trick I'm about to teach you goes back to a problem Paul Curry (1917–1986), one of the great creators in close-up card magic, posed in 1949 that seemed impossible - it was also known under the name of the "Curry Unsolved Card Problem". To this day the top minds in magic are still coming up with solutions. Here we will look at an easy-to-do method that I created some years ago and which is published here for the first time.



## Effect

A spectator thoroughly shuffles and cuts a deck of cards. Before anything else is done, the performer writes the name of a card on a piece of paper, so that all may see it – this is an “open prediction”. A second spectator deals the cards face up on the table in a pile, but in the process leaves one single card face down. The predicted card doesn’t turn up. It is seen to be the only card that the spectator had left face down during the dealing process!

## The Effect in a Photogram



Two spectators shuffle and cut a borrowed deck. The performer



... makes an „open prediction“, the Four of Spades.



The spectator deals the cards from the deck face up on the...



...table, put leaves any unknown card face down.



The only card, which was left face down during the deal...



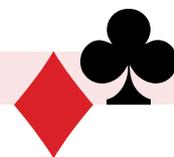
...turns out to be *exactly* the openly predicted card!

## Prologue – The Prediction

“Let me demonstrate a most unusual experiment using this deck of cards.” Hand the cards to a spectator for shuffling and cutting.

Remember that any good trick starts with a prologue that should arouse the audience’s interest. In this case it is merely a single sentence, and an example of a minimalistic prologue. Nonetheless it serves its purpose and will lead to the plot which you’ll expose in a few moments.

Take the deck from the spectator and briefly ribbon spread it from left to right face up on the table, saying, “This is a perfectly shuffled, complete deck and before we start doing anything whatsoever, I will make a prediction – that’s a statement about something that has not happened yet, but is going to happen in the future.”



As you begin forming the ribbon spread, you will be able to see the index of the deck's top card – in our example it is the Three of Diamonds. The technical term for this is “to glimpse a card”, i.e. you gain knowledge of the identity of a card without the audience being aware of this fact. You can learn more about this powerful principle in advanced books that teach some refined methods of how to secretly learn the identity of one or even several cards. Meanwhile you have just learned an excellent “self-working” way of doing this. As soon as you have seen this card, lift your gaze and look at the audience, *finishing the spread without looking at it*. This will create the impression that you haven't even looked at the cards and that you are merely making a comment.



*When you look, where you look and how long you look are important techniques of directing and leading the audience's attention. The famous Scottish amateur magician John Ramsay, who was one of the most inspired sleight-of-hand artists in the history of magic, used to say, “If you want them to look at something, look at it yourself; if you want them to look at you, look at them.” This simple sentence contains a lot of what is the essence of artistic magic. We will come back to it many times. Meanwhile, when you perform, become aware of where you look and why you do so – it will make you a better magician.*

Gather the cards and place the deck face down aside for the moment, as you take a piece of paper and openly write on it the name of the card you've just glimpsed, i.e. “Three of Diamonds”. If available, put the prediction under an inverted glass, in view of all.



My suggestion is to put the prediction in view under a glass, as glasses are easily available wherever you perform. The idea, however, is simply to try to stage the prediction in some interesting way, to give it focus and importance, and to make its display attractive and intriguing. Think about this, and you will come up with some idea of your own for doing this. Notice: the prediction doesn't need to be written on a piece of paper, and it doesn't need to be put underneath a glass...

## Double Intelligence

Set the face down deck in front of a spectator and explain to her, “Everything you are going to do now has been inexorably predetermined. Although you will think that everything is happening under your control, this prediction over here will ultimately prove that fate is guiding you.”



This is indeed an intriguing claim and should ensure everybody's undivided attention. Take care not to make this sound like a challenge to your audience through your tone of voice and attitude. Rather deliver the statement tongue-in-cheek with a twinkle in your eyes – you don't want to scare your audience, but provide an entertaining, yet unusual and intelligent experience.

I suggest you take a female spectator to assist you in this trick, as women have a tendency to go along better with this kind of "esoteric" subjects.

Make sure to take a spectator sitting furthest to your left, or have her sit next to you on your left – you'll see later why. Continue, "To ensure this, let's use both your emotional *and* intellectual intelligence." Ask her, "Are you right or left handed?" Let's assume she says right-handed. Tell her to take her left hand, which is closer to her heart, and to lift off a small packet of cards from the top of the deck.



Have her turn the packet face up....



.... and replace it squarely on top of the balance of the deck. Continue, "Now take your right hand, and with it also cut off a packet, but make it a bit larger than the first, since the right hand is the hand you use more." Like before ask her to turn the cut-off packet over and then to replace it on the balance of the deck. If she answers "left" to your question, have her do the cutting accordingly. Thank her and quickly remark that the deck has been shuffled and that she has cut wherever she liked – all actions have apparently been haphazard.



Although all of these actions are quite simple, you must take care that they are correctly executed without giving the impression you care. An easy and safe way of guiding your spectator through her actions, is to accompany your verbal instructions, "...cut off a small packet from the deck... turn it over... and replace it on the rest of the cards...", by pantomiming each of these three actions and performing them in the air together with the spectator.



You have just accomplished what is called the “cut-deeper force”, which is a simple force and always succeeds. If you were to ribbon spread the deck now, you would notice that about one third of the cards are face up and the following two-thirds face down. *The first face down card is the originally top card, the Three of Diamonds.* Let’s see how to use this now.



## Dealing to the Finale

Instruct her to take the deck and to start dealing the cards on a pile on the table.

Again, this is a simple set of instructions, but since it consists of *four* pieces of information, you want to make sure that she gets it right. The first thing you want is that she holds the cards correctly so that they don’t fall out of her hand and thus ruin your trick— many spectators can be very clumsy, and you can’t know this before. Use clear instructions in a *laymen terminology*.

Explain, “Please take the deck as if you were distributing cards in a card game.” Once she holds the cards correctly, give her the second, third and fourth piece of instruction, step by step, “Please deal the cards (2)...here on the table (3)...”, pointing to a spot on the table in front of her, “...in a packet (4).”

As soon as she has dealt the two or three cards, stop her and add, “As you are dealing the cards, please watch out for my predicted card, the Three of Diamonds, and stop the deal.” Point to the open prediction under the glass - visible to all – to remind her. To maintain the interest as she is dealing, you can make a comment, such as, “Of course we cannot know when the card will come, as you have shuffled and cut the deck yourself.” All of this is certainly true ... well, in some way.



She will deal until she runs out of face-up cards and reaches the face down portion of the deck . *Immediately stop her*, if necessary even by putting your hand on her dealing arm.



This is an important moment in the management of your spectator, as you must make sure that in her enthusiasm she doesn’t continue the deal, otherwise she will expose the force card and all is kaput.



Explain, “Good – that’s were you cut the deck yourself.” This is certainly true, in some way, but due to the principle involved in the cut-deeper force this is now the original top card, our Three of Diamonds. “Deal this card face down on the other cards, and then please continue the deal.” She will do so by dealing the Three of Diamonds *face down*...



... and the following cards again *face up*. After she has dealt a few more cards, remind her that she should stop when she arrives at the Three of Diamonds. She will deal until the end, as the sought after card won't turn up.



As she deals the last few cards, suspense will build up. All you need to do is not to spoil this moment which leads to the climax. What you do next needs to be done and said not too quickly and not too slowly, but just right. Your common sense and a few trials before real audiences - besides the following instructions - will help you.

### Perfect Match!

Take the deck very deliberately and ribbon spread it on the table, revealing all face-up cards and one single face-down card. As you do this, make it clear, that you are not performing any kind of sleight-of-hand, because that's what your audience expects you to do – they have no idea that everything happened before they even knew what was going to come.



Say, “You have shuffled this deck thoroughly yourself (1)...you have dealt the cards yourself (2)... and left one card, and one card only, face down (3).” The “...” in the sentence denote a pause of one second, not more, to let the audience recreate the associated images they have in their memory and acknowledge what you say. The first two things you said (1 & 2) are absolutely *true*, the third utterance is a *generalisation* that in its linguistic form is also absolutely correct, but in terms of content allows for multiple interpretation. Delivered in a steady rhythm and accompanied by the spreading of the deck, with its visible impact that matches what you are saying, the first two statements will elegantly lead to the third.

This is an interesting piece of linguistic manipulation – “sleight-of-tongue” if you will – that we will have a closer look at in advanced courses. Meanwhile you'll notice how magicians and politicians share some common techniques...



Without missing a beat point to your open prediction, “Remember that I made this prediction *before* you even touched the deck.”

Take the face-down card from the spread, holding it at its inner end. Slowly turn it over towards yourself and show it first to the spectator who dealt the cards, without showing it to the others, yet. This is the reason why you had your spectator sit to your left to begin with. Then turn it so that everybody can see the card. *Hold it still for three seconds in the same spot* before you throw it on the table. It is indeed the Three of Diamonds. This is the climax of the trick.



Pay particular attention to how the card is revealed. If you simply turned it towards the audience you would lose suspense as well as a double dramatic effect. The first effect is the spectator’s reaction when she sees the card. If you have picked the right person, she will react emotionally – *her face will become a mirror of the effect*. Then you show the card to everybody and get the effect and reaction of all. Notice how much better the moment of the climax can be dramatized and extended in time just by the way the card is turned over. *No detail is too small if you want to become an accomplished performer.*

## Epilogue

As an epilogue you might hand the prediction and the Three of Diamonds to the spectator who dealt the cards, and remark, “You did everything by yourself, and still it was predicted. Was it fate or just a coincidence of the other world...?”

