Diviner

Deceiver

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KENT AXELL

Diviner / Deceiver

By Kent Axell

With Contributions from Watkins

Kent Axell
2019

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Dedication

Thanks to those who have supported me through the years.

To my Family, who always wanted me to show my jokes to their friends.

And to Stacey, who clearly picked a Card.

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Acknowledgements

In this, my first publication, I can confidently say that without the inexhaustible support and unending patience of those around me there is no way this book could have been completed.

Thanks to all the magicians, mentalists, and thinkers that have influenced me over the years. A special thanks to those who have naively sat with me for what they thought would be a shot, pleasant conversation about some magic this or that, only to be engaged in hours of painstaking examination makes magic powerful, and what makes powerful magic. You are soldiers and survivors, especially those who come back for round two.

Any success that I have in the performance, creation, or examination of magic are thanks to this community of folks who, in my experience, have always been inviting and inspirational in their willingness to share magical secrets.

Thanks to Watkins for the hours of time pouring over this material with ideas and edits, for an all too generous foreword, and for the kind donation of some pages of his own material for me to expand upon in this work.

Thanks to Stacey, who is always patient and understanding when I need to stay up late because if the idea doesn't get onto paper it will vanish.

Thanks to all my teachers in theater, magic, and life. Thanks to my students, who are also my teachers in asking pointed questions which sculpt better answers.

Thanks to Kiffy for sparking fire in a young mind with a matchbook, a dime, and some rubber bands, and to Bub-Bup for fueling that fire with more magic paraphernalia than I knew what to do with. Thanks to my parents for fully supporting this silly little hobby through my entire "adult" life thus far, and for the look of surprise and relief on their faces when I showed them my first corporate gig's paycheck.

And a special thanks to all of those who pre-ordered this material during my lecture tour and then waited the better part of a year to receive your book. Your patience and support have been incredibly meaningful, and I hope that you find the material worth the wait.

Foreword

I met Kent Axell through our mutual friend Warren Thackeray. Kent invited me to do show at a comedy club where I opened for him. This club was filled with tourists, many of which didn't speak English so needless to say it was a difficult audience for magic. After my set Kent took the stage and I was immediately impressed by his ability to entertain and keep the audience engaged. He was a magnificent performer and after seeing him work I knew I could learn a lot from him. We began meeting frequently and jamming, throwing ideas back and forth and became very good friends in the process.

What you are about to read is material that I have personally seen Kent perform with great success on numerous occasions, both on stage and close-up, this guy knows the rules and principles of presentation and deception. He is the kind of performer that can openly tell his audience he's simply using tricks and yet they will still approach him after the show and ask if he can speak to their dead relatives. This is real working material and I would recommend you pay close attention to the lessons herein, with focus on the scripting, which in my opinion is where you will find some of the most important aspects of the routines.

Some magic/mentalism books are based on 'Ideas' and hypothetical effects that may work under certain circumstances. Those ideas won't be found in this book. These routines are tried and tested in front of real paying audiences by a man that's constantly gigging and engaging with the theory and practice of mind reading, magic, and theater.

Kent and I have spent a lot of time both theorizing and testing out ideas for my "Challenge Cards" principle, from my book 'Positive Negative'. We've dissected the idea and approached it from many angles, including Kent's wonderful idea of combining it with a 'Q and A' routine. A section in this book contains some of the best working ideas using the principle so far. Some of the ideas may seem far out, but when I helped Kent behind the scenes during some of his off-Broadway performances and shows for major NYC institutions, I saw the ideas in action, and they work elegantly and beautifully. Simply put, this section will change your mentalism.

There is something for everyone in here from card routines to drawing duplications to advice on memorizing scripts. The methods are deceptive, and the plots are entertaining. Many of the routines are hard-hitting and quick, which makes them great for

working real gigs, and some are longer form from his theater show. They are also technically easy to do, with a focus on strong magic rather than knuckle-busting for its own sake. Pay special attention to the open prediction effect 'Poker Face' which is one of my personal favorites.

Every now and again when inspiration strikes, I like to run my new ideas by my magician acquaintances. Kent is always the first person I call for feedback. He is neither a 'no-man' nor a 'yes-man', he just tells you what he genuinely thinks, and usually offers effective ideas for improvement. It's a good thing to have someone who can give you advice and feedback, and it's even better if that person knows what they're talking about and proves it every performance. For me, that person is Kent.

