



Tricks And Stuff

**Some tricks and other
forgettable witterings to
accompany my 2023
Magic Circle lecture**



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About This Book

In February of 2023, I was invited to give a lecture at The Magic Circle. No one knows why, least of all me.

It just goes to show that even a great club like The Magic Circle can't always find good lecturers. Even they have to occasionally 'scrape the barrel' and put on a sub-par lecture just to fill a gap in the schedule.

I started putting together a few pages of lecture notes but they somehow grew and grew into this booklet of over 110 pages. It features twenty of my 'least worst' old tricks and routines, all of which have been published before either in magazines or previous sets of lecture notes. The material isn't all that great but maybe one or two of you will find a few bits you like. The rest of this booklet consists of a few witterings that nobody will ever read or take any notice of, which is fair enough.

On the basis that everything should be priced according to its value, this booklet is completely **free**. Anyone in the magic world can have it. By all means copy this pdf and send it to your magician friends. Or let them know that any magician can download it from: www.ianrowland.com/magic .

I'd be happy for you to copy this book to two of your friends in the magic world and for *them* to do the same and so on so that it spreads like a nuclear chain reaction. Who knows? Within a very short time, every magician in the world could have a .pdf of 'Tricks And Stuff'.

This is probably the last time I'll ever be asked to give a magic lecture. I'd therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all my friends in the magic community and everyone who has played a part in my magical journey over the past forty years or so. I deeply appreciate all the friendship, love, fun, laughter and good times I've been lucky enough to share with you. Magicians are special people and time spent hanging out with magicians is never wasted. It has been a genuine and joyful privilege to know you all.

A Short Note About Me

Just for context, I'm not a magician (or mentalist) and magic has never been my job. I'm just a clueless amateur. By trade, I'm a writer. I started off writing and producing corporate videos, then wrote reports for a finance company, then got a job as a technical writer with an I.T. firm. These days, as well as being a freelance writer/publisher, I also write books for myself and other people and do some corporate talks and training as well. I usually include bits of magic in my corporate presentations to add fun and interest or to illustrate certain points.



Tricks



The Lying Game

Introduction

This is quite possibly my favourite item in all of mentalism.

It's easy to carry round and I almost always have it with me. It's simple and versatile — it can be routine about sorting truth from lies, ESP, astrology, intuition or pretty much any theme you like. The possibilities are endless.

I've found that most people accept my 'Lying Game' routines as genuine, with no suspicion of trickery. Even if you do get the occasional sceptic, the secret is very safe and secure so they won't be able to find anything.

I can use this item to entertain one person for a short time or a large audience for about ten minutes. In fact, the potential is more or less unlimited. All of which isn't bad for just four blank cards! I've been using this item for decades. I hope you get as much use and fun out of it as I do.

Preparation

You need four double-blank Bicycle playing cards. I use poker size, but bridge size will do just as well. You will also need something to carry them round in. A simple plastic card wallet will do [1]. In performance, you'll also need a Sharpie or anything the spectator can use to write on the cards.

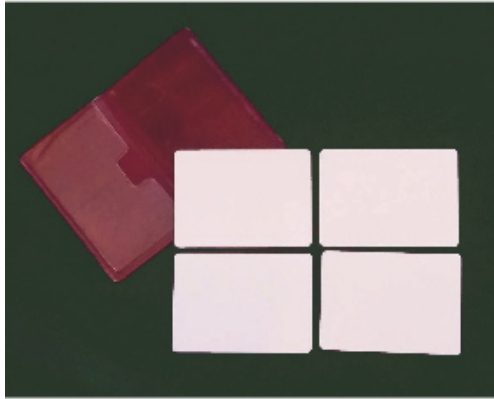
Take the first card. You are going to mark this card so that you can always distinguish it from the other three. However, you are going to use *tactile* marks rather than visual ones. There are many ways to do this and you may have your own favourite method.

Here's just one suggestion. With a fine modelling knife, put a small cross-hatch pattern of light cuts at the upper right and lower left corners of the card [2]. These are too fine to show up on a photo, so I've added lines on photo [3] to show you roughly where the cuts go. When you hold the card in your hand (palm up) and brush your thumb across either of these corners, you should be able to *just about* detect these fine cuts. Aim to make the cross-hatch cuts as light and as hard to detect as possible, while still being able to readily detect them with your thumb. Obviously you will have to experiment a little to get the best results.

Another option is to use a fine emery cloth to remove some of the surface coating of the card, again at the upper right and lower left corners.

Once you have marked the card in whichever way you prefer, turn the card over. With your Sharpie or marker, draw one line on the card. In performance, this will just indicate to your spectator where to write. Put this marked card on top of the other three. Put all four cards in the plastic wallet or whatever you are using to carry them around [5]. You are now ready to perform any one of many possible effects.

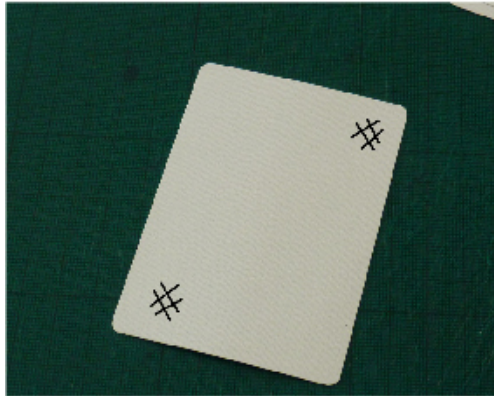
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5



Effect #1: A Stage Routine

Here's my favourite way to use these cards for a stage routine as part of a straightforward mentalism show.

"There's one question that I get asked all the time, and it's something that's of interest to every single person in this room. No matter who you are, this question comes up from time to time in your life.

Here's the question: is it possible to tell when someone is telling the truth or lying? It's a good question. The answer is: sort of. It isn't a perfect science by any means, but I'll try to demonstrate some of the techniques I use. I may not get everything right but I hope you'll at least give me full marks for trying."

Get a man up on stage to help. Let's call him Jack. Take out the packet of four cards. Give Jack the top card, which has a single line drawn on it, together with a Sharpie.

Ask Jack to think of any name that means a lot to his heart, or with which he has a strong emotional connection. Make it clear that you are allowed to see what he writes and so is everyone else — this is not a mindreading trick, the name is not a secret, and he doesn't have to try to conceal whatever name he writes. You have to make this clear because otherwise this is exactly what he will assume.

Once Jack has written this name, e.g. Jill, have him hold it up for everyone to see, and read the name out clearly on his behalf. You want everyone in the room to see this card and know that this is the name that means something to Jack. Don't ask the spectator to explain who Jill is or what the emotional connection is. It's irrelevant, you don't need to take up the time, and you might stray into private and personal territory.

Ask Jack to hold this first card face down, so the name can't be seen anymore.

Hand Jack the remaining three cards one at a time, and ask him to write or draw a completely meaningless cross on each one, like this: X. Then ask him to turn these face down as well. Take the pen off him and put it away.

Here's the position. Jack is holding four cards, writing side down. One of these cards bears a name, Jill, with which he has an emotional connection. The other three bear a meaningless cross. They appear to be identical and blank on the upper side, but the 'Jill' card bears secret tactile markings.

Phase 1

Ask Jack to keep the four cards face down, but to mix them up so they are in a random order. Stand next to Jack so that you are both facing towards the audience, but you can turn to face each other when you need to.

Look away from Jack and close your eyes. Hold out your right palm towards Jack (or left palm if you are left-handed) and ask Jack to place any of the four cards on your palm, face down. He does so. Give these clear instructions to Jack:

"I am going to show this card to you. It will either have a name on it that means something to you in emotional terms, or just a meaningless cross. I will ask you if it means something to you. You can say yes or no. You can lie to me or tell the truth. Understand? Lie or tell the truth, yes or no. Here we go."

As you explain all this to Jack, explore the upper surface of the card for the secret markings. If you can detect the marks, you know it's the card with Jill written on it. If not, it must be one of the meaningless X cards.

With your head still averted away from Jack, and your eyes closed, display the face of the card towards him so that he can look at it. Ask him, "Are you looking at a name that means something to you?"

Pretend to pay very close attention to whatever Jack says in reply, as if you are deriving some sort of clue from his delivery, intonation, inflection or whatever. Take your time over this — it's not meant to be easy.

Give your verdict and show that you have made the correct call. Your precise wording will depend on what's written on the card and what Jack said. For example, if the card just has a meaningless X on it, and Jack has said No, you might say, "I think that's a true statement, and this does not have Jill's name on it." Display the card to Jack and to the audience so everyone can see, and say, "Am I right? Tell me the truth because otherwise this gets very confusing."

Jack will confirm that you called this correctly. Repeat the process with the remaining cards until you have correctly identified the Jill card, apparently just by being able to listen to Jack's voice and make correct judgments about Jill or X, truth or lie.

Phase 2

Give Jack all four cards. Once again, ask him to hold them all face down and to mix them up in a random order.

Say to Jack:

"We'll do exactly the same again, except this time I want you to just *think* of your reply. As before, you can lie or tell the truth, and you can say Yes or No, but you only answer in your mind. You don't say anything out loud."

You then repeat the process, this time apparently basing your verdicts purely on his facial expressions.

Phase 3

For Phase 3, ask Jack's permission to lightly grip his wrist (use whichever arm is nearer to you) so that you can detect his pulse. You then repeat the same process of elimination, apparently by being able to detect some information purely from his pulse.

This concludes the demonstration.

Effect #2: Close-up Astrology

You can wrap the same basic effect in many different presentational guises.

For example, suppose you want to perform an informal close-up effect with an astrological theme for one spectator. Let's call her Jane.

First of all, ask Jane to confirm that she knows her own star sign without saying what it is, and that she also knows the name of several other star signs. Hand over the first card, the one bearing the secret markings, and ask her to write her real star sign on the card. Close your eyes and look away so that you don't know what she's written. Then have her write the names of three other star signs on the other three cards.

Get Jane to mix the four cards face down. You can then make up any sort of divination effect you like. For example, for Phase 1, you could show the cards one at a time to Jane, so that she can read them but you still have no clue what is written on each one. You ask her, "Is this your star sign?" in each case, and tell Jane to say No each time — so on three occasions she will be telling the truth and on one occasion she will be lying. You pretend that just by noticing subtle aspects of the way she replies, you can tell when she is, in fact, looking at her own star sign. So far, so good, but you still don't know which star signs Jane wrote on any of the four cards and, by extension, you don't know her star sign.

For Phase 2, set the four cards aside for a second and ask Jane a few very general questions about her personality and life. I ask questions such as, "Are you mainly an indoors sort of person, or an outdoors sort of person with a great love of nature, or are you a bit of both?" / "Do you believe that, fundamentally, you create your own destiny or your destiny creates and shapes you?" / "Would you say you find it easy to trust friends, or do friends have to earn your trust?" / "Would you say your head rules your heart, your heart rules your head or you're a bit of both?"

When you have asked your questions, pretend to be going through quite a lot of analysis in your mind, sifting and assessing the fragments of information you've been given and attempting to come to some broad conclusions. Say, "If I'm right, there are two signs in particular that I'd expect to see among those four."

Pick up the four cards, detecting the tell-tale marks as you do, and pick out two cards: the one that you know is Jane's star sign and one other. Smile as if your mental calculations have been vindicated: "Yes, I was pretty sure it had to be one of these two."

Hesitate some more, as if finding it difficult to arrive at a final decision, and then place the correct card face down on Jane's hand.

"Jane, this isn't a perfect science and I can be wrong. But I'm pretty sure that your star sign is written there, on the card on your hand. What's your sign?"

Jane tells you, and you then invite her to check the card on her hand.

Variations

I hope you can see the potential of this very simple but very effective bit of magical chicanery.

In the first routine, you can include include any set of pseudo-explanations you want: body language, voice reading, micro-expressions, 'tells' (as in gambling), pulse reading and so on.

The second routine can be themed around astrology, as described here, or almost any other divinatory principle.

You can take the same basic idea and wrap it up in many different presentational guises. Have fun making up your own routines. There's plenty of scope to explore different subjects and themes.

A Cautionary Tale

Many years ago, I started performing the first routine described here. In each performance, there was a point where I said to the spectator, "On these other three cards, please just put a meaningless X".

I was, of course, referring to the letter X, and I drew an X shape in the air to clarify my meaning. However, on one occasion, when I gave this instruction to the spectator it seemed to cause a problem. He looked a bit stressed and it was clear that he was struggling to think of something. It took me a while to figure out that he had misunderstood me completely. He thought that on the three decoy cards I was asking him to write the name of "a meaningless ex-", that is, an ex-girlfriend that he didn't think about or for whom he no longer had any feelings!

Ever since then, I have been very careful to use unambiguous wording: "And on these cards, just draw a meaningless cross", and I draw a X in the air to illustrate.

There are some lessons you can only learn from experience!

Mind Maze

I rarely if ever get hired to present a magic show as such. At this point you can, if you wish, insert the obvious joke: 'I'm not surprised, Ian... I've seen your act! Ha ha ha, chortle.' Very good.

I *do* sometimes get invited by big companies to give a talk or provide some training. On these occasions, I usually add touches of magic and mentalism in order to add a bit of entertainment or illustrate a relevant point. In other words, the companies that hire me are paying for some (theoretically) useful content rather than *just* to be entertained.

When I talk to potential clients about my work, I'm not trying to position myself as an *entertainer*, first and foremost. I'm trying to show that I can offer some *useful* training or coaching that delivers *practical business benefits*, for example to do with persuasion or creative problem-solving. This item, 'Mind Maze', helps me to make a good impression on the people I meet. I take it with me everywhere I go. As you will see, it's not a magic trick. It's an intriguing and entertaining demonstration that may well encourage someone to hire me for a talk, seminar or training event.

Props And Preparation

I have a cut-out five of spades. All the parts of the card that would normally be black are in fact cut away, leaving holes [1]. I also have a piece of dark blue paper [2] that I can place behind this cut out card. While this piece of paper is dark and very *close* to black, it is clearly dark blue and not *actually* black.

On either side of a double-blank card I have two versions of the Federal Express logo. The first version has the colours the wrong way round (orange then purple) [3]. The other side has the correct version [4]. I made these just by downloading the logo from Google Images, resizing it, making two copies and editing one to switch the colours. I printed both versions and stuck them on to either side of the card with spray glue.

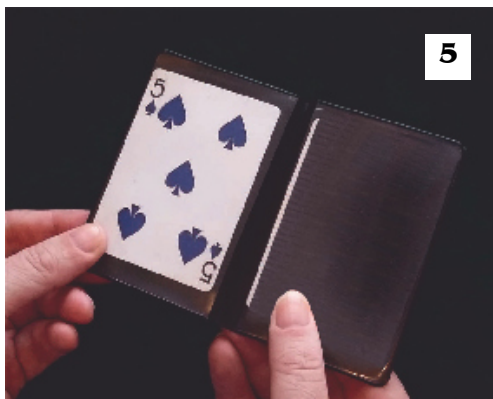
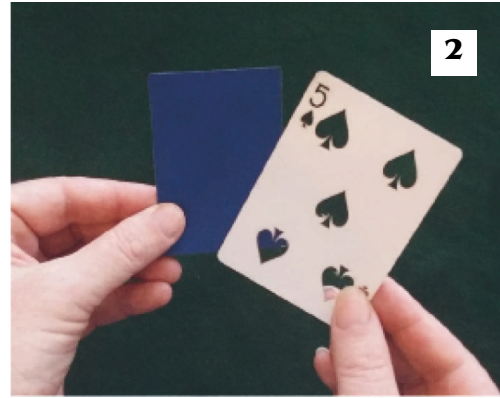
I carry these cards in a card wallet that has one clear pocket and one opaque. On the clear side is the cut-out card with the dark blue paper behind it. On the other side is the Fedex card with the *incorrect* version face up, so that this will be seen first when I remove it from the wallet [5].

Presentation

Suppose I have met someone who might be interested in my services, or who wants to get a better idea of what I do. Let's call him Andy. I say:

"A lot of my work has to do with the mind and how it works, or sometimes *doesn't* work quite as perfectly as we might like. For example, there can be quite a difference between what we *see* or *perceive* and what's *real*.

It's important to be aware of this problem because it crops up all the time. For example, is a problem *really* impossible to solve... or does it just *appear* that way? Is that new project really too difficult to take on... or do we just perceive it that way? When people understand the gap between perception and reality, it can make a big difference. Let me show you what I mean."



I take out the wallet but I don't open it yet. I tell Andy I'd like to show him something for five seconds and then I'll ask him what he saw. I open the wallet, holding it about a metre (one yard) away from Andy. He sees what appears to be a playing card, the five of spades, inside the wallet. After displaying this for just five seconds, I close the wallet and ask Andy what he saw. He says it's the five of spades.

"Okay, I know you *think* you saw the five of spades, but you didn't. Honestly. I *promise* that you didn't. Here, why not have just one more look."

At this point, Andy feels intrigued by this confident assertion that he did *not* see the five of spades when he feels pretty sure that he *did*. I repeat the display and Andy once again believes he is seeing the five of spades.

"Let me explain. What you think you saw is something quite familiar — a playing card you have seen a million times before. In fact, what you were looking at is something you have *never seen before in your life*."

I open the wallet and *slowly* extract the five of spades, showing that it is in fact a cut-out card with holes where the black ink should be. I leave the dark blue card behind. Of course, Andy has never seen a cut-out card before so it seems rather intriguing.

"It was difficult for you to reach the correct conclusion because all your past experience involves cards printed with ink, as opposed to being cut out like this. You were looking straight at it, but reached an incorrect conclusion. Don't feel bad... it works the same on everyone. Here's the point. The same thing happens in life and in business all the time. Sometimes we only see what we *can* see, based on our past experience, rather than *what's really there*."

But wait... there's more. You were pretty sure you were looking at the five of spades, a *black* card. But it was in front of this piece of blue paper. You can see this is clearly blue, not black. It's a dark shade of blue, for sure, but it's most definitely *not* black. Yet you perceived it as a black, again based on past experience. And even now that you know what you're looking at, the effect persists. As soon as I slip the card back in position, your brain tells you that it's a black playing card."

I slip the card back into the wallet, in front of the dark blue paper, and display it once more at a slight distance from Andy. He can see that it looks like a black playing card.

"So there you go. One card, two examples of perception being some way off from reality. And that's what I try to do in my work. I try to get important points across using demonstrations like this that people find interesting."

Let me show you just one more thing. It only takes a moment. Do you know Federal Express, the courier company? You've heard of them, right? Do you know about the secret arrow hidden inside their logo? Let me show you."

I take out the FedEx card, showing the side with the colours the wrong way round.

"Can you see the arrow? Look at the white negative space between the 'E' and the 'x'."

There is indeed an arrow in the logo, formed by the negative space where the E and the x meet. This is intentional. The logo was created by graphic designer Lindon Leader and you can find interviews with him online.

I show Andy the ‘hidden’ arrow in the logo. Most people who have never seen it before find it mildly interesting.

“This is another illustration of what I was just talking about a moment ago. I mentioned that we often don’t see reality at all. It’s just happened again. You think you’re looking at the Fedex logo but I promise you’re not. I promise you’ve never seen this before in your life. The colours are completely the wrong way round. *This* is the Fedex logo.”

I flip the card over to show Andy the *correct* version of the logo.

“This is the one you’ve seen a million times on adverts and vans. The colours always go from cold to warm. Now, why did you think the first version [I flip the card over again] was the usual logo? Because of two things. First, I used a technique called ‘priming’. I *mentioned* the Fedex logo before I *showed* it, so your mind was primed to expect it.

Then, I used *misdirection*. As soon as I took this card out, I got you to focus on one detail, the arrow, so you stopped evaluating what you were looking at and just accepted it as the usual logo, even though it’s *completely* wrong! And that’s another demonstration of the difference between perception and reality.”

This concludes the demonstration. This item *always* gets a good reaction and it *does* bring me work. I think it’s a lot of entertainment, interest and education to get out of a small wallet with a couple of cards in it. I always have this item in my wallet. It means I always have something to show people, even if it’s not appropriate to perform a magic trick.

Notes

Where can you get a cut-out card? I got my first one by buying a great trick from my friend Charlie Frye. In one of his brilliant lectures he featured a trick called ‘Missing’, which is published by Alan Wong. This trick features a cut-out card. I won’t say exactly what happens in the trick but it’s one of the finest close-up card effects you can perform. If you like really strong, close-up material that connects with people and makes a big impression, then I recommend ‘Missing’. I bought the trick on the spot.

What are your alternatives? I suppose if you’re *really* good at arts and crafts, you could possibly find a way to make a cut-out card one for yourself.

Some graphic design stores, and some magic dealers, offer laser cutting and may be able to cut a card design, such as the five of spades, into a blank card for you. By the way, you don’t have to use a black spot card. You could also have a cut-out red spot card that you display with a background that is actually a shade of pink or orange — *close* to pure red but not *actually* pure red. This would also work.

I had a small number of cut-out cards made to sell at lectures but these have now all gone so please don’t write to me.

If you’re interested, the precise shade of blue that I use is:
Pantone reference 295 // RGB: R00 G56 B107 // CMYK: C97 M77 Y19 K1
Hex #00386B or #00396A

Venus Mind Trap

Effect

First, you give the entire audience the chance to experience for themselves that telepathy or ESP is real. Then, a spectator thinks of something *without* writing anything down and you read their mind.

This is the easiest way I know to involve the entire audience in a mentalism effect *and* deliver a thoroughly convincing demonstration of pure misreading. There are hardly any props and you can perform this item anywhere. It all hinges on some subtle deceptions that allow the audience to fool themselves into seeing a miracle.

Method

You may feel disappointed when I say this is sort of an ‘instant stooge’ effect, but before you turn the page... wait! It’s an instant stooge effect with a few distinctive characteristics. If you have always despised these kinds of effects until now, this *might* be one you actually like.

You need a small stack of blank business cards or postcards. On the card *second from top* write “Your star sign / A favourite song” on two lines, as shown.

Let’s say you’re performing for a small business group. You say:

“These little experiments I like to try with mindreading and so on, aren’t really important in themselves. They’re really just a metaphor. You see, I believe the human mind is wonderful. Whatever goals and ambitions you have and whatever you want to achieve, I think that having a positive attitude makes a big difference. The things I do are just a way to help people to stay positive and to believe in themselves, the power of their mind and what they can achieve.”

As you say this, look around the audience to find someone who seems to agree with you about the importance of positive thinking. Let’s call her Ann. Ask Ann to come and sit on a chair in front of the rest of the group, facing towards them. A little later on, Ann will be writing something on a card. When she does so, it’s important that nobody else can see what she’s writing.

<p>Your star sign:</p> <hr/>
<p>Your favourite song:</p> <hr/>

Phase 1

Say to Ann that you're going to ask her for a bit of secret information.

Take out your small stack of blank cards. On the top one, write 'Your star sign:'. Don't let anyone see what you write. *Do* make it obvious that you're only writing *one* line consisting of two or three *short* words. This is a crucial part of the deception.

Go over to someone at the far left or far right of the main group. Let's call him John. Let him (and only him) see what you've just written, saying, "You're my witness. Please remember the piece of information I've asked Ann to write down."

Go back to Ann and apparently hand her the card that you have just shown to John. In reality, you give Ann the card *second* from the top of your stack, the one you prepared earlier. Ask Ann to look at the information you've asked for and to fill in the card. Ditch the rest of the cards in your pocket.

While Ann writes on the card, talk to the rest of the group a bit more about positive thinking and the wonders of the human mind. When Ann has finished writing, say:

"I'm allowed to see what you've written, for reasons that will become clear in a moment. But it will just be our secret, okay?"

Take the card from Ann, read what she wrote and then ditch the card in such a way that it cannot be retrieved or checked. Address the main group:

"I want you all to try some mindreading so you can feel what it's like. We'll start with something simple. Try to guess what *type* of information I asked Ann for. I'll give you a clue. It was one of these three things. I either asked her for her star sign, her favourite movie or her favourite celebrity. John knows what I asked for, of course, because he saw what I wrote. But the rest of you will have to use your intuition, your telepathic instincts.

Just try to read my mind, or Ann's mind, and sense whether I asked Ann for her star sign, favourite movie or favourite celebrity. Even if you don't believe in this sort of thing, join in anyway! You might surprise yourself!"

You are subtly re-enforcing the notion that Ann only wrote down *one* piece of information.

"Ann and I will send you the correct answer telepathically. We're working together — two heads are better than one! All of you, try to hear our thoughts in your mind."

The 'two heads are better than one' reference helps you to create a sense of collaboration with Ann. You are *both* concentrating on the correct answer while everyone else tries to telepathically receive it.

Give everyone in the group a bit of time to try to guess what type of information you asked Ann to provide.

"Since there are only three possibilities, we'd expect about one third of you to guess correctly just by chance. But I'm pretty sure *more* than a third of you will turn out to be right. Let me tell you the answer. I actually asked Ann for her star sign. Isn't that right?"

Ann agrees and you can nod to John for additional confirmation. Ask everyone in the group who guessed correctly to raise their hand. Look around the room, look amazed and delighted, and *pretend* that significantly more than one third of the group got it right.

“Wow! You can put your hands down but that was clearly more than a third of you. Well done everybody! You must be a pretty psychic group!”