## Lest I forget...

1. What you are getting here is an excellent cost-benefit ratio, as you have a great effect that is achieved by a practically automatic method. However, as my good friend Gordon Bruce, an inspired Scottish amateur magician and scholar, once remarked to me, “There might be self-working tricks, but there are no self-working presentations.” What this trick doesn’t need in digital dexterity, it needs in a captivating presentation, good pacing and capable audience control.
2. A word on pacing. Pacing refers to the rhythm used in the actions and the delivery of your text. Every trick that involves dealing needs to be carefully managed and presented, as *dealing is a potentially boring procedure*. In this particular trick we have three problems: first, the spectator is doing the dealing and is therefore even slower than if you did it, second, she has to deal through the whole deck, and third, she is looking for a specific card at the same time. Go back to the description above and check out my suggestions of when and where to say something as she is dealing. Use my suggestions, or come up with your own, but be at all time aware that you need to keep the deal going. At the same time, know when to be silent, as the dealing itself has an inherent dramatic quality. Thanks to the great plot of the trick, some spectators will already become alert when you ask her to deal the card she cut to face down – they sense a connection between this card and the open prediction initially made. When she continues the deal and you repeat to her that she should stop when she reaches the card, a few more from the audience will catch on, until almost everybody will be totally absorbed and wait for the inevitable and inexplicable climax. That’s the idea.



## Credits

### Paul Curry

Learn a little more about Paul Curry, the inventor of this card problem, here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Curry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Curry). Follow the links on that page and you will obtain some remarkable information.

### Cut-deeper Force

The cut-deeper force utilized in this trick was long credited to Henry Christ, an amateur magician, who invented many ingenious tricks. According to Stephen Minch (see his book *Ken Krenzel's Close-up Impact*, Hermetic Press, Seattle 1990, page 13), it was Ed Balducci (1906-1988) who created this particular handling, inspired by Henry Christ's 203rd force. Christ's idea was published in Annemann, Theodore, *Sh-h-h! It's a Secret*, p. 41, Balducci's development in *Hugard's Magic Monthly*. More recently, Karl Fulves discovered a close precursor to the cut-deeper force in Sam Mayer's "Another Do as I Do", in the July 1946 *Sphinx* (Vol. 45, No. 5, p. 143). Mayer used a sequence of four increasingly deep cut-and-turnover actions to force the top card. However, whether four cuts or two are used, the principle is the same. Therefore, Mayer predates Balducci by ten years.

### A Note on Historical Credits

As you can see in this example, every idea in magic has a creator, and an incredible amount of publishing is available that at least proves when a creation first saw print. Sometimes these published ideas are original creations, sometimes they are unintended reinventions by another clever magician, sometimes they are ideas deliberately stolen from others. To know one from the other is not always easy, and once a source has been established, it might be proven incorrect the next day by an earlier reference in an obscure and rare publication of the past. It remains a fact that every small and great idea has been thought up by somebody, and when we practice and perform our magic, we should be at all times aware that "we are standing on the shoulders of giants", as Sir Isaac Newton once wrote. This should keep us humble and respectful towards the rich heritage of magic. I can assure you, that this translates in a more artistic attitude that will show in each and every one of your performances...



## Golden Rule Number Ten

### Be Original... and Good

*Always strive for originality in your performance, but never let originality kill the magic effect.*

Sir Isaac Newton said, "If I have seen further, it is because I'm standing on the shoulders of giants." Be aware that you are building on a legacy that has been created over centuries by innumerable brilliant inventors and performers. Respect this and don't ignore the brilliance contained in what has been brought to you, but at the same time constantly strive for some degree of personal originality in method and presentation.

However, remember: Good is better than original. The more experience you acquire, and the more thought and practice you put into your magic, the better you will be able to balance these two ingredients.



# Creating a Program

*«Magic is an Art, because...*

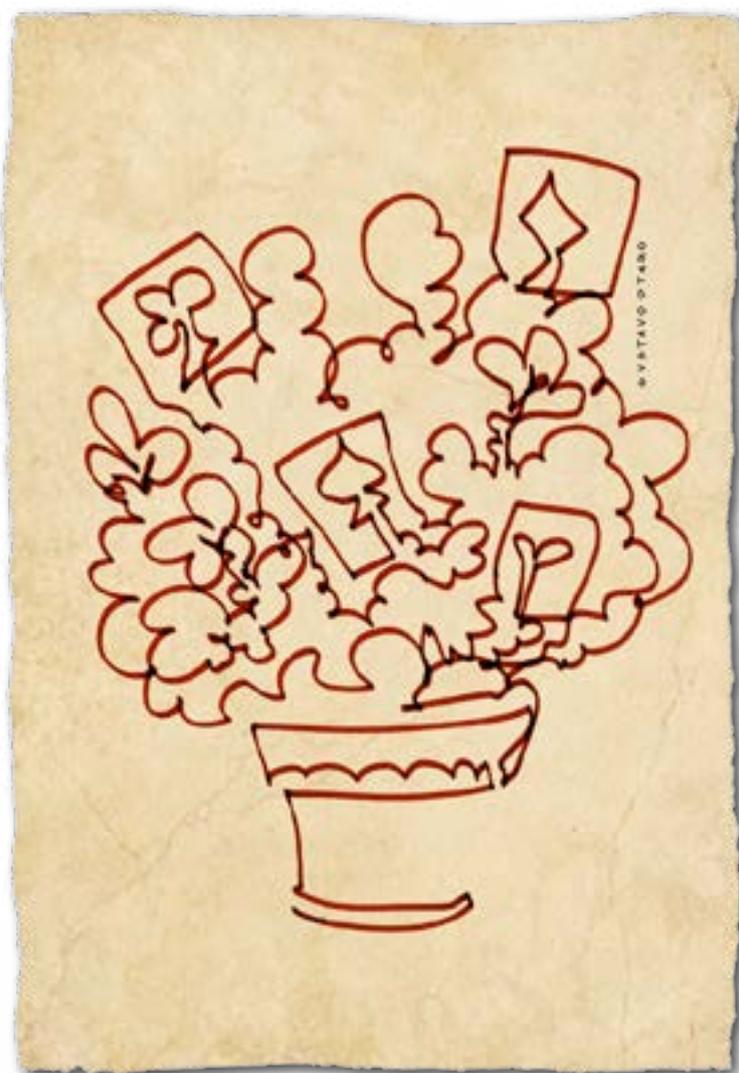
*...there is artifice.»*

*...there is communication.»*

*...something has been created that was not there before.»*

*...there is more than meets the eye.»*

*...it requires another person's imagination to exist.»*





## Contents

### **Introduction**

#### **Learning Goals**

Trick, Routine, Program

### **First Steps Towards a Program**

Magic is Meaning

What is a Good Trick?

What is the Effect?

Structure of a Trick

### **An Example of a Program**

Variety of Effect

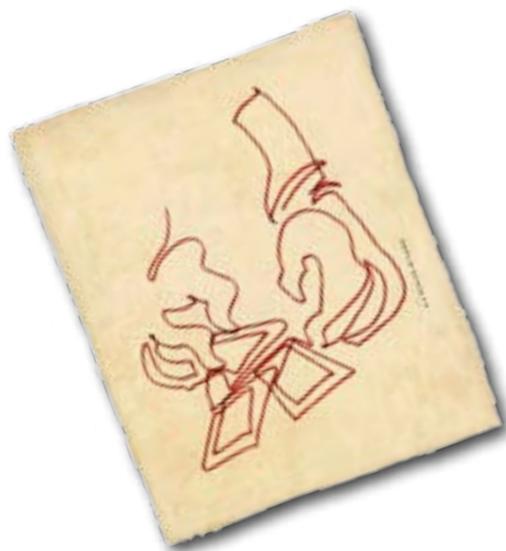
The Structure of a Program

To Have or Not to Have a Theme

The Importance of Having a Plot

### **Conclusion**

**Golden Rule Number Eleven**





## Introduction

Up to this point in our course we have looked at a few individual “tricks”. If a trick consists of different phases, or if a few thematically related tricks are put together, we call it a “routine”. And when you put several tricks and routines together you get a “program”.

### Learning Goals

In this Lesson you will learn...

- ...what the difference between a trick, a routine and a program is.
- ...what makes a good and a bad trick.
- ...what an effect is.
- ...the categories of basic effects, i.e. phenomena, on which all magic is based.
- ...what the structure of a good trick is.
- ...how to create a program from the tricks you have already learned.

### Trick, Routine, Program

Practically every performance contains several tricks. This is true whether it is a paid show or a casual one given for friends after dinner. No matter if a performance is formal or informal in nature, you will almost always do a routine consisting of several effects, or even a program made up of several routines. This is so even if you are not aware of it and you simply present a random series of tricks.

For a lay audience, the totality of your presentation constitutes a “program” in the broadest sense. The fact is, the individual tricks you present will make a better or worse impression depending on the order in which you present them.

But how do you put together an ideal program of card magic, even if you do not really intend to present a “program” as such? In short, how can you combine the tricks in this course so that you may achieve the greatest success with them? This lesson addresses the criteria for creating the most compact, yet strongest possible sequence of individual tricks.

Let us first consider some subjects related to the effect of the individual trick, and then look at how to arrange these tricks into a short program.

## First Steps Towards a Program

### Magic is Meaning

If you are just doing a trick to get to a surprising result that fools the audience, you are simply showing off how clever you are and that you know (a little) more than your audience. But that’s not magic. Nobody is interested to be made look foolish and to be told that he or she is not smart enough not to understand a simple card trick.

However, if you manage to stage a trick with a presentation that appeals to the audience’s *mind*



and heart, if what you do is “beautiful” in an artistic sense, then you will elevate what you are doing to a performance piece that has an artistic value.

In order to do this, you need to...

- ... select a good trick,
- ... understand its effect,
- ... give it a plot,
- ... give it a solid dramatic structure,
- ... and then arrange it together with other tricks to form a fascinating program.

Let's now look at these steps individually.

## What is a Good Trick?

There are two things that make a good trick, first, it needs to have a *straightforward effect*, and second, it needs an *inherent meaning*.

**STRAIGHTFORWARD EFFECT:** You know that you have a good trick if a layperson can describe its effect in a few words. Here are a few examples:

- “He predicted what card I selected!” (“Open Prediction” in this course)
- “He had four coins and passed them one by one through the table into a tumbler!”
- “He made my card disappear and reappear folded in a small box which was on the table all the time!”

