



# **The CAT Test**

**Ian Rowland  
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**A fun telepathy idea for magicians  
and mentalists to play with**



The Cat Test.

A free booklet for magicians and mentalists.

By Ian Rowland and James Pritchard.

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## The CAT Test

The CAT Test is a fun idea for magicians and mentalists to enjoy using. It's not really the sort of item where it makes sense to state the Effect and then reveal the Method, for reasons that will soon become clear. However, for those who insist, here's the basic idea.

Imagine an informal, impromptu setting. You're hanging out at the coffee shop or in the bar with friends. An opportunity arises for you to demonstrate your amazing talents.

A spectator looks through a regular deck of cards and merely thinks of one. There is no force or control. You are seated a short distance away and have nothing to do with this selection procedure (the spectator can even have the cards in her own hands). Once the spectator has memorised one card, and she has hidden the cards away, you turn to face her. You can read her mind in any way you like and identify the card.

You never touch the cards or handle them in any way. If you really wanted to, you *could* do this without any cards being involved, although I think the version with actual cards in play is better. You genuinely look away while the spectator chooses and thinks of any card, and the cards are out of sight by the time you begin your demonstration.

You can dress this up however you like. You know what the card is as soon as you start your performance so the rest is just up to you and your acting ability.

You can play it very straight and serious, or just present it as a bit of a laugh. You can say it's telepathy, ESP or clairvoyance, or just claim that you're quite good at guessing. You can dream up literally any presentation you want.

What's more, over the next few years you will probably find yourself in all sorts of 'impromptu' situations where you can have fun with this idea. In some circumstances, you could even perform this effect over the phone or the internet.



So, how's it done?

When I explain what's going on, you may feel disappointed. I hope not. I hope you'll see that this is a really cool idea that all of us – magicians and mentalists all over the world – can have fun with and enjoy using.

And even if you are disappointed, well, it hasn't cost you anything, has it?

## The Story

In January, 2016, I attended The Session. Most of you will know this is a truly wonderful convention mainly devoted to mentalism and close-up magic. It's organised by Joshua Jay, Andi Gladwin and Luke Jermay and they, and their team, do a terrific job every year.

As it happens, I have never learned any stack or done any memorised deck work. I have nothing against the idea. It's just one I've never explored.

During The Session, I noticed that almost everyone I was hanging out with had learned the 'Mnemonica' stack devised by magical genius Juan Tamariz. It seemed to me that so many people knew this particular stack that it had almost become a sort of 'lingua franca' among magicians. Everyone seemed to know that  $1 = 4C$ ,  $2 = 2H$  and so on.

Of course, there are many other stacks in card magic, all with their fans and advocates. I'm just saying that these days Mnemonica seems to be especially popular, and the stack that many magicians learn *even if they don't do much stack work*.

Shortly after The Session, I had a large project to work on at home. I was busy 'ghost writing' a book for a client of mine. I've been a professional freelance writer for over 25 years, and these days I often work for clients who want to put out a book but don't want the slight inconvenience of actually writing it themselves!



This project involved a lot of long desk hours without many breaks. I decided that I would learn the Mnemonica stack at the same time, just to provide a little distraction when I took occasional breaks or made a cup of tea.

For learning and practise purposes, I got a red-backed deck and wrote the numbers on the backs of all the cards. I don't have a strong intellect or a particularly agile mind, so things like this take me a long time. Nonetheless, I slowly but surely learned the stack and reached the stage where I could go from card to number or number to card.

It occurred to me that all the magicians who had learned Mnemonica had a ready-made way of coding the identity of a card. If the 'sender' just mentions a number, e.g. 38, the 'receiver' knows that they are referring to the 10H. I had no idea whether this idea had already been thoroughly explored by magicians, but I just assumed this was the case.

Soon after, I happened to be down at the Magic Circle with various friends including James Pritchard. I mentioned having learned a stack for the first time in my life, and asked James if this idea of using a stack as ready-made coding system had been widely explored. He said he wasn't sure, but didn't think he had heard of it before.

We chatted about it and corresponded. We hatched a few refinements. The CAT Test is the result.