Because you’re standing in front of the group, and they’re all sitting down, you’re in a better position than anyone else to *see*, or *pretend* to see, how many people have their hands raised. Anyone actually *in* the group has a far less clear view. This makes it easy for you to mis-represent the situation and pretend that far more than one third of the group got the answer right. Also, you only ask people to raise their hands for a *short* time, so no one in the group gets much of an opportunity to correctly count the number of raised hands.

Phase 2

Move on to the second phase of the routine. Let’s suppose for the sake of this description that Ann wrote ‘Libra’.

“Okay, so you all know I asked Ann for her star sign. But which sign is she? I know the answer because I had a look. Again, I’ll give you three options. I’ll tell you that Ann’s star sign is either Capricorn, Aries or Libra.

Again, everyone try to tune in to the correct answer using your intuition or your telepathic gifts. Ann and I will both concentrate and send you the answer telepathically. Try to hear our voices in your mind. It’s either Capricorn, Aries or Libra. We’d expect one third of you to get it right just by chance but I suspect the actual percentage will be much higher.”

Encourage everyone to try to tune into your thoughts. After a suitable amount of time, announce the correct answer and ask those who got it right to raise their hands. Again, pretend to be pleased and astounded by the high percentage of people who somehow sensed the correct answer.

Invite everyone who has so far guessed correctly *twice* to raise their hand. Again, pretend that the number of raised hands is somehow exceptional or way above what would be expected by chance alone.

“Wow! You’re obviously the psychic superstars of the group! You can put your hands down. You know, the odds against getting this kind of success are astronomical!”

Phase 3

“So far, you’ve all experienced what it’s like to try a bit of telepathy. Maybe it didn’t work for some of you but it *did* work for *most* of you. We’ve seen some clear signs of strong intuitive gifts.

Let me try something. Mm... we all love music, right? Ann, I want you to think of a favourite song. Just like you did before with the business card [mime the act of writing on a business card] but this time don’t write anything, just imagine it in your mind, okay?”

This ambiguous wording is another crucial part of the deception. This is what Ann understands you to mean:

“Earlier, you *wrote* the name of a favourite song. But now I want you to just *think* about it”.

To everyone else, it sounds like you’re saying this:

“Earlier, you wrote down a piece of information. This time you’re just going to *think* about something *without* writing anything down.”

Ann confirms that she is concentrating on a favourite song. Get everyone in the group to join in as before, trying to telepathically sense Ann’s thoughts.

Take out your standard issue mentalist’s scribble pad. Say to Ann:

“As I said, this isn’t about me being important. I’m trying to help people to believe in themselves and to have a positive attitude. You understand?”

At this point, Ann will probably indicate that she understands and is going to play along in exactly the way you want her to. If you sense that she’s reluctant, all is not lost. Simply run this final phase like the first two, as a group exercise in telepathy. Everyone tries to guess the song and you deliberately make your guess close but incorrect. When Ann names the song, you show that you didn’t get it entirely right.

The fact that you haven’t tried to make yourself look impressively telepathic gives Ann little motive to ‘expose’ you. If she does try to say that she wrote down the song title earlier, she’s going to sound a bit confused. Everyone could tell, from watching you write on the business card, that you only asked for one piece of information. There’s no evidence to the contrary (because you got rid of it) and John is your witness if you need one. In any case, you guessed the wrong song — if it’s a trick, why didn’t you get it right? Your secret is safe.

Assuming Ann seems inclined to co-operate, continue:

“Focus on your song, and hear it play in your mind. You’re now going to have some strange experiences. First of all, try to turn the volume up. You can’t, can you? Isn’t that strange? And you’re not pretending, are you? This really does feel a bit strange, doesn’t it?”

Most people who try to ‘turn up the volume’ of a song they are imagining in their mind discover that they can’t, and find this a little intriguing. Everyone sees Ann confirm that this is really happening in her mind.

“Here’s another weird thing. Hear the words of the song in your mind. Now, hear them as if I were singing them to you in *my* voice. It feels strange, doesn’t it? It’s as if I’ve managed to get in among your thoughts. And it really does feel strange, doesn’t it?”

Most people find this *does* feel strange. Everyone has now seen Ann confirm twice that she is experiencing strange sensations in her mind.

“Now I’ll try to hear the same sounds that you can hear.”

Write down the name of Ann’s favourite song on your pad, either perfectly accurately or close enough to seem impressive, and keep it concealed for now. Ann names her song and you show everyone what you wrote down. You have successfully read Ann’s mind! What’s more, it looks as if she hadn’t even written anything down. It was just pure, clean, telepathy!

Notes

Let me mention a few points.

By using a peek or an impression device, you could make this into a routine that fools Ann as well. I am aware of this. I’m intentionally presenting the ‘instant stooge’ version for those who might find it as useful as I have over the years.

By observing the responses to your opening spiel about positive thinking, you can choose the spectator most likely to play along. Also, the emotional slant of the introduction practically ensures Ann’s full co-operation. You make it clear that this whole routine is about helping people to feel good about themselves, their potential and their future. Who would *not* want to help people in this way?

You get the chance to check whether Ann seems likely to play along *before* you commit to the final phase. If you get the feeling that she won’t play along, you can bail out safely as described. There is no evidence of any deception and if you really need deniability you’ve got it.

When everything goes smoothly, as it will 99% of the time, everyone sees Ann genuinely reporting that she’s experiencing weird things in her mind before the final reveal, which helps to create the illusion of real telepathy.

I first published this effect in the August 2015 issue of MAGIC magazine. I also performed and explained it in my second Penguin Magic lecture, which is part of their ‘Acts’ series.

Thetalia (Miracle Poker Deal)

Effect

A spectator takes any deck of cards and shuffles it thoroughly. You take back the deck and demonstrate your impressive ability to deal winning poker hands at will. You also show that you can deal pairs, three-of-a-kind and a 'full house' more or less whenever you want.

No restrictions, no deck switch, hardly any sleight of hand. To laymen, this looks like an incredible demonstration of the skills used by 'card sharps' and 'gambling cheats'.

Method

The method, as explained in the lecture, is very simple.

1. Glimpse the top and bottom cards. If you can use them, do so. If not, perform another short cut or shuffle sequence so you have new top and bottom cards to play with.
2. When you *can* make use of a card, from either the top or bottom of the deck (or both), produce it using whatever moves or flourishes you have in your repertoire.
3. Keep giving the deck little cuts and shuffles throughout the routine. Be opportunistic and make the most of whichever cards happen to become available.
4. Keep talking and make it seem as if everything you do is *planned* and *intentional*. The talking is the most important part of the method. If your patter is convincing, spectators will believe you're in complete control of the deck and can produce almost any cards you want. If the talking is not convincing, then the routine will fall flat.

This is literally my favourite card routine and the thing I most love to perform for laymen. However, to the best of my knowledge, hardly anyone else performs it. Maybe I'm just delusional and it's really not that good. This is strange, because I have countless happy memories of performing this routine for lay audiences all over the world and seeing them absolutely enthralled, delighted and enchanted by it. There are some non-magician friends who *insist* that I perform this routine every time I see them!

Maybe one reason nobody performs this routine is that I gave it a stupid and unhelpful name. When I first came up with this item, I called it 'Thetalia'. This stands for '**the talking is all**', because most of the 'method' is just talking in a convincing way. This wasn't a good name. I should have called it something more accessible, such as 'The Golden Poker Deal' or 'Poker Impossible'. If I had, perhaps more people would have noticed it and started to use it. This is just one example of the stupid and poorly considered decisions I've made in my life. There are many more.

If you perform this routine, here's my top tip: make it abundantly clear from the outset that although the routine is about poker, gambling and cheating at cards, *you don't have to know anything about poker to enjoy it*. This is true. If you don't make this point clear, a lot of specs will mentally 'switch off' before you get very far into the routine.

A Card Warp Script

Card Warp is a close-up card effect invented by Roy Walton and Jeff Busby. I think it's one of the greatest effects in magic. It thrilled, delighted and intrigued me when I first saw it and I'm still in love with it today.

In this booklet, I'm obviously not going to explain the workings of the trick itself. I didn't create it so it's not mine to publish or give away. You can find the details from many sources. What I want to share is just my *script* and *presentation*. I've been using this script for about twenty years and I know how much it delights people.

A short note about preparation: if you're a skilled close-up worker, you can start with any two cards and, while talking to spectators, accomplish the necessary preparation surreptitiously, without anyone noticing. I don't have any skills so I do things the dumb, easy way and prepare pairs of cards in advance. I start with two high contrast cards, such as a red court card and a high value black spot card. I do the necessary prep and then stash this pair of cards in my wallet so they're ready for use. In fact, I generally carry two or three pairs of cards around with me all the time. I know that these days younger magicians sometimes refer to their 'EDC' effects, meaning 'everyday carry'. I guess having two or three pairs of cards set up for Card Warp form part of my EDC.

With all that said, here's my script for this beautiful and beguiling gem of magic.

"In a moment I'd love to show you something amazing that you've never seen before and — here's the best part — *you* get to do the magic yourself!

First of all, can I just ask you a question? Sometimes, when I hear friends talk about a situation in their life where they want to make a few changes, they say, "I'm going to turn this thing around", or, "I'm going to turn this situation around". Have you ever heard people say this or use a similar expression?

What I'd like you to do is to think of a situation in your own life, or some aspect of your life, where you'd maybe like to 'turn things around' or make a few changes. By the way, I'm *not* going to ask you what it is. It will remain sealed inside the privacy of your own mind. But I'd just like you to think of something, some aspect of your life, where you'd like to 'turn things around', so to speak. Perhaps it's the sort of thing where you have some doubts about how much you can achieve or whether you can change the things you want. Okay? Can you think of something? I promise I'm not going to ask you what it is. But have you thought of something?

Okay... let me show you this. I've got these two cards that you can see all around, front and back, and I'm not trying to hide the fact that they've got these folds in them. This one folds this way, this one folds the other way.

And because they've got these folds, they can go together like this, and this one can sort of slide back and forth, like a train.

Now, let me show you something. Just think about that situation in your life where you'd like to turn things around... but you maybe sometimes lack confidence about what you can achieve."

[First push through]

“Isn’t that the craziest thing you ever saw? Now, you know about magic stuff, right? They never let you see what’s happening round the back because you’d see how the trick’s done. But no... see, I can show you the front, back, all around, everything’s fair and yet the magic still happens.

Now, the first time, *I* did the magic. This time, *you’re* going to do it — if you want to. May I politely ask for your consent to very *lightly* hold the tip of your finger? Okay, here we go. This time, you’re going to turn things around. You just have to believe you can do it.”

[I guide the spectator’s finger for the second push through]

“Isn’t that amazing? You believed you could do it and you did it!

Now, let me add an extra bit, just for you. I don’t normally do this. I’ll let you actually see it happen, in real time.”

[Third push through, with the corners of the outer card folded back to create the illusion of the ‘turn’ happening in real time]

“Isn’t that amazing? But this is my point. Sometimes, you just have to believe in yourself a little more. With a little confidence, and the right belief, you *can* turn things around — even when it seems challenging or impossible.

Now, let me just finish this off. A lot of people say to me, ‘Ian, we know what happens at *this* end. And we can see what happens at *that* end. But what on earth is going on in the middle?’ So, I’ll show you. Can you hold your hands out for me like a little book?”

[Do the tear down the middle, revealing the inner card to be half face-up and half face-down. Place the cards in the spectator’s hands]

“And they are yours to keep, as a souvenir. Now, I know that in one sense they aren’t much of a keepsake. They’re just some torn up playing cards. But you can keep them and, whenever in your life you want to ‘turn things around’ — even if it seems tough or impossible — think back to this moment, and these cards, and remember that with just a little bit of self-confidence, plus a touch of magical thinking, you have the power to turn *any* situation around.”

I’ve been performing this effect, using this script, for decades. It flows nicely and it *does* make a big impression on people. Almost everyone you show this to *will* want to keep the torn pieces as a reminder to stay positive and to believe they can ‘turn things around’ in their life.

Incidentally, I’d like to add that both James Brown and Quentin Reynolds have their own excellent versions of Card Warp that are well worth seeing if you ever get the chance.

Home Astral Projection

Introduction

This is a cold reading script that enables you to describe someone's home or living space, even if you don't know anything about it.

If you don't know anything about cold reading, and have never tried it, this is not the right place to start. I suggest you find a good source of basic information about cold reading, try it out until you get the hang of it and *then* come back to this item. However, assuming you have at least a basic grasp of cold reading, I hope you'll have some fun with this item. It's one of my favourite things to do for complete strangers.

You must *never* perform this item if it will make the person you're talking to feel insecure, or lead them to suspect that you have actually visited their home *in secret* to gain information. If there is any risk of this, you may want to change the premise a little. For example you could ask them to think of any *other* home that they have ever visited, such as a friend's home or the house they grew up in. All that matters is that they know this place well enough to answer a few questions about it.

The Script

You should only present this item one-on-one, as a private conversation. It is not something for other people to watch.

For this explanation, I will assume you are in conversation with someone called Terry.

Say you'd like to try a little bit of 'astral projection' or 'remote viewing', in the sense of trying to use your mind to travel to a place that you haven't actually been to or visited. Invite Terry just to think about his own home or living space.

So, let's assume Terry is concentrating on a home or living space that he knows well. Act in whatever way you feel is appropriate for a little bit of 'remote viewing', and say you will try to pick up on a few impressions.

First Statement

"I'm probably not going to get everything right straight away. It doesn't always work like that. Some of the impressions I get might make more sense to you than to me, but let's work together and see how it goes. If some of it works, great, and if not then maybe I'm just having an off day. To begin with, I want to go to the main entrance of this place, this home, and see what I would see if I was at the main door. Now, why am I seeing a door that's white or mainly white, a pale colour?"

If this is a hit, use it for validation.

"Yes, that's what I was picking up from you. Maybe this door isn't *completely* white but that's the overall impression I was getting, a very pale colour, and I'm glad it's mostly correct. We seem to be on the right wavelength."

If this first statement is not correct:

“Really? That’s interesting. I take your word for it, but I was getting this sort of white, pale-ish image. Maybe I’m not quite focused yet — there’s something white near the door or around it. A sign, a letterbox, a number or numbers... I’m picking up on *something* I would see if I were standing right there.”

In most cases, Terry will be able to think of something that could fit. If not:

“Okay, let’s move on. I may come back to this later because if it’s not the actual door itself then I was getting lots of white light and brightness, like sunshine or like you’d get at night time from a lamp post or a security light maybe.”

One of these references to some sort of bright light may win recognition and agreement from Terry. If so, it’s a hit. If not, just move on.

Second Statement

“Okay, I’m going inside now, past the door. I want to pause here for a moment. I’m just inside the front door or main entrance, but no further. Here, to my side, there’s a rectangular shape on the wall. What’s that? Is it a mirror or a picture, or am I not quite seeing it? It’s been there a while.”

If this is a hit, use it for validation. If not:

“This is puzzling me now. I’m sorry it doesn’t seem to mean anything to you, but I’m seeing this sort of flat, rectangular shape, and it’s just inside of the door and to one side. Maybe it’s a piece of paper, a message, a chart, a photo... I’m sorry I can’t quite bring it into focus but it’s definitely there. Or at least it was until recently. Are you sure this doesn’t mean anything at all to you?”

This is about 99% certain to meet with agreement or partial agreement. If not:

“Well, I don’t know what to make of it. Maybe I’m picking up on something that *used* to be there. That can happen sometimes. Let’s move on.”

Third Statement

“Let me move on now with the help of your mind. I’m moving forward and going into the main living room or living space, and I’m picking up several different impressions all at once. Let me try to disentangle them. Okay, first of all, there’s something here that isn’t from here, if you see what I mean. It came from far away, like a picture or souvenir from a different country or from a vacation. What is that? I can sense that it’s something that perhaps brings to mind a range of emotions, memories and associations.”

This is 99% certain to meet with agreement or partial agreement. If not:

“I won’t argue with you because that’s not what I do. However, it feels a bit strange because I’m definitely picking up on something along the lines I described. I’m sorry it doesn’t seem to mean anything to you at the moment, but perhaps you’ll remember something later. Let’s carry on looking around.”

Fourth Statement

“Also, in this same space, the main living area, there’s a collection of some kind. Who’s the collector? Is this you? I’m seeing a set of items that belong together. Things you’ve won, collected or brought together, or someone close to you has. I don’t think it’s just books or music. Help me bring it into focus.”

This may well be a hit. If not:

“I hear what you say, but I can still sense this collection of items. Perhaps it’s something from the past and it’s been moved or tidied away. It could be something simple like a set of cards on display, like Christmas cards, or a set of matching pictures. Would I not see photos with some of the same faces in them? It could be as simple as that — a collection of faces and images.”

It is highly likely that Terry will be able to find something that matches.

Fifth Statement

“I’m picking up on something else now. Yes, I’m looking around and... tell me, what’s the thing that’s broken or doesn’t work like it’s meant to, and you’ve sort of fixed it temporarily? It may not be all that obvious, but I’m clearly picking up on something that you’d like to work perfectly and reliably, but it doesn’t.”

If this is a hit, Terry will provide some detail and you can use this for validation. If not:

“Well, okay, I accept what you’re saying but maybe what I’m seeing is on the way. Something that doesn’t work as it should, and you’ll attempt some sort of improvised fix or repair. I think that’s what I’m picking up on.”

Sixth Statement

“Oh, this is interesting. I’m still in the main living room or living space, and I can see something in one corner, like a rectangular shape, a screen or glass, but it’s not the window and it’s not the TV screen. It’s something else. What is it? Am I just seeing something like a photo or picture frame, or a large chart or poster of some kind... what is this? Can you help me?”

Terry will almost certainly be able to think of something that matches. If not, just appear slightly bemused by the impressions you’re getting, be politely apologetic and move on.

Seventh Statement

“There’s something else I’m getting now, and it’s not just about what I would see with my eyes if I were actually in the room. It’s more about things that have been said, and some of the emotions and feelings that you associate with this space. If I go back about three to five days, there was something that touched on two themes at the same time. There’s a sense of conflict because you heard something or said something about a specific hope, or something you really want to happen, and at the same time there was a note of doubt. This is clearly going to mean more to you than it does to me, but it could be about health.”

See if Terry responds positively to this. If yes, it’s a hit. If not:

“Or the health of a relationship. It’s one of those emotional areas where there’s definitely two threads woven together — your hope and desire, and the way you want things to be, but tinged with a little nagging doubt about what might lie in store. And these words or these feelings are associated with this space for some reason, and quite recently. I suppose it could even be financial health, but I didn’t want to go into that area. Can you relate to these feelings?”

I’d be very surprised if Terry can’t find a match with any of this.

Conclusion

By this stage, you have navigated your way through seven statements about a house or a home you have never visited or seen. Unless you have been profoundly unlucky, at least 70-75% of what you’ve said will have sounded either correct or close enough for psychic purposes. On very lucky days, you will have one solid hit after another!

It’s time to draw the ‘demonstration’ to a conclusion in whatever way seems suitable. Here’s one way to do it.

“I’m going to stop there, for a couple of reasons. One is that when I start picking up on feelings and emotions, it might get a bit personal and that’s not really what I want to get into, at least not here and now. The other is that I’m not getting quite as much focus and clarity as I usually do — maybe I’m just a bit tired — and I don’t think I’m going to get much more for the time being.”

And that’s all there is to it. If you remember this script, and the various options involved, you can use this at any time, anywhere, with anyone you meet. It’s a very nice impromptu item to carry around in your head. Here’s a summary:

White door
Rectangular shape on wall inside
Something not from here
Collection
Broken
Rectangular shape in the corner (not window or TV)
Feelings, a conversation, a hope and conflict

Gemini Thoughts

As I expect you know, 'Gemini Twins' is a Karl Fulves trick (see credits later) involving a force of two cards. I absolutely *love* this way of forcing two cards. I think it's powerfully deceptive and highly versatile. In my lecture I tried to share some of my love for this double force and suggested a few ways of using it.

The Basic Effect

I'll start by describing the basic Gemini Twins effect with a couple of minor additions:

- A presentation based on the spectator 'feeling something inside'.
- A strong psychological convincer.

For the sake of this description, I'll imagine you are performing one-on-one for a spectator called Sophie. You are going to force whichever two cards are on the top and bottom of the deck. Let's say these are the 6C and JH respectively. Skim through the deck and take out the twins of these two cards, the 6S and JD. Give these to Sophie to use as 'marker' cards.

Explain to Sophie that you're going to deal cards on to the table one at a time and, as you do, you would like her to take one of her marker cards and place it face up on to the packet of dealt cards, marking one place in the deck. Say:

"Please do this before we get past halfway in the deck because we're going to do it twice, OK? However, don't just do this at random or else it won't work. I'd like you to wait until you 'feel' something inside that tells you now is the right time to put down your first marker card. It may be an intellectual feeling in your mind, a feeling in your heart or just a 'gut' feeling, a sense of intuition or a moment of inspiration you can't really explain. Whatever you feel, just go with it, okay?"

Proceed to deal cards face down on to the table, one at a time. Whenever she wishes to do so, Sophie places one of her marker cards, face up, on to the packet of dealt cards. Ask her if this just 'felt right' for some reason. You may want to encourage Sophie to try to describe this 'feeling inside' that somehow guided her actions.

Place the remainder of the deck on to the packet of dealt cards and pick up the whole lot. Repeat the process one more time, making sure that Sophie understands what you want her to do. You deal, Sophie puts down her second marker card whenever she feels it's the right time to do so and you place the rest of the deck on top of all. Your work is now done!

Ribbon spread the entire deck across the table. Sophie's two face-up marker cards will now be visible at two places in the spread. Say:

"Let's just take out whichever cards happen to be next to yours."

Remove the two marker cards and the cards immediately above them (which will be your two force cards). Note that you do not *say* 'above'. You say 'next to' instead. This is a little bit more deceptive.

Here comes the psychological convincer that I mentioned. It isn't *essential* for the trick to work. However, it's a very sweet and deceptive way to encourage spectators to fool themselves.

Gather up the spread. Turn the entire deck face up and ribbon spread it again. With your hands, indicate the top half of the deck. Ask Sophie:

"Just out of interest, during the first deal, roughly whereabouts do you think you placed your first marker card? I mean, do you think you did it quite quickly or waited a little longer? Was it about here... or here?"

Gesture to different parts of the upper half of the deck. Wherever Sophie points to, give her a small ego stroke by agreeing with her and suggesting she's good at estimating.

"Yes, I think you're about right. Well remembered!"

Just point out that if she had put down her marker card a little earlier, or a little later, it would have ended up next to a different card.

Indicate the lower half of the deck and repeat the question — whereabouts does Sophie think she placed her second marker card? Without labouring the point, let Sophie see that if she had put down her marker card a little earlier or a little later, the result would have been very different.

Clear away this face-up spread of cards and set them to one side. You don't want them to be a visual distraction from the climax of the routine.

"I'm going to show you something rather surprising. Just before I do, I want you to remember one thing. If you tell people about this, they'll probably dismiss it as just some sort of trick. But remember, you actually *felt something inside* that told you when to put your marker cards down. Call it intuition, ESP or whatever you want, but you felt it and it was *real*. Now, you know, even the greatest magician in the world can't fake that! You felt it, you experienced it for yourself. Just remember that. And remember that *you* did this, not me."

Let Sophie turn over the two cards that were next to her marker cards. Surprise, surprise... they form two sets of twins!

Notes

So, there you have it: a conventional Gemini Twins with a couple of extra touches.

Asking the spectator to place her marker cards down when she feels 'something inside' is, I believe, a nice presentational twist. As you correctly point out, even the greatest magician in the world couldn't fake whatever it was she felt. This can be a very powerful presentational grace note that turns 'a card trick' into something that seems more significant and memorable. I've used this and similar ruses many times.

The part where you spread the cards face up and invite Sophie to estimate whereabouts she placed her two marker cards is, as I've said, not essential for the trick to work. If you prize directness and efficiency above all else, and always want to find the straightest line to a magical climax, then this won't interest you. However, I think it's a very strong psychological convincer that greatly enhances the perceived impossibility of the effect.

Variations

This beautiful double force is very versatile. Let's look at its constituent elements:

- The type of cards or card-like items you use.
- The nature of the prediction.
- The premise.
- What you give to the spectator to use as 'marker' cards.

You don't have to use the 'twins' concept, in which the two marker cards somehow locate their own twins in the deck. You can just use this procedure to force two cards and predict them in any way you wish. (My apologies to anyone who thinks that dispensing with the 'twins' concept is heresy.)

Let's start with the cards or card-like items you use in the routine. You can use a regular deck; a deck from a different culture that looks slightly different and intriguing; tarot cards, picture postcards or anything else you want.

Also, you can get some blank face or double-blank cards and write, draw or print whatever you want on them. This means you can devise a routine using any theme you want: celebrities, places, song titles, movies, countries, feelings and emotions... or anything else you'd like to use as the theme for your routine.

Suppose you're into sport. Get some blank-face cards and on each one write the name of someone famous or pre-eminent in the world of sport. Choose the two names you're going to force and have these names engraved on a metal trophy or plaque small enough to be practical to carry round.

Here's another example. Suppose you want to theme the routine around runes and other ancient symbols. Again, get a packet of blank face cards and on each one draw a rune, symbol or shape that is said to have some mystical significance. Choose which two you're going to force and have these carved, in wood, in a small presentation box you hand to the spectator before you start.