These are just a few of the miracles you will learn to do when you progress in magic.

**INHERENT MEANING:** Besides what the spectator obviously sees and experiences, any good trick has a clear *subtext*, which is something not expressed in words, but a hidden meaning that relates to the great symbols of humanity. If you tear and then restore a card, a rope or a newspaper, it is about death and resurrection. If you deal yourself a winning hand in a Poker demonstration trick, it is about being able to beat the odds and seduce the Goddess of fortune. And if you find a lost card, it is about knowing the unknown, or finding the lost son, or simply having the ability to solve apparently unsolvable problems. Who wouldn't want to be able to do all these things which usually can only be imagined or dreamed of?

To be able to make the impossible possible, to be a superhuman on earth, in a theatrical-artistic sense, therein lies the inherent power of magic, its deep-rooted fascination, and the clearer this symbolism is, the more impactful, memorable and therefore better the trick is. The important thing is that when you have a good trick, you don't spoil it with unimportant additions, such as excessive flourishes or comedy that has nothing to do with the trick. This would be like a chef taking an excellent *foie gras* and then covering it up with ketchup and mustard.

## What is the Effect?

Once you have a good trick, the next question you should ask is, “What exactly is the effect?” The famous magician Dai Vernon (1894-1992), affectionately called “Professor”, used to say that the difference between an amateur and a professional was, that the latter knew what an effect was. Michelangelo used to say that in order to make his sculptures, he would look at the piece of marble, see the statue inside, and then simply chip away whatever was too much. Similarly, the inspired magician can look at a trick, recognize the built-in effect, and then perform it with sincerity and just enough presentation - not too little, and not too much - to make the effect shine.

In order to gain an understanding of this, you should know that there is only a limited amount of *basic effects*, also called *phenomena*, on which all magic tricks are based. This is very much like literature, drama or film, where there is a limited amount of conflicts/plots on which all is built.



In card magic the phenomena are:

- **Animation (Telekinesis):** An object moves without apparent cause.
- **Clairvoyance:** The performer divines something that nobody knows, such as the identity of a card that a spectator put in his pocket without looking at it or showing it to anybody.
- **Coincidence:** Two or more similar things inexplicably happen at the same time.
- **Location & Discovery:** One or several cards that are apparently hopelessly lost in the deck are found by the performer.
- **Penetration:** A solid object passes through another solid object, such as a card penetrating a handkerchief or the table.
- **Precognition:** The performer knows an event before it even happens and is able to predict it.
- **Production:** Something appears out of nothing, such as a card at the performer's fingertips, or an assistant out of a box previously shown empty.
- **Superpowers:** The performer demonstrates to have some kind of superhuman abilities, such as a prodigious memory, or an exceptional sense of touch, or the ability to deal the best hand in a game of Poker.
- **Telepathy:** The performer reads the mind of another person, thus for instance reveals the name of a card another person is merely thinking of.
- **Transformation:** One or more cards mysteriously change their identity or condition.
- **Transportation:** One or several cards invisible travel from one location to another.
- **Vanish:** Something disappears.

An understanding of what the phenomenon is, that you are performing, will lead to a better and more convincing performance. As an example, "The Mystery of the Triangle" which you learned in Lesson 5, is a coincidence. Sometimes a trick can have different effects, depending on how it is presented. As you practice and perform a trick, you should keep its effect at all times in mind, like the star that guides your path.

Next, we will see how the considerations discussed above are used in a program.

## Structure of a Trick

An individual trick consists of at least three parts, similar to a program: a beginning, middle and end. These parts are ideally introduced by a prologue and followed by an epilogue, so you have in fact five parts to a trick. Let's look at them briefly.

The *prologue* makes the spectators curious as to what is going to happen. Its main function is to introduce you and your instrument, maybe hint at the plot, and thereby get the audience's attention. Now they look forward to enjoying what is about to come.

In the *beginning*, the plot as well as the protagonists and antagonists are introduced, and a situation starts to develop. In theatre an example of a plot is: a young couple is in love, but their families are at war with each other (Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*). In card magic a classic plot is that a lost card must be found, in spite of the deck having been shuffled face up and face down (Dai Vernon's *Triumph*). The *plot* is basically the *story* of the trick and is a very important part.

In the *middle*, one or more conflicts arise. This involves the audience intellectually and emotionally, and the expectation is created of how the story is going to end.

In the *end*, these conflicts are resolved. In the case of magic this is done by using the performer's "magical power" (in a theatrical sense), which satisfy the audience's deep desire to do impossible and miraculous things.

The *epilogue* finally ties loose ends together and allows another view of what was just experienced. This might be done by resuming the impossibility of what was just experienced, or by giving a short



statement about the possible consequences of what they just saw, or be just an amusing and thought-provoking “last word”.

The *style*, in which these five parts can be interpreted, may range from tragic to comedic, with all possible variations and mixes in between.

This is an essential description of the dramatic structure of every story. Consequently, I start with the assumption that a program, no matter how short, should almost always consist of at least three tricks.

## An Example of a Program

The three tricks we are looking at in our course and are trying to arrange into a little program are:

- “Mystery of the Triangle” (Lesson 5)
- “The Cards Knew” (Lesson 7)
- “The Open Prediction” (lesson 10)

### Variety of Effect

When assembling a routine or a program, you should make sure that the individual tricks have different effects and demonstrate *varying phenomena*. Your audience will find it neither interesting nor convincing if you perform three tricks in which you show you can predict future events. One good demonstration is sufficient to convince them you can do what you claim. The exception to this is a routine in which the impossibility of a certain phenomenon is proven in increasing degrees with each repetition. Such routines are usually complex and technically demanding, and therefore will be the subject of advanced courses.

Besides varying the phenomena, you should sequence your tricks so that they escalate in effect. This raises the question of whether some phenomena are stronger than others. For example, is the appearance of a card stronger than the prediction of an event? Usually, mental phenomena, such as predicting the future, reading thoughts or divining information, are stronger and therefore better suited to close a performance. This holds true, though, only when you have an attentive and intelligent audience. You cannot always decide which tricks to use by resorting to a prefabricated matrix of possibilities. You need to be flexible and sensitive.

The larger your repertoire is, the easier it will be to choose the proper material for each audience. But until you reach that stage, it is better to master two or three tricks in each category, rather than learn nothing but tricks of one type. This will suffice, at least for a non-professional performer, to put you in control of any performing situation. Here are some concrete principles, strategies and techniques (all without sleight-of-hand) that will enable you to prepare tricks and to connect them in a graceful and an effective manner.

Let us check what kinds of phenomena are demonstrated in our little program:

- “Mystery of the Triangle” is a *coincidence effect*.
- “The Cards Knew” is some kind of “intelligent deck” effect: rather than the performer, the cards themselves seem to develop human or *superhuman features*.
- “The Open Prediction” finally is an effect of *precognition*, where you demonstrate that you know before what is going to happen later.

It looks as if we were good and really had three clearly distinct effects.



## The Structure of a Program

We have already looked at how a *trick* should be constructed from a dramatic and presentational point of view. Let us now look at the criteria that make up a *program*.

The *opening* of a program should showcase a trick that serves to arouse interest and to put the audience into the proper mood for subsequent tricks. Most of the time such tricks will have a visual and brief effect. Sometimes they will also serve a similar technical function, for instance of delaying a pre-arrangement of cards which is used only later in the program. We will see an example of this in Lesson 13, the Bonus Lesson, where I will describe another little program using three tricks. There I will briefly explain how you can eliminate any suspicion of there being the slightest preparation - all done without using sleight-of-hand.

The *middle* part of the program ideally contains tricks that can be performed at any time, without preparation. They could even be performed with a borrowed deck, and especially when you are asked, "Please, show us a card trick!"

The *finale* of the program should contain your strongest trick, worthy of concluding a card program. Their effects often venture into the realm of mental magic, and they can have an exceptionally strong effect on a lay audience.

As with a trick, a program should be framed by a text or short piece that functions as a prologue and an epilogue.

## To Have or Not to Have a Theme

When you go about the creation of a program, you can try to find an *over-all theme*, something that is common to all three or more tricks, even in the broader sense of the concept.

In the case of our program, an example of a theme could be that you talk about the fascinating characteristics that are inherent in a deck of cards, and then proceed to demonstrate this with each trick. You will recognize that this theme has a very open architecture and will allow for almost any card trick to be included, provided you use a thoughtful text.

Another example could be that you want to show your audience how you got into magic and then proceed to show the first three tricks your grandfather taught you.

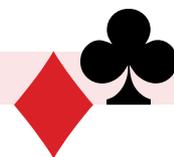
Yet another way of creating a hook for your tricks is to talk about scientific phenomena and illustrate them with the individual tricks.

However, I would like to mention that it is not imperative to have an over-all theme for a program. This especially holds true in an improvised performing situation as opposed to a formal show. But it will still be beneficial to think about how to begin, how to proceed and how to end your performance.

## The Importance of Having a Plot

Although it might not be indispensable to have a theme for the program, *it is of vital importance that each trick you do has a plot*. It is the plot that makes the individual actions coherent, justifying their inclusion and creating an emotional hook. As a rule, any action or piece of information that does not add to what is already there, should be eliminated since it is unnecessary and distracting.

In each trick offered in this course (and in all my books) I have taken great care of describing these aspects and commenting on them. I believe that it is not just through theory, but through practical trial and experience that you will ultimately understand what a plot is, and install the skill of thus giving each of your tricks an original interpretation.



## Conclusion

Decades of experience as a hobbyist, an amateur magician and eventually as an international professional performer have taught me this about the length of a program: *better too short than too long*.

Present a program of three (or more) tricks that lasts fifteen minutes at most. Only when you are sure that the *overwhelming majority* of your audience wants to see more, should you perform another program of three tricks.