Neither James nor I have the foggiest clue whether this is a new idea or an old one. For all we know, it may have already been invented and published a hundred times. If you want to criticise us for our dismal lack of magical knowledge, or our lack of due diligence, please go right ahead. We claim no originality, we are not trying to make any money from this, and we are both happy to learn from brighter and more knowledgeable minds.



## The Work

This is an effect you can perform whenever there are two magicians present who both know Mnemonica (or any other stack where a given number codes for a given card).

All you need is at least one layman that you both want to entertain. It's ideal for any informal situation when you're hanging out with friends.

One of the magicians takes the part of the Performer. The other magician is apparently *nothing to do with the actual demonstration*, and just helps to set it up. I'll refer to this role as the Friend.

We'll assume for this description that the magicians have already covertly confirmed that they both know Mnemonica, and have also agreed which of them will be the Performer and which will be the Friend.

Let's assume the Performer's name is John. The effect goes as follows.

A suitable opportunity arises for John to demonstrate his amazing psychic or telepathic gifts. The Friend says to the Spectator, "Oh, I've seen John do this before. It's pretty amazing when it works. I'll show you what you have to do."

John sits or stands a short distance away, facing away from the Friend and the Spectator. It should be plainly obvious that John, the Performer, isn't doing anything suspicious and is merely looking away and waiting until it's his turn to shine.

The Friend positions himself next to the Spectator. He takes out a deck of cards and spreads them such that both he and the Spectator can see the faces, but no-one else can.

The Friend says to the Spectator. "There's just one thing to do before John can start. Can you just choose one of these and remember it? But John just doesn't want you to choose



anything obvious like that one [pointing to the Ace of Spades] or that [pointing to the Queen of Hearts]. Just choose a card by pointing to it. Don't say anything out loud. And make sure it's a completely random card that he won't be able to just guess."

The Friend's role is that of a helpful facilitator who happens to have seen this demonstration before, and knows what needs to be set up before John can start. Note that the Friend gives the impression that *the demonstration hasn't started yet*.

It is possible to do this with the Spectator holding the cards and spreading or fanning them towards herself, if the Friend has sufficiently good spectator management skills to ensure he will still know the identity of the chosen card.

The Spectator points to any card e.g. 9C. The Friend says, "All you have to do is remember that and concentrate on it. You need to be able to see it in your mind. Got it? Good. Put the cards away where nobody can see them. "

The Friend gives the cards to the Spectator, if she isn't holding them already, who puts them anywhere out of sight (in a pocket, under a napkin, under the table or whatever). While the Spectator is doing this, the Friend mentions the numerical clue that will code the card to the Performer.

In this example, the chosen card is the 9C. This means the Friend has to mention the number 44. So, the Friend might say something like, "Apparently, in 1944, during the war, someone showed this to Winston Churchill. He was so astounded he spent an hour asking to see it over and over again, and then wondered if there was a way to use this ability in the war effort! So, it's quite famous historically."

The Friend then says, "Okay John, we're ready." The Friend takes no further part in the demonstration. John, the Performer, has heard 44 mentioned so he knows the card is the 9C. He can now pretend to 'divine' or figure out this card in any way he wishes.

And that's all there is to it.





## Notes

### (1) Ways To Code The Card

James Pritchard and I have come up with a few different ways to code the card.

(a) The Friend simply names a number. This is the simplest and most direct option.

**“John is pretty good at this. I’m not. I tried about 12 times the other day and never even got close.” 12 = 3D.**

(b) The Friend mentions more than one number. The rule is: only the last number named actually matters.

**“There are 52 cards in a deck, but we eliminated a couple of options because they’re too obvious. That still leaves about 50 cards for John to guess from.” 50 = 6C.**

(c) The Friend mentions a number greater than 52. The rule is: the Performer mentally subtracts 52.

For example, the Friend might find it easier to mention 83 than to mention 31.

**“When I was back in college, around ‘83, I had loads of friends who dabbled with tarot cards and psychic stuff. I wish they could have seen this.” 83 = (83 - 52) = 31 = KS.**

(d) The Friend mentions any time of day before twelve noon.

**“You know, John gets up at six o’clock every morning to meditate and practice this technique.” 6 = 6D.**



(e) The Friend refers to a time of day after twelve noon. In this case, the number is interpreted using the 24-hour clock. In other words, the Performer mentally adds 12.