It's fun to devise different types of predictions. For example, your prediction could take the form of a photo, or audio message, that you send to the spectator's phone at the start (obviously asking her not to look at or listen to until the end). Then again, your prediction could be a link to a prediction page on your website or on the company's website (at a corporate gig). Have fun dreaming up different types of predictions!

The premise for the routine can be literally anything you want: blind chance; the power of coincidence; fate and destiny, 'some things are just meant to be'; like attracts like; romance and the way all hearts eventually find their true match; positive thinking and being able to do things that seem impossible at first glance; the power of trusting your intuition... and so on.

Finally, think about the two items the spectator uses to mark two positions in the deck. These can be two cards from the deck you're using; two small envelopes containing predictions; two pieces of paper bearing 'mystical' symbols; two halves of a lottery ticket; two pieces of card each bearing half of a conventional Valentine 'heart' symbol; two cards that say 'Choice' and 'Chance' respectively... or anything else you want.

I hope it's clear that you can dress up the basic Gemini Twins effect in countless different ways and have a lot of fun with it.

In the lecture, I showed my version of the trick that uses a genuine rainbow deck. Let me mention what I mean by this. Some 'rainbow' decks are just regular decks printed with 52 different back designs. I made my own rainbow decks by buying 52 different (and very distinct) decks from a card collector and then taking one card from each deck. This means the cards all *look and feel* different rather than just having a different back design. I could be wrong but I think this adds to the charm and intrigue of the trick.

You can have a lot of fun dreaming up variations on the 'Gemini Twins' effect. I hope I've given you a few ideas to play with.

Credits

I am grateful to David Britland for helping me with the correct credits for this ingenious force. According to the 'Conjuring Credits' website (www.conjuringcredits.com), the Karl Fulves 'Gemini Twins' trick originally appeared as 'Stopped Twice' in his 'Impromptu Opener', 1979, p. 2. It may have been adopted from either of two sources: Theodore Annemann's 'Locatrik' in *The Jinx*, No. 39, Dec. 1937, p. 262; or Herb Rungie's 'Hidden Mystery' in *The Jinx*, No. 83, Mar. 1940, p. 535. In 'The Fine Print No. 10' (1999, p. 318), Fulves claims that the Herb Rungie effect is "almost certainly the inspiration for Gemini Twins" and acknowledges that there has been much speculation over the history of the routine.

Other precursors are Ron Wohl's 'Australian Sixes' in Harry Lorayne's 'Reputation-Makers', 1971, p. 164, and Ed Marlo's 'Ruse Cull' in *Kabbala*, Vol. 1 No. 9, May 1972, p. 74.

I mentioned that you could use tarot cards for this effect. Even better, you could use the Cat Tarot deck by Megan Lynn Kott. This is a deck in which all the usual tarot cards have been re-designed with a feline theme. It's great fun and well worth using.

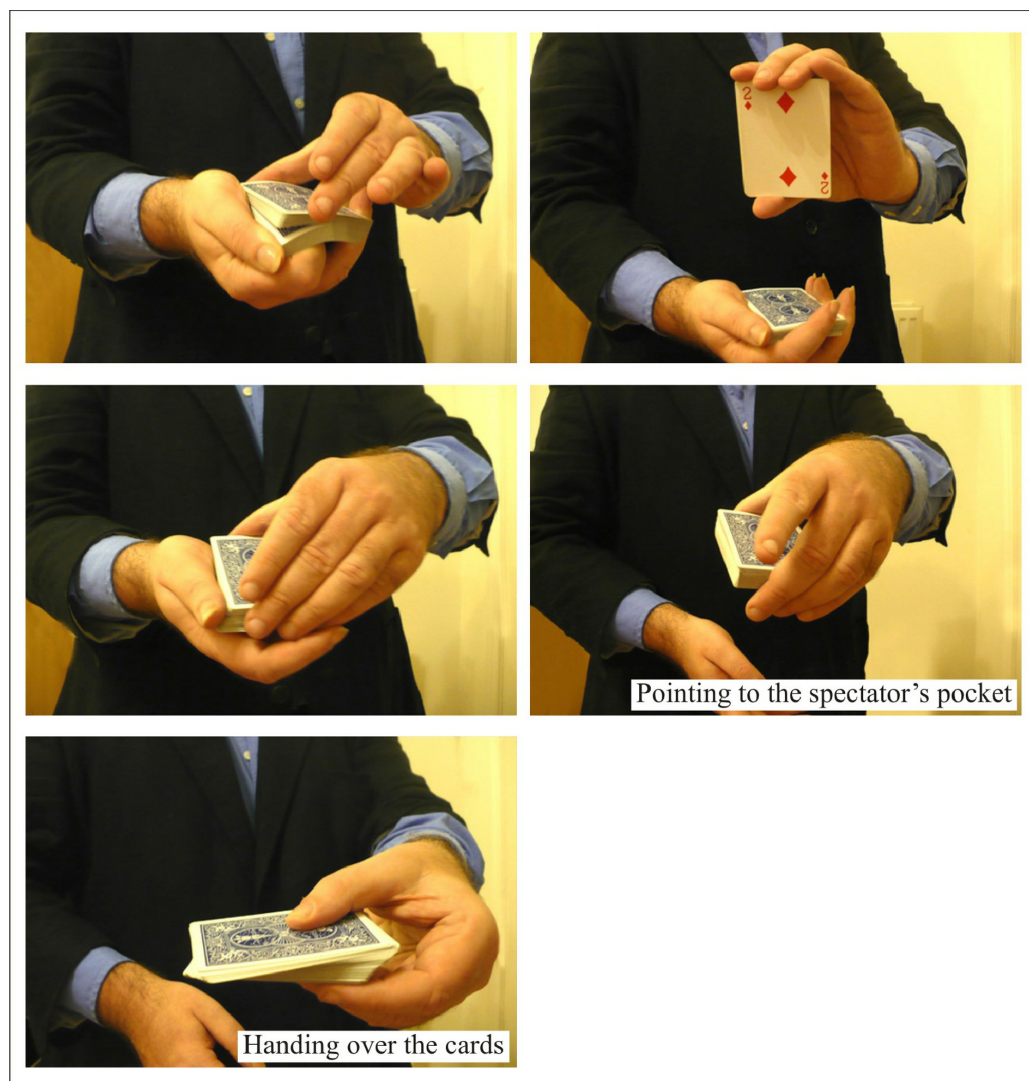
My Peek

This is my favourite peek and I use it all the time. It is *very* deceptive and can deceive even the most astute and perceptive spectator.

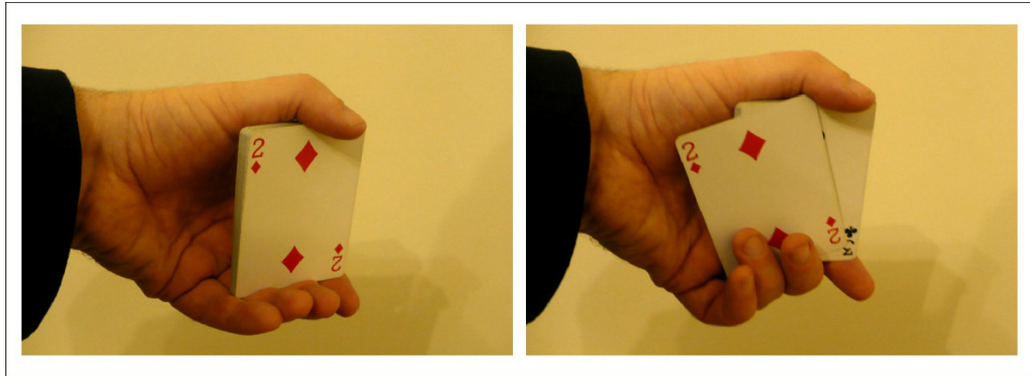
These photos show you the spectator's view. I riffle or spread through the deck until the spectator says 'Stop'. This is a free and fair selection.

I square up the deck if necessary and raise the upper portion so that the spectator can see and remember their chosen card.

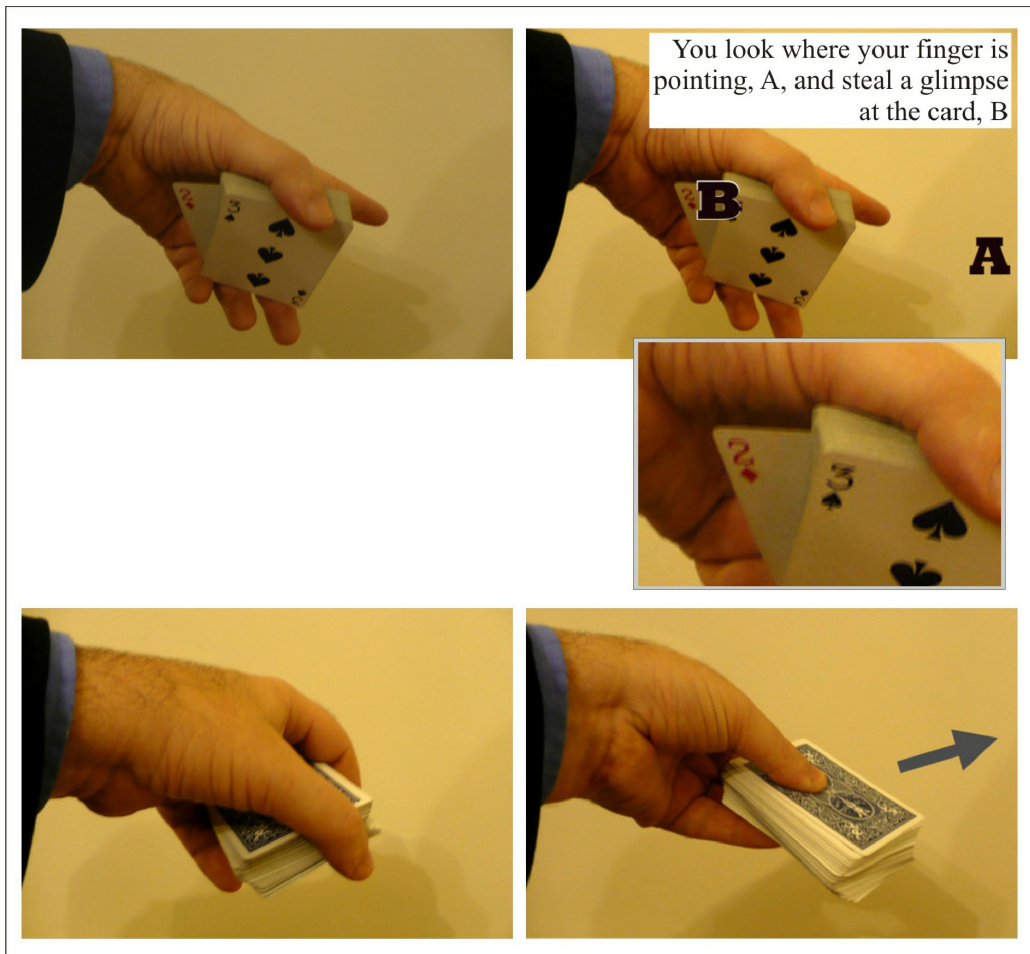
I put the two halves of the deck back together. I say, "I don't want to hold on to the cards in case you think I'm cheating so, here, you can put them in your pocket or just put them over there, whatever."



As I put the two halves of the deck back together, I pivot the bottom card of the upper half slightly to one side. This is the card the spectator just looked at. This action has several names: Ovet Master Move / the Lewis Jones Paragon Move / part of the Kelly Bottom Placement.



And here's how it looks from my point of view as the performer.



Thoughts

This description, and these pictures, show the peek the way I perform it, which happens to be the 'left-handed' way. However, it works just as well if you perform it the 'right-handed' way. You just need to adjust the handling slightly:

- (1) You will need to shift the spectator's card more 'sideways' than diagonally.
- (2) When you peek at the spectator's card, you will need to look at the lower part of the card, nearer your fingers, rather than the upper part of the card nearest your thumb.

When I lecture on this item, I always demonstrate both the 'left-handed' and the 'right-handed' variations. They both work perfectly well!

Misdirection

There are many ways to peek at a spectator's chosen card. I happen to believe this is one of the best and most deceptive methods. I have used it in countless different situations, all over the world, for over thirty years. I have never met a single spectator who even came close to suspecting that I was somehow able to see which card they looked at.

The moment when you point towards the spectator's pocket, or wherever you suggest the spectator can keep the cards, provides extremely powerful misdirection and cover for the peek. Try it, and you'll see how deceptive it is!

The Unmoved Card

With this peek move, the spectator's chosen card does not get moved or controlled to the top or bottom of the deck. If you use this peek in a routine where the spectator later retrieves their card from the deck, they will see that it is exactly where it ought to be — right in the middle of the deck, among all the other cards. This adds to the illusion that there is no way you could possibly have seen the card. It also means that you as soon as you have peeked at the card and handed over the deck, you are clean, with no trace of trickery left behind. This is a good position to be in.

Twin Think

Introduction

This is one of my favourite card effects. You can do it completely impromptu with any deck and in just about any location. You don't even need a table! It's an enjoyable trick with two spectators and so easy a cat could do it. I have used this routine all over the world, for informal 'show us a trick' moments and formal shows on the eve of a big corporate gig. I even used it on the one and only occasion I was invited to take part in a Magic Circle close-up show!

Effect

One person freely chooses any card they like, from a face up and fairly shuffled deck. A second person somehow manages to locate its exact twin in the deck, apparently quite by chance.

Performance

Choose two spectators who have — or at least *ought* to have — some sort of rapport or connection, for example because they're related, or in a relationship or work together. I'll call them John and Jane. Invite John to stand to your left and Jane to stand to your right. Ask them if they are on the same mental wavelength, or whether they *can* be if they really need to be.

Turn to Jane, give her the cards and ask her to mix and shuffle them all she wants.

Turn to John and explain that you *will* get to him in just a minute, and he does have an important role to play, but the first part is all about Jane. Ask him to forgive you if you have to focus on Jane for the next minute or so.

Turn back to Jane. Retrieve the cards. Stand next to Jane, shoulder to shoulder, and spread the cards hand to hand at eye level. Both you and Jane can see the faces of all the cards but no one else can. Mention that there are a great many cards to choose from. Have Jane choose a card by pointing to one — she mustn't say anything out loud. Suppose she chooses the 9C.

Shift the 9C to the face of the deck. Spread through the cards again. Ask Jane to verify that all the cards are different, there are plenty to choose from and she could have chosen a different card if she had wanted to. Mention that there are high and low cards red and black, odd and even, four different suits... lots of different possibilities. As you do this, secretly look for the 'twin' of Jane's card — the one card with the same value and colour. In this case, it would be the 9S to go with Jane's 9C. Cull or cut this to the back of the spread, so it will be the top card of the squared up, face down deck.

Square up the cards. Jane's chosen card, the 9C is on the face of the deck. The 9S is on top of the deck but only you are aware of this. Say to the audience:

"Jane has chosen a card. I'm going to show you what the card is but please don't say anything out loud because we don't want John to know just yet. Just look at the card with your eyes and your minds."

Say to John:

“Sorry, John, but we have to keep this a secret from you for just a little while longer. Please look over there slightly so that you don’t see the card Jane chose. I promise you’ll see what it is in a minute or two.”

Display the squared up deck to the audience so that everyone, apart from John, gets a good look at the face card. This is Jane’s chosen card, the 9C.

As everyone gets a look at Jane’s card, invite Jane and everyone else to think about the one other card in the deck that has the *same value* and the *same colour*, but to do this silently.

Hold the deck face down at waist height in one hand, and Jane’s chosen card, still face down, in your other hand. Say to Jane:

“The first part was all about you, and we had to ignore John for a little while. Now, it’s the other way around. This is all about John, so please excuse me if I face towards him for a moment. You are welcome to look on, but please don’t say anything or give John any clues.”

Face John and have him face you.

“John, here is Jane’s chosen card.”

Nod towards the single card you are holding face down.

“Can you make your hand like a little puppet? [I mime what I mean: hand palm down with the thumb moving up and down ready to grip the card when you hand it over].

I’m going to give it to you to hold. Please keep it face down for now and don’t turn it over. I promise I will show it to you very soon. I am going to spread the cards like this, one at a time, and I want you to insert Jane’s card into the spread anywhere you like, leaving it sticking halfway out.”

Briefly demonstrate what you want John to do, showing him what it will look like when the card is inserted half-way into the spread. Make sure John knows what he is supposed to do. Let John hold the 9C face down.

Invite Jane and the rest of the audience to silently think of the only card in the deck that has the same colour and the same value as Jane’s chosen card, and to aim their thoughts at John’s mind. Invite John to try and tune in to these thoughts.

Spread the face down deck from hand to hand, slowly and fairly, and invite John to insert the card he’s holding into the deck at any position he wants, leaving it sticking halfway out. Make it clear that he has a completely free choice but ask him to choose somewhere *roughly* near the middle, not at the *very* top or the *very* bottom.

John does so. Gesture towards the card that John has just placed in the deck.

“You still haven’t seen what this is, have you? Everyone else knows what it is, so I think it’s about time you saw it as well.”

You now turn the card over, and as you do so you execute the Backward Prophecy Move

(this is explained at the end of this section).

The situation now is that Jane's chosen card, 9C, is face up, sticking halfway out of the squared up, face down deck. Unknown to the audience, it is right next to the 9S (thanks to the Backward Prophecy Move). Give the cards to John to hold.

Say to Jane and the rest of the audience:

"Jane chose the nine of clubs. I invited you all to think of the *other* black nine and to aim this thought at John's head. So you controlled what we were looking for, but you didn't control where John placed the card in the deck."

Say to John:

"You had control over where you placed the card in the deck, but you didn't know what we were looking for. So the only way for this to work would be for the thoughts of everyone in the room to come together — Jane's thought about what we were looking for and your thought about where to put the card into the deck."

Spread through the deck, very cleanly and fairly because you have nothing to hide, and take out the visible 9C and the card immediately next to it (which is the 9S but the audience don't know this yet). Set all the other cards aside or have someone hold them, leaving you with just the two black nines.

"You know, this was all about the degree of rapport or connection between Jane and John. And I can't explain it, I don't know how it happened, but I think it's safe to say... they've got nothing to worry about."

Turn over the 9C and display both cards so that everyone can see they match. Congratulate both Jane and John on their remarkable mental and telepathic compatibility.

I can't even begin to describe how much fun I've had with this routine over the years. I've performed it everywhere from a street market in Bali to a conference in Orlando, from a coffee shop near Sydney harbour to a friend's party in Milan. It always seems to win a good reaction.

It's very baffling to non-magicians because everything seems so perfectly fair. In fact almost everything *is* fair: you can use any deck, it can be genuinely shuffled, Jane has a perfectly free choice from *face-up* cards and John can place the card anywhere he wants. What's more, there are no strange or sudden moves at the end when you take the two cards from the deck to display them. The whole thing is perfectly fair except for the split-second when you perform the Backwards Prophecy Move. I hope you have as much fun with 'Twin Think' as I have done over the years.

The Backwards Prophecy Move is explained over the page.

The Backwards Prophecy Move

Bill Simon invented the original Prophecy move in “Effective Card Magic”. Steve Beam published this variation, the “Backwards Prophecy”, in his excellent book, “Semi-Automatic Card Tricks, Volume Two”. Steve has kindly given permission for me to summarise the move, but I recommend you check out his description and handling. In fact, check out all his books because they contain some truly great material. Plus Steve is a really nice guy.

For explanatory purposes, in these photos I’ve used two red cards and a blue deck. One of the red cards is marked C for ‘Chosen’ card, which in this example is the 9C. The other is marked T for ‘Twin’, which in this example is the 9S although its face isn’t seen in these photos. In real life, of course, all the cards come from the same deck.

A spectator has inserted the chosen card, C, halfway into the deck.

The point of the move is to apparently just turn this card over, so the spectator can see its face. In doing so, you secretly swap the halves of the deck so that the chosen card C ends up on top of its twin, T.

Here’s how it’s done.

A spectator has inserted a chosen card C into the deck [1].

Unknown to him or the rest of the audience, its twin is on top of the deck (here marked with a T).

You say you’re going to turn C face up. Separate the cards above card C. Raise this upper packet as you gesture towards the chosen card [2].

Rotate the hand holding this upper packet, so it turns palm down [3].

Grip the chosen card C at the outer edge [4].

Reverse your hand’s rotation, which turns the chosen card face up [5]. The chosen card, C, is now on top of its twin, T.

The other hand adds its cards on top [6], thereby reassembling the deck with the chosen card now face up, outjogged halfway. The audience is not aware that you have secretly positioned it directly above its twin.

Square up the deck except for the outjogged chosen card, and hand the entire deck to the spectator to hold.

1



2



3



4



5



6



Impromptu Drawing Dupe

We live in the age of Frankenstein mentalism. This is my collective term for all the hi-tech electronic gadgetry that so brightly enhances the contemporary mind-reading trade. You know the kind of thing I mean: someone draws on a pad two miles away and a little screen, glowing in your prop case like the discovery of radium, shows you what they've drawn. Or someone holds a plastic ESP card and with a mere wave of your hand, thanks to some gizmo bolted to your forearm, you can (a) tell them it's the wavy lines and (b) wipe their credit cards.

You may wonder how all this hi-tech apparatus came into being. It all started a few years ago when a lone genius was toiling in a secret laboratory. One dark and stormy night, a bolt of lightning ripped through the lab and fused a copy of '13 Step's with a Radio Shack catalogue. Inspired by this amazing event, the lone genius found a way to modify the DNA of carbon paper so it could be grafted inside a piece of wood that was almost quite thin (compared to a weightlifter's neck), together with some components that were, until recently, legally available only to the CIA and Batman. This is all historical fact.

The result was sold to the mentalism community as a 'clipboard', a wholly accurate description if you ignored the fact that it didn't look, weigh or feel anything like one. This isn't just my opinion, by the way. Around the time these devices first became available, I went with some laymen to see one of Derren Brown's excellent theatre shows. At one point Derren asked a spectator to think of something and write it down. The non-magician next to me said, "Oh look, he's getting him to write it on one of those dodgy-looking clipboards." So much for the sweet, poisoned kiss of illusion.

The emergence of these hi-tech gadgets gave rise to a new era in mentalism, one characterised chiefly by widespread loathing of the phrase 'batteries not included'. The technology improved over the years, of course, even if in some cases the after-sales service (allegedly) failed to do so. The pads got thinner, the range got better and, after a few regrettable incidents, the tendency to reset pacemakers to 'off' was also fixed.

I never use these devices but I'm not *against* them. I'm sure they *can* be brilliant tools of entertaining deception. However, like any other tool, how useful they are depends on who is using them. Michelangelo created 'David' with a hammer and chisel.

What I'd like to share with you here is a completely impromptu drawing duplication. It is entirely powered by experience, acting and lying. You would never use it for a formal show or a well paid gig. But it's handy for informal occasions when you'd like to do something miraculous and inexplicable.

Art Works

Let's consider an informal social occasion. You feel like presenting a drawing duplication effect and all you have are pieces of paper and things to write or draw with.

Choose someone to work with, preferably a woman in her 30s (because this maximises the chances of success). Let's call her Alice.

"Let's try something. It doesn't really matter if it works, it will be interesting whatever happens. I'm going to ask you to make a simple drawing. Don't worry, it's not about artistic ability. The simpler you make it, the better."

Take a piece of paper and, by way of demonstration, say:

“You can draw anything... it can be something weird and abstract (draw a cube) or something real that you can actually picture in your mind’s eye (draw a simple tree). To be honest, you’ll find this a lot easier if you draw something real (tap the tree for emphasis). Okay? Oh, and don’t draw a stick man or a house, because everyone picks those.”

Give Alice a fresh piece of paper. Let her make her drawing unseen by anyone present. She can even leave the room if she wants to make her drawing in complete secrecy. When Alice has done her secret drawing (and rejoined the group if she ever left it), say:

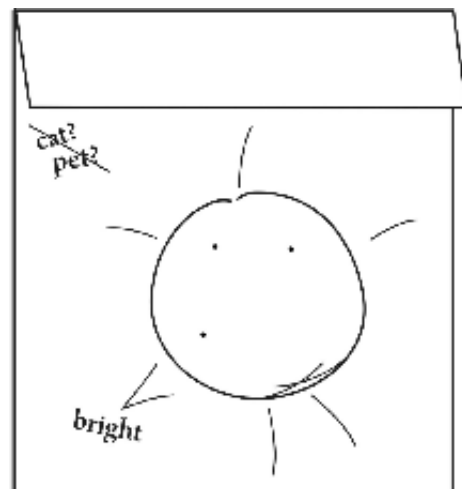
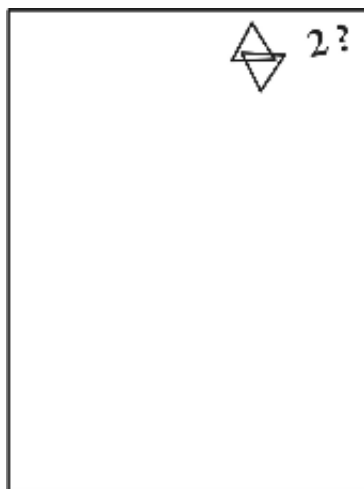
“This is about you and me working together. Please focus mentally on what you drew, and *want* me to get it right. I’m going to try to see what you see. If we do well, you get the credit for being really good at visualising things. If we don’t, it’s just me having an off day. Deal?”