In certain cases, it is advisable to present *only one more trick*, as an encore of sorts. It takes tact and sensitivity to know how to handle this - things that cannot be taught in a course, but must be learned from personal experience. You can look forward to the experiences you will have as a performer, even if they sometimes turn out to be painful. When you later remember them, you will find most of them quite funny.

I have assumed that you will assemble your program using the tricks described in this course. The advantage of this approach is that every example I've mentioned is immediately accessible to you in these pages. Of course, a live performance could contain material completely different from my examples. Not only could it consist of card tricks other than those taught here; it could include tricks performed with instruments other than playing cards. In fact, I encourage you to explore these possibilities. The principles discussed here, though, remain valid. I hope the ideas in this lesson make it easier for you to put together the best possible magic programs.

### Further Reading

If you are interested in a discussion providing more depth on this topic, I suggest you read the essays "Technique, Handling and Management" and "Construction" in my *Card College, Volume 2*.



### Golden Rule Number Eleven

#### Magic is not Paranormal

*Contribute more to the edification of people than to their ignorance.*

Don't claim paranormal powers, even though some of your "miracles" to some people might appear to be just that. Occasionally you will have gullible members of your audience who are desperate to use your performance pieces in order to confirm some exotic belief. Be thoughtful, but by all means don't encourage them, as nothing can be gained from this. Make it clear that you are a "theatrical illusionist" or a "magical artist", if you prefer, no more, no less.



# Techniques Without Sleights

*«The person  
who doesn't make mistakes is unlikely to make anything.»*  
Paul Arden





## Contents

### Introduction

#### Learning Goals

False Shuffles and Cuts

False Riffle Shuffle to Maintain Bottom Stock

False Riffle Shuffle to Maintain Top Stock

False Riffle Shuffle to Maintain Top & Bottom Stock

Two Subtleties for False Riffle Shuffle

False Cut I (After Riffle Shuffle)

Maintaining a Bottom Stock Using the Overhand Shuffle

Maintaining a Top Stock Using the Overhand Shuffle

False Overhand Shuffle Maintaining the Order of the Entire Deck

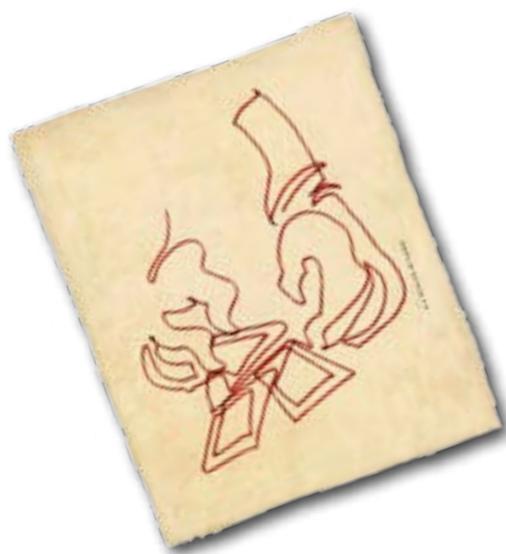
False Cut IIa (After Overhand Shuffle)

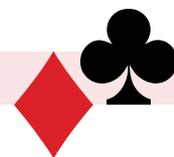
False Cut IIb (After Overhand Shuffle)

Glimpsing a Card on Top, Bottom or Any Other Position

Glimpse Subtlety

Golden Rule Number Twelve





## Introduction

The title of this lesson sounds like an oxymoron, so let me explain. A technique is a secret maneuver that accomplishes a specific goal and relies on sleight-of-hand. This could be shuffling a deck, and in the process not changing the order of even a single card, or apparently putting a card in the center of the deck, but in reality delivering it to the top or the bottom. A technique is therefore *a specific skill that needs to be acquired by precise understanding and constant practice*. Some techniques can be learned within minutes and hours, others can take several years to master. Techniques are not the main subject of this course and can be found in the technical literature recommended in Lesson 14.

This lesson, however, will teach you how to accomplish certain goals, such as false shuffling a deck, giving it a false cut, or glimpsing a card, *by using the moves you have already learned in this course and without having to resort to additional skills*. Still, you will have to thoroughly understand what you do and practice the procedures until every movement flows into the next without arousing suspicion.

## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...how to use an overhand shuffle to control a stock on top and on bottom of the deck.
- ...how to retain the order of the complete deck, while apparently overhand shuffling it.
- ...how to retain the top and bottom stock during a normal looking riffle shuffle.
- ...two ways of false cutting the deck, one after a riffle shuffle, the other after an overhand shuffle.
- ...how to glimpse cards on top and bottom of the deck.

## False Shuffles and Cuts

A false shuffle thrown in at the right moment, makes any trick more deceptive and therefore considerably increases its impact for your audience. Any false shuffle is intended to do one of three things:

- To maintain the order and position of the *top card or cards* of the deck.
- To maintain the order and position of the *bottom card or cards* of the deck.
- To maintain the order of *all the cards*.



### False Riffle Shuffle to Maintain Bottom Stock



To follow the shuffle, put the four Aces on the bottom of the deck.

Place the deck face down in front of you, in position for a tabled riffle shuffle. With your right hand, cut off about half the deck and set it to the right.



As you begin to riffle the halves into each other, allow at least the four cards you wish to control to riffle off your left thumb. Then riffle shuffle the rest of the cards in a normal manner. When you square the meshed cards together, the four Aces are still at the bottom.



### False Riffle Shuffle to Maintain Top Stock



In a similar way, you can maintain the position and order of the top cards. To follow the shuffle, put the four Aces on top of the deck.

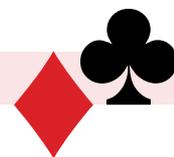
Place the deck face down in front of you, in position for a tabled riffle shuffle. With your right hand, cut off about half the deck and set it to the right. Start the shuffle in a normal manner, but as you approach the end of the riffle, the right thumb retains at least the top four cards and lets them fall last. When you square the meshed cards together, the four Aces are still on top.



### False Riffle Shuffle to Maintain Top & Bottom Stock



Naturally you can combine these two ideas to retain both the top *and* the bottom cards in place. To follow the shuffle, put two Aces on top and two Aces on the bottom of the deck.



Place the deck face down in front of you, in position for a tabled riffle shuffle. With your right hand, cut off about half the deck and set it to the right. As you begin to riffle the halves into each other, allow at least the two cards you wish to control to riffle off your left thumb. Then riffle shuffle the rest of the cards in a normal manner, but as you approach the end of the riffle, the right thumb retains at least the top two cards and lets them fall last. When you square the meshed cards together, two Aces will still be on top and two on bottom.



## Two Subtleties for False Riffle Shuffle



Here are two subtleties that you can apply to each one of the three false riffle shuffles described above.

1. Do *two consecutive riffle shuffles*, rather than just one, cutting the upper portion of the deck to the *right* for the *first shuffle*, and to the *left* for the *second shuffle*. This makes it difficult to keep track of the blocks of cards for spectators watching your shuffle.
2. An astute use of the gaze completes the deception: When you are ready to undercut the cards for the riffle shuffle, look up at your spectators, causing them to meet your gaze, if not completely, at least partially. As their eyes rise to look at you, make the cut. They will then be unable to be certain which half of the deck is the top one. Next, as you begin the riffle shuffle, look back at the deck. Repeat for the second shuffle.

## False Cut I (After Riffle Shuffle)



Since a shuffle commonly concludes with a cut, you can do this: After you have completed the shuffle, the deck still lies on the table in riffle shuffle position. With the right hand cut the top half toward yourself and set the packet down.

With the same hand, grasp the bottom half...

...and place it into dealing position in the left hand.





With your now empty right hand, take the remaining half of the deck on the table (the original top portion)...



....and drop it onto the half already in your hand (the original bottom portion).

If you do these actions casually and briskly while you *look at the audience and say something*, no one will perceive anything unusual.



## Maintaining a Bottom Stock Using the Overhand Shuffle



The overhand shuffle also offers simple procedures for maintaining the top and bottom cards.

To follow, again put the four Aces on bottom. Bring the deck into overhand shuffle position and begin a normal overhand shuffle.



When you near the stacked bottom portion, throw the unshuffled bottom cards – at least four cards - *behind* the ones you have already shuffled off. If the shuffle actions are done smoothly while maintaining an even rhythm, the last action won't be noticed. The Aces are again on the bottom.



To make it easier to throw the last cards under those already shuffled off, the middle and ring fingers of the left hand tip their cards slightly back and onto the base of the thumb. Your *gaze* can once more be helpful to obscure the deception. Focus on the deck at the beginning of the shuffling, then *look up* at the audience and say something just before you finish the shuffle.



## Maintaining a Top Stock Using the Overhand Shuffle

To follow put the Aces now on top of the deck. In principle you use the same sequence of actions just discussed to maintain the bottom stock, but you'll shuffle the deck with the cards turned *face outward*. To make this look natural, begin by holding the deck face down in dealing position. With your free hand, grasp the deck in position to begin an overhand shuffle. But as this hand moves to grasp the deck, curl the thumb of the supporting hand under the deck...

... and lift it to a perpendicular position, so that its face is turned to the left towards the audience. Immediately begin an overhand shuffle, completing it by throwing the last portion *behind* the shuffled-off cards, just as taught above. Then let the deck flop face down again into dealing position.



To justify this slightly unusual way of shuffling, as you begin it you can say, "*Let's shuffle the deck - you can really see how well the cards are mixed.*" Don't forget to look at the deck while you shuffle it, and just before you throw the last packet behind the shuffled-off cards, look up at the audience, leading their attention away from the unconventional last action.

## False Overhand Shuffle

### Maintaining the Order of the Entire Deck



To false shuffle the *entire* deck with the overhand method, proceed as follows: Bring the deck into position for a normal overhand shuffle. Shuffle off the first five face-down cards *singly* and throw the rest of the deck onto them. Next turn the deck face up, shuffle off the five cards at the face, and throw the balance onto them. What you have done, is to shuffle the top five cards to the bottom and then immediately back to the top, which of course retains the order of the complete deck. Finally turn the deck face down again and cut it using the method given below (False Cut II).