Over the time I've known Kent I have become a better magician based on what he has shown me, and I know the same will apply to anyone who reads these notes. I have personally gained value from the contents of this book, and this is only a collection of a few of the routines and ideas he has in his repertoire, I recommend you keep an eye out for everything he may release in the future.

-Watkins

Preface

The story of this text was a life changing journey for me. After nearly 14 years living in Manhattan, a precious few of those years making a decent living as a professional full-time magician with repeat clients, my girlfriend and I decided to uproot together and move to the fabulous Las Vegas Nevada! That magical place where things that happen there stay there, apparently, and 3's of clubs litter the streets. To get from NYC to Vegas though, we took a small detour through places like Florida, and Texas, and Utah. You see, to get us there I booked cross country lecture tour. All in all, the journey was 40 days and 40 nights to get to our new desert home. Sounds familiar somehow, but I just can't put my finger on it.

The whole thing was kind of off the cuff. I had been working on some stellar material and my repertoire had some older heavy hitters with a modern flare that were worthy of sharing, so I did. I did not, however, have lecture notes, and this was a popular request among the attendees. About half way through the tour I decided that notes were a great idea, so I began preselling the notes and typing up the material that would eventually turn into the book that you're holding.

Many kind and curious souls pre-ordered this material along with the promise that they would receive it in just a few months. Unfortunately, I was unable to follow through on that promise. There were many issues holding me back, the least of which was packing up my entire life and moving across country, doing the week long drive several times to get the last of our stuff from NY. Primarily though, while I was careful in the lecture itself to give credit where credit is due, committing these routines to writing brings that responsibility to an entirely new level which, out of respect for the giants upon whose shoulders I stand, I wanted to reach with completeness and gratitude. So, to those folks that helped us cross the country only to receive your magic late, I apologize again for my tardiness, and I am confident that if applied, you will find the following thoughts and material worth the wait.

At first it was just a 30-page pamphlet, briefly going over the tour's effects, but I remember so clearly wanting to do more during the lectures than our two-hour time slot would allow, so I began including the extra material as well. Soon it was 50 pages, and then over 75, and then I realized that these were no longer lecture notes, this was going to be my first book. And it's a first book that I'm very happy with.

My intention for the tour was to curate some of the strongest magic from my repertoire for the magicians I'd be sharing with. And given that this book is the eventual outgrowth of that intention, then the material within is representative of the best that I have to offer, and I offer it with the sincere hope that you find it valuable.

Thank you so much for your time and attention.

Introduction

Before we get to the good stuff, please give me one more moment of your precious time.

I just wanted to say thanks to you. Thanks for your support and your interest without which I never would have written this book, my love letter to magic.

I love magic. I love layered and clever deceptions and the illusory walls they create. I love surprise and I love the people who love surprises. And delivering those surprises to those people generates in me an energy and enthusiasm that I find difficult to put into words. I love the way that deep and simple deceptions give people tiny panic attacks, and how in a safe environment, someone can drop the facade of control, inside and out, and experience a moment adrift in space. If you feel the same way, then there's something for you within these pages.

The material was designed and reworked over thousands of performances to be deeply fooling, and therefore deeply moving. It's meant to be read in detail. Please do 'make it your own', if you like, but not right now. Every word was put in its place for a reason, and if you keep that in mind while reading and rehearsing then I promise that whatever you end up with will be the best of both of us.

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The Test of Time
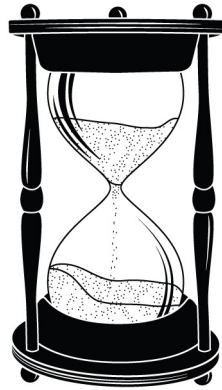
Effect: The deceiver predicts the exact moment during the show that a volunteer from the audience will call out the word "Now!"

Details: He does so by removing the battery from a wall clock and setting the predicted time on the face of the clock, which is then placed in a large envelope on stage. This is the prediction, and none of the audience members know what time the clock is set to. The volunteer is instructed to yell out "Now!" or "Stop!" at any point during the show. When they do, the current time is marked down, and the envelope containing the clock is given to the volunteer to hold. Later in the show the clock is removed from the envelope, and it is revealed that they had indeed called "Now!" exactly at the time that the performer had predicted on the clock.