For example, suppose the demonstration is taking place in the early part of the evening. The Friend might say humorously,

**“I should warn you, John, doesn’t always get this right first time. If he’s still guessing at ten o’clock, we’ll forget it.” 10 in the evening = 22 = 8S.**

(f) The Friend refers to a year. The rule is: only the final two digits matter (in other words, the year matters but not the century).

Two useful options are to refer to a year in your own life, or a year in history.

**“When I first moved to London, around 1990, I knew loads of people who were into psychic fairs and so on. It was fascinating! I wish they could see John do this.”**

The ‘year’ rule means the Performers only pays attention to 90. The ‘higher than 52’ rules means the Performer subtracts 52.  $(90 - 52) = 38 = 10H$ .

**“They say that apparently, during the war, in 1945, someone showed this to Roosevelt! Blew his mind!” 45 = JS.**

(g) The Friend doesn’t mention an actual number, but instead uses a homophone (a word or words that *sound* close to a number). He puts these near the end of the last sentence he says before he says, “Okay John, we’re ready.”

**“John says that this kind of demonstration is quite a strain, mentally, so he doesn’t do it often. Okay, John, we’re ready.” The word ‘often’ is close to ‘of ten’. 10 = 2S.**



**"I've seen John do this a lot, like when he meets up with someone for coffee or, in my case, for tea." The words 'for tea' sound like 'forty'. 40 = 4S.**

(h) The Friend doesn't mention an actual number, but instead uses a reference or allusion that the Performer will understand codes for a particular number.

**"John does usually get it right but, to be fair, anyone can be unlucky." 'Unlucky' refer to 13 = QC.**

**"Hopefully, he'll get this sometime before Christmas." Dec 25 = 5D.**

**"When he gets this right, it's like something out of the X files." X = 10 = 2S.**

## **(2) Ways To Mention A Number**

From the examples already given, you will have seen that there are various ways for the Friend to contrive to mention a number. Here's a summary.

You can refer to the number of attempts the Performer might need. For low numbers, you can suggest the Performer is usually very good.

**"I don't know if John will get this right away but he usually nails it within 2 or 3 tries." The last number mentioned is 3 = 7D.**

For higher numbers, you can use a more humorous reference to the Performer *not* being very good.

**"John isn't bad at this. He often only needs about 20 guesses." 20 = JH.**



You can refer to betting or gambling odds.

**“Even if John knew the colour, the odds would still be 1 in 26”. 26 = KD.**

You can refer to time or hours of the day.

You can refer to years.

You can use homophones.

You can use allusions.

### **(3) The Role Of The Friend**

When you play the role of the Friend, you want to convey the idea that you aren't important and you're not really part of the performance or demonstration.

You're simply saying that you have seen this demonstration before, you know what needs to be done to set it up, and you are merely 'facilitating' the process so that everyone can sit back and enjoy the Performer's amazing gifts.

You are also helping the Spectator not to make mistakes such as choosing a really obvious card, like the Ace of Spades.

Once the Spectator has a card in mind, have the Spectator put the cards away somewhere out of sight and, as she does this, code the identity of the card. Then let the Performer know that he can start.

Note that you give the impression that the demonstration only starts once the Performer turns around and starts his or her process of divination.

Also, once the Performer turns around and starts the demonstration, make it abundantly clear you aren't providing any clues, cues or feedback in any way.



#### **(4) The Role Of The Performer**

When you play the role of the Performer, you want to convey the idea that this is all about you and your abilities, but that the demonstration only starts once you've been told you can turn around and begin.

It doesn't hurt to convey a slight air of boredom during the 'selecting the card' part of the procedure, as if this is the very dull bit that you don't find even slightly interesting.

When you turn around and start your demonstration, do focus entirely on the Spectator. Ignore the Friend as much as you can. Never give any onlooker any reason to suspect you are looking at the Friend for cues, clues, signals or feedback.

#### **(5) Presentational Options**

If you are the Performer, you can invoke any premise you want for your amazing ability to identify the card.

You can say you have had a profound psychic gift since your teenage years. You can say you were once a gambling addict and developed a very finely tuned gift for figuring out what cards other people had. You can say you work with a spirit guide from 'the other side' who helps you to read minds. You can make up anything you like. You can be telepathic, a clairvoyant or simply someone who had a prophecy that the Spectator would choose... whatever card they selected.