To provide an outwardly logical structure for this procedure, you can say, "*We'll shuffle the deck from the back—and then from the front. And while shuffling is good, cutting is better, so let's cut the cards a few times as well.*" After this, though, you must go immediately into an action that demands everyone's undivided attention; otherwise they will immediately begin analyzing what they have seen, and they may quickly figure out this method. This is the price for using such a simple false shuffle. It is best to do your false shuffling and false cutting while saying something pertinent to the specific trick you are performing – this will lead the audience's attention away from your actions in a natural manner. Believe me, it works. Of course, you should use this procedure only *once* per audience. Even though you have gotten by once on self-confidence and casualness, the second time you won't have the element of surprise on your side.



## False Cut II a (After Overhand Shuffle)



As mentioned above, it is common to conclude a shuffle with one or more cuts. We've already seen a false cut to use after a riffle shuffle. Here is a full-deck false cut by Jay Ose<sup>1</sup> that combines well with an overhand shuffle.

Cut the top third of the deck to the table,

... set the second third *to the right* of the first,

... and drop the last third *to the right* of the second .



Then pick up the packets *from left to right*, restoring the original order of the deck.

Again, pay attention to the rhythm and your gaze.





## False Cut II b (After Overhand Shuffle)



This is a technical variation on the Ose false cut just described. Whereas the first cut starts in the hands and ends on the table, this second version starts out with the deck set on the table and ends up in the hands. Use the method that better suits your requirements.

Start out with the deck on the table and cut the top two-thirds *to the left*, leaving about a third on the table.

Cut about half of this packet *to the left* of the second packet.

Pick up the bottom third furthest to your right...



..and place it in left-hand dealin position.

Pick up the next packet and put it on top of the first one.

Eventually drop the last packet on top of all, thus restoring the original order of the deck.

Again, pay attention to the rhythm and your gaze.





## Glimpsing a Card on Top, Bottom or Any Other Position



“Glimpsing” a card, in magic parlance, means that you secretly note and remember a card in the deck. In lesson 10 we have circumnavigated the techniques normally used for glimpsing by briefly spreading the deck face up on the table or in your hands. Let’s now look at various handlings and how to manage them in more detail.

Hand the deck to a spectator for shuffling and then have another spectator cut it as you deliver an introduction to the trick you are about to perform. As you are still finishing what you are saying, take the deck back, turn it face up and ribbon spread it from left to right on the table, but *do not yet look at the cards yourself*. The photo shows the initial stage of this spread, and you’ll notice how your left hand partially covers the first few cards of the spread. This should be done casually and naturally, without seeming effort - to the casual onlooker it will seem as if you wanted to simply steady the spread. Technically the use of the left hand is of course not necessary, as a good close-up mat or table cloth will ensure a regular and steady ribbon spread, all you’re doing is to protect the index of the top card.



Finish the spread, as you are still looking at the audience and ending your sentence.



Since the indexes of the cards are standing on their head for your spectators, it will be difficult for them to see and remember a card from the spread, besides they don’t know what is coming. To afford additional misdirection, your right hand taps the right side of the spread a bit, to apparently spread the cards for better viewing.



Meanwhile say something along the lines of, “*You have thoroughly shuffled the deck, and the cards are arranged in a random order fully determined by your shuffling.*” It is only during this action that you briefly look down at the spread and catch a glimpse of the card you need to know. In most cases this will be the *top card*, but it could also be the second or third from the top, or the bottom, or second, or third from the bottom. Three or four cards are as far as you can normally look in about one second. If you need to glimpse a card in another position, you need to make up a reason for looking at the spread longer, such as taking the Jokers out.



Instead of ribbon spreading the deck on the table, you can simply spread the cards between your hands as you make a covering comment. This is very efficient, and it has the added benefit of both being fast and allowing you to protect the cards, especially the top ones, by tipping the spread slightly towards yourself. The photos show your view as well as the audience's view of the same situation.



What else can you say to justify the spreading of the cards? Here are a few ideas:

- If the deck is borrowed from your host, you could say, after taking back the shuffled deck, “I assume this is a complete deck, right?”
- Or say, “This is a deck with fifty-two cards. I mention this, because different countries have short decks. Germany and France have thirty-two, Italy and Spain have forty. So this is a deck that would be used to play Poker, Bridge or Blackjack.”
- “Oh, let’s take out the Jokers as we won’t need them.” Take the Jokers out of the table or hand spread and put them aside.

The desired card is glimpsed unnoticed during this action - just like that, it’s done. This method won’t bear repetition, so it can only be used once in a program. Nevertheless, for this one time it has replaced a more difficult technique.

## Glimpse Subtlety

If you will be using the bottom card in an obvious way in a trick, such as in a prediction, it is better to *glimpse the top card instead, and then simply shuffle it to the bottom in a subsequent overhand shuffle*. To do this, after you have glimpsed the top card, bring the deck in overhand shuffle position and start the shuffle by peeling off only the top card instead of a block in the first shuffle action. Then simply shuffle off normally. Follow up with false cut II explained above. The card which was originally on top is now on bottom.



Similarly, you can glimpse the bottom card, then close the deck and bring it into overhand shuffle position. Now execute the shuffle described above to maintain the bottom stock and follow with a false cut. The glimpsed card will still be on the bottom, but the “dirty work” has been cleverly disguised.



Instead of using an overhand shuffle, you can also table the deck and use a riffle shuffle to maintain the top or bottom stock, as taught above. Again, follow with a false cut.

The handlings just described introduce a powerful strategy, where the execution of a technique is delayed from its application – you will learn more about it in the advanced literature.

### Credits

- 1) The Jay Ose cut was published in: Lorayne, Harry, *Close-up Card Magic*, “Ose’s Cut”, p. 93, D. Robbins & Co., Inc., USA 1976.



### Golden Rule Number Twelve

#### Magic is an Art

*“Magic is the performing art of wonder.”*

This is my definition of what a conjuror does. It implies the use of complex artifices on the part of the performer that stimulate the spectator’s imagination – his intellect and emotions - in order to create the live fiction of impossibility. The artifices are based mostly on principles from natural science (physics, chemistry, hydraulics, electronics, mathematics), psychology, drama, and sleight-of-hand.

You might not be an artist when you start out, but having the *vision* that magic is an art form will lead you on the royal road to magic.



# Bonus Lesson

*«The tiny details are by far the most important thing.»*  
Sherlock Holmes





## Contents

### **Introduction**

#### **Learning Goals**

### **Belchou Aces**

**Effect**

**Preparation**

**Prologue**

**Spectator Cuts the Deck Into Four Piles**

**You Have Cut Exactly to...**

**Le Carte Parlanti**

**Grand Finale**

**Lest I forget...**

### **Lucky Cards**

**Effect**

**Lucky Thirteen**

**You Predict Your Lucky Card**

**Lucky Card and Number**

**So Lucky ... You Knew it Before!**

**Lest I forget...**

### **A Phenomenal Memory**

**Effect**

**Prologue**

**Card Selection & Location**

**An Additional Subtlety**

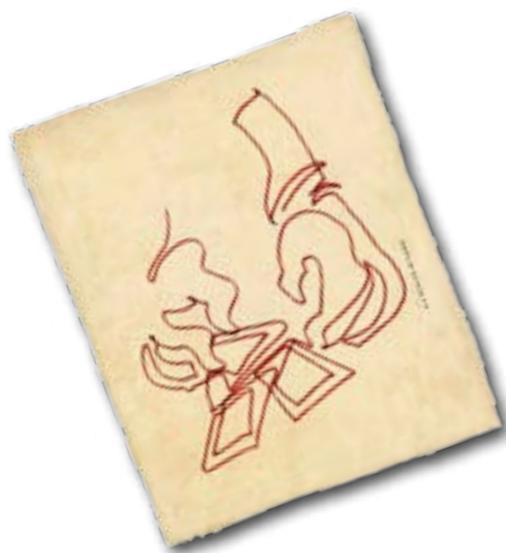
**Master Memory**

**The Denouement**

**Lest I forget...**

**Ideas for a Program**

**Golden Rule Number Thirteen**





## Introduction

Congratulations on having got so far. You are now able to handle a deck of cards properly and execute practically all basic moves that are necessary for neat and elegant card handling. The tricks you have learned up to here will allow you to gain your first performing experience before a live audience. Consider this lesson as a bonus, where I will teach you three more wonderful tricks, each with a different effect:

- The first trick is an amazing *production* of the four Aces from an apparently shuffled deck.
- The second is an intriguing *coincidence*, combined with a *location* and a *prediction*.
- The third is a demonstration of an apparently *extraordinary memory*.

At the end I will briefly discuss how you can put these tricks together to obtain a little program.

## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...three excellent tricks that can be done at any time with a normal deck of cards and how to combine them into a little program.
- ...how to use the “non-techniques” from Lesson 12.
- ...a very useful way of locating a selected card without resorting to difficult moves.
- ...various subtleties of card handling that you will be able to use for the rest of your life.
- ...yet another application of a clever mathematical principle.

## Belchou Aces

This is Richard Vollmer’s elegant variation on the well-known Ace-cutting trick by Steve Belchou (1), described with his permission.

### Effect

The shuffled deck is cut by the spectator into four about equal packets and the top card of each packet turned face up. Cards are dealt according to the values of these cards, but in spite of the haphazard nature of the procedure, the four Aces are revealed!



A deck is thoroughly shuffled.



The spectator cuts the deck into 4 approximately equal packets.



The top card of each packet is turned over and said to have...



...a meaning. Cards are dealt on the table...



...according to the value of the card cut to. Nonetheless...



...the top card of each packet turns out to be an Ace!

## Preparation

This is your first trick in this course that will require a preparation, albeit a very simple one. A group of specially arranged cards is called a “set-up” or an “arrangement” when the cards and their order are referred to, and a “stock” when just the group as a whole is meant.

The set-up is this: on top of the face-down deck are any Five, two indifferent cards, the four Aces, followed by the balance of the deck.