Materials:
- An IKEA wall clock (around $3 at IKEA, or any clock with an open battery slot on the back of the clock will probably work.)
- Batteries for the clock (2 AA's for the IKEA clock)
- A large plastic envelope that can hold the clock (I use a large plastic bubble envelope that I bought from Staples. A bag would also work)
- A strong thread matching the envelope in color. (upholstery thread is my go-to)
- Duct Tape matching the envelope in color
- A key or pair of scissors/ pliers to bend the battery contacts in.
- A pad of paper and a marker to record the time they say 'Now'

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Preparation

To prepare the clock take a key or pair of scissors or pliers and bend in the metal contacts that hold the battery such that the battery will slide in and out of the clock with little resistance. They must be tight enough that a battery will stay in without falling out, but loose enough that the battery will slide in with ease.
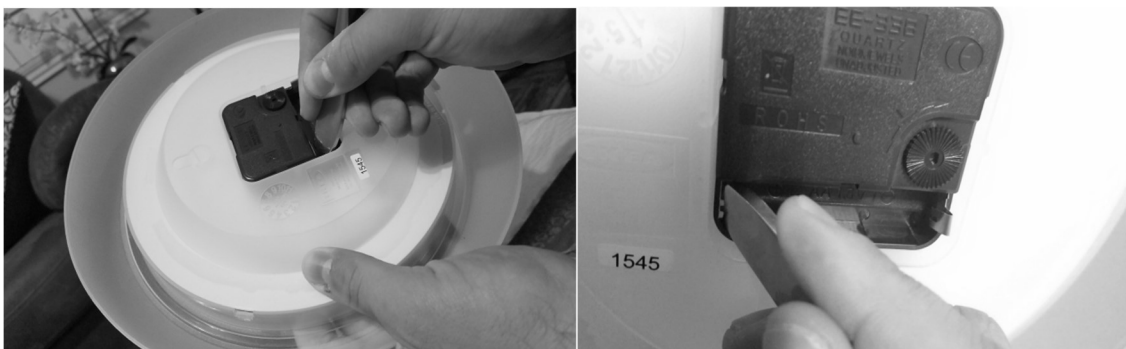
In preparing to make the envelope it may be useful for me to give you a general outline of the unit here before going into detail. The basic purpose of the envelope is to conceal a hidden battery which is inserted into the clock during the performance, and then secretly removed by use of a string which runs out of the back of the envelope.

To prepare the envelope begin by cutting a small, approximately one inch slit on the non-flap side in the center. Now tie a loop of thread around the middle of one of the batteries. Then add a strip of duct tape around the battery and the thread for added security. Keep the thread doubled up. In other words, tie the battery in the middle of the thread, and then fold that thread over to run alongside the other half of the tread; this will strengthen the anchor point once it's taped down.

Now place the battery inside the envelope through the hole so that the thread runs through the hole to the outside of the envelope. You'll now need to cut the thread at the correct length, tie it off and anchor it to the envelope. It needs to be long enough that the tied battery can be inserted into the clock with the clock resting at the bottom of the envelope and still the thread will have a small amount of slack. The tied battery also needs to be able to rest near the opening of the envelope while the envelope is resting

flat on a table. Once you've determined an appropriate length for the thread, cut it and tie to two ends together tightly.

The anchor point will need to be a few inches to the left or right of the slit. Just far enough that you'll be able to easily hook the thread with your fingers and pull on the string without looking. I anchor my thread to the left of the slit.

Now, run a piece of tape through the loop and attach the thread to the envelope. Then put another piece of tape over that one, fully securing the thread to the envelope.

Next, create a tab by attaching a piece of tape to the flap of the envelope so that it extends over the flap, and fold the tape in on itself for about a half inch at the end of the strip, forming a 'tab'. This will allow you, when the time comes, to fold the envelope in half (hiding the string and the hole) and attach the tape to the bottom of the envelope, and then open it back up with ease for the reveal. The final product should look like this.

What you have is an envelope with a 'tab' of tape on the flap side, and on the non-flap side a small slit near the center. Some string is duct taped to the outside of the envelope near the slit, and runs through the hole to the inside, where it's secured to a battery. Note that the black tape is used for contrast in the photo. The actual tape should match the color of the envelope.