After some suitable mind-reading facial expressions, take a fresh piece of paper for yourself. Without letting anyone see what you’re doing, draw two triangles plus ‘2’ and a question mark (see Figure 1). Act as though these are just initial impressions. Then shake your head and say, “No, I don’t think that’s right. Let’s start over.”

Fold down the top of your piece of paper and start again. Write the words ‘cat? pet?’ towards the upper left corner, quite small, then put a line through them. Draw an approximate circle using a single line, leaving a small gap and indentation near the top. Around this draw ‘shine lines’, as shown. The first is at the top, like the stem of an apple. Two more go at the 5 and 6 o’clock positions. Add a few more, faintly, at random.

Add two dots that could be eyes, and one more towards the lower left. Towards the lower right portion of the circle, draw a couple of arcs that cross. Add a slanted ‘V’ shape to the lower left, and scribble ‘bright’ (see Figure 2).

You can do all this in about twenty seconds. How long you *actually* take depends on the situation and how much mindreading theatrical drama you want to include.



Improv Time

Alice shows what she drew. You then improvise accordingly, finding as much correspondence as possible between her drawing and yours. The routine gives you an 'out' for about 90% of the commonest things people draw.

In most cases, Alice will have drawn something basically circular (face, sun, flower, apple, spiral, target etc.). Emphasise any elements of similarity between her drawing and yours, and congratulate Alice on having done well. As you do, go over your sketch to strengthen the bits that match, saying, "These were the bits you were focusing on most clearly."

What about the elements that don't match? Just ignore them. In my experience, no one will challenge you about them. If they do, say, "You're right, I shouldn't have put those in. It's my fault for not sticking closely enough to Alice's thoughts."

If Alice's drawing contains triangular elements (sailing boat, Star of David etc.), say you got that impression at first, but didn't trust your instincts and tried something else. Unfold the top part of your piece of paper to show that this is true. If Alice's drawing has anything to do with pets, show what you wrote in the upper left corner.

What if there's no match with anything? You still have three chances to rescue the demonstration. First, ask Alice if it's possible she thought of drawing something else before she made her final decision, and if so... what? She may well mention something that matches some elements of what you drew.

If this doesn't work, refer to any part of what you drew, e.g. the reference to cat / pet, and ask her if there's any reason why this might have been on her mind lately. If yes, it's another partial success. Finally, as a last resort, you can suggest that maybe you picked up on someone else's thoughts. Ask if anyone else present was thinking of a face or a flower. If so, which is very likely, then it's another partial success (and better than nothing). If faced with total failure, you will just have to graciously accept it. Tell Alice she did her part well, but you just didn't get it right this time. In case you're wondering, this has happened to me precisely *once* in the past *thirty years*.

I'm not saying this is the only way or the best way to do a drawing dupe. I'm saying it's a good option if you can't use some other method or don't want to. Can it fail? Yes. Every trick in the world can fail. As noted above, I've had just one total failure in about three decades. It's not the end of the world. If this is the only thing people ever see you do and it fails, they won't be too impressed. If they see you perform other miracles, the occasional 'failure' won't hurt and might even, in some people's eyes, enhance your reputation.

This is not a pipe dream. You can ask the brilliant Andrew Goldenhersh. He once invited me to a party at his beautiful home in LA. I performed this routine and impressed one of the guests so much that I could have started a new religion. As far as this guest was concerned, he had witnessed genuine telepathic ability. He leapt around the room in an adorably deranged fashion enthusing about it.

Credits. This routine is derived from many sources, principally 'The Psychology of the Psychic' by Marks & Kamman, and Banachek's 'Universal drawing' from Vol. 1 of 'Psychological Subtleties'. A version of this article was first published in the January 2012 edition of 'MAGIC' magazine.

Vision In Gold

Here's a nice effect suitable for informal, close-up performances when you're socialising with a few friends. It's a particularly good routine to perform if one or two laymen present feel they have a smattering of knowledge about our methods e.g. they know what a nailwriter is. This will spank the smugness out of them rather delightfully.

Effect

You take out a business card, write something on the back and set it down for later. People place any three objects they want in a row. You make it clear, right from the start, which object is in position (1), which is in position (2) and which is in position (3). A spectator mixes up the order of the three objects using a genuinely random and unpredictable process.

You show your prediction. It states the *correct* three objects in the *correct* order! However, instead of the hand-written prediction everyone is expecting, you show that the prediction on the back of the card is, in fact, a pre-printed, gold-embossed message. This elaborate pre-printed prediction is un gimmicked and can be given away as a souvenir.

Method

You will need to prepare two business cards. These must look like the sort of business cards with plain white backs on which you *could* just write a prediction with a pencil or a nailwriter. If yours aren't suitable, just use two white pieces of card. On the back of both cards, create your prediction messages. You can create these any way you like, so long as the result (a) looks attractive and (b) is clearly elaborate, pre-printed and not something you could have created at any point during the performance. For example, have the messages embossed in gold or printed in a fancy font and laminated.

On the back of Card #1 the prediction message reads: 1. Phone 2. Watch 3. Keys.

On the back of Card #2 the prediction message reads: 1. Watch 2. Keys 3. Phone.

You will also need a simple way to switch one card for the other if the need arises, which it will 50% of the time. I use the top pocket switch. Card #2 is already in the breast pocket of my jacket or shirt. I place Card #1 there, sticking out slightly. If I need to switch it, I just reach up as if to remove Card #1, push it down into the pocket out of sight, and pull out Card #2 instead. You can use any switch you like and it doesn't have to be particularly subtle. A Himber wallet or Z-fold wallet would also suffice.

To perform, take out Card #1 without letting anyone see what's on the back. Take out a pencil and pretend to secretly write your prediction on the back. Place the card somewhere so that later on you can either pick it up or secretly switch it for Card #2. It is important that everyone believes you have simply written a prediction by hand.

Next, invite your friends to place any small objects on the table.

"Can I ask you all just to put any small items on the table. Let's get a good selection — a ring, set of keys, dollar bill, phone, coins, a watch... it's up to you. I promise you'll get everything back and nothing is going to get broken."

By your words, manner and gestures, convey the notion that you don't care which objects get placed on the table. All that matters is that the three items mentioned in your prediction are in play. If this happens you can subsequently emphasise that you just worked with whatever items people offered. If not, subtly encourage people to provide more items until you have what you want.

If you still don't get what you need, take a more direct role. For example, if nobody offers a watch, turn to someone with a nice watch and say, "I noticed you thought about putting your watch down but then hesitated. Come on, let's have the watch too if that's what you were thinking. You'll get it back."

I've based this description around some keys, a phone and a watch because I think these are nearly certain to be among the items offered. If you think other objects are more likely to arise, feel free to adapt the routine accordingly.

Assuming you have keys, a phone and a watch in play, the second phase is to make sure these three items end up being used. Start by asking one of the spectators (let's call her Jane) to hand you any object on the table. If Jane hands you one of the three items you want, e.g. the keys, say, "Some keys? Okay, not a common choice but we'll use those. And let's add a couple more." Simply pick up the other two prediction items (phone, watch) and you have the three items you need.

If Jane hands you something you don't want, e.g. a dollar bill, say, "Given a free choice of items like these, the most popular choice is always money because it's so important to us all [make up any rationale depending on the object]. So this would be very predictable. And that's the last thing I want this to be. This is all about what *cannot* be predicted, so let's leave it to one side."

Set the dollar bill to one side and then pick up the three prediction items you want and arrange them in a line in alphabetical order: keys, phone, watch. Don't try to justify this action. By not offering a justification, you don't make it seem like something that needs to be justified. That which is never stated can never be objected to.

Move the remaining objects to one side so they are clearly out of play. You don't want to kill the momentum at this point by having everyone reclaim their items. You do want to make it clear that these other items are no longer involved.

"Okay. Three items. We will always count from this end, going this way, so there's no ambiguity or messing about. This is one [gesture to the keys], two [phone] and three [watch], left to right from this point of view. Are we all clear about this? Now one of you is going to mix them up."

Choose a spectator you can trust to carry out two simple tasks. Let's call him John.

"John, I'm going to give you two instructions. Three items in a row. I will ask you to swap any two of them."

Demonstrate this action, and then undo it so the start position is unaffected.

"When you've done that, I will invite you again to swap any two — but not the same ones, obviously, or else we'll just end up back where we started, which would be pointless. I'm telling you exactly what the process is before we even start. Two swaps, no more and no less. At the end of the swaps, what order will these three things be in?"

John will shrug and say he doesn't know. This is a very compelling part of the psychological deception involved.

"Of course you don't! How could you? It's a random process! I will look away slightly so I don't influence you."

Look away but retain enough peripheral vision to know when John has carried out the required actions.

"John, you have three objects in a row. Pick up any two and swap their positions. It can be the first and second, third and first, second and third or whatever you want. Just swap any two you want."

Give John a moment to do this.

"Now, same again. Pick up any two and swap them, but obviously not the two you just swapped or else we'll be back where we started. Any two you like, third and second, second and first or whatever you want. It's up to you."

This process is totally fair, by the way, in the sense that the outcome is genuinely unpredictable. However, it can only lead to two possible results. The three objects must now be in the sequence written on Card #1 or Card #2. Retrieve the correct prediction, which may or may not involve a switch. Hold it as you would as if you were going to buy some time and write something on the card with a nailwriter.

"I invited you all to put anything you wanted on the table. Anything. It wasn't up to me, it was up to you."

If Jane picked one of your prediction items earlier, say, "And Jane selected what to use." If she didn't, omit this line.

"John, you mixed them up and even you didn't know where they would end up. You admitted as much. So this result is literally unpredictable. Earlier on, I pretended to write a guess about what would happen. But I confess I played a little trick on you all. I didn't really write anything."

Allow yourself a dramatic pause of intrigue.

"Didn't need to. Already printed."

Slowly reveal your pre-printed prediction and be sure to give it as a souvenir to the most sceptical soul present, just to annoy them.

This routine is based on David Berglas's work on equivocation, and a ruse from Patrick Redford's four object divination routine. A version of this article was first published in the January 2014 edition of 'MAGIC' magazine.

I Chant Now

Effect

A spectator thinks of a famous movie. She has a free choice and even she doesn't know which one she'll think of before she thinks of it. You mention that you have recently been studying meditation and chanting to assist your mindreading efforts, and briefly show one of the books you have studied.

You demonstrate your new-found chanting skills, but only succeed in making yourself look and sound rather ridiculous. You make a couple of attempts to read the spectator's mind, but are ultimately unsuccessful. Eventually you ask the spectator which movie she thought of. It turns out that the cover of the book you showed everyone is a perfect prediction of this movie, albeit in a surprising way.

Preparation

This routine provides an opportunity for you to behave in an amusing way and get a few laughs. However, it does lead to a highly surprising and baffling climax. It's intended for stage and cabaret use.

Let's start with the preparation. Take sixteen blank Bicycle cards. On the face of each one, write or print the name of a different movie and its star (e.g. The Dark Knight / Christian Bale). Make each card as clear and legible as you can. Choose movies your audience will recognize.

Make up another set of sixteen cards that are all same: Chinatown starring Jack Nicholson. With all the cards face down, arrange them so that the sixteen different cards are on the bottom and the sixteen Chinatown cards are on top. You have created a simple Al Baker force deck — top stock all the same, bottom stock all different.

You also need to create a book called 'I Chant Now' by Kashlin C. Jonco. This is easier than it sounds because only the front cover will ever be seen and it doesn't have to look particularly convincing. If it just looks like a prop you made for the routine, that's perfectly okay in this context. From a second-hand book store, get any cheap book with a stiff cover measuring roughly 11 x 8 inches. Create a fake cover that you can spray glue on to the front, similar to (Figure 3), which is a simple example I made in ten minutes with a picture from Google Images. I expect you can create something better, but if you want the artwork shown here just email me (offer ends three months from the date of this publication). You will need to replace this cover for each performance.

You will also need either a reproduction of a Chinatown movie poster, or just a large sheet of paper with Chinatown / Jack Nicholson written on it in bold, clear lettering. I'll refer to this as the "poster". Fold it up into quarters and tuck it inside the book. You will also need a thick red marker.

You're all set.



Presentation

“Let’s try a little mindreading experiment. I’m going to work with movies because they’re good targets. There are many to choose from and they evoke strong emotions and clear, vivid images in your mind.”

Pick up the packet of movie title cards. Display the packet with the faces towards the audience.

“These are all classics in their own way, some new, some old and a few of my personal favourites — although I think I forgot to include The Little Mermaid.”

Mention any movie that your audience would consider highly unlikely to be among your favourites, to get a small laugh. A little humour is good for bypassing the audience’s mental defenses.

Refer to whichever card is on the face of the packet, and say a few things about it. Thumb it aside and do the same with the next four or five movie titles, without altering their sequence.

“You get the idea. Quite a range of styles and genres.”

Note that you do not explicitly say all the cards are different. It is much more effective to *imply* this and let the audience form this conclusion for themselves.

Square up the packet of cards and cut or shuffle them as you wish, so long as the top stock

still all say Chinatown. Invite a spectator to join you. Let's call her Sue. Hold the cards face up and fan the stock of cards that are all different.

"Lots to choose from, but let me ask you something."

Square up the cards, turn them face down and fan them again, this time only fanning the top stock of cards that are all alike:

"At this stage, Sue, do you even know yourself which movie you're going to choose, or will it be a random choice?"

Sue has to agree that she has no idea, and that yes, it will be a random choice.

"If you don't know, then I can't know."

Allow Sue to select a card, making sure she gets one saying Chinatown. As soon as she has one, look away. Ask Sue to peek at her chosen movie card very secretly, so that nobody else can see what she sees. Ask her to remember the title of the movie and whoever starred in it. After Sue has done this, ask her to fold the movie card and hide it so that you can turn and face her again. Ditch the packet of movie cards.

"Recently, I've been learning a few things that I hope will help me with my mindreading experiments. Things like breathing exercises, yoga, meditation and chanting, mainly from Kashlin Jonco's book. They say these things help you to kind of open up your mind and achieve great focus... so I figured they'd be worth learning."

Pick up the book and give the audience a good look.

"This is the one. 'I Chant Now'. I like it because the instructions are clear and easy to follow. She knows her stuff."

Put the book down.

"Let's see if it works. Sue, you have a movie in your mind, yes? One that you chose at random, and even you had no idea which one you would think of before you thought of it, right? Please just concentrate on your movie."

Adopt some sort of meditative pose and expression, and start to emit a series of strange chanting sounds for about five to ten seconds. The point here is to be silly, have fun and get a few laughs. Obviously, the precise nature of your 'chanting' is up to you and your sense of humour, but I think it's quite easy to make this look and sound amusing.

Open your eyes and look as if you are going to attempt to read Sue's mind... but then snap right back into the meditation and chanting.

Having apparently completed your meditative preamble, look at Sue and say:

"I'm getting something. Yes. I'm seeing a special kind of adventure park. Big, lumbering beasts from long ago. Some frightened kids in a jeep. Tell me, is the movie you are thinking of... The Shawshank Redemption?"

This mention of a title other than the one you led the audience to expect (Jurassic Park)

is also intended to be funny. Sue will say you are wrong.

Act as if you're puzzled by this apparent failure.

"I don't understand why it didn't work. I thought all those techniques I've been learning from the book would help."

Gesture towards the book.

Say that you will try again, even more intensely. Repeat the silly meditation and chanting. You can make it even crazier this time, as you are apparently making a more concerted effort.

"Okay, I've got it this time. It's coming through quite clearly. I'm sensing a little kid, a young boy. He can do magic, there's a school of some kind. Tell me, is the movie you are thinking of... Gangs of New York?"

Sue will once again say you are wrong.

For a second time, look annoyed that the mindreading hasn't worked despite your devotion to the art.

"I really thought that book was going to help."

Ask Sue what movie she is thinking of. She says Chinatown. Ask her who starred in it. She says Jack Nicholson. Repeat these details for the audience's benefit.

"I've just thought of something. Maybe that book was pretty helpful after all. Sue could have thought of almost any movie, and even she didn't know which one she was going to think of before she thought of it."

Display the book cover very clearly and read out the details once more: 'I Chant Now by Kashlin C. Jonco.' Say, 'Chinatown', then spell it out loud one letter at a time. As you do so, use your red marker to underline the corresponding letters in 'I Chant Now'. Say, 'Jack Nicholson', then spell his name out loud one letter at a time and underline the corresponding letters in 'Kashlin C. Jonco'.

Reach inside the book, pull out the movie poster and display it for all to see.

That's all there is to it! It's hard to find anagrams of Jack Nicholson that sound like a female author's name and that the audience are unlikely to solve prematurely. Another option I made up was Sonja L. Chonick. Feel free to devise your own (and good luck).

You don't have to base this routine around Chinatown. You can use any other movie you want. However, suitable movies are hard to find. The title has to yield an anagram that could be a book title with some relevance to your mindreading skills, while the star's name has to yield an anagram that could be the book's author.

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Easy Inexplicable Miracles

Effect

Allow me to describe something that is impossible. Something that absolutely cannot happen... and yet it did.

I was at a party recently and I met a journalist. She was a complete stranger to me and I knew nothing about her. We chatted a little about my work, and at the end of our conversation I took out a business card to give to her. I also took out a black marker pen and wrote something on the back. I asked her what her astrological star sign was. She said 'Capricorn' and I gave her my card. I told her to put it away and look at it when she got home. When she later looked on the back of card, she saw that I had written the word 'Capricorn'. This word was written in block capitals, in bold, black marker pen ink, and filled up most of the back of my business card.

The nice thing about this, as with so many things in mentalism, is that it is completely impossible. Could I have somehow researched this woman's astrological sign? No, because she was a complete stranger and I had no idea I was going to meet her. Could I have used some secret device to write 'Capricorn' on the card after she had told me? No, because I handed my card to her instantly, and because the word was written in neat capitals, in bold, black strokes that filled up most of the card.

The journalist was left with a souvenir of an impossible event. If she wanted, she could believe that it was just a lucky guess. However, this would strike her as unlikely. If she had named a different star sign, I would have looked rather foolish giving her a business card with 'Capricorn' written on the back. It would have been an enduring souvenir of the fact that I'm not very good at my job! Even if she decides to believe the 'lucky guess' theory, she will consider it rather dissatisfactory, and will muse on the tantalising possibility that I somehow knew the right answer.

Method

One reason I love being a mentalist is that we get to play with some extremely delightful deceptive principles. One of my favourites is the principle of *opportunism*. Someone once wrote that 'Chance favours the prepared mind'. This is what opportunism is all about: being prepared to deceive people, and taking advantage of this preparation whenever life is kind enough to allow us to do so.

The business card trick described above is just one example of opportunism. Here are the details. I own a website called 'www.ianrowland.com'. This means that my email address is 'ian@ianrowland.com'. It also means that you can write anything to the left of the '@' symbol and it will work just as well. The email will still get to me. My business card of course features both my website address and my normal email address.

In my left jacket pocket I always have one of my business cards. On the back is written part of a 'variation' of my normal email address, like this: 'mindreader@ian...' with a blank space after the letters 'ian'. In my wallet, I have several of my normal business cards, with nothing written on the backs.

If I meet someone I might wish to impress, I say "Here, let me give you one of my business cards." I reach into my wallet and take out one of my normal business cards. I

hold it in my left hand without revealing the writing on the back. With my marker pen I start writing on the back of the card. The person I'm with cannot see what I am writing. In fact, I write 'Capricorn' in large, bold letters. As I remove the pen from the card, apparently having finished writing, I say, "Tell me, what's your star sign?"

If she says any sign other than 'Capricorn', I jokingly react as if very alarmed. I say, "Oh, well, there's no point giving you my card! Aries people are very uncommunicative, they never call me or send me an email...". My left hand goes into my left jacket pocket as if I've decided not to give her my card after all. Secretly, I ditch the 'Capricorn' card and pick up the other card, bearing the incomplete variation of my email address.

I smile and say, "Only joking. Actually, I like Aries people. They're just like me. Very sceptical about astrology!" I take out the card that's now in play (it looks as if it's the same one as before) and I finish writing 'mindreader@ianrowland.com'. I now show the card to the person I'm talking to. I say, "The normal version of my email address is here on the front, but recently I've started using this version instead, OK?" and I point to the 'mindreader' version of my email address. Then I say, "So, have a look at my website and drop me an email some time!"

Let's look at the two possible sequences.

If the person I'm talking to is *not* Capricorn, then she sees this version of events: I offer her my card, I start to write out my revised email address on the back, I make a little joke about her sign, I finish writing my new email address, and I give her the card.

If the person *is* Capricorn, then she sees this version of events: I offer her my card, I write Capricorn on the back, I ask her for her star sign, she says Capricorn, and later on she sees that I was right. And she has a souvenir of a mind-reading miracle.

Of course, 11 times out of 12 there is no magic, no trick, no miracle. This is perfectly fine because I never said I was going to do anything magical. But 1 time in 12, the person I'm talking to will be left with a miracle. And what did I have to do to achieve this miracle? I took one of my cards, wrote an incomplete variation of my email address on the back, and left it in my pocket just in case I needed it. Not a great deal of preparation, is it?

It's easy to think of countless variations on this theme. One way is to think of a question that might arise in everyday conversation and that only has a limited number of possible answers. Choose one of the answers, and create a 'prediction' about it that is easy to carry round with you all the time. Then you just forget about it until it becomes useful.

Let me give you another easy example. On the back of my watch is a sticker that says, "You will say 9 o'clock". In ordinary, casual conversation, I might say to someone, "Are you a morning or an afternoon sort of person? What's your favourite time of day?"

If she says, "Nine o'clock" I take off my watch and I ask her to hold it, face up, on her hand. She does not know about the sticker on the back. I say, "I will make the hands of the watch move around until they say nine o'clock." It sounds like I am promising to perform a psychic miracle, and she becomes intrigued. Then I make a joke of it. I say, "Of course, this could take a while. It might take about three hours..." and I mention whatever interval of time there is between the present time and nine o'clock!

She enjoys the joke and thinks the 'magic' is over. I then say, "The funny thing is, I knew the answer even before I asked the question. Turn the watch over." Once again, this is an inexplicable miracle.

If she mentions a different time, I just continue the conversation as normal and forget about the trick. So, if she says, “Five o’clock”, I might say something like, “Oh really? You’re a sort of afternoon person then. I’m more of a morning person really.”

A friend of mine works as a mind-reader in America. In his wallet, he always carries a small envelope made from bright red paper. On the outside of the envelope, it says, ‘The Wishing Airline’ with a small picture of an aeroplane. Inside is a folded piece of paper. When unfolded, the paper is printed like a airline ticket and it says ‘Thank you for wishing to go to your chosen destination: New Orleans’.

When he meets people socially, he often steers the conversation round to favourite American cities. He says, “Apart from all the obvious big cities that attract lots of visitors, like New York, LA, Vegas... which would be your favourite city do you think?”.

If the other person does not say “New Orleans” then he just continues the conversation as normal. If the other person does say it, then he immediately says, “Have you heard of the Wishing Airline?”. He takes out his wallet, and lets the other person look inside so they can see there is just *one* bright red envelope inside. He lets them take it out and hold it. He says, “It’s called the Wishing Airline because they don’t have any regular, scheduled flights. They just fly wherever you wish to fly. Even the tickets print themselves by magic. You just name your favourite city and the ticket appears from nowhere. Hold the envelope on your hand. I won’t touch it.”

He continues, “What did you say your favourite city was?”. They say, “New Orleans.” He says, “Do you want to change your mind.” Most people will not change their mind, and will say they are happy with their first choice. He says, “Fine. Open the envelope yourself. I won’t touch a thing.” And it’s a miracle.

What if they change their mind and name another city, such as Seattle? He says, “Okay, it’s your choice. It’s down to New Orleans or Seattle. I don’t care. If you stick with Seattle, then inside will be a ticket for Seattle. If you say New Orleans, inside will be a ticket for New Orleans. It never fails.”

If they stick with Seattle, he has them open the envelope and read the ticket. Then he breaks out into his broadest grin, shrugs, laughs and says, “You know, sometimes that works and it looks like a miracle!”.

But if they choose New Orleans... it’s another inexplicable miracle!

And I find that *inexplicable* miracles are the best ones of all!

Bolder Book Test

Introduction

There can be no doubt that the internet has bestowed many blessings upon us. If you earnestly wish to know who won each and every episode of 'Wacky Races', this information is yours at the click of a mouse. If you wish to verify that there really was a Superman comic book story called 'Planet of the Capes', it has never been easier to check this for yourself. (Yes, there really was.)

However, every silver lining has a cloud, as it says on my family crest, and the internet has also brought some curses into the world. One clear example would be the interminable discussions concerning the 'best' book test, which seep like radioactive fog across every online magic forum in existence.

You could spend a lifetime reading these discussions and still be none the wiser. There is no such thing as the best book test. It simply comes down to personal preference. Musicians have favourite chords, models have favourite brands of mascara and mentalists have favourite book tests. Some mentalists have favourite book tests *and* favourite brands of mascara, but that's their business.

My own personal favourite (book test, not mascara) is one I've been using for years. It works, it gets good reactions and all you need are two borrowed books.