## Prologue

In my presentation I speak about having handled the cards for many years, every day, for many hours. I have therefore established an affinity with them, a real friendship, and *they talk to me*.

This is the prologue I use that introduces the plot, and of course it fits me because in some way it is even true. Take this as an exercise to find a text that would fit *you*.

## Spectator Cuts the Deck Into Four Piles

As you give the deck a shuffle and cut - both false and maintaining the top stock as we’ve learned in Lesson 12 - deliver your introductory lines. Place the deck face down on the table and ask someone to cut the deck into four roughly equal piles. As he does this, keep track of the pile with the setup on top. Here we’ll assume it to be farthest to your right.





For laypeople it is not easy to estimate four equal packets, but in this particular case it doesn't matter how big or small each packet is, as long as the packet with your set-up consists of at least seven cards.

You should, however, take care that if the spectator cuts unequal packets, he doesn't correct their size by putting cards from a larger packet on top of a smaller one – this could upset your set-up... To prevent this from happening ask the spectator to first cut the deck in half, and then cut each half again in half. In this way all four packets will be approximately the same size and no “correction” will be provoked.

### You Have Cut Exactly to...

Turn up the top card on each pile and place it in front of its pile. Let's say these are a Four, a Seven, a King and a Five (the Five is of course the top card of your set-up).



You can create some situational comedy by building this moment up as if it was an effect. You could therefore say something along these lines *before you turn up the cards*, “Please remember that the cards were shuffled and you yourself have cut the deck. You must agree, that I have in no way influenced where you cut.” Wait for the affirmative answer, and then immediately proceed by turning up the first card, “Nonetheless...you have cut *exactly* to the Four of Hearts!” Make it sound as if this was quite something. Follow up by turning the other three cards up and naming them aloud. Then look into the audience with a satisfied look, as if you had accomplished something very unusual. Your spectators will look back and wonder if you have a nut loose.

### Le Carte Parlanti

Tie in with the plot established in the prologue and say that the cards are *obviously* telling us something, they are speaking to us. If you say this tongue-in-cheek, the audience will play along. Depending on how you sense your audience's tolerance and playful abilities, you can go a bit further by asking, “Do you know what they are telling us?”

Whatever they answer, explain that the Four is telling you to deal four cards – of course! Pick up the pile behind the Four and count four cards into a face-down pile in the space just occupied by the pile from which you are dealing.





Follow this by dealing one card onto each of the other three piles.



If you need a reason for this, you might say, *“Because that’s the rule - and I make the rules.”* Set the remaining cards you hold onto the pile of four dealt cards.



Repeat this procedure with the other three piles, counting seven cards, ten (for the King) and five.

If you have a high card, such as a Nine, a Ten or a court card, and estimate that you don’t have enough cards to reach the full count, explain, *“Besides being counted, the cards can even be spelled,”* and spell the value of the card (K-I-N-G would be just four cards). This mixture of counting with spelling actually makes the procedure more interesting.

In order to increase attention after two repetitions, on the third card you might say something like, *“Kings are wild. What value would you like it to have?”* A “wild card” in some card games is a card that can take the value of any other card, like a Joker. Your helper then determines the number to which you count or spell.

## Grand Finale

When you have finished counting five cards off the fourth pile and have dealt a card onto each of the other three piles, an Ace will lie on top of all four, which you may reveal to suit any theme you wish to give this intriguing piece.



## Lest I forget...

1. In theory you could simply have the four Aces with any Three on top of the deck, thus reducing the initial set-up to just five cards. However, the fact of taking away five cards on the last packet, instead of three, considerably camouflages the working.
2. Once you have gained enough confidence in the performance of this trick, you can try to *let the spectator do all the actions*. This will result in you never touching the deck, an amazing feature.



## Lucky Cards

Here is another little gem of a self-working card trick that comes from the fertile mind of my friend Richard Vollmer and which I will teach you here with his blessings. You can use it directly after “Belchou’s Aces”, or as a separate trick to be performed anytime with any deck. Even the professional performer will want to have a small repertoire of tricks that can be performed with a borrowed deck, which might even be incomplete and in bad condition – this is such a trick.

### Effect

In a surprising process of finding their own lucky card, two spectators manage to mysteriously locate the performer’s lucky card, which he had predicted!



Two spectators thoroughly shuffle a deck of cards.



Each spectator receives a packet of 13 cards.



As they deal their cards, a surprising match occurs.



The values of their two „lucky cards“ are added ...



...and that number of cards counted to in the balance.



The card arrived at is the performer’s card he had predicted!

### Lucky Thirteen

Ask who from your audience would like to find out more about his or her lucky number and lucky card. Depending on whether you get two men, two women or a man and a woman, additional presentational possibilities open up...

Hand each of your two assisting spectators about half the deck, and ask them to shuffle and cut their cards. Explain that this is necessary, so that nothing is predetermined and everything is left to chance.

Reassemble the deck and count 13 cards face down in front of the first spectator, explaining that in magic 13 is considered a lucky number, and that in a deck of cards each suit consists of 13 cards. As soon as you have counted the first 13 cards, hand them to the first spectator asking him to recount the cards to make sure they are really 13. As he does that, deal the next 13 cards to the second spectator.



When counting, if possible drop the cards from a little height on the table in a pile, rather than putting them on the table, for more clarity. You retain the balance of the deck.



As I have repeatedly mentioned, *counting cards is a potentially boring action* and therefore needs to be managed accordingly. There are three things you can do to maintain interest and keep the process going when you count cards.

- First, *practice dealing* cards accurately but rapidly so that the dealing will take up as little time as possible.
- Second, think about *something meaningful to say* before and after you deal, or in very short breaks during the deal.
- Third, *count out loud*, making it sound important – this will automatically attract the audience’s attention, provided you handle the cards smoothly and the count is not too long.

## You Predict Your Lucky Card

Instruct each spectator to take his pile, which is made up of 13 cards, and to shuffle and cut it once more. This will do two things. First, it reminds them that they have initially shuffled the deck and that therefore there can be no previous arrangement of the cards known to you – a possible explanation of the effect that is about to come. Second, it gives you an outward reason to shuffle the remaining cards you are holding in an act of demonstration. As they are still shuffling, you briefly spread your cards face up between your hands and glimpse the second card from the back, i.e. the second card from the top, which we will assume to be the Four of Clubs. To cover this action, say, “This will leave the cards in your packet in a totally random order.” Immediately turn the cards face down again and place them aside.



Explain that the Four of Clubs is *your* lucky card, and that they will now try to find *their* lucky card. Instead of announcing the card openly, you could also write it down on a billet or on your business card, so that nobody can see it, and then put the prediction aside, in view of all. This will take up a little more time and I leave it to you as a little exercise to try either versions and then pick the one that appeals most to you.



## Lucky Card and Number

Ask them to hold their packets as if they were to deal cards for a card game, and then deal the top card face up on the table and say, “King”. Instruct them to deal the next card also face up and on top of the first card, saying, “Queen”, then the next, “Jack”, and so on, by naming the 13 cards in the suit from King backwards to the Ace. However, *as soon as a card that is named matches the card that is turned up*, the deal must be stopped.

Here is an example: Assume your first spectator deals cards, saying, “King, Queen, Jack, Ten, Nine, Eight...”, and when he says, “Eight”, he turns up the Eight of Hearts. Stop him and tell him that this is his lucky card, and eight is his luck number, although he might not have known before.



Take his remaining undealt cards and replace them on top of the balance of the deck, which you had previously placed aside. In our case these will be sevens cards, while the face-up packet is made up of six cards.

Do the same thing with the second spectator, who we will assume hits it on the count of three by turning up the Three of Diamonds. Again leave the face up packet on the table and take her undealt cards, placing them on the balance of the deck.



Before proceeding, allow me a few comments on what has just happened. To start with, these two coincidences will prove quite startling to some of your spectators, as one would think that a match is highly unlikely. This is a nice counter-intuitive thing, because mathematically the probability of at least one match is surprisingly high.

But what do you do if one or both spectators do not get a match? This will occasionally happen. Simply explain that luck is of course not something that falls into your lap, but has to be earned through hard work... Let the spectator who didn't have a match reshuffle his 13 cards and go through the deal once more. I have never had to repeat this more than twice in order to get a match, provided the cards are well distributed at the beginning.

## So Lucky ... You Knew it Before!

You will now get to the actual denouement of the trick. Explain that luck always comes by threes through a lucky synergy. Ask them to add their two lucky numbers. In our example they will add eight (Eight of Hearts) and three (Three of Diamonds), thus obtaining *eleven*. (Notice that the King counts 13, the Queen 12 and the Jack 11.)



Say that *eleven* is *your* lucky number, and then proceed to slowly and clearly count down to the eleventh card. When you reach it, hold it face down in your hand as you very quickly resume that *they* have shuffled the cards themselves, and that *they* have done everything themselves in their own hands. Remind them your lucky card, which is the Four of Clubs, or show the written prediction if you chose to go that way, and then slowly turn the card you are holding over – it will indeed be the Four of Clubs !



### Lest I forget...

1. The working of this trick is based on the same mathematical principle we have already seen in “The Cards Know”, Lesson 7, but uses a different procedure.
2. Here is a worst case scenario, which I never had to resort to, in case a spectator doesn't hit a match on his back-count: Have him exchange his 13 cards for new ones, saying they might be bad-luck cards. In this case have him cut the balance about in half and take 13 cards from the bottom portion, then complete the balance again, placing the original portion back on top – this contains your predicted “lucky card”, so shouldn't be upset. Replace or riffle shuffle his original 13 cards into the center of the balance, again taking care not to put any cards above your lucky card.
3. When you turn the selection face up at the end of the trick, there will always be exactly 24 cards left in the balance of the deck. If you assemble all the cards that you have been dealing with, these will consequently be 28 cards. This can be used to your advantage in other tricks...you may try to find out in which way. Hint: you can set a key card.