Set-up for performance

Before the show begins, place the envelope, flap side down (slit and string side up) on a table on stage with the opening toward the audience. The battery with the string is resting inside the envelope, about 2-4 inches away from and parallel to the opening of the envelope with the positive (top hat) end facing stage left. Place the other (normal) battery inside the clock and set the clock to be about 60 seconds ahead of the actual time.

Note: These 60 seconds are the amount of time during performance between the battery coming out of the clock, and the clock being inserted into the envelope, and subsequently the gimmicked battery being inserted into the clock, at which point the clock will start ticking at the correct time. For your presentation, you may need more or less than 60 seconds.

Place the running clock somewhere on the stage and you're ready to go.

Presentation

This routine touches the show three times. First is the set-up, then the Call Out, then the Revelation.

The Set-up

The Wizard: *"I'd like to start with a prediction."*

We begin, as usual, with the selection of a volunteer from the audience. Choose someone near the front, but a few rows back.

TW: *"You ma'am, will you please stand. And what's your name?"*

Mary: *"Mary"*

You grab the clock from wherever it's standing and remove the battery, handing it to your volunteer. This of course, stops the clock, which was set to be a minute or so fast.

TW: *"Hello Mary! Thank you for volunteering. Hold onto the battery, you'll need that later."*

You begin by running Mary through a quick pseudo-method. Of course, this presentation, like all presentations, is optional, but I find that it adds some legitimacy to the

proceedings. Have her roll two dice in her mind and tell you the total, and then the values on the dice. The implication being that her answers here have something to do with the time that you're about to set on the clock. They don't.

> TW*: "For now, imagine that you have two standard six-sided die tumbling around in your mind, and when they finally land please tell me exactly what number they total. Of course, it will be between 2 and 12."*

> M: *"10"*

> TW: *"Is that a 6 and a 4, or two 5's?"*

> M: *"Two 5's."*

> TW: *"Alright this should work with you. I'm going to set this clock to a very specific time within the next 40 minutes."* (the length of about ⅔ of your show)

Turn the clock face toward yourself and run your finger along the dial on the back as if you're setting a new time on the clock. You're not. Really, you're just grazing the gear with your finger, not changing the time at all. While finishing this up, you give Mary her simple instruction.

> TW: "*In a moment the clock will go into the envelope. Mary. Your job is to at some point in the next 40 minutes call out the word* **"Now!"** *It may be during another experiment, or a monologue, or it may be during a dead, dramatic silence. I can't give you much more of an explanation than that, except that when you feel the time is right, do not hesitate. Hopefully I've set the clock to that very moment give or take 60 seconds. As for the rest of you. I'd like you to just THINK the word 'now' at some point when you think the time may be right, but Mary is the only one who has permission to yell it out during the show. Do you understand Mary?"*

> M: *"Yes"*

> TW: *"Don't forget"* Grin. *"Mary, take a bow and find your seat. Let's get some encouragement for Mary!"*

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During Mary's bow and the subsequent applause, you'll be reorienting the clock and inserting it into the bag, and the gimmicked battery into the clock. These actions survive scrutiny, but because of the audience applauding and Mary is taking her bow you'll have some extra cover. Here are the specifics. The following assumes that the envelope is laying on a table to your right side. If you must have the bag on your left side, flip left and right in the next paragraph.