Most of you will be familiar with the David Hoy's Bold Book Test, first published in 'The Bold And Subtle Miracles of Dr. Faust' back in 1963. The effect I'm going to describe is an extension of the Hoy routine with a few extra twists. It relies on the same basic method — a miscall of a page number — but hides it so deeply I can give you a cast iron guarantee that it will never be caught or even suspected.

I don't think of this as a stage routine. I think it's particularly well-suited to private parties where you can use two books from a friend's own bookshelves. It's very nearly impromptu, in the sense that you can do all the prep you need in about 30 seconds.

Method

All you need are two books and about 30 seconds of private preparation. Ideally, choose two well-read paperback books that you can flip through easily and that have roughly the same page count. If possible, choose books that do *not* have running chapter titles at the top of the page as this sometimes gives rise to confusion.

Select one of the two books and open it about two thirds of the way through. Look at the top line of the left-hand page. Memorise two or three significant words in this line and note the page number. I will refer to this book as the Force book and I will suppose the page number is 182.

To perform, choose a co-operative female spectator who looks intelligent and well read. Let's call her Jane. Show the two books and have Jane 'choose' one, making sure she ends up with the Force book. Explain that you'd like Jane to try a little telepathy. Make it clear that it's not a test or a challenge and there's no win or lose — it's just for fun and to see what happens. You will think of a word in your book and Jane will try to guess what it is.

Assuming that Jane is willing to try the experiment, explain that you are going to choose a ‘target’ word entirely at random using a totally fair process that guarantees a random result. It is important that everyone present understands the following page selection process, so explain it clearly.

You will turn your gaze *away* from Jane. Jane will start to flip through the pages of her book, and will say ‘Now’ to let you know she has started. She can flip through the pages forwards or backwards, from any starting position she likes and at any pace. You will say ‘Stop’ at some point. Jane will open her book at that point and read out the page number. You will turn to the corresponding page number in *your* book. This is a truly random process, so do make sure everyone appreciates this point. It’s all part of the psychological trap you are setting up.

Go through the page selection process, which ends with Jane calling out a page number and you turning to the corresponding page in your book. Having done this, tell Jane to *close* her book and set it aside. There are two reasons for doing this. The first is that for this phase of the routine you want the Force book to seem unimportant. Secondly, it helps to justify choosing a new page in the second part of the routine.

Tell Jane that you will concentrate on the first line of this randomly selected page. Tell her you will ignore short, unimportant words such as ‘the’ and ‘it’, and focus on any *significant* words of *medium*-length that are in *common* use. Invite Jane to try and receive telepathic impressions from you. She can either write her impressions down or just say them out loud.

During this phase of the routine, take a good look at three things:

- The *actual* top line you say you are focusing on.
- Nearby text on the same page, especially key nouns and verbs.
- Any nearby text on the opposite page.

You do not need to do this covertly. You are *supposed* to be staring intently at the page in front of you, sending mental impressions to Jane. Invite Jane to share whatever impressions are coming to her mind. She is allowed more than one guess and you can offer small hints such as if she’s getting ‘warmer’ or ‘cooler’. Once Jane has announced whatever telepathic impressions she has received, there are several possibilities.

In rare cases, Jane’s guess will be close to the actual target word. This is an inexplicable miracle of telepathy, so milk it all you like.

In most cases, Jane’s guess will not be exactly right. In this case, look for *any* association between Jane’s guess and *any* of the words you are looking at — either on the top line, or nearby, or on the opposite page.

If there is a link with one of the words on the top line, this fits the plot perfectly. If you need to involve a word nearby or on the opposite page, just say that your gaze and your thoughts did wander a little, and Jane has obviously picked up on one of these other words that happened to catch your eye. There will very nearly always be some sort of link you can establish that looks like a partial telepathic success.

Before you dismiss this for not being ‘sure-fire’ (as if anything ever is in live performance), let me mention three salient points.

First of all, the scope for a partial hit is greater than you might think. The association between Jane's guess and one of the words in front of you can be based on *meaning*, *appearance* or *sound*. This gives you plenty of scope to find a connection. I've been performing this routine for over twenty years and I can only remember one occasion when I couldn't contrive some sort of connection.

Secondly, it's okay for the link to be fairly weak. After all, this is a difficult test of direct telepathy. For Jane to come up with even quite a faint connection is a success of sorts. Assuming Jane hasn't often tried a telepathic test of this kind before, it's perfectly understandable if her guesses aren't majestically impressive. It's normal to be not terribly good at things the first time you try them.

Thirdly, complete failure is *perfectly okay* for this part of the routine. It just goes to illustrate how hard this kind of test is, which will make the second part of the routine all the more impressive.

If there is no match at all, it is important that Jane doesn't feel she has *failed* in any sense. Remind everyone that it was just for fun, and all credit to Jane for at least trying. Say it's your fault because you're much better at receiving telepathic impressions than sending them. In the next phase of the routine Jane *will* definitely emerge with some credit, so she won't be left with any negative feelings.

All you have to do now is say, "Let's try it the other way around. Exactly the same experiment, but I'll try to do the mindreading this time."

You now repeat the page selection process, but with the roles reversed. Jane averts her gaze. You say 'Now' and start flipping through the pages of your book. At some point, Jane says 'Stop'. When she does, here's what you do.

Open your book. Look towards the top of the left-hand page, as if expecting the page number to be there. Correcting yourself, allow your gaze to drift down the page to the page number at the bottom. Miscall this as 'One hundred and eighty two'. The little subtlety of not being sure whether the page numbers are at the top or the bottom assists the illusion that you are actually reading some information from the page.

Make eye contact with Jane and say, "Can you find that page in your book? Page one eight two." Close your book without even looking at it, and set it to one side. This miscall will sail past everyone like a ship in the night. The psychological misdirection is very strong. As far as the spectators are concerned, the fairness of this procedure has already been established and it will therefore attract zero scrutiny.

Jane looks at the top line of page 182, and tries to send you impressions telepathically. Give a few vague verbal indications of the impressions you are receiving. Pick up your scribble pad and jot down your psychic impressions as accurately as you feel is appropriate. Have Jane read out the top line of her page, and then show everyone what you received. This will get a very strong reaction.

In the first half of this routine, people either see an amazing and inexplicable feat of telepathy, or they see proof of just how hard it is to guess thought-of words correctly. In the second half, they see strong proof of your psychic ability. All with two normal, borrowed books. It may not be the 'best' book test in the world, but if you try it I think you'll like it.

Killer Test

Effect

You get four men up from the audience. By a random, secret selection process, three are designated as Angels, who have a clear conscience, and one is designated as a Killer who has a guilty conscience. You can't control this process and have no idea who ends up with which role. The premise is that the 'Killer', even though he hasn't actually done anything wrong, will nonetheless manifest classic tell-tale signs of a guilty conscience.

You ask the four participants various questions and claim that by studying their responses, as well as reading their body language and expressions, you can tell who is showing signs of a guilty conscience. This process is played largely for laughs. Nonetheless, you successfully identify the Killer.

The whole point of the routine is the fun you have with the four spectators and the absurdity of the 'deduction' process. There's also plenty of audience participation.

Method

Here's the how. Take four identical white envelopes. You can use any practical size, but 6 x 4 inches is about right. I will assume you are using envelopes that come with 'lick and seal' adhesive on the flaps.

On the face (non-flap) side of three of these envelopes, print a solid black border as shown, with square corners. On the fourth, use slightly rounded corners (Fig. 1).

Take four plain pieces of white card stock just the right size to fit snugly inside the envelopes. On three of them, print the word 'angel' in the middle of the card, using relatively small print (I'd advise using approximately 20pt lettering). The point is this: when someone peers down into the envelope to read what is written on the card, they should need a couple of seconds to read the word. On the fourth card, print the word 'KILLER' across the entire card, using big, bold letters.

Take the envelope with the slightly rounded black border. Put a single grain of rice at the bottom of the envelope. Put the Killer card inside. Put the Angel cards in the other three envelopes. Glue all the cards in position, so they cannot come out.

Seal the three Angel envelopes well. Lick or moisten all of the adhesive along the full length of the flap, and stick the flap down very firmly. In addition, place one dab of glue half-way up one side of the flap (Fig. 2). The point is that these three envelopes will be relatively difficult to open, and the dab of glue means at least one side of the flap will always tear on opening. On the Killer envelope, just lick and seal the tip of the flap. This envelope is relatively easy to open.

You're all set!

Tell the audience you're going to have four people come up on stage and that you will give them roles (like casting a play). Three will be Angels and one will be a Killer. Angels are sweet and innocent with nothing to hide. The Killer is riddled with guilt and shame. No one will know who has which role, but you will use your understanding of subtle giveaway signs to spot the guilt-racked Killer.

Choose four men to take part. Check they can read without glasses or they have their reading glasses with them. Try to choose a range of personality types. Ideally, you want at least one clean-cut, conservative type who doesn't look like much like a Killer, and one person at the opposite end of the scale who doesn't look much like an Angel. This will make things funnier later on.

Ask your four participants their names and ensure the audience hears all four names clearly. This will increase the amount of audience participation later. I don't normally favour placing name labels on participants, but in this case it would help.

Show the four envelopes. Explain that three of them have the word 'Angel' written inside, while one of them has the word 'Killer'. Position the four men in a line upstage left. Hand over the four envelopes. Go and stand downstage right. Instruct the four participants to mix and swap the envelopes randomly among themselves for about 20 seconds, but not to open any envelopes at this stage. Make it clear you are looking away from the four participants and can't possibly follow who has which envelope.

Once the envelopes have been mixed, remain standing some distance away from the four participants but turn so you can address both them and the audience.

Tell the four participants to hold their envelopes close to their chest, open them, peek inside and see if they are an Angel or the Killer. Tell them that secrecy is essential: they mustn't give anything away by their reaction, expression or body language. While they do this, chat to the audience and only *occasionally* glance at the four participants.

Fig 1. Straight and rounded borders.

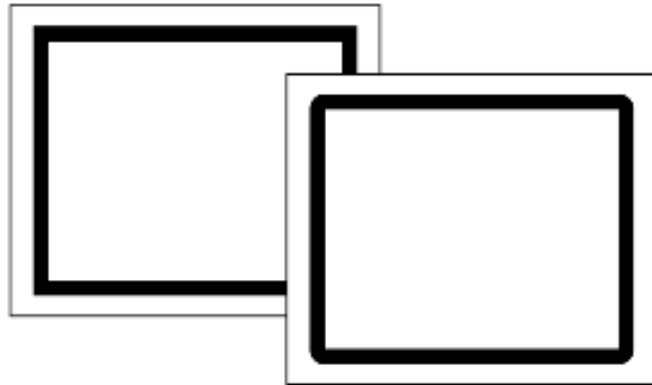
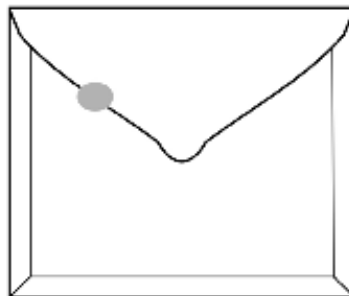


Fig 2. A dab of glue.



You have four potential clues to the Killer's identity: the rounded envelope border, how long it takes him to open the envelope, how neatly the envelope opens, and how long it takes him to learn which role he is playing.

If one or more of these clues tells you who the Killer is, fine. If not, you have a back-up plan. Ask the four men to close their envelopes and keep the contents securely hidden. Go to them and move briskly down the line collecting the envelopes saying, "You won't need these anymore." This allows you to spot the slightly curved black border and to feel for the grain of rice in the 'Killer' envelope. Ditch the envelopes and resume your former position some distance from the four men. Obviously, the routine is more effective if you don't have to do this and can spot the 'Killer' from a distance.

You now know who the Killer is, and the rest of the routine is just fun and games. Start by inviting the audience to guess which of the four men look like they are showing signs of a guilty conscience. It's important to get the audience playing along.

Announce that you will go down the line and ask each man one question. State that in each case, what they say and how they say it will give you subtle clues as to who is harboring guilty thoughts and feelings and is therefore the Killer. Invite the audience to play along and pit their deductive skills against yours.

The questions you ask depend on your personal style. You can ask serious questions that sound like they might plausibly yield some insight, such as, "Which quality do you admire most: reliability, honesty or tact?" Alternatively, you can ask questions that sound like psychological games, such as, "If you were trying to hide the fact that you're the Killer, would you try not to smile or giggle right now?"

My personal preference is to ask absurd questions and play the whole routine for laughs. Here are a couple of examples. Humour is of course highly subjective and you should make up your own questions based on what you, and your audience, will find amusing:

"If you were famous for one thing, would you like it to be something you've done, a distinctive odour, or a part of your body?"

"If you could have one of these superpowers, which would it be: to always know exactly where you are in relation to Swindon, to be able to read bar codes at sight, or to be able to make a sound exactly like a duck with a hangover?"

After each question, offer some sort of insight that is apparently part of your evaluation procedure, such as, "You see the way he fidgeted and touched his nose before he answered? That's a reliable sign of guilty feelings. Or he may just have an itchy nose."

After your first round of questions, name two of the men as innocent Angels with nothing to hide, have them confirm that you are right and return to their seats. Two men left. Have one more round of questions and eliminate the remaining Angel. Have the fourth and final man confirm that he was the Killer all along, and take your applause.

This is a versatile routine. You can include any pseudo-explanations you want, play it straight if you prefer, and use any terminology (e.g. 'Truth-teller' and 'Liar'). While it may not be a major mystery, it's a good way to generate interest, laughs and audience participation with just enough mystery to make it worthwhile.

Credits: This routine is based on numerous Liar/Truth-teller routines, Marc Paul's 'Direct Thought Projection' and discussions with Jaq Greenspon.

A Meeting Of Minds

Here's a simple way to prove that you can read someone's mind and they can read yours. It is suitable for any informal, close-up, one-on-one situation. It uses one simple gaff that you can make in under a minute for less than a cent. You can carry it around forever, in your wallet or purse, knowing it's always there if you need it.

You need three identical blank cards. I use double-blank Bicycle card stock.

Take Card #1 and with a thick black marker add four straight lines at each corner. Do the same with Card #2.

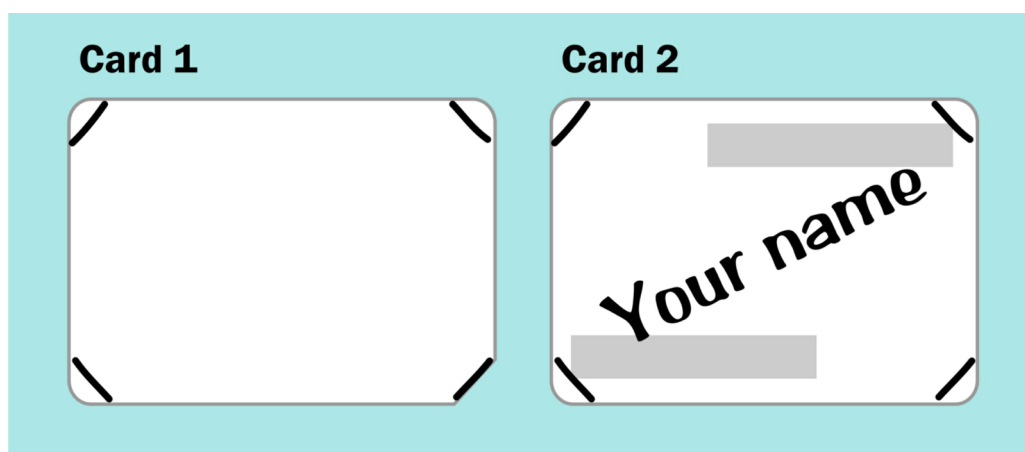
Trim away one corner of Card #1, cutting precisely along the black line.

In the middle of Card #2, write your first name. You will need to write your name in exactly the same way during performance, so a little practice is in order.

Apply spray glue very lightly to Card #2 as indicated by the shaded areas. To do this, use a paper mask so the glue only goes where you want it to.

Stick Card #1 on top of Card #2, so that the *blank* side of Card #1, which does *not* have the corner lines, sticks to the side of Card #2 bearing your name. Align the two cards perfectly. Press firmly and allow a minute for the spray glue to set. You now have a double card that looks like a single card with four corner lines on top and a blank back. The fact that one corner of the upper card is missing is disguised by the black lines at that corner.

Take Card #3 and add four corner lines similar to those on the other two cards.



You need to prepare a question that you can pose to a spectator as a sort of mindreading challenge. The question needs to have these qualities:

- It is easy to understand.
- There is one obvious answer.
- There is a second, slightly less obvious answer, which becomes obvious as soon as you provide a clue.

The question you use will depend on whatever is suitable for you and the people you typically perform for. Here's a possible example, just to give you the idea. You could ask someone to think of a place that many tourists visit that is associated with American presidents. The obvious answer is Washington D.C. or the White House. If you offer a supplementary clue about four large faces carved into a mountain, they will probably say Mount Rushmore.

Here's another possible example. You could ask a spectator to think of a famous, influential British pop group from some time ago. The most obvious answer is The Beatles. If you offer a supplementary clue that that this group were around at the same time as the Beatles but are still performing, they will probably say The Rolling Stones.

Devise a question that follows the same structure and that is appropriate for you and the people for whom you are likely to perform. For this explanation, I will go with the 'Washington / Rushmore' example.

I'll assume you are in a café, sitting opposite a friend. Let's call her Kate. You will need some kind of opaque cover, such as a thick napkin. You are going to prove to Kate that you can read her mind and she can read yours. Say, "Mindreading is really a very natural sort of thing that almost anyone can do. You're probably better at it than you realize. Let's try something simple." Take out the gaffed card and the single card.

Put the single card in front of you with the four corner lines uppermost. Write your name on the card exactly the way you wrote it on Card #2. Turn the card over so the blank side is face up. Explain to Kate, "I'm going to think of a place or location — later on you can try guessing where it is. I'll write it down and then turn my card over."

Ask Kate to look away but promise it will be for less than ten seconds. Write 'Mt. Rushmore' on the card and turn it over. Tell Kate she can look again.

"Let's lock this away in the vault." Slide the card under the napkin out of sight.

Pick up the gaffed double card with the four corner lines face up. Keep the edge with the missing corner nearest to yourself. Write Kate's name across the card. Turn the card over like turning the page of a book, side to side, so the missing corner is still nearest you. Position the card, now blank side up, in front of Kate and give her the marker pen.

"Think of a place that means a lot to you. It has to be spontaneous so I'll only give you ten seconds. When you're done, turn the card over so all I can see is your name."

As you say 'turn the card over', demonstrate the same page-turning action, such that the missing corner remains nearest to you. It isn't crucial that Kate copies this action, but it doesn't hurt to plant the suggestion. Reverse this action so the card is once again blank side up.

Look away while Kate writes on the card and turns it over, then face her again.

“This goes in the vault as well!” Place Kate’s card under the napkin. As you do this, maintain eye contact with Kate and make it perfectly clear you are not trying to look at what she wrote.

“Let’s start by seeing how good you are at mindreading. I was thinking of a famous location. It could be anywhere in the world. Any ideas?”

Kate will make a guess or admit she has no idea.

“Let me suggest a good way to do this.” As you talk to Kate, reach under the napkin for the gaffed double card. Split this apart, which is easy if you start from the missing corner. Take out the lower card of the two. This has your name on the upper surface. Bring this single card into view with your name facing uppermost. Hold it so that your thumb and forefinger cover up the missing corner. Throughout this action, look towards the napkin/cards as *little* as possible, and maintain eye contact with Kate as *much* as possible. You want Kate to think that *she* is important, *not* the card.

Display this card so your name faces towards Kate. *Do not look directly at the card just yet.* It’s the wrong time.

“The place I’m thinking of is one that lots of tourists go to, and it’s strongly associated with the history of America and the presidency. Try to look into my mind and see what I see.”

As you say ‘what I see’, nod towards the side of the card that is facing towards you. You will see what Kate wrote.

“You don’t have to *believe* you can read my mind — just *imagine* that you can. And ask your imagination what idea would float into your mind if you could really do this.”

Kate will probably suggest either Washington D.C. or the White House. Whatever she guesses, congratulate her on doing well. “That’s a great start! It’s not exactly right but it’s close. The place I’m thinking of isn’t quite so obvious.”

Put the card back under the napkin but maintain eye contact with Kate as much as you can. “Let me help you just a little. It’s a place where you can see four faces of American presidents carved larger than life.”

At this point, Kate ought to be able to arrive at the correct answer: ‘Mount Rushmore’. If not, give her more hints until she gets it right.

Make Kate’s achievement sound more impressive than it really was. “That’s amazing! It could have been anywhere on the face of the earth, and yet you got it. I only gave you one little hint, and even then it wasn’t the most obvious answer.”

This may seem rather lame on the printed page. However, a lot of spectators will be happy to credit themselves with telepathic brilliance based on this rather flimsy evidence.

Reach under the napkin and slide out Card #3. Do not look towards the napkin when you do this. You must never let Kate suspect you are trying to glimpse what she wrote. Card #3 has your name on one side and ‘Mt. Rushmore’ on the other. Briefly display this and let Kate congratulate herself on her telepathic prowess.

"Your thought is still locked in the vault." Gesture towards the napkin. *"Let's see if I can guess what you were thinking of."*

Kate concentrates on whatever place she was thinking of and you can now read her mind in any manner you wish.

Having done this, reach under the napkin, get the two cards lined up (Kate thinks there is only one), take them out, rip them up and dump them in the trash or in your pocket. As part of the same action, take out the prop you're going to use for your next effect or a business card to hand over. The point is to immediately provide Kate with a new focus for her attention and not let her dwell on the card(s) you have just destroyed. You do not want her to think about some cards with words written on them. You want her to remember the experience of her reading your mind and vice-versa, and this is where you should steer her recollection and her focus.

Credits: this is a combination of The Informatico Principle by Ted Lesley and Albertest by T. A. Waters.

Three Prizes

This is a close-up item you can use just about anywhere. It's so simple you can almost perform it impromptu, and although it's very straightforward there are a few subtleties you might like.

All you need are three bits of opaque paper or card that you can write on and fold into quarters. I use regular file card stock.

On the first card, write, "Whoever gets this prize wins "£1000 from Ian Rowland", except that you obviously substitute your own name. I'll call this the T card for short (T for thousand).

On the second card, write, "Whoever gets this prize wins 10 pence and a warm smile." I'll call this the 10 card for short.

Leave the third card blank.

Fold all the cards into quarters with the writing on the inside. You need to mark the T card using any visual marks you find effective. For example, give it a very slight bend and subtly crimp one of the four corners of the folded card. You will also need to have a 10p coin to hand.

For explanatory purposes, let's suppose you're at a table in a coffee shop. Your spectator friend, Lynne, is sitting opposite.

"Two themes that fascinate me are persuasion and luck. You know what's interesting about them? They're opposites. If I somehow sneakily make you do what I want, that's persuasion. But if you just happen to do what I want, entirely by chance, that's luck. But it can be hard to tell the difference. I'll show you what I mean."

Take out the three folded cards and hand them to Lynne.

"On these cards I've written three prizes. Please don't open them just yet, but do mix and shuffle them so they're in no particular order. This is a game where you do everything and I do nothing. I don't make any decisions and I don't touch anything, I promise. When you've mixed them up however you like, please just put the three prizes on the table like this: you, middle, me".

As you say these last three words, mime creating a diagonal line of three cards on the table between Lynne and yourself.

When Lynne has created this line of cards, one will be nearest to her, one will be in the middle, and one will be nearest to you.

If the T card is nearest to you, which is the most convenient outcome, you can use Version A of this routine. We'll get to Version B later.

Version A

“So, we have a prize for you [gesture to the card nearest Lynne], one in the middle, and a prize for me [gesture to the card nearest yourself]. We really ought to share the prize in the middle, but instead I’ll be nice and let you have it. So you get two prizes, I only get one. Aren’t I kind?”

“[Point to the card nearest Lynne] If it could be anything in the world, what would you like your first prize to *be*?”

Allow Lynne to answer, then have her open the card and read out what it says.

Suppose this is the 10 card. When Lynne has finished reading and looks up at you, slide a 10p piece across the table and give her a nice smile. This is mildly amusing.

“I said you could have this prize as well [the card in the middle of the diagonal row]. What does it say?”

Lynne opens the card in the middle of the row and sees it’s a blank card.

“See? You didn’t think winning 10p was much, but at least it was better than nothing, right?”

If Lynne gets the blank card first and the 10 card second, the narrative of the routine still flows nicely. When Lynne opens her first card, she sees that she’s won nothing. Offer your commiserations, then remind her that she gets a second prize as well, and say you suspect she could win some big money. She checks, and finds that her second prize is a 10p piece and a smile.

After Lynne has looked at her two prizes, the T card is still folded on the table. “

I’m sorry you’re not very impressed by your two prizes, but then again you mixed them up, not me! Why don’t you check my prize? Let me stress that although I’ll let you read it, because I promised I wouldn’t touch anything, this is my prize, not yours, okay?”

Lynne reads the T card and sees that you win your own money.

To round off the routine, say:

“Maybe that was just luck, although you may think it’s unlikely I’d risk losing a thousand pounds. Maybe I somehow persuaded you to give me this [the T card] although it’s hard to see how since you did everything and I did nothing. I guess it’s just one of those mysteries that happen when I’m around. But at least you won 10 pence!”

Now let’s see the alternative handlings.