I think it's best to choose a presentational option that is very faintly plausible, but still impressive. For example, you could ask the Spectator to imagine he or she is holding up the card they are thinking of and to look at it intently. You could claim that by tracking her eye movements, you're able to get close to identifying the card.

You could also turn it into a demonstration of pulse reading, or claim to detect faint vibrations when you just lightly touch your palm to the Spectator's palm.



The main thing is to *take your time*. You want at least a minute or two to pass between the moment when the Friend mentioned a number and when you announce the correct card. You want to allow the fact that the Friend mentioned a number to be *entirely forgotten*.

Remember that if the onlookers either don't notice the Friend mention a number, or forget about it, you have a genuinely inexplicable miracle. Take away that one sliver of information and this becomes an authentic demonstration of ESP.

Also please remember not to make eye contact with the Friend or to pay him any attention. If you do, onlookers may think you are somehow getting 'stooge' signals.

## Advanced Options

James Pritchard pointed out that if you and the other magician both know a 'peg memory' system, this gives you more options. For example, you may have both learned One/Gun, Two/Shoe, Three/Tree... and so on. Hence 'tree' codes for 'three' which is the 7D.

Unfortunately, there are many different versions of the 'peg memory' list. You need to check your lists are the same before trying to use this idea.

If you and the other magician both know the number alphabet, also widely known as the Major Memory System, you can add another layer of deception. The Major Memory System (you can read all about it online) is a way of converting numerals to sounds so they are easier to memorise. For example, 1 becomes the sounds t or d, 2 becomes n, 3 becomes m and so on. Vowels are used to form words.

Using this system, a number such as 23 becomes 'n' and 'm' which you could code using the word 'name':

**"John will now try to identify the card by name."**



## **One Warning**

As Mnemonica fans will be aware, there are three cards in the deck whose number corresponds to their position: 2H, 6D, 9S.

The CAT Test doesn't work very well for these cards, because in most cases your 'clue' will sound quite close to the value of the card. The 'adding 52' ruse might help a little.

I think the simplest way around this is to move these three problematic cards to the rear of the deck before you start, so that they aren't going to be chosen.



## Why Is It Called 'The CAT Test'?

I wanted a covert way for magicians everywhere to be able to refer to this method. If you read 'stack' backwards, it sounds like 'cats', so I figured The CAT Test was as good a name as any.

If you and any other magician happen to be hanging out, and there's at least one layman around, you can very quickly check with one another, "Do you know The CAT Test?"

If no, you know this won't work.

If yes, you're good to go. If you have a moment's privacy, you can quickly decide by mutual agreement who is going to be the Performer. Alternatively, if anyone is watching and it's hard to make covert plans, you can allocate the roles of Performer and Friend just by taking the initiative. If you turn to the layman and say, "You know, John has one ability that he might be willing to demonstrate...", then you have clearly taken the Friend role.

Alternatively, if you say to the other magician, "I promised I'd try a little demonstration. Would you mind helping to set it up?", you have clearly taken the role of the Performer.

If a layman happens to overhear your reference to the CAT Test, you can say, "Yeah, it's a term they use in psychic research. It stands for Clairvoyance And Telepathy. It's all about a very strict test they use to ensure it's all fair, no cheating. Maybe John wouldn't mind demonstrating..."

Hence it's possible to set this whole thing up in public, even with other people watching and listening, and even if you and the other magician have only just met.





## About This Booklet

This idea is just a bit too long for a magic magazine article, but not sufficiently substantial (or original) to sell as a standalone item. So I decided to just write it up as a free gift to my friends in the worlds of magic and mentalism.

By all means copy it and forward it to other magicians and mentalists you know. Given the amount of illegal piracy and copying within the magic community, you may want to make it clear that in this instance you're copying and sharing with the consent of the authors.

But please copy and share it PRIVATELY. This means you send it to magicians and mentalists you know AND CAN TRUST. Don't post it online where laymen can access it. This defeats the whole point.

If The CAT Test catches on, we will all have a great new toy to play with wherever we happen to meet and there's a layman nearby.

## Credits

Of course, the credit and the glory all goes to the great Juan Tamariz for devising Mnemonica and for doing so much to encourage magicians all over the world to explore and enjoy memorised deck work.

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