## A Phenomenal Memory

A version of this trick was shown to me by nobody less than the Spanish card genius Juan Tamariz. He, in turn, had seen it performed in Las Vegas by Jimmy Grippo<sup>2</sup>. Grippo's method is a wonderfully simple solution to an effect called “Moe's Move a Card” by the American enigma, “Moe” Seidenstein<sup>3</sup>. Perform this trick as though it were really a feat of prodigious memory and, for those not in the know, no other explanation is possible.

### Effect

A chosen card is shuffled back into the deck, which is then ribbon spreads face up on the table. The performer stares at the card spread for fifteen seconds, pretending to memorize them, after which he turns away. The spectator then moves the chosen card from its location in the spread to another part of the spread. The performer turns back, looks at the cards again, divines what card was selected and pulls it out of the spread. An amazing demonstration of memory.



A first spectator shuffles and cuts the deck.



A second spectator is asked to call 'stop'...



...as cards are dealt on the table.



She looks at the selected card, shows it to everybody else...



...and then places it back into the deck...



...where it is hopelessly lost.



The cards are spread face up, and the performer takes ...



... 20 seconds to learn their order by heart.



He then turns his back and asks the spectator to take her card...



...remove it from its original position...



...and put it back anywhere else in the spread. The performer...



...turns back, studies the cards and finds the only card moved!

## Prologue

This is most effective when performed after a discussion of memory. Of course, you can always introduce the topic yourself: *"Ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to offer, not a card trick, but a feat of magical memory. In order to be a good magician you need three things: a lot of practice, an excellent memory and...ummmm...I can't remember the third! It doesn't matter, it will come to me as we proceed. OK – what was I going to do? Oh, yes, I remember: Please take a card from the deck."* If you fancy a humorous style, such could be your introductory words, or if you prefer a more serious approach, you could say a few things about the science of memory. Whichever approach you choose, make it interesting!



## Card Selection & Location

You are now going to have a spectator select a card and then apparently lose it in the deck. What you will really be doing is to secretly place a card know to you – we call this a “key card” – next to the selection, so that you will be able to later locate it. Start by having the deck thoroughly shuffled by a spectator and ask somebody else to cut it. Take it back and briefly spread the cards face up between your hands, remarking how well the cards have been shuffled. In the process glimpse and remember the bottom card of the deck as your key card – let’s assume this is the Two of Diamonds.

This is the same strategy we have already discussed in Lesson 12. As mentioned there I recommend for more deceptiveness to glimpse the top card and then shuffle it to the bottom in a subsequent overhand shuffle. Or glimpse the bottom card as suggested, but then give the deck a false shuffle maintaining the bottom stock.

Hold the deck face down in dealing position and start dealing small batches of cards face down on the table in a pile. As you do so, ask the spectator to call ‘stop’ whenever he likes. When he does, stop the deal and ask if he would like the top card of those dealt, the top card of those still in your hand, or any other card. As you ask the latter question, slightly spread the cards you are still holding between your hands. Let the spectator take whichever he likes.



You could of course simply ask him to take any card, but the point of using this dealing procedure is to prepare the way the card is going to be replaced in just an instant, so that it lands below your key card.

Ask him to look at the card and remember it, also insisting that he shows it to a few spectators around him, but of course not to you.

Whenever you have a card selected, make it a point that the spectator who takes the card also shows it to several other people. This is your best insurance against the spectator forgetting or misnaming the card at the end.



Deal a few more cards on the tabled pile and then tell the spectator to put his card back on top of the dealt pile. Immediately drop – or better dribble – the remaining cards on top, thus completely losing the selection in the midst of the other cards. The great thing about this method is that his card is really lost; however, it is marked off by your key card, which is immediately above the selection.

### An Additional Subtlety

To further convince your audience that their card is hopelessly lost, you can give the deck a quick overhand shuffle that will not separate the key card from the card below it. In order to do this, you simply roughly estimate how big the packet is that you just dropped on top. This is very easy, as it is not important to estimate the number of the cards, just the *approximate size of the packet*. Start the overhand shuffle by shuffling off a few cards, less than the packet you dropped on top, then shuffle off about half the deck in one single block – that's where your key card and the selection are - and then finish the shuffle in two or three more shuffle movements. Done casually as you look at the audience this looks and feels very convincing. For this "false shuffle" it isn't even necessary that you look at the cards – with very little practice you can easily feel the size of the blocks you are shuffling off, so you can look at the audience.

End the shuffle by having a spectator give the deck a cut or two. Take care that these cuts are single cuts, as multiple cuts could separate your key card from the selection.

### Master Memory

Ribbon spread the deck face up from left to right on the table as you explain, "*I will now attempt to memorize the order of the cards...in less than fifteen seconds!*" Someone with a stop watch or a watch with a second hand is appointed "time keeper". This spectator calls out "*Ready, set, go!*" for you to start your study of the spread.

Now you must pretend as though you really are memorizing the order of the cards. Stare at them and move your lips, mumbling the names of some of the cards. Also touch a few of them with the tip of your right forefinger, moving from left to right, to reinforce the impression that you are noting their order. In fact, you are looking for your key card, *noting and remembering the card to its right*, which is the spectator's card.

Here are a few convincing touches you can use: Now and then go back in the spread, as though double checking certain combinations. If possible, note two or three cards lying together. When you reach the key card, remember the two or three cards to the left of the chosen card, as well as the chosen card itself - you will recite them later from memory. Be sure to look over the entire spread within the fifteen-second limit you have imposed on yourself. If the key card is not at the very end of the spread, you can claim that you didn't have time to memorize the last few cards, but you'll take a chance that the chosen card is not among them. As soon as the time keeper tells you your time is up, look upward with relief - as though you have just completed an extremely difficult act of memorization.

Ask the spectator to take the chosen card from the spread and replace it in any other part of the spread, making sure that the selection is the only one moved. Turn away and do whatever you can to convince the audience that you cannot see the spectator's actions. You may want to have a second spectator closely watch your eyes, to ensure this. Before you turn back, have the spectator straighten the cards in the spread, so that you cannot detect the locations from which the card was removed or reinserted.



## The Denouement

You now begin to build toward the climax. As you turn around, casually look at the spread and note the top three or four cards. Looking at the spectator, you say, *“I will try to remember the order of the cards and to find the only card out of place. Let’s see, it started with the Ace of Hearts, the Seven of Clubs, the Three of Spades...”* These cards are the ones you have just noted. Now turn your attention to the spread and remark, more to yourself than to the audience, *“Yes, that’s right.”* Begin to go through the cards quickly, as though recalling them from memory. When you come to the block of two or three cards that you memorized previously, look up again and recite their names out loud, *“Nine of Hearts, Ace of Clubs...”* Naturally, while going through the cards now you can spontaneously note several cards in a sequence, look up and name them as though they were memorized earlier. Don’t exaggerate, but try to act as you would if you really had memorized the order of the cards. By now you’ll have located the chosen card. If it is placed in the spread before the key card, pass over it but hesitate slightly, as though something seems out of place. If you reach the key card first, hesitate, look up and recite the cards before and after the key card. Look again at these cards, and call out suddenly, *“Hold it, a card is missing here!”* Go to the place in the spread where the chosen card is located and stare for a few seconds at that area. Then announce, *“Here there is one card too many. It is the Ace of Hearts - and that is the card you moved!”*

## Lest I forget...

1. When you ribbon spread the deck to start the memorizing, try to locate your key card *as you do the spreading*. In very rare cases it will happen – because of the shuffling and cutting – that the key card is at the top or bottom or very near it. In such a case simply assemble the spread and ask somebody to cut the deck again, as if it was an afterthought, maybe saying, *“Oh, you didn’t cut the cards, did you? It is always better to cut the deck three times.”*
2. Recently, on a popular television game show, one contestant successfully memorized five shuffled decks in thirty minutes. You can use this incident to create a topical presentation for this trick, in which you will, of course, point out that you only take fifteen seconds to do the job.

## Ideas for a Program

These three tricks are not difficult to arrange into a program – simply take them in the order described. Start with “Belchou Aces”, using the presentation suggested or one that you came up with.

To lead over to “Lucky Cards” you could say, *“Many people say that I must be very lucky when playing cards. Of course I can’t tell you the whole secret, but let me reveal a part of it ... I’m a lucky person! But you can make your own luck, if you know your lucky number and lucky card.”*

Continue, *“Most seem to have a lucky number, but few know their personal lucky card. I have therefore invented an experiment which will allow anybody who is interested to find his or her lucky card and lucky number.”* Then ask, *“Who would like to know more about this?”* You will find that it will be easy to recruit two willing spectators to assist you in “Lucky Cards”.

At the end of the preceding trick, explain, *“In order to be lucky at cards, you need three things: a strong will, a very good memory, and ...ehm...the third...I forgot!”*



You may also make a list of all the tricks taught in this course, and then try to link three of your favorites into a little routine. A natural opening sequence would be “Belchou Aces”, followed by „The Cards Know”, using the Aces from the first trick to do the second. You can then for instance close with “Open Prediction” by finding a way to elegantly link one to the other.

I hope that these suggestions gave

you an idea of the possibilities you have to create your own program, for the most satisfying presentation will always be one that you come up with and that only you will be using.

### Credits

- 1) This was first published in the June 1939 issue of *The Dragon*, Vol. 8, No. 6, p. 7. It appears as “A Poker Player’s Picnic” in Hugard’s and Braue’s *Royal Road to Card Magic*, 1951, p. 30; as “Belchou’s Aces” in Martin Gardner’s *Mathematics Magic and Mystery*, 1956, p. 27; and is included in many beginners’ texts on conjuring.
- 2) See *The Magic of Jimmy Grippo* by Geno Munari, G-M Publication, Las Vegas 1981, page 23.
- 3) For information on Moe and his “Move a Card” trick, see *Moe and His Miracles with Cards* by William P. Miesel, Jeff Busby Magic Inc., Oakland 1986.