Version B

If Lynne does not conveniently place the T card nearest to you, or if you just don't want to use option A, here's how it goes.

"This is all about three decisions. You do everything, I do nothing. Three prizes in a row. First of all [gesture to the diagonal line of three cards], choose one for me." Stress the word "one".

Suppose Lynne points to the T card (if not, see Version C).

"I asked you to choose one for me because I can't choose it for myself — remember, in this game I don't touch anything. What do you think I've won? Or what would you *like* me to win?"

There is scope for humour here.

Whatever Lynne says, ask her to place the T card (still folded) in front of you, thus designating this as your prize.

"Next, choose one for yourself [she does so]. There's one prize left. We could share it, but actually I'll let you have that too. So you get two prizes!"

Finish as in Version A.

Version C

If Lynne did not point to the T card:

"In a moment we'll see what you've won. Can you guess? Don't open it yet. Just put it in front of yourself. [She does so] Two left. Choose one for me."

If this second choice is not the T card:

"So now you've chosen two possible prizes for yourself. Can you guess what you've won? I don't get a choice — I just get whatever's left over. Can you push it over towards me? I can't do it because I promised I wouldn't touch anything."

If this second choice is the T card:

"I asked you to choose one for me because I can't choose it for myself — remember, in this game I don't touch anything. What do you think I've won?"

Have Lynne push your prize over towards your side of the table.

"There's one prize left. We could share it, but actually I'll let you have that too. So you get two prizes!"

Finish as in Version A.

Although this is a very simple equivoque (or "magician's choice") routine, let me mention a few points of possible interest.

First of all, it's a truly 'hands off' effect with no moves and nothing to hide. From a layman's point of view, it really does seem as if they do everything and you do nothing (a theme emphasized in the suggested patter), yet you end up with your thousand pounds intact. It's not a bad little mystery for something you can do at a moment's notice with three scraps of paper.

Secondly, there's a neat subtlety involved in the way the equivoque works. Consider the point where the spectator has pointed to a card and you say, *"In a moment we'll see what you've won. Can you guess?"* By saying this, you have designated the card as being the spectator's prize *without explicitly saying so*. What's more, the *"Can you guess?"* question at the end distracts the spectator's attention, and as soon as she starts trying to reply she has unwittingly accepted your designation. These subtleties help to conceal the equivoque from prying minds.

Three more points and then I'm done.

If you're familiar with Deddy Corbuzier's excellent Free Will effect, you know it exploits the ambiguity of pronouns (e.g. the meaning of a phrase like 'I will have the coin' varies according to who reads it out). In this effect, the wording of the T card is intentionally *unambiguous*, precisely because I don't want even a very astute spectator to think of this possibility. The unambiguous wording in this case shuts down one possible line of speculation, helping to leave the spectator clueless.

It doesn't matter whether the spectator gets 10p then nothing (blank card) or vice versa. The narrative structure is equally satisfying either way. In one case, she's disappointed with her first prize but then she sees that at least it was better than nothing. In the other case, she starts with the worst prize (nothing), then things get slightly better (10 pence), and then she sees what she allocated to you: a thousand pounds. This feels like a natural progression of scale.

There are many possible variations. For example, you could use the exact same routine with three packets of five face down cards (perhaps clipped together for ease of handling): a royal flush in spades (which you end up with), a dull hand of five random cards and five blank cards. You can prove your ability to win at poker without any sleights, deals or even a full deck of cards.

Sign Language

I'd now like to tell how to look at anyone you meet — even a complete stranger — and immediately identify their correct star sign. That's what I would *like* to tell you, but I can't because I don't know how. What I can offer is the next best thing: a method that will, in the vast majority of cases, create the *impression* that you can ascertain someone's correct star sign, or at least get pretty close, very quickly.

This is an impromptu, anytime, anywhere demonstration with no props required and nothing written down. It also has nothing to do with branching or progressive anagrams.

I have included a table of star signs to make this item easier to follow. I have simplified the dates of the cusps between signs for the sake of simplicity.

As with anything of this type, you will need to read through it a few times, exploring the different paths, to see how it all fits together.

Let's suppose you are in an informal setting and working with one spectator. The subject of astrology comes up, and the spectator wonders if you can identify her star sign (or you offer to try).

[1]

In a matter-of-fact tone, say, "So, let's see. I'm going to say you are Capricorn or Cancer."

As you say this, pay close attention to the spectator's reactions and be ready to interrupt with your next remark before she can say much.

If the spectator starts to look favorably impressed, this suggests that you are correct. Obviously this will happen one sixth of the time. Go to [2].

If the spectator does not respond favorably, and begins to tell you that you are wrong, interrupt her quickly: *"No! I'm just kidding... I know you're not! Obviously it's never that simple. But if you like, we could try to do this properly."* Laugh and make it clear you were not being serious but you will now attempt to determine her sign. Go to [3].

Capricorn Dec 23 - Jan 22

Aquarius Jan 23 - Feb 22

Pisces Feb 23 - Mar 22

Aries Mar 23 - Apr 22

Taurus Apr 23 - May 22

Gemini May 23 - June 22

Cancer Jun 23 - Jul 22

Leo Jul 23 - Aug 22

Virgo Aug 23 - Sep 22

Libra Sep 23 - Oct 22

Scorpio Oct 23 - Nov 22

Sagittarius Nov 23 - Dec 22

[2]

Say, "Wait! Don't give too much away! Just yes or no — your sign is one of the two that I just mentioned, right?"

You need to get this confirmation before you go any further, just in case you have read the signals incorrectly. It's also important to prevent the spectator blurting out too much.

If you are right, so only Capricorn and Cancer are in play, say, "That's what I thought, and later on I'll explain why I thought so." These words plant the idea that this is an analytical process, and not just guesswork. Go to [TWO SIGNS LEFT].

If you are wrong, apologise for any confusion and go to [3].

[3]

You have established that the spectator is neither Capricorn nor Cancer. Say, "All kidding aside, I can usually do this or get pretty close. Let's see if this works for us because it's pretty interesting when it does."

This wording is intended to get the spectator intrigued so she *wants* to see whatever comes next. This encourages a co-operative spirit that is neither too critical nor too challenging.

You continue, "First of all, there's just one problem to address. I promise we'll get to your star sign soon but we just have to deal with one point. The middle of the astrological year is the 25th of June. Your birthday doesn't come before then, does it?"

This question is intentionally ambiguous. Whether the answer is yes or no, you can act as if this is what you were asserting. (We have already eliminated Capricorn, the only sign found in both halves of the year.)

[3 > YES] If the spectator says yes: "I thought so! Great! That's good because it means I'm more likely to be able to pick up the right impressions about you. For some reason, this works better with the earlier signs rather than the later ones."

At this point you have established that her sign is in the first half of the year, and it is not Capricorn. So you are down to five possible signs: Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus or Gemini.

Go to [FIVE SIGNS LEFT]

[3 > NO] If the spectator says no: "I thought not! Great! That's good because it means I'm more likely to be able to pick up the right impressions about you. For some reason, it works better with the later signs than the earlier ones."

At this point you have established that her sign is in the second half of the year, and it is not Cancer. So you are down to five possible signs: Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio or Sagittarius.

Go to [FIVE SIGNS LEFT]

[FIVE SIGNS LEFT]

“Okay, let me ask you which you think guides you most — optimism or practicality?”

Whatever the spectator says, pretend to take some interest as if this is helping your evaluation of her sign.

“One more question — which do you think is more true: you build your own destiny or you discover it?”

As before, pretend this is relevant to your evaluation.

“Okay. At this point I want to mention three signs to you: Aquarius, Aries and Gemini [or Leo, Libra and Sagittarius if you are working with signs in the second half of the year]. Just yes or no: do you see your sign in this group? Because I don’t think many people would associate them with you.”

If she says yes, go to [THREE SIGNS LEFT]

If she says no, go to [BRIDGE TO TWO SIGNS LEFT]

[THREE SIGNS LEFT]

“I knew it! Based on your answers, I just sensed it had to be one of those three. I’m glad this is working so well for us. Okay, I’ll play a little game with you, and this will also make it a little quicker. Name one of those three signs that is not yours, and the choice you make will tell me everything I need to know.”

Whichever sign the spectator eliminates, say, “Ah! That tells me a lot.” Nod to yourself as if her choice has provided some sort of clue as to her personality. There are now only two signs left in play.

Go to [TWO SIGNS LEFT].

[BRIDGE TO TWO SIGNS LEFT]

“No, I didn’t think so. As I said, not many people would think you matched those signs, and based on your answers, I certainly don’t.”

At this point, you only have two possible signs left (these will be either Pisces/Taurus or Virgo/Scorpio).

Go to [TWO SIGNS LEFT]

[TWO SIGNS LEFT]

This part of the script is written using Gemini and Cancer as the only two signs remaining. You can adapt the same script for *any* two signs.

Say, “Here’s the situation. With Gemini, the head usually rules the heart. But with Cancer, it’s the other way around: the heart usually rules the head. The impression I got first and clearest was Gemini, and your answers also take me in that direction. But I want to think you are a woman of strong emotions and passions, so on this occasion I’d happily be wrong and say Cancer. It’s what I’d like to think is true. So... which is it?”

If she says Gemini, say, “See? I said I was going to be wrong and I was! Gemini was my first and strongest impression, but I went with what I wanted to be true instead! But tell me, aren’t there some times when your emotions take over and your heart rules your head?”

The spectator has to agree because everyone has moments like this in their life. When she agrees, say, “Well, that’s the side of you that I was picking up on! Even though it wasn’t perfect, I’m glad this worked out as well as it did for us. Do you know the main traits of your sign?”

Go to [ENDING].

If she says Cancer, say, “Great! So I was right to change my mind! I wanted it to be true, and it is! I’m so pleased this worked for us. Do you know the main traits of your sign?”

Go to [ENDING].

[ENDING]

You have just asked the spectator if she knows the main traits of her sign. If she doesn’t, make up one or more traits that sound gently flattering (just don’t lay it on too thick) and that paint a rather pleasant, optimistic picture for the future.

If she offers a few suggestions about her key traits, as many will, broadly agree and then, as above, offer some additional insights of your own.

And that’s all there is to it!

Parity Party

Here's something you can use to intrigue and entertain people for five minutes or more. It's not a magic trick, as such, but it is intriguing, fascinating and entertaining. With a little imagination you can dress it up in all sorts of different themes pertaining to the mind, perception or coincidence.

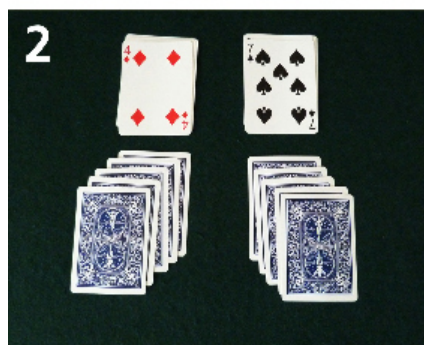
I'm going to describe the routine using red and black playing cards for ease of explanation,. However, you use *any* cards that neatly divide into two groups: sets of blank cards with 'Smile' and 'Frown' written on them, picture cards featuring male and female celebrities, names of famous people who are either dead or alive... and so on.

You'll need ten red cards and ten black cards. I like to use the 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 of hearts and diamonds, and the Ace, 3, 5, 7 and 9 of clubs and spades. The fact that the red cards are even and the black cards are odd has nothing to do with the routine, but it adds a nice red herring to the proceedings.

First Demonstration

Display the twenty cards. I like to keep the reds over to the left and the blacks over to the right to be consistent with the rest of the routine (Photo 1).

Turn all the cards face down and have a spectator shuffle them thoroughly. Take the cards back and be quite assertive about the fact that you have to do the dealing. There are two reasons for this: (i) it's easier to demonstrate the process if you deal the cards the first time, and (ii) at this stage you want the spectators to suspect you're exerting some sort of covert control over what happens.



Turn over the top card. If it's red, place it face up, left of centre. If it's black, place it face up, right of centre.

Take the next card *without turning it over*. You do not know the colour of this card. If the first card was red, place this second card beneath it to start a face down pile on the red side. If the first card was black, place this second card beneath it to start a face down pile on the black side.

Turn the next card face up. If it's red, add it to the face up red cards; otherwise add it to the face up black cards. Take the next card, the fourth card, without turning it over. If the preceding card was red it goes on the face down pile on the red side; otherwise it goes on the face down pile on the black side.

Continue to deal the cards in this way: turn one card face up and place it on the appropriate face up red or black pile; then place the next card face down on the same side as the preceding card *even though you don't know what colour it is*. You will eventually have dealt all twenty cards. Ten of them will be in the face up red and black piles. You may have five of each, but not necessarily. Ten of the cards will be in the face down red and black piles. (Photo 2).

As you can see from the photo, I like to keep the face up piles loosely squared up while keeping the face down piles stepped. These two face down piles may come out even, five cards either side, or they may not. It makes no difference to the routine.

Gather the two face up piles together, turn them face down and put them to one side.

"These aren't important. What's important are these two sets of face down cards we haven't seen yet."

Gesture to the red and black face down piles.

"This was a random process, right? We have no idea which of these are red, which are black. However, the universe always seeks balance. Good and bad, love and hate, win and lose... a sense of harmony runs through everything."

"This is why I can make the number of red cards here [point to the face down pile on the left] equal to the number of black cards here [point to the face down pile on the right]. Of course, another factor might be that I often use misdirection and sleight of hand to get things just how I want them. Here we go... I guarantee the number of red cards here [face down left pile] will equal the number of black cards here [face down right pile]."

The reference to 'misdirection and sleight of hand' is just to tease the audience and make the next demonstration more intriguing. Turn over the face down red pile and count the red cards. Turn over the face down black pile and count the black cards. They will match (Photo 3). In the photo there are four red cards on the left and four black cards on the right. Your outcome may be different, but the numbers will always be equal.

At this point, if your spectators just shrug and say this outcome is obvious, maybe this routine isn't right for them. It perhaps takes a certain amount of intellect to appreciate that this is actually quite an intriguing outcome and hard to explain.

"But it gets more weird and interesting than you can possibly imagine. This time, I won't even touch the cards, which makes the sleight of hand harder."

Second Demonstration

Gather all twenty cards and have someone thoroughly shuffle them face down. This time, let a spectator do all the dealing. You may have to coach them a little to get the dealing process correct, but most people get the hang of it very quickly once they've been shown what to do.

During this second deal, point out two facts. First of all, the face up cards are in a completely random order that no one could predict or determine. Each time a card is turned face up, it could be either red or black.

Secondly, the face up cards have *no bearing whatsoever* on the face down cards. If the first card happens to be red, the second card (which gets added to the face down pile on the red side) *could be either red or black*. Ditto on the other side of the table. These two statements are perfectly true.

When the spectator has finished dealing, say:

“Like I said, the universe always seeks balance and harmony. Even when you shuffle and deal the cards, I can make the number of red cards here [click fingers over the face down pile on the red side] match the number of black cards here [click over the face down pile on the black side]. Even though you did all the shuffling and dealing, and I literally never touched the cards, I can still make this work.”

Let the spectators check that the number of red cards in the face down pile on the red side matches the number of black cards in the face down pile on the black side.

“But it gets even more weird and interesting than you can possibly imagine.”

Third Demonstration

As before, let anyone shuffle the cards face down and complete the dealing process. Get to the point just before you turn over the two face down piles. Have anyone choose a low number e.g. three. Have them choose any three cards from the face down pile on the red side pile, and any three from the face down pile on the black side, and exchange them. Repeat your speech about universal harmony, click your fingers over both piles, and then let the spectators check that once again the number of red cards on the left equal the number of black cards on the right.

You can include other variations if you wish. For example, you can remove one red and one black card so you now only have nine of each. You might think that having an odd number of each colour would spoil the outcome, but... it still works! It always works so long as you start off with the same number of red and black cards.

When I present this item, I find people want to ‘take over’ and try it for themselves several times. If you want to give the routine a ‘mentalist’ finish, prepare a written prediction that says, “For the final deal, the number of red cards in the red pile, and black cards in the black pile, will be [space].” Let your spectators decide which is the final demonstration, then use your nailwriter to add the correct number before showing your prediction. Alternatively, prepare five business cards with the prediction message written on the back, covering all the likely outcomes from 1 to 5. Place one business card in view or in your top pocket at the start, and switch it for the correct prediction if necessary.

As I said at the start, you can wrap this intriguing demonstration in any patter theme you wish. At the risk of being criticised for pretentiousness, let me mention that if you read popular accounts of quantum physics you may have come across the notions of ‘quantum entanglement’ and ‘spooky action at a distance’ (and if not you can always google them). This routine is a perfect way to demonstrate these ideas, since there seems to be no reason why the two piles exhibit this strange sympathetic relationship, and do so even if quite widely separated! I sometimes perform this routine with the red and black ‘sides’ at opposite ends of the room!

Credit: this item is based on a video on the YouTube “standupmaths” channel. Search for “Mind-boggling Card Trick (you can try at home)”. There is a follow-up video in the same series that explains in mathematical terms why it always works. All I have done is add some presentational touches.



Stories



A Favour For A Favour

Here's a story that I included in the lecture. It illustrates what I feel is an important point about the magic community.

Last summer, my brother and niece paid a visit to London. They live in Australia so I don't get a chance to see them very often. They both quite like magic and, for example, occasionally write to me about something they've seen on the Penn & Teller 'Fool Us' show. I therefore decided to organise a special 'Magic Afternoon' for them while they were here in London. My plan was to find a nice venue, where we could all relax and enjoy a drink and a bite to eat, and invite two magician friends to come along. The three of us would then treat my brother and my niece to a relaxed, informal show.

The two magi-friends I invited to come along were AJ Green and Lee Hathaway. The afternoon was a great success. The five of us chatted and shared stories, and then every once in a while myself, AJ or Lee would perform a bit of magic. AJ performed some great close-up magic and also demonstrated his dazzling speed-cubing skills. Lee performed plenty of strong magic as you'd expect. Among other gems, I had asked him to include his version of David Williamson's 'Torn & Restored Transpo', which I think it's fair to say is one of the finest close-up card tricks ever devised.

So, at one point in the afternoon, I watched Lee Hathaway, one of the greatest magicians in the country performing one of the greatest card tricks ever invented for my guests. How hard had it been for me to make this happen? Did I have to fill in lots of paperwork or pay a big fee? No. I just sent Lee a message asking if he'd mind helping me out.

A couple of months later, Lee got in touch with me. He had written a book, called 'Happy Busy Magician', and wanted my help with it. He had done all of the actual writing, resulting in a Word file of about 30,000 words. Lee said to me, "You know all about this sort of thing, publishing a book and so on. Can you give me a hand?"

This was definitely something I could help him with. I've been a professional writer for about forty years and I've published scores of books either for myself and for others. I reviewed the text, did a bit of editing and re-structuring, proofed it and then did all the page layout. It took me one week. I sent the file back to Lee saying, "There you go, send that file to your printer and you've got your book."

How hard had it been for Lee to get his book professionally checked, edited and laid out ready for printing? Not hard at all. He just sent me a message and asked for a bit of help.

I'm sharing this story because I hope it illustrates the joy of the magic community and what a privilege it is to be part of it. Sometimes, we can help one another with our magical talents. Sometimes, we can share our other skills and expertise *outside* of magic itself. But we *can* all help one another and, in my experience, we *do*.

Let me add an important note of clarification. I did not write Lee Hathaway's book for him. 'Happy Busy Magician' is a great book and anyone interested in magic should buy it and study the contents carefully. It's Lee's book from start to finish. It's all his words, his experience, his knowledge, his insight and his brilliance. I just helped out with technical aspects of turning a Word file into a finished, published book.

I shall deliberately repeat myself because the book deserves it. 'Happy Busy Magician' is a *great* book. Check it out.

A Friendly Miracle

Here's another story in similar vein to the last one.

I use two or three different website hosting companies. At one point last year, one of them contacted me to say that I needed to 'reallocate my DNS'. This meant absolutely nothing to me. They may as well have asked me to parasol my velvet chaffinches or plurgle my quaffy binkles. Even when I learned that 'DNS' meant 'domain name server', the message from the web company still made no sense to me.

The company had provided info they said would help me understand what to do. It didn't. They also provided a way to contact them for help and guidance. I contacted them but received neither help nor guidance. It all got a bit stressful. As far as I could tell, whatever they wanted me to do was urgent and crucial. Failure could mean losing one of my websites and perhaps cost me a lot of money. I made several efforts to do what the company wanted me to do. I just couldn't understand it all.

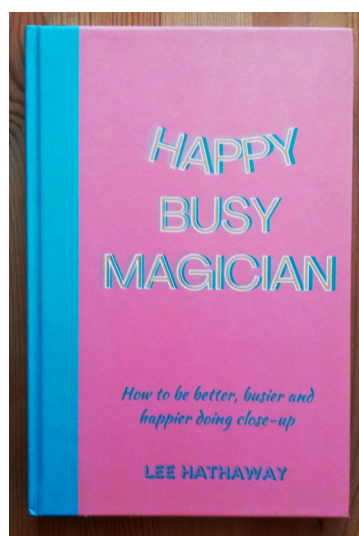
Quite by chance, I happened to mention this problem to my friend Gordon Drayson. This is when I learned, to my surprise and delight, that Gordon knows just about everything there is to know about the internet and websites. In fact, he runs a highly successful company building websites and helping people to achieve online success.

I explained my problem which had, by this time, been driving me mad for two or three weeks. He sorted it out for me *in one afternoon*. For me, this is what the magic community is all about. Sometimes, we help one another with regard to magic itself. Sometimes we share our skills *outside* of magic. But the point remains: we can and do help one another.

If you want a website, or anything to do with creating an effective online presence for yourself, chat to Gordon Drayson. He's likeable, great and amazingly helpful:

www.draysondesign.com

Every magician should read Lee Hathaway's book, 'Happy Busy Magician'. Available from www.leehathawaymagic.com/book



An Annoying Misunderstanding

Sometimes, audiences have an annoying tendency to applaud the *wrong* effect!

Some years ago, a friend of mine was having a housewarming party. She asked me to go along and perform a small magic and mentalism show for all of her guests, which I was happy to do. My show was going to be in two halves.

I closed the first half of my show with the 4x4 Magic Square. I invited one of the women in the audience to choose a target, which happened to be 83, and then proceeded to create the magic square and demonstrate its fascinating properties. It got a good reaction. So far, so good.

We then took a break. The woman who had participated in the Magic Square part of the show, and her friend, came up to me during the interval. They said they were enjoying my show and I thanked them for their kind words.

“We’re really puzzled by that last thing you did,” they said. “That bit with all the numbers and all the different ways they add up. We don’t know how you made me choose 83.”

To their way of thinking, I had learned how to create *one* magic square, based on 83, and the hard part was making the spectator choose ‘83’ every time. It never occurred to them that I could create a square to fit *any* given total.

What made it especially annoying was that I couldn’t correct them! For one thing, I just didn’t have time. It was a busy party, there was a lot going on during the interval and I had to set up for the second half of my show. In addition, I wasn’t entirely sure that I *should* correct their misapprehension. They had experienced some magical wonderment and pronounced themselves baffled by my apparent ability to make someone choose ‘83’ every time. Maybe this was *more* magical than being able to almost instantly create a square to suit any total. So I didn’t explain anything.

Nonetheless, it is a bit annoying when audiences lavish their praise and admiration on tricks we *haven’t* done and completely ignore the trick we *have* done.

I expect there are many similar tales to be told in the magic community!

What You Did Was Amazing!

Here's a story that all magicians should know.

I once attended a dinner party at a friend's house. As well as myself, there were two other magicians present. Everyone else was a non-magician. Towards the end of the meal, when people were chatting over coffee, a fairly predictable thing happened. One of the magicians produced a deck of cards and, standing at the end of the table so everyone could see, performed a card trick. Then I did a bit, then the third magician did a bit. It was all very informal and good fun.

At a later point in the evening, I happened to be talking to one of the women at the party. She said, "I thought what the three of you did earlier was absolutely amazing! I couldn't believe it!"

Of course, I was glad that she had enjoyed the magic. I said, "Well, you know, magic's like anything else. You start off with the beginner's stuff, the basics, and then hopefully get a little better over time."

"Oh no," she said, shaking her head. "I don't mean doing the magic tricks. I mean *standing up in front of people and talking*. I could *never* do that!"

As I've said elsewhere in these pages, I don't think we, as magicians, tend to give ourselves sufficient credit for what we do. Performing magic is hard. It's *really* hard. Yet we often take many aspects of what we do for granted — such as being able to speak in public.

Jerry Seinfeld used to do a routine about this. He said he'd read a survey saying that most people feared having to speak in public even more than they feared dying. "This means that at a funeral, most people would rather be in the casket than giving the eulogy."

As magicians, we have to speak in public and also make sure the effect works and that we accomplish all of the 'secret stuff' without being caught out. This is hard. Let's all pat ourselves on the back. And let's also praise, respect and support one another. We're doing difficult things that most people can't do and could never learn to do.

My Favourite Description

Thirty years ago, in February 1993, Jerome Burne wrote an article about me and 'psychic readings' for 'New Woman' magazine. It was basically a 'debunking' piece. (I hasten to add that this isn't the sort of thing I do any more.)