As you approach the bag, and with the clock face staring at the ground, grip the clock with your left hand from above so that your fingers cover the 12 and your thumb is at the back. Your right-hand will let go of the clock and reach for the envelope as your left-hand lowers, preparing to insert the clock face down, 6 first, into the envelope. Under the guise of simply opening the envelope to insert the clock into it, your right thumb will slide into the envelope and under the battery, assisted from outside of the envelope by your right fingers. The battery is gripped and lifted inside the envelope, and while inserting the clock into the envelope, the battery is inserted into the clock, pushed by the right-hand fingers. This is easy to do, since you've bent out the prongs on the battery connectors on the clock. Once the battery is in the clock simply continue inserting the clock into the envelope until it reaches the bottom, as which point you hold the envelope by the flap and lean it against something on stage, set it on a chair, or use the tape tab to attach it to something on stage.
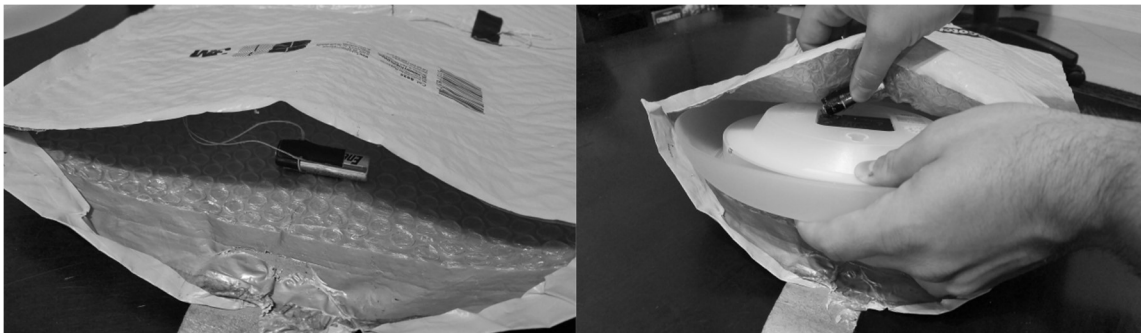
Where we are right now…
1. The clock now has a battery inside of it and is running inside the bag.
2. Because you set the clock about a minute fast before removing the battery, and about a minute passed between removing the battery and replacing it, the clock is currently running at the correct time.

The Call Out

Later, during the show the volunteer will call out 'Now!', and when they do you will stop everything.

> TW: *"Stop? Everyone, what time is it?"*

As you say these words people will be checking their watches, their phones, looking for wall clocks, etc. Now is the time to remove the battery from the clock. As you're asking them to check the time, move toward the envelope and pick it up. Now grip the clock through the envelope and pull on the string attached to the battery, removing it from the clock. You'll have plenty of cover behind the envelope. And the action can seamlessly blend with the next action of folding the envelope in half. Simply hook the string with your thumb on the way up to the duct tape 'tab' and pull the battery out of the clock, then let the string slide off your thumb as you grab the tab and fold the envelope in half, taping it that way and hiding the string in the fold.

Unbeknownst to your audience, you've just stopped the clock on the exact time that Mary said *"Now"*. And then you've hidden the string by folding the envelope in half.

Hand it to the volunteer in this folded state and say,

> *"You hold onto this until the end of the show. What time was it?"*

You ask again and mark it down on your pad to remember later. Let's say it's **8:07.**

Here's an extra win/win, if you're into that sort of thing. After handing the clock to the volunteer, say this.

> *"Raise your hand if **you** would have said 'Now' around this time, or even within a minute or two of this moment?"*

If nobody raises their hand, the impression is that it's worked on only the person it was intended to work on. If some people, or better yet, many people raise their hands, then the impression is that whatever you did to 'make' the volunteer say 'Now' has also affected others.

The Revelation

Later in the show, after the Call Out, you will reveal that your prediction matched the time the 'Now' was called.

> TW: *"Mary. You're still holding that envelope, right? Good, will you bring it up onto stage please? Some encouragement please as Mary makes her way up here!"*

When Mary gets to the stage you take the envelope from her and unfold it with the dirty side away from the audience. At this point it's important to keep everything as open and fair as possible. Hold the envelope at the tips of your fingers with hands spread wide.

> TW: *"What was the time that Mary said 'Now'?"*

Someone might answer. Luckily you and the audience will have the answer displayed for reference on your pad.

> *"8:07"*

Says you, or someone else. Go slowly into the envelope with your free hand and grip the clock at the top edge. I'm sure it's possible with some foresight to have them remove the clock but doing it yourself is less risky. The last thing you want is for the to see the contents of the envelope. Look into the envelope to make sure that the gimmicked battery and string aren't snagged somehow on the clock and pull the clock out of the envelope. The clock will read 8:07, give or take 30s. You say…

> TW: *"And Mary, what time did I set the clock to?"*

> M: *"8:07"*

> TW: *"Mary, please keep the battery and this as a memory. Give her a hand!"*

Give Mary the clock as a gift and guide her off the stage to a warm round of applause for both of you.