### Golden Rule Number Thirteen

#### Enjoy and Share

*Ask yourself: “Why do I want to be a magical performer?” Then enjoy being one and share your enjoyment with your audience.*

The question above is a difficult one, not only for a beginner. Whatever your answer is, I believe it should contain the element of personal joy. You have put time, effort and a certain talent into the study and practice of your magic. When you are ready to bring it before an audience, its performance becomes an act of sharing, a very personal moment of human interaction that will be unique and won’t happen again in exactly this form. It will be only as good as your sincere excellence and enthusiasm you put into it. Whatever art is, it will always be communication, too.



# Your Next Step

*«Knowledge tells us that tomatoes are a fruit, wisdom is not to put them in a fruit salad.»*

Miles Kington





## Further Studies

### Card College Books

If you enjoyed this introduction into the fascinating world of card conjuring and are now ready to get involved more seriously, I recommend my *Card College* books - they were conceived specifically with that purpose in mind. There are five volumes, the first two being a complete course in sleight-of-hand card magic, and I suggest you start with them.

### Card College DVDs

The first two *Card College* books have also been translated into a 8-hour video course titled "*Card College 1&2 – Personal Instructions*", which is like taking private lessons from me personally.

I recommend the DVDs to those who find it easier to learn from visual media. But many have said that the DVDs are also an excellent complement to the books. Indeed, each media has its advantages: the book on one hand can go into more detail and it is easier to pace one's learning, the DVD on the other hand immediately shows you the Gestalt of the move and above all that it is feasible - this insight greatly facilitates the learning process. Decide according to your learning style, each medium being complete in itself, and if you can afford it get both the books and the DVDs.

### Card College Light Trilogy

Besides I have written three other volumes – *Card College Light*, *Card College Lighter* and *Card College Lightest* – all on so-called self-working card tricks, similar to those you have learned in this course, with some wonderful tricks that do not require any sleight-of-hand.

See the following pages for more information and how to order.

Thank you for joining me in this course, I hope your journey was as pleasurable as mine.

All the very best!

## Donation

Now that you have finished this course, you can see its magnitude and the immediate use it has to you. You don't need to be in publishing in order to imagine how much time and work it took to conceive, write, photograph, film, design and implement it into this electronic document. I have decided that it should be available for everyone free of charge, because I love magic in general and card magic in particular so much, that I want everyone to start right. If you want to say „thank you“ in a tangible way, hit the button below and make a small donation (\$5 is OK). Thank YOU.





# roberto giobbi's Card College 1 & 2 personal instruction

**Finally!**  
**Card College 1 & 2 on DVD**



**Roberto Giobbi's Card College 1&2 – Personal Instruction**  
\$125.- *postpaid worldwide* (if you order directly from the author)

#### Features:

- A complete course in the art and science of sleight-of-hand card magic, self-contained (but also ideal to use with the Card College books).
- Based on the third completely revised and expanded original German edition. Clear and easy to understand instructions, even if English is not your native language.
- Set of 4DVDs in one practical box - total length ca. 8 hours.
- 26 technical chapters and 27 routines, performed and explained in minutest detail, including the all-important theory: psychology, misdirection, timing, handling & management, audience management, trick & program construction, outs & precautions, how to study magic, and much, much more.
- This is like taking private lessons from Roberto Giobbi, whom many consider one of the finest teachers in magic - any time you like and at your very own pace.
- A detailed index of each DVD is printed on the box covers, and important techniques, tricks and concepts are itemized in the clearly designed on-screen menu. You can play it all, or comfortably access every technique and trick individually.
- Professionally recorded with 3 cameras and state-of-the-art digital technology, produced by Frankie Glass and Jim Steinmeyer, with magic consultant Richard Kaufman.

#### How to Order

Order directly from the author (postpaid worldwide!) and get a signed set plus a personally dedicated photo: send an email by clicking [HERE](#) and we'll send you a PayPal link.

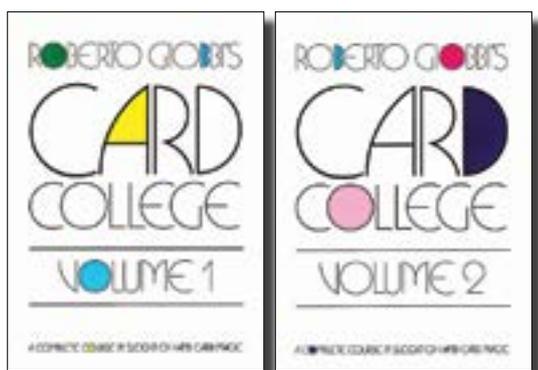
Or order from your favorite dealer or from the producers at [www.hahnemagic.com](http://www.hahnemagic.com) (plus postage outside of USA)



## Books

*Card College* is the world's most widely translated series of card books, having appeared in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Japanese. Experts consider it the standard work for beginning and advanced card magic.

All four volumes of *Card College* follow the same pattern: the best and most useful techniques in a category are first taught in painstaking detail, and then you'll learn a few of the very best card tricks using the sleights just taught. All along great emphasis is placed on teaching the fundamental principles that make magic astonishing and entertaining at the same time, resulting in artistic card magic.

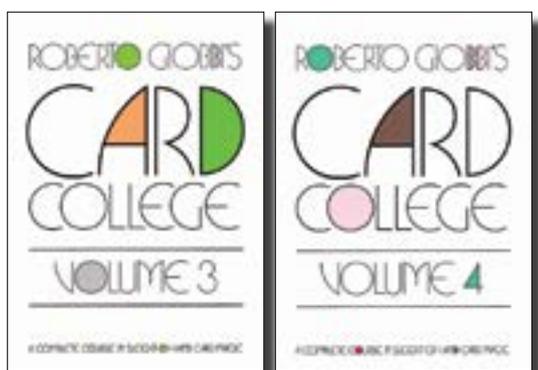


\$ 35.-

\$ 37.-

*Card College Volume 1 & Card College Volume 2* were conceived as one single book, but published in two volumes for convenience. Get them together and learn the basics of state-of-the-art professional sleight-of-hand card magic: cutting-edge techniques, entertaining tricks, professional presentations and enlightening theory, all thoroughly taught in an engaging writing style, illustrated by hundreds of crystal-clear drawings that leave no questions open. Volume 2 ends with seven startling chapters on the theory of magic.

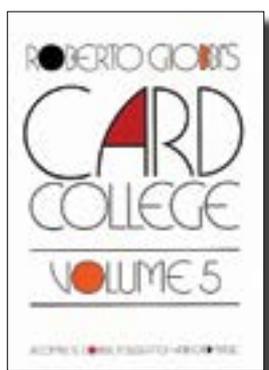
If you understand and master the content of these two books, you will know more about card magic than 90% of magicians worldwide.



\$ 37.-

\$ 37.-

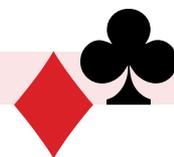
*Card College Volume 3 & Card College Volume 4.* Again conceived as one book split into two volumes for convenience - we recommend you get them together. Learn about new topics, such as deck switches, false riffle shuffles or estimation, but also advanced concepts of chapters already introduced in the first two volumes, such as refined controls, forces and much, much more. You'll find dozens of the most marvellous card tricks, some of them great classics in a modern dress.



\$ 37.-

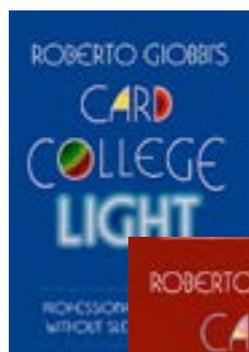
*Card College Volume 5* closes the circle and is the book of tricks. It brings it all together - many of the concepts taught in the first four volumes, plus new ones, finely interwoven in some of the finest card tricks ever to be described, directly from Roberto Giobbi's professional repertoire. Sophisticated and elegant, yet straightforward, astonishing and memorable card magic, all done with an ordinary deck of cards.

**Special Set-Price Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 \$ 160.-**

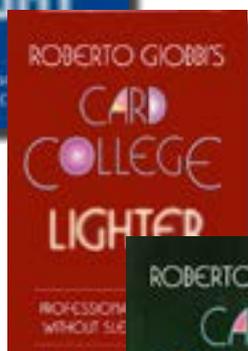


*Card College Light, Card College Lighter & Card College Lightest* is a trilogy of professional calibre card tricks, which do not require any sleight-of-hand, but are based on psychology and several other cleverly disguised principles. If you liked the tricks in this course, you'll love those in the Light series.

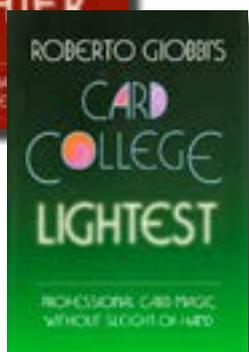
These books are for the performing magician – beginner and expert alike - who from time to time wants to throw in a trick or two that requires no manipulative skill whatsoever, and still utterly fool even a sophisticated audience, while completely entertaining them.



\$ 35.-



\$ 35.-



\$ 35.-

*Card College Light* gives you seven programs of about 20 minutes duration, made up of three tricks each. You may take advantage of the synergies offered, or compose your own routines.

*Card College Lighter* is divided into four sections. The first has 7 opening tricks, the second 7 middle tricks, the third 7 finale tricks, and the fourth section tells you how to best arrange short programs made up of these tricks.

*Card College Lightest*, finally, has just clever card tricks, explained in greatest detail as in the other two volumes, plus a chapter on how to solve technical problems without having to resort to sleight-of-hand.

**Special Set-Price Volumes 1, 2 & 3**

**\$ 90.-**

## How to Order

If you are based in the USA or Canada we suggest you order directly from the publisher Hermetic Press (click [HERE](#)) or from your favorite magic dealer in order to get the best postage deal.

If you are based in Europe or anywhere else outside of North-America, order directly from the author, asking for a signed copy and personally autographed photo – the postage will be the same as if ordering from the USA (send your order with your post address to [giobbi@bluewin.ch](mailto:giobbi@bluewin.ch) and we'll send you a PayPal link).