Here's what happened. First of all, the editor of the magazine, Gill Hudson, sent one of her staff to me for a twenty minute tarot reading. Jerome sat in as an observer. This member of staff then returned to the office and gave her verdict which, I'm pleased to report, was favourable. It seems she was suitably impressed by my 'psychic' talents. Then Jerome interviewed me and I explained how it was possible to fake these types of readings.

Jerome gave his article the rather witty title, 'Play Mystic For Me'. The point of the article was 'caveat emptor': just because something *seems* to be psychic doesn't mean it actually *is*. The article, which was very well written, made it clear that I don't normally give psychic readings or charge for them. It was crystal clear that I had given the reading just for demonstration purposes and to show that people can be taken in.

After the article appeared, quite a few readers wrote in to the editor. Gill shared some of this correspondence with me, although she rendered all the comments anonymous. My favourite was the woman who wrote in to say, 'If Ian Rowland is going round giving readings to people and conning them out of their money in this way, then he is a sad and shameful specimen of a human being'.

There you have it: 'A Sad And Shameful Specimen Of A Human Being'. I think this is possibly the finest description of myself that I've ever read. I intended to get this printed on some business cards but, alas, never got round to it.

I'm scribbling these pages to accompany my Magic Circle lecture. It occurs to me that whoever gets lumbered with the unfortunate task of reviewing my lecture may at least have the pleasure of starting their review by saying, 'Ian Rowland is a sad and shameful specimen of a human being'.

Gala Show Verdict

Let me share with you one of the finest moments of my life in magic.

In 2016, I was invited to perform in the Saturday night gala show at the famous Blackpool Magic Convention, organised by the brilliant people of the Blackpool Magicians Club. I was the penultimate act of the first half. I went on, did twenty minutes of my usual not-entirely-awful mentalism and went off again. I wasn't great but I wasn't too excruciatingly dismal either.

Having performed my set, I gathered my stuff, went out of the Opera House (where the gala shows take place) and sat down for a moment in the vast, empty stillness of the Winter Gardens complex. Behind me, the final act of the first half was in progress.

I got into magic when I was about seven years old and saw a magician on TV. I got some library books on magic and, not long afterwards, received my first magic set. I would never have dreamed, all those years ago, that one day I would be performing in the Saturday night gala show at the biggest annual convention in the world, in front of 3000 people.

I didn't feel smug or full of self-congratulation. I just felt that it had been quite an interesting journey, from being a small child with his first magic set to the dazzling experience of walking out on the Winter Gardens stage. I allowed myself a wry smile and a small moment of quiet pride.

At that point, two rather elderly gentlemen emerged from the Opera House and sat down on a bench not too far away. They didn't notice me. I gathered they had come out a little ahead of the interval in order to avoid the crowds.

One turned to the other and said, in a broad Lancashire accent, "So, what did you reckon to the first 'alf?"

"Oh," replied his friend. "It were all right, I guess." He then sucked hard on his teeth and added, "But that bloody mentalist ruined it."

And that, my friends, is life. Sometimes you get the roses and you feel good. Sometimes you get the nettles and they sting. Sometimes you sort of get them both together.

That's all there is to the story. I'd just like to apologise to that dear gentlemen and the many who no doubt agreed with him. I'm sorry I ruined the first half of the gala show.

David Copperfield's Sofa

As you may have gathered from these pages, I love to hang out with various friends from the magic world. In general, I find magic folk to be excellent company. On one occasion, I was hanging out in a very likeable but slightly noisy pub, 'The Old Coffee House' on Beak Street in central London.

I was with a small group of magicians, including Phil Scrace, James Pritchard and Dan Stanbridge. We were talking about Angelo Carbone, the brilliant creator of countless great magic effects. Phil mentioned how amazingly successful Angelo had been and the fact that many of the world's top magicians use effects based on Angelo's impressive ingenuity.

At one point in the chat, against the general background noise of the pub, Phil mentioned, "Angelo's well known by all the top magicians. He's even got David Copperfield's sofa."

I'll admit that this comment had me slightly baffled. As the other guys chatted about Angelo and all the brilliant tricks he has created, I zoned out a little. I was just trying to make sense of Phil's comment. While it sounded a little unlikely that David Copperfield would have sent Angelo a sofa, it wasn't entirely beyond the bounds of possibility. Maybe there had been a time when Angelo had visited Copperfield's home and Angelo had happened to mention, "Oh, this is quite a nice sofa." Maybe at some later point, David had got himself a new sofa and, wondering how to dispose of the old one, had remembered his friend Angelo and sent the old sofa to him. A little unlikely, perhaps, but not impossible. Maybe he sent Angelo a note saying, "I remembered that you liked this sofa and I've just replaced it so now... you can have it!"

As I was pondering all this, I leaned towards Phil and said, "Excuse me, but what did you mean when you said Angelo had David Copperfield's sofa? I mean, was it a gift or something?"

Phil looked at me for a few moments, apparently quite perplexed. Finally, comprehension dawned.

"No no," explained Phil. "I said that Angelo has David Copperfield's *cell phone*." (Meaning his phone number, not the actual phone itself.)

Tedious explanatory note: here in the UK, we normally refer to the phones we all carry round all day as 'mobile phones'. We understand that in the USA and elsewhere they are known as 'cell phones' but we hardly ever use the term. It's true that, against the general background din of the busy pub, I had mis-heard 'cell phone' as 'sofa'. On the other hand, it was a little unusual for Phil, who is as English as I am, to say 'cell phone' instead of 'mobile phone' or just 'phone number'!

My Awesome Psychic Powers

One of my oldest friends in magic is Tom Cutts. He was based in Oakland, California at the time we met but now lives near Sacramento.

Tom is a very accomplished close-up magician whose other great passion is wine. On one occasion, when I happened to be over in the States, I accepted Tom's invitation to go round the Napa Valley with him. It's a region known worldwide for its many excellent vineyards and wineries. We got into Tom's beautiful white sports car, a Mitsubishi Eclipse Spider, and set off.

At one of our stops, the famous Rombauer winery, they were having a little trouble in the wine and gift shop. The cash register wasn't working very well. One of the staff, looking rather flustered, explained that the problem wasn't just with the cash register itself. The whole software system, of which the cash register was just one part, had started to behave erratically. They had tried all the usual remedies but to no avail. The recalcitrant cash register showed no signs of behaving itself. This was quite a concern since the gift shop was an important source of income.

I had often read tales of psychics casually laying their hands on malfunctioning equipment and, in a miraculous flash of extraordinary power, managing to correct the fault. Such tales often feature in accounts of the lives of psychic superstars. I decided this was a good opportunity to 'play psychic'. I touched the cash register for just a second or two and struck what I imagined was a suitable pose for someone demonstrating strange powers. As soon as I did this, the cash register started working properly again. In fact, the whole system was suddenly back to normal. As you might expect, the member of staff we had been talking to was delighted, intrigued, astonished and very grateful.

Tom has good improv skills. He had the presence of mind to shrug, act as if it was no big deal and say, "It happens all the time when he's around." We walked out of the gift shop looking like mysterious heroes.

There isn't any moral or lesson to this story. It's just a fun memory. However, I do think it illustrates an important principle of mentalism. Wherever you go in the world, exploit opportunities to demonstrate your psychic gifts. If nothing happens, so what? No one expects it to work anyway. On the rare occasions when you do, apparently, cause something to happen or fix a problem, you can shine like a hero and leave people with an amazing, intriguing experience. It costs nothing!

The Joy Of Corporate Gigs

The notion of being hired (and quite well paid) to give corporate talks and presentations may sound quite appealing. However, it can sometimes turn into a deeply unpleasant experience. Here's an example.

In 2014, I was hired by Rabobank to give a presentation about creative problem-solving. This involved flying to the lovely Dutch town of Utrecht, where they signed treaties to end the War Of The Spanish Succession. It was about 7pm by the time I checked in to my hotel. Because I'm quite a light sleeper, I asked for a room that was as quiet and peaceful as possible, far away from any lifts [elevators] or doors in constant use."

The woman behind the Reception desk scanned her system, mused for a while, selected a room and handed me my key. Upon entering the room, I saw that it featured a large window overlooking a busy main road intersection, with cars, vans, buses, lorries and bicycles all narrowly missing one another. As well as the more or less constant hum of traffic, I could hear horns being honked, either in the 'Just to let you know I'm coming through' way or the 'You're an idiot who just nearly got us both killed' way.

I trudged back to Reception. With all the politeness and respect in the world, I explained why *maybe* the room was not exactly the best choice for someone who likes a *quiet* room. Miss Reception kindly allocated a different room to me.

I settled in to my new room. It was a little on the small side but I didn't care. I was tired after my day's travelling and settled down for a good night's rest.

And that's when I noticed the bells.

The bells from the nearby church. The bells that pealed and chimed every half hour. In a rash burst of optimism, I assumed that, as the night wore on, the bells would cease ringing. After all, whoever was responsible for the bells must surely be aware that people like to sleep at night... right?

Alas, the bells never stopped. All night, every half hour, the bells rang out like they were announcing the reign of a new king or victory in a great and glorious war. They were loud, happy, triumphant bells, apparently designed to convey a sense of joy and conquest. They were also designed to prevent me from getting so much as one second of peaceful sleep. By the time I realised the extent of the problem, it was too late to go to Reception, which was now closed, and there was no one around who could help. There was no good solution. Ear plugs don't work and I didn't have any noise-cancelling headphones with me.

In the morning, after getting no sleep at all, I was collected and taken to Rabobank. The deal was that, because of the numbers involved, I was going to give the same presentation twice — once in the morning and then again after lunch. Dear reader, I invite you to stop reading at this point and guess what ghastly, unimaginable horror lay in wait for me.

I gave my first presentation, which consisted of three hours of material. I was standing up and interacting with the client group the whole time.

We broke for lunch. On being taken to the company lunch area, I was soon overcome by a chilling realisation. It was a *stand-up lunch*. There was a serving area and several high tables around which people could stand... but absolutely *nowhere* to sit down. Not even

a ledge to perch on. The company had decided that, since their staff spent most of their time sitting at their desks and doing nothing more energetic than tapping computer keys, it wasn't a good idea for them to sit down during lunch as well. No! They should stand! Use their legs, get a bit of exercise!

This was (perhaps) a sensible policy for people whose working day was mostly spent sitting down. However, it wasn't so good for me as I had just been on my feet for three hours non-stop. At this point, you might think there was an easy solution, such as just asking if I might fetch a chair and sit down for a while. I'm trying to keep this story reasonably brief. Trust me, for various reasons there was no simple, easy solution. I just had to accept the situation and get through it.

You may have noticed the irony here: I was there to tell people about good ways to solve problems but I couldn't find a good way to solve *my* problem. Life is sometimes like this.

In the afternoon, I gave my second three-hour presentation. By now, my legs were on fire. If you have never had to stand for a very long time, without a break, you might be unaware of how uncomfortable and painful it can be. If you *have* had this experience, then you'll probably sympathise.

I got through my second presentation and finished at about 5pm. Following a night of no sleep at all, I had now been on my feet since about 8.30 am. My legs were complaining quite bitterly at this point. Someone summoned a taxi for me. Sitting in the taxi was pure bliss. However, the ride to the airport was quite short. At the airport itself, all I wanted to do was sit down but it didn't quite work out like that. I did manage to sit down now and again but there was also lots of walking to do, plus queuing, plus waiting, plus hanging around. And I was still understandably tired because the Bells From Hell had kept me awake all night.

I got my return flight, then a train, then a taxi and finally made it home. I ran a bath to soak my legs and feet and could then, at long last, collapse into bed. This was a *painful* experience. It was two or three days before I felt I had caught up with my sleep and my legs were sort of back to feeling normal.

Let me add that I don't really blame the wonderful people at Rabobank. They were great to work with and, apart from the lack of sleep and my legs being on fire, I did enjoy the day!

My One Achievement

Let me tell you about the one time in my life when I achieved something.

In 2014, I was invited to be one of the ‘filler’ acts at the Bristol Day of Magic. For reasons we don’t need to go into, this wonderful convention didn’t actually take place in Bristol. Instead, it took place in the nearby town of Weston-super-Mare.

I checked into my hotel, went to my room and discovered that the heating was on full blast, creating a distinctly sauna-like atmosphere. It didn’t take to discover that (a) there was no thermostat or controller so I couldn’t turn the heating down, and (b) the windows were non-openable. I went down to Reception where an uninterested teenager confirmed these details. All the room heating was centrally programmed, she explained, and guests had no control over it. I said it was so hot in my room that I didn’t think I’d be able to sleep. Reception Girl said it wouldn’t be a problem as the heating would shut off at eleven pm.

Surprise, surprise... it didn’t!

And by the time it became clear that the heating was *not* going to go off, Reception was closed and there were no members of staff to be found anywhere.

So, there I was in my room, radiators still red hot, feeling like a baked potato and unable to sleep. I needed some way to pass the time so I did what any man would do in that situation: I reached for pen and paper and started working out anagrams of ‘Weston-super-Mare’. Look, I’m a writer and pushing words around is what I do for a living, okay? Maybe *you* would have passed the time differently but, hey, each to their own.

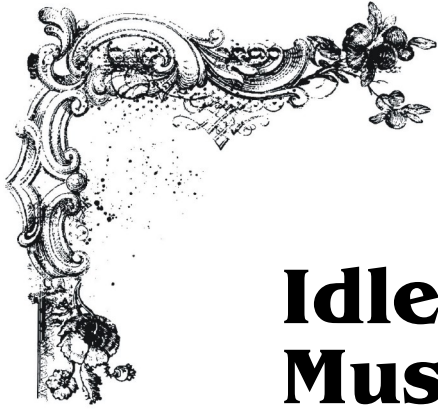
After about forty minutes of thoughtful permutation, I finally found the perfect anagram. It was, without doubt, the finest thing I’ve ever pulled out of my head. Ladies and gentlemen, friends and foes, bottle-washers and wheel-tappers, it’s my pleasure, my honour, to share it with you here:

ENSURES TAPEWORM

The following day when I gave my lecture at the convention, this majestic discovery was the first thing I talked about. Everyone agreed it was the best thing in the lecture.

I still regard this discovery as my one achievement in life. I may not have much to be proud of, but I do take pride in this shimmering jewel of an anagram that so neatly conveys everything I feel about W-s-M.

Postscript: some years later, I happened to be part of a discussion on Facebook and someone mentioned ‘Weston-super-Mare’. Naturally, I shared my anagram with them. To my delight, a representative from the Weston-super-Mare tourist board showed up in the chat! To her lasting credit, she said she thought it was hilarious.



Idle Magical Musings



For The Avoidance Of Misunderstanding

Asking me for advice is like asking a Dalek for tap-dancing lessons. It's just not a good idea.

If anyone is ever so misguided as to ask me for advice, I always say the same thing, "The best advice I can give you is not to ask *me* for advice." I then try to refer them to far better and finer sources of help, advice and guidance, based on whatever they're talking to me about. I think this is the right thing to do. I haven't lived the sort of life that qualifies me to give anyone advice about anything. It would be like approaching the captain of The Hindenburg for tips on travel safety.

Nonetheless, while I was putting these pages together, it occurred to me that maybe, just *maybe*, I could try to offer younger magicians a few suggestions based on experience. I suppose I could have called this section 'Notes To My Younger Self'. It's mostly about a few things I wish someone had told me when I took my earliest steps into this curiously beautiful world we call 'magic'.

I sincerely doubt that anyone will read this section and I'm not saying anyone should. But if you're a somewhat youthful magician, just beginning your magical journey, here are a few idle musings that *might* be worth a look.

Love The Magic Community

Here's the best suggestion I can offer to younger magicians: see magic first and foremost as a *community*. And learn to *love* this community. There's a lot to love about it.

By all means, learn all you want to learn about effects, methods, props, sleights and techniques. By all means, strive to become the best performer you can be, take an interest in the history of magic, get involved in online discussions and support your nearest club or society. These are all excellent things to do. But, whatever else you do, always remember to see magic as a *community*, and a very golden, important and delightful community at that.

I *love* the worldwide magic community. Even though I'm no more than a rather clueless amateur hobbyist — and I've never performed professionally — the magic world has been very kind to me. In my experience, it's a community full of wonderful, fantastic people with smart minds and big hearts — the type of people who will go to any lengths to help you and who are always there for you if life gets a little cold and rainy.

It's also full of people who are great fun to hang out with. I don't know how many days, evenings and nights I've spent having fun and enjoying myself with my magician friends but I know (a) it's a lot and (b) it's never enough. Whenever I meet up with my magic friends, it seems that the hours fly by, the stories never stop and there's so much laughter it actually hurts.

Of course, I've had the pleasure of hanging out with magic friends in London, where I live, and many other parts of the UK. However, I've also been fortunate enough to enjoy fun times with magic friends in Los Angeles, Sydney, Helsinki, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Las Vegas, Rome, Toronto, Saint Petersburg, Rio de Janeiro, Brussels, Queenstown, Ljubljana, New York, Baden Baden, Orlando, Lisbon, Melbourne, Jerusalem, Stockholm, San Francisco, Istanbul, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen and many other places as well. (Wherever you are, my friends, let me say I consider it an absolute privilege to have spent time with each and every one of you.)

It's often said that most people in the magic world are a bit strange — in a good way. I think this is probably true. Anyone who aspires to be a competent magician has to have the knack of what I call 'twin-track' thinking. When we perform, we have to be able to focus on two things at once. We have to focus on the effect: everything seen by the audience and their 'journey' through the routine. At the same time, we also have to focus on the method: all the secret, covert things we're doing, in real time and without re-takes, to bring about the magical conclusion. It's very difficult to do this *at all* and profoundly difficult to do it *well* while looking confident and relaxed. Not everyone has the right mindset for it.

What's more, you can't be a good magician unless you have extraordinary people skills. As we all know (and learn through bitter experience) 'spectator management' is one of the toughest aspects of presenting magical effects. It's not easy to 'control' people without seeming to control them at all, and to get people to co-operate without being heavy-handed about it. In most walks of life, people don't like to be deceived or taken in. To get to the stage where you can deceive people and they actually *enjoy* it, and come back for more, isn't easy.

Putting these two traits together, I don't think it's a coincidence that magicians tend to be great company. They're smart (by definition), with lively minds and extraordinary people skills. This is a pretty likeable, enjoyable and attractive combination.

Magicians also tend to be a pretty talented lot. Some of my magic friends are brilliant professionals, arguably the best in the world at what they do. Others (like me) are only amateurs but (unlike me) have impressive skills and talents *outside* of magic. You want examples? Katherine Rhodes is an impressively talented musician who has toured Europe with her band *and* a qualified pilot. Tom Cutts is an authority on wine and wineries who can more than hold his own with top sommeliers. Jayne Corrigan is an expert when it comes to creative home décor. Darryl Rose is a BAFTA and EMMY award-winning VT editor. Sonia Barton is a genius in the kitchen who can create a 'themed' cake that looks like anything you want. Thom Bleasdale is an authority when it comes to music, audio recording and sound mixing. Joan DuKore was once a professional dancer who can still 'hoof' with the best of them.

I can keep going all day. Maria Cork is a leading 'creature FX' artist who worked on Star Wars and 'created' Chewbacca! Frank Haschka is a brilliant carpenter and wood-worker who can make anything you want. Tori Noquez is a magician by night, math professor by day. Stuart Turner is a superb video producer who runs his own independent TV studio. Louise Andrée Douglas-Mirza and Natalia Villalonga-Stanton are both top-flight dancers. Chris Dodd is an award-winning professional chef who works at one of London's top hotels. Nikola Arkane is an expert ice-skater. Suhani Shah published her first book when she was just 15 and is a certified scuba diver. Fay Presto is a skilled driver and mechanic *and* can ride a horse *and* can sail a boat. Jay Adkins runs his own radio station and is a 'walking Google' when it comes to music, bands, charts and albums. Angelo Funovitz is a magician but also a qualified doctor. Steve Haresign is an expert musician, composer and publisher. Ariann Black is a very talented wildlife photographer. Carlo Vagliasindi owns his own chocolate and ice cream factories *and* is a professional tailor!

I could go on but I think I've made my point. What's not to love about the privilege of hanging out with all these multi-talented people?

Some people like to dwell on what they see as negative aspects of the magic community. They can talk for hours about when A stole B's idea or *this* person said something unkind about *that* person. While such things *do* happen, they are just a tiny percentage of what goes on in the magic community. For the most part, you'll find honesty, friendship, trust, camaraderie, smiles, laughter and a profound willingness to share, care and help.

So, there you have the best suggestion I can offer: see magic first and foremost as a *community*. Reach out, make connections, build up your friends and contacts in the magic world and have yourself a great time. Be part of the community, make whatever contribution you can and remember the golden rule: the way to *have* a good friend is to *be* a good friend!

Aim For Some Peer Group Respect

Here's another crumb of advice I'd like to pass on to magicians — especially younger magicians just starting out on their magical journey. Whatever type of magic you do, try to do at least enough to earn a bit of *peer group respect*.

How you do this is up to you. Let it be seen that you're really, really good in your chosen field, whether it's cards, stage, mentalism, family shows, coins or whatever. Write a book passing along the benefit of your experience, contribute articles to magic magazines (both print and digital/online) or develop a really good lecture that you can offer to your local clubs and then to conventions and events further afield. (Not a lecture like my rubbish — a really *good* one.)

Perform a service to the magic community (like the brilliant Denis Behr) or play an active role in your nearest magic club or society. The *way* in which you choose to earn a bit of peer group respect is up to you. But one way or another, earn it if you can. You can do this whether you're a working professional or, like me, just an amateur dabbler.

I say this because I think it makes a positive difference to your experience within the magic community. When you've done enough to win a bit of peer group respect, you'll make more friends in the magic world, get invited to take part in things and find yourself very welcome wherever magicians get together — which means more opportunities to hang out with great people and enjoy yourself.

While I'm on the subject, as well as trying to *earn* some respect... why not *give* a little too? Respect the magicians who excel at what they do and who are a terrific advert for magic wherever they go. Respect the ones who work hard in the background, often unthanked and unappreciated, to make sure your club or society runs smoothly or to keep magazines and websites going. Respect the creative minds that dream up the material you use. Respect the hard-working dealers and the convention organisers. Respect those who take on the hassle of organising regular public shows and help to keep magic alive. Respect those who have to combine their magical career with family life and all the rich complexities of parenting. Respect any and all performers because performing is hard.

There is no downside to being respectful. None. It is *always* a good policy.

The more kindness and respect there is in the world, the better it is for everyone.

Make Your Magic Meaningful

Whenever you find a trick you particularly like, I think it's a good idea to make it *about* something meaningful. If you don't do this, then every magic trick just becomes what Eugene Burger described as, 'The adventure of the props in the hands of the magician'.

I'm a big fan of the 'wrapping paper' theory of magic. Suppose I buy you a nice gift and wrap it in paper that features Christmas trees, reindeer and images of Santa Claus. What type of present is it? Obvious answer: it's a Christmas present. If I wrapped it in paper that said 'Happy birthday!' and featured images of birthday cake and party celebrations, what sort of gift would it be? Obviously, a birthday gift. What if the wrapping featured lots of lovely red hearts? It would be a romantic Valentine's Day gift for a loved one. The *same* gift but with *different wrapping paper* becomes a different type of gift.

It's the same with magic tricks. You can keep the same basic trick but change the patter and presentation to give it any theme you like. What's more, you can choose a theme that you *care* about or that means a lot to you personally. I think it's a good idea to do this. Spectators can sense when you're talking about one of your passionate interests or a subject you know about. It makes your magic more personal, authentic and meaningful.

Of course, there are some common sense limits to this idea. I agree it's hard to present Hippiety-Hop Rabbits as an a journey into spiritual self-knowledge. But just because there are some obvious limitations, please don't ignore this idea altogether.

You can write, draw or print literally anything you want on blank-faced cards. So you can take your favourite card routines or packet tricks and adapt them to suit any theme you choose. Try it and see what you come up with.

As a purely hypothetical example, consider the 21 Card Trick. As a creative thinking exercise, ask yourself what it could be *about*. How could you imbue it with some meaning or significance? What patter could you use to make it personal to you?

For example. I really love rock music. I can happily spend hours talking about my favourite albums and all the memories that I associate with them. I think it's fascinating the way that certain songs can evoke memories and feelings and, in a sense, 'transport' me back to certain times in my life. Everyone can relate to this. So, I could get 21 blank cards and, on each one, write the name of a well known album that I love. My patter could be about the way music seems inextricably linked with our feelings, emotions and memories. As I proceed with the trick, I could talk about trying to 'sense' the feelings and memories associated with the particular album the spectator chose. Getting to the end of a trick and saying the spectator thought of 'the five of clubs' seems rather sterile to me. Who cares? I'd much rather get to the point where I say they chose 'Dark Side Of The Moon'. I think it's more emotive, meaningful and interesting to talk about.

I'm not suggesting this is a particularly good example or that you should go out and perform versions of The 21 Card Trick in real life. I'm just offering it as a useful exercise, a way to start thinking about how you can adapt tricks and put different 'wrapping paper' around them.

Make your magic personal and meaningful. It makes your magic more interesting and entertaining for *you* as well as for your audiences.

Three Ways To Add A Theme

On the previous page, I suggested it's a good idea to make your magic meaningful and to build your effects around particular themes.

May I suggest three ways to do this.

(1) Use a theme that means a lot to *you* or that you feel passionate about.