After Thoughts

- I first saw this plot on a Paul Stockman DVD called 'Connected' and I really enjoyed it, but it was the one effect on the DVD which he did not explain. I researched several different methods for the effect and found that most, if not all, would require a second mortgage to perform. This is a low-cost solution to making a prediction on the face of a clock, and a great way to try out the effect before investing in one of the more expensive methods.

- Telling them to say stop in within 2/3 of your show's length insures that they will say *'Now'* before the end of the show. It also makes it clear to you if they've forgotten, at which point you can remind them. In fact, reminding them several times during the show can make for an amusing through-line. *"Mary, you didn't forget, did you?"*

- Occasionally, even when executed well, the reveal will be off by 30-60s. This results from having the battery out of the clock for too much or too little time. Commenting on this as I do in my script allows for a small but useful margin of error. That said, it's no tragedy to be off by a tiny bit when making such a bold prediction. There are arguments that being 'slightly' off adds legitimacy and intrigue to a set. Just be sure not to make this your final reveal and you're golden either way.

- It's always a good idea to have a digital clock readout somewhere in the room that you can use to set your original clock and then check the audience member's answers against. This has saved me from many a badly set wrist watch. I use an APP which is currently in the google play store called 'Night Clock'. It has a full screen digital time display which is easily read from across most rooms. If you can't find that one, then I'm sure there are a myriad of other applications that will work just fine.

- Some have asked, "Why not reveal the prediction at the moment they say "Now"? In other words, why go through handing it to them and waiting until later to reveal the clock?" I can see why they would ask this. If the clock were actually set at the beginning, wouldn't it be just as good to reveal the correct time at the moment they say 'Now'? Logically this should be just as effective a moment to make the reveal. While I agree that logically the effect is the same, there are some theatrical and psychological considerations.

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- o Firstly, this routine puts a natural break in the flow of your show when they say "Now". This interruption in pace would be unnecessarily exacerbated if you also make a reveal and accept an audience reaction for the trick in the moment of the interruption. Having a well-planned reveal for later will enhance the flow and pacing of your show.

- o Secondly, the fact that they're holding the clock for much of the show and must take it onto the stage for the reveal is likely to produce a false memory in at least some of your audience that the volunteer had the clock the entire time, increasing the effectiveness of the deception.

- Finally, while this does by design need to be set up near the beginning of your act, I would suggest avoiding this as a direct opener because it's all set-up and no climax. One good fix is to use the chosen spectator for something else, something faster and more direct, as a "qualifier" to "make sure" the clock thing will work on them. An ideal solution to this problem is to use a grease pencil swami gimmick during the provided 'pseudo-method' to suggest that you guessed which number of 2-12 that she would roll on her imaginary dice.

  - o Start by taking a small pad of paper and a sharpie, pretend to write something on the pad, then put the sharpie on the table or in your pocket. Then run through the dice opener and mark her number on the pad with the swami gimmick. One cover is asking… "What did you say?" as you write the number. "10?" A delighted look crosses your face and you say "I think this will work with you just fine" as you reveal that you had written 10 on the pad.

  - o Alternatively, if you wanted to add some interesting structure or extra reveals during the show, imagine that you use the swami method for guessing her dice (total, or individual numbers) on the back of a coin envelope containing a prediction of some kind to be revealed later.

  - o Perhaps at the end of the show the clock is revealed to be 4 minutes off of the time she said stop. But wait, she's been holding this envelope since the beginning. When she opens it, a larger prediction unfolds and in magnum sized sharpie clearly reads, "She will be 4 minutes fast!" An unambiguous miracle.

- One last note. If using a weaker material than the plastic envelope, I would recommend duct taping around the hole to prevent tearing and cutting from the thread.

Credits and References

Paul Stockman: Psyclock
I originally saw this plot in Paul Stockman's 'Connected' DVD, where he featured his Psyclock effect. He has since released 'Psyclock II', available through penguin.
http://www.penguinmagic.com/

Max Gordon: Pizza Time
Candidly, this effect has only been described to me, and it's a challenge to track it down online. Apparently it predicts the selected toppings on a pizza, and a similar method to predict the 'time' the pizza would arrive.
Max Gordon's site: www.solutions.yolasite.com

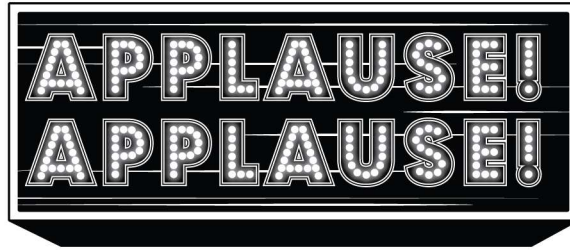Cesaral Ultimate Time Prediction
In my view, the cleanest version of this plot thus far is the Cesaral UTP. Worth checking out if you're looking to invest some cash into this effect.
The UTP can be found at http://cesaral.com

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When Should You React?