If you're taking about something you feel passionate about, your warmth and enthusiasm for the subject will come shining through your presentation. The routine will at least have some feeling and emotion, rather than just being an arid and functional trot through whatever mechanics are involved in reaching the magical payoff. The trick will come alive and actually feel like it has some connection with real life, albeit *your* particular interest or passion.

Of course, one can criticise this option. It could be seen as self-indulgent and you might end up theming a trick around a subject that, while fascinating to you, the performer, means nothing to your audience. I agree that you should try to avoid doing this. Nonetheless, I think involving a theme that you genuinely care about is better than no theme at all.

(2) Use a theme that means a lot to the person or group you're going to perform for. If you happen to know that you'll be performing for someone who loves horses, see if you can give the trick some relevance to horses. If you know that most of the corporate group you're going to be in front of are keen on sport, give your favourite trick a sporting theme.

Obviously, this isn't always possible. You won't always have this type of advance information. But if you do have it, or can obtain it, then it's an excellent idea to make use of it.

(3) Use a theme that's in the news at the moment and they everyone will be able to relate to. At any given time, there are certain subjects that people are talking about at bus stops, around the office water cooler, on park benches, around the breakfast table and on the popular satire shows. If you are aware of such a theme, see if you can wrap it around one of your favourite tricks.

It's hard to provide examples because they vary so much from place to place and from time to time. Just keep your eyes and ears open and, if you think a lot of people are interested in a particular subject at the moment, see if you can apply it as a theme to some of your magic. This will give your tricks a nice topical flavour and make them seem a little more relevant than just, 'Your card was the seven of diamonds'.

An Interesting Exercise

As magicians, I don't think we give ourselves enough credit for what we do. Performing a magic trick well is *seriously* difficult.

Here's a suggestion. Find a non-magician friend and teach them a simple beginner's card trick. (I hope this doesn't invoke the wrath of the Magic Circle Anti-Exposure Committee and get me cast into the dungeon for thirty days of gruel and penance.) Then ask them to perform it for you or for someone else while you watch.

Unless you happen to have found someone with outstanding natural flair, you will witness a rather unimpressive performance. You'll notice that they are visibly struggling to remember the basic 'mechanics' of the trick. Also, they will struggle to sustain the patter and the whole thing will be a bit of a shambles. It certainly won't be entertaining or feel mystifying. I'm not suggesting for a moment that you should mock this lacklustre performance. It's far nicer to be tactful and tell your friend they did pretty well for a beginner. My point is just that this exercise will remind you of all the things you get right when you perform and how difficult it is to perform magic.

Performing magic is profoundly difficult. As well all know, there's a lot more to any trick than just the 'how it's done' mechanics. You also have to consider what to say and how to say it well; projection and stagecraft; pacing and timing; reading the room and being responsive to the audience; spectator management; whatever is the gender-neutral equivalent of 'showmanship' and maybe adding a touch of wit here and there. Getting all of these elements 'in sync' and presenting a coherent performance that is enjoyable, entertaining and mystifying is one *seriously* tough challenge. What's more, you have to do all of the things I've just mentioned while appearing relaxed, natural and confident.

In my view, if you have performed even a single trick for one person successfully, you should feel very proud of yourself. (And by the way, feeling justifiably proud of having achieved something difficult is not the same as being smug, conceited or arrogant.)

I suggest we all take a moment to remember that performing magic well is really difficult. When we remember this, it might make us all a little less critical of other magicians and more willing to help, lend a hand or quietly offer constructive criticism (where it will be welcome.) It might make us all a bit more sympathetic if a friend has a bad gig. It might make us all a little kinder, warmer and charitable towards one another.

Be kind to yourself and to everyone else in the wonderful magic community we share. What we do is difficult. When we stumble, let's acknowledge that it's okay to stumble now and again because we're walking across rocky terrain. When we do well, let's be ready to congratulate one another and to be proud of our friends.

How To Get Corporate Gigs

As I have mentioned elsewhere, I am not a gigging magician and I rarely, if ever, get hired to present a magic or mentalism show. However, I do get hired by companies to give various talks or to offer training in a range of subjects. Among other companies and organisations, I've been hired by Google (twice), Coca-Cola, Hewlett-Packard, Unilever, The Crown Estate, The Ministry of Defence, the British Olympics team and the FBI.

I know some of you are interested in getting into this area, so I thought I'd include a few notes here in these pages.

If you can perform magic well, you can get corporate gigs. In other words, you can get hired by big companies to give talks on useful subjects that deliver practical business benefits.

Here's the first point to appreciate. If you are a good performer, then the corporate world will absolutely *love* you. Why wouldn't they? Think about it. A typical in-company presentation involves Joe from Marketing going through some boring slides about next year's regional expansion plans. No offence to Joe, but he's probably a bit on the dull side and not a great speaker. You, on the other hand, know how to be *entertaining*. You have presence, you know how to project, you can be witty, you understand about pace, timing and delivery plus you have some amazing skills. You're way ahead of the game before you've even started.

So, if you want to get into this market, what can you offer?

In some cases, the subject you choose to talk about will refer directly to your experience as a performing magician. For example, let's say you're a brilliantly successful street performer such as my friend Owen Lean. This means you know about how to *persuade complete strangers to give you money*. It also means you know how to *engage* with people and *win their attention* so that they'll stay and watch you instead of just walking past. These are skills that big companies, or at least their sales teams, might want to learn from you.

In other cases, the subject you choose to talk about won't be *directly* related to magic or magical performance. However, you can write a talk, course or presentation and then use touches of magic and mentalism to liven it up, add bits of interest and perhaps illustrate one or two relevant points. This is what I do.

So, how do you persuade companies to hire you? I can't give you the complete answer here in these pages. But I can at least pass along a few points worth noting.

1. Read my friend Lee Warren's book, 'The Busy Person's Guide To Great Presenting'. (It's on Amazon.) Lee is one of the finest and most successful professional speakers in the country. His book is essential reading if you want to get into this market.
2. Read Lee Warren's book *again* and digest as much of his wisdom as you can.
3. Choose a subject that you can express simply and clearly. Your talk or presentation needs a clear, simple title such as 'How To Solve Problems' or 'Six Practical Selling Tips' or 'Advanced Leadership'. Keep it short, sweet and punchy.

4. Offer *genuine* expertise and authority based on *experience*. Don't try to fake it because you'll be found out within minutes. People *love* genuine expertise and are willing to pay for it. People *hate* bluff, pretence and people who can't live up to their hype and promises.

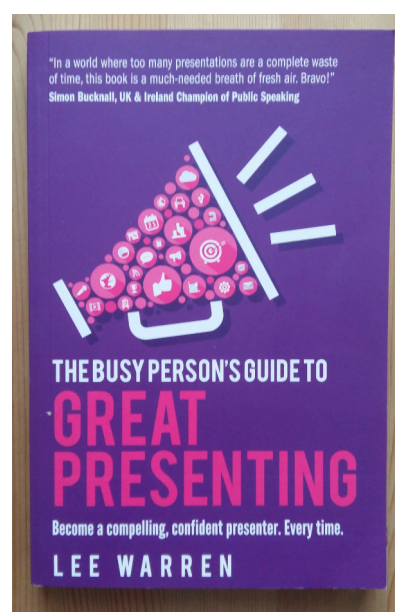
5. On your website, and wherever else you're trying to promote what you have to offer, state what your course or talk is about. Then state two main *practical business benefits* and follow this up with three minor practical business benefits. If there aren't any practical business benefits, why should anyone hire you?

Finally, you need to understand what I call the Boss Principle. It goes like this. Let's say Alan contacts you and says his company might want to hire you. Let's also suppose that Alan's boss is called Brenda. Your job is not *just* to persuade Alan to hire you. Your job is to provide Alan with enough ammunition so that when he recommends you to Brenda, and she asks why they should hire you, he can make a good case on your behalf. It's not just about selling yourself to Alan. It's about helping Alan sell you to his boss, Brenda, who makes the final decision. This is why all the points I've made above are so important: a clear subject, practical business benefits, genuine expertise. You want to make it as easy as possible for Alan to 'sell' you to his boss.

What else can I tell you? If you've taken care of all the above points, it just comes down to your personality and whether people feel they want to work with you. Be likeable, professional and dependable. You'll also need to be flexible. They may ask if you can offer an in-real-life presentation, or a virtual presentation, or a mix of the two? Can you fit their time slot and can they rely on you to start and finish at the agreed, specific times? Be very reassuring on these and any related points that come up.

Always remember to look at all this from Alan's point of view. If he recommends you, and you turn out not to be very good, then you'll make him look bad. He will feel that he's wasted everyone's time and some of the company's money. Conversely, if you do a *great* job, Alan will be the hero for having recommended you. Your job is to make Alan look good in the eyes of his colleagues and his boss. Make sure he ends up looking shiny, not whiny.

Buy and study this brilliant book!



Cold Reading And Mentalism

I'm putting this here because it's something I get asked about quite a lot, particularly when I'm training clients in the delightful art of cold reading. It doesn't really fit in with the rest of this section but I figured there was no harm in including it. You can always just turn the page and ignore it.

Some people say they like to mix mentalism and cold reading (or vice versa). I'd like to just offer my opinion on the subject. This *is* just my opinion and I'm not pretending it's anything else. If you or anyone else thinks I'm wrong, well, yes — maybe I am. I've been wrong many times in my life and I expect I'll often be wrong again.

I'm not a fan of trying to combine mentalism with cold reading. To my mind, they are two different experiences. The crucial difference is this:

- In mentalism, the performer is the star. It's all about the amazing things the performer can do.
- In cold reading, *the person you're giving the reading to* is the star. It's all about their character, their potential and their life.

Just to expand on that second point, when you're giving someone a reading, the presentational framework is that you're just providing a service by interpreting the tarot cards for them (or studying their handwriting or whatever premise you're using). You're not the star and you're not after applause. Your role is secondary and quite humble. The person receiving the reading is the main focus, the star, the VIP.

Magic is a branch of the entertainment industry. It involves creating a sense of intrigue, wonder and delight by doing things that seem to be impossible. We hope to give people child-like (not childish) moments of mystery and astonishment that are fun and enjoyable. Mentalism is one branch of magic. It is principally concerned with powers of the mind and explores themes such as telepathy, prediction and clairvoyance.

Cold reading is about how to talk to people so you sound psychic. There are many ways to do this, all of which are explained in my own books and other (better) ones. It's a way to leave people feeling, 'He told me things he couldn't possibly have known'.

I think these are two distinct experiences and they take place in different frames or contexts. When people go to see a mentalism show, they understand (or at least I hope they understand) that they are there to enjoy some entertainment. When people choose to have a personal reading, they are hoping for some interesting and helpful insights regarding their character and potential, or a bit of handy advice. They may *also* find the experience entertaining. But the entertainment is secondary to the primary purpose.

Trying to combine mentalism and cold reading is, to my mind, an example of 'salad and ice cream' thinking. I like salad and I like (vegan) ice cream. But I wouldn't put them on the same plate at the same time. The salad would diminish the pleasure and value of the ice cream and vice versa. It wouldn't be a case of one good thing + another good thing = two good things. I'd just spoil the appeal of both of the constituent elements.

I think I understand what some mentalists mean when they suggest, for example, 'throwing in a few cold reading lines'. For example, consider a routine in which a spectator has secretly written down the name of a loved one. You get towards the end of

the routine and it's time for 'the big reveal'. On the one hand, you could just say the name. On the other hand, you could, via a bit of cold reading, include a few additional bits of information (or at least what sounds like information) about the person the spectator was thinking of.

This is a perfectly legitimate approach. The fact that you can tell the spectator more about the person they had in mind than just their name heightens and intensifies the mystery. Even if the magician somehow saw what the 'secret' name was, how could they mention all these other details that the spectator never wrote down or referred to?

I've nothing against this approach and I'm sure some very talented mentalists — far more talented and capable than I ever was — can make it work very well. I'm just wary of people thinking that this constitutes 'cold reading' to any meaningful extent. The art of cold reading involves giving someone a reading that could last anywhere from a couple of minutes to half an hour or even longer. Just adding a few 'quite likely to be true' guesses to the climax of a mentalism routine is not, in my personal opinion, worth the name 'cold reading' and I think it's a bit unhelpful to blur the distinction in this way.

A Useful Distinction

Here's a good way to appreciate the distinction between mentalism and cold reading. Many mentalism routines involve covertly obtaining information. For example, a mentalist might invite a spectator to secretly write down a personal question to which they'd like to know the answer. The mentalist, of course, can secretly get a look at the question (using any of the tools of our trade). The rest of the routine will be largely about the mentalist's impressive ability to identify the question and answer it.

In most cold reading contexts, this isn't the point at all. The person you're giving the reading to will *openly* and *willingly* tell you the question that's on their mind. They aren't (usually) interested in whether or not you can guess or psychically 'sense' what the question is. All they are interested in is the *answer*. They're looking for a bit of guidance, insight or life advice. (This could lead to a lengthy digression about the ethics of cold reading and giving 'advice' to complete strangers. I'm aware of all the ethical issues but I don't want to go into them here and now.)

Mentalism makes this offer: for the purpose of entertainment, I will show you things, *apparently* involving powers of the mind and the imagination, that I hope you will find engaging, intriguing and hard to explain.

Cold reading makes this offer: I have learned a system of divination or interpretation, or have some sort of psychic gift. I can therefore provide some useful insights into your character or the prevailing trends and narratives in your life.

To my mind, these are two distinct offers, two distinct experiences.

I am not saying they can never be combined. I'm just saying that, in my personal and often very flawed opinion, there's no real point in aiming to combine them and they are best kept separate and enjoyed separately — just like salad and ice cream.

Are there other opinions about this? Yes. Could it be that these other opinions are more thoughtful, well considered and enlightened than my own? Yes. I'm just offering my contribution to the discussion, misguided and worthless as it may be.



Some People Points



Listen, Learn, Love

This short section is about getting along well with people. In one sense, this has nothing to do with magic as such. In another sense, it has *everything* to do with magic.

I'd like to start off with a simple suggestion. When you meet people socially, don't just talk about yourself. It's not a good idea. At the end of the 'conversation', you won't have learned anything new. There won't be anything in your head that wasn't there at the start.

Instead, take a genuine interest in the person you're talking to, ask them questions and listen to them. Seize the precious opportunity to learn about their story, their experiences, their thoughts and feelings.

Here's one way I think about this. I was once fortunate enough to visit Hawaii. While I was there, I had a look around one of the botanical gardens on Big Island. It was amazing. At every turn, I was seeing extraordinary plants and flowers I'd never seen before. Some were incredibly elaborate and beautiful. Others, such as some of the orchids, were amazingly complex in structural terms. It felt like a great privilege to wander round and marvel at all of these botanical wonders.

I feel the same way about the privilege of wandering around inside someone else's mind. Just like the botanical gardens, I know I'll see intriguing and fascinating things I haven't seen before. Think about the next person you get to meet socially. They have done things you haven't done, seen things you haven't seen and had experiences you haven't had. They have been to places you haven't been, met people you haven't met and learned about things you know nothing about.

Also, not all heroes wear capes: they may have achieved a great deal or done wonderful things for other people that aren't obvious on the surface. Then again, not all problems and challenges are easy to see. The person you're talking to may have had to deal with problems, setbacks and tough times you know nothing about; maybe they are *still* dealing with challenges that aren't apparent on the surface. You never know. Bearing this in mind helps you to develop some empathy and patience with people — you never know what hardships they've been through or what disadvantages they've had to overcome.

Listen to other people. Enjoy the opportunity to wander round inside their mind, looking at all the new, unfamiliar and fascinating things you find in there. It's a pleasure and a privilege. Learn from them and love their story, their journey, who they are and the contribution they've made.

If you do this, then at the end of the conversation you'll know things you didn't know before — some of which could be incredibly useful to you. Even if it isn't useful in any practical sense, the things you hear about might at least be intriguing and fascinating. In fact, I'll make you a promise. If you take a genuine interest in the people you meet, and learn to wander round their mind with a genuine sense of respectful interest and curiosity, you will often come across the most extraordinary treasure.

I once got talking to a Greek taxi driver in Las Vegas. He told me the most amazing story about his background. Before the second world war, his family owned a small business buying and selling gold. When the war came along, they decided to flee Greece, escape to America and somehow take all their gold with them — evading Nazi attempts to stop them and seize all their gold. It was a fascinating story and I got it for free — just by asking a question or two and listening.

Just by learning to be a good listener, you can learn a great deal about people and about life. This is good for your mind (which needs new food just like your stomach does). It's good for your mental and emotional health, because you'll see that you're not alone — everyone has their trials and tribulations, ups and downs, sunny days and rainstorms.

It's good for your social life and for making new friends. It's good for your sense of empathy and your ability to relate to other people — their highs and lows, strengths and weaknesses, smiles and tears. It's good for your business because people will feel more inclined to hire you and work with you. It's also good for your magical performances because you'll learn more about human nature, how to 'read the room' and talk to people in an engaging way. You'll also pick up stories, anecdotes, strange expressions, memorable quotes and little 'nuggets' of wisdom that help to make you more interesting to talk to.

When I'm talking, I'm pulling stuff out of my own head. This is a bit dull for me because I already know what's in there. But if I'm listening to someone else, I'm hearing new stuff I haven't heard before. I think this is a lot more interesting.

Enjoy walking around the 'botanical gardens' you find inside other heads. It's free, fun and endlessly fascinating. Listen. Learn. Love.

Let People Be People

My second suggestion concerns a life lesson that it took me a *very* long time to learn. I'd like to pass it on in order to save you a huge amount of stress and frustration.

My first job was as a writer/producer with a video production company. This was back in the early 80s when video was new and exciting. The job was all right, but for me it was a daily exercise in frustration and annoyance. Let me explain why.

There are many things that I'm no good at. If you want a list of my faults and failings I can give you a list as long as my arm and so can everyone who knows me. However, I do have one very minor virtue: I'm very reliable and dependable. I've got the 'dependability' gene. This doesn't make me better than anyone else. It's just one *good* point to set against the longer and greater list of all my *bad* points.

When I started my job at the video place, I expected other people to be as reliable I am. As you can imagine, this didn't work out very well. Most people, most of the time, aren't very dependable. They forget stuff, mislay information, misunderstand things, get themselves double-booked, mis-remember 'Tuesday' as 'Thursday', don't realise what they've said is ambiguous, fail to get up on time, fall asleep, manage to get lost even when the directions are clear, leave essential items at home, mis-hear what was said on the phone, don't think to check things and sometimes have emotional tantrums.

Being a video producer is essentially all about organisation and logistics: making sure the right crew, with the right kit, are in the right place at the right time. This wasn't easy and often felt like trying to herd cats. Time after time, I felt exasperated and dismayed to see that even when supplied with good information and clear directions, people somehow managed to not be where they were supposed to be. I often fumed inwardly about how 'flaky' and unreliable people could be.

Eventually, after *many* years, I started to calm down. I realised that I couldn't change fundamental aspects of human nature and it was a fool's errand to try. Instead of getting stressed, I learned to just smile, shrug and let people be people. Yes, it could feel annoying if someone was forgetful or let me down. But so what? That person might be better than me in countless other ways. It's nice for me that I happen to be quite reliable. But that doesn't make me a saint. I have faults that probably annoy other people on a daily basis.

Don't spend your life trying to change human nature. It is what it is. Learn to let people be people. You'll save yourself a vast amount of stress, annoyance and anger (if you're the sort of person who gets angry about stuff, which I'm not). Don't waste your time feeling upset that human nature is the way it is. Difficult as it may be, learn to work *with* people rather than trying to work *on* them.

Learn to love people as they are, not as you would prefer them to be. If you want some work to do, work on your 'acceptance' of other people, even if they can't always be perfect. You have your good points, they have theirs.

Don't distress when you can de-stress. Learn to smile, give a little shrug and say, 'Well, you have to let people be people'. It's better for your health and for every relationship you will ever have, personal, social or professional.

Everyone's Doing The Best They Can

Here's my third and final suggestion in this short section: always remember that everyone is doing the best they can with what they've got. The more keenly you appreciate this, the happier and more peaceful your life will be.

It can be seriously difficult to learn this lesson. For example, have you ever felt that someone 'treated you badly'? Well, I've got news for you. They didn't. I promise you they didn't wake up one day and say, "Today, my plan is to treat [name] badly!" This just doesn't happen. It may seem like it does — but it doesn't.

In some ways, people aren't hard to figure out. They are constantly trying to move towards things that feel good, such as peace, safety, confidence, comfort, acceptance, strength and pleasure. They are constantly trying to move away from things that don't feel good, such as fear, insecurity, doubt, discomfort, hurt, rejection, weakness and pain. Getting closer to the good things and away from the bad things isn't easy. Life can be a difficult trail across precarious ground. Everyone's trying their best but sometimes people fail.

What if someone lies to you about something important? Well, it's a shame they never learned the same lessons you did about why honesty matters. Maybe they never had that education. Or maybe their awareness about why honesty is a good idea was compromised by some other natural drive, urge or inclination.

If you could see everyone you know in terms of their inputs and outputs, you would understand why they do everything they do. You would see that, in their own flawed and imperfect way, they are wrestling with this tricky proposition we call 'life' and trying to be happy and content. That's all. Sometimes they will stumble and fail and you might be a casualty. It happens. But it doesn't change the sign over the door: everyone's doing the best they can with what they have.

You never know anyone's complete back story. Maybe they had some disadvantages or challenges when they were growing up that you never had. Maybe they weren't taught the life lessons you were taught. Maybe they have emotional problems you can't see on the surface. Maybe they've been through trauma and bad experiences that you've never had to live through or recover from. Everyone is the product of their inputs, their experiences and the events on their timeline.

I know what it's like to be lied to, deceived, exploited and badly 'let down'. I also know, with the benefit of hindsight, that the people who did these things were just flesh and blood, like me, and trying to do the best they could with what they had at the time.

This doesn't mean that everyone can just play the 'I'm only human' card and get a free pass on everything they do. Every society, every social group, arrives at a set of commonly agreed rules and codes about what isn't acceptable. However, it is still the case that everyone does the things they do for a reason. People work on the basis of inputs and outputs, drives and motives, facts and feelings. And everyone is doing the best they can with what they've got. The sooner you understand this, the easier and more peaceful your own journey will be.



Bits At The End



Why This Book Is Free

As you may have gathered from these pages, magic has been very good to me. Even though I'm only an amateur hobbyist, magic has been my gateway to countless wonderful joys, experiences and memories. It has enabled me to travel and to see many amazing parts of the world, including Milford Sound, Komodo Island, Iguazu Falls and Easter Island. More importantly, it has enabled me to meet hundreds of the smartest, funniest and most delightful people on the planet. May I take this opportunity to thank *everyone* who has played a part in my magical life and my magical journey. To all of you I send love, hugs and enduring gratitude.

I produced this booklet to accompany my lecture at The Magic Circle in February 2023. At first, I was just going to put together a few pages of lecture notes, as you do. But then I had a re-think. As this may be the last magic lecture I'm ever invited to give, I thought I'd put together something slightly larger in scope — and here we are! Over 110 x A4 pages, featuring twenty of the tricks and routines I've published over the years plus a few stories and extra bits.

Making this booklet available free of charge is my small way of saying 'thank you' to the magic community and giving something back. It's not much, I know, but it's better than nothing!

This booklet is free. **Absolutely, completely, 100% free.** Anyone in the magic world can have it. By all means, copy it and share it with other magicians or give them the download link: www.ianrowland.com/magic .

In the unlikely event that you *want* to give me some money for this booklet, you can. My Paypal account is: ian@ianrowland.com .

Alternatively, you can make a donation to one of these three charities. They all have impeccable credentials and operate internationally. In each case, your money will actually help to do some good in the world, not just support a bloated bureaucracy.

1. Medecins Sans Frontieres

<https://msf.org.uk/secure/donate>

2. International Fund For Animal Welfare

<https://secure.ifaw.org/united-kingdom/donate>

3. Concern Worldwide

<https://www.concernusa.org/give>

Thanks

My lecture at the Magic Circle was organised by the Club Night Committee. These hard-working, brilliant people never get the thanks or recognition they deserve. At the time of writing, the people on this Committee are Darryl Rose, Mandy Davis, Marcus Morgan, David Penn, Charlie Burgess, Gunnar Kr Sigurjonsson and Lee Hathaway.

The Club Night lectures couldn't take place without the Magic Circle's brilliant and ever-resourceful tech crew. At the time of writing, they are David Agrawal, Stuart Kelly, James Cowan, Sid Quatraine, George Smith, Kevin Doig and Wayne Trice. Thank you for all the excellent work you do.

I can't thank *all* of my magical friends here — I'd need a gazillion more pages! But, without any disrespect to the friends I *don't* mention, may I offer special thanks to Matt Daniel-Baker, Stu Turner, James Pritchard, Oliver Tabor, Wayne Trice, Romany, Suhani Shah, Darren Smith, DeeJ Johnson, Jayne Corrigan, Mandy Davis, Thom Chessser, AJ Green, Sonia Barton, Joan DuKore, Reign Bowie, Jaq Greenspon, Chris Dodd, Phil Scrace, Daniel Young, Daniel Stanbridge, Angelo Carbone, Lee Warren, Lee Hathaway and Mandy Ollis-Razz.

Thom Chessser gets an extra mention for proofreading this booklet in a *very* short space of time and doing a great job!

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