A mentalist swings like a pendulum between pretending to know more than he does and pretending to know less than he does. Artful and Believable mentalists are sure not to confuse the two.

If you choose to react to your own magic, be sure to react at a time that is congruent with the knowledge you're supposed to have. Many performers, especially mentalists, will 'react' to their magic at entirely the wrong time. Specifically, during the reveal of a prediction. Which is to say that, in the previous routine, some may save their own reaction for the reveal of the clock to the audience.

> *"How shocking! I set it to the right time after all!"*

But remember, you're supposed to know what time you set that clock to, so your reaction should come after an audience member confirms what time that the volunteer has said 'Now!'

> *"8:07"*

This is the moment that you, the performer, have confirmed that you have correctly (or at least nearly) predicted the correct time. If you choose to react, this is the moment. Later you will show the audience the clock, and at that moment they can join you in your celebration.

Personally, I choose to give a subtle and cheeky reaction of surprise and delight when I hear the time, as if I were only about a minute off. A quick hint of a grin crosses my face

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as I subtly yet triumphantly ball one hand into fist, and then, as if remembering where I am, I grab my sharpie and mark down the time and say that we'll get back to the clock later.

The Magician and the Card Shark

Effect: The performer finds two selections in a most surprising and delightful way.

Details: In demonstrating the differences between a magician and a card shark, the performer finds one selection by overt skill, and the other is found deceptively, before the audience realizes they're staring at it.

Presentation and Method

"Being a student of the magic, I meet a lot of people who are good with cards. Mostly they fall into one of two categories, magicians and card sharks. While at times they both 'find' cards, they have some differences that I'd like to clarify by demonstration. I'll have two cards selected, even though a card shark probably wouldn't have you select a card, I'll sacrifice my laurels just this once."

You're about to have two cards selected by two volunteers and then control both cards to the top. Spread the deck toward a volunteer and have them select a card.

"Take one right out of the deck. The magicians that I know put little stock in their cards. They're just a tool to entertain. Show that around. This will be the magician's target card."

Let's assume they've selected the 8H. Have a second card selected.

"For the card shark, the cards are their life, so they may be guarded in social situations. Here. Just touch a card. Memorize it. This is the card shark's target card."

Let's say they've selected the 5C. Control the 5C to the top using Lee Asher's 'The Losing Control' or Emran Riaz's 'Shinobi Control'. If you don't know or have access to these wonderful moves, then the infamous 'Your Favorite' method will work just fine. (see the **afterthoughts** and **resources** sections for more on these controls)

During whatever control that you use, try and mess the deck a little bit. This will give you reason to touch the deck with both hands for a moment to 'square' the deck when really, you're using that moment to catch a break underneath the 5C. Take the 8H back from the first volunteer and perform Marlo's 'Tilt' move, apparently placing it near the middle of the deck, but actually inserting it into the second position, just underneath the 5C. My preferred tilt move is explained during "funner color stunner" on David Williamson's "Magic Farm"

"The magician's target goes back in the pack and now we can begin!"

Finding the Selections

Here I tend to perform a sequence of false cuts and shuffles before revealing the selection. If something 'fancy' is out of reach, you could just as easily perform an 'in the hands' riffle shuffle. Something impressive to the layman and two handed is best. All you're interested in doing is retaining the top two cards.
If at a table I prefer to "find" the card using the Benzais Spin Out, but any method will do. Standing, I'll usually use a false cut and then turn over the top card.

"I'll start with the card shark's target card. That's yours… (gesturing toward relevant volunteer) *Now… the card shark's living relies on nobody knowing about his skills, so often he'll be reluctant to demonstrate, unless he's out of the game. But, buy*

him a few drinks and maybe if you're lucky he'll show you why you should never play

cards with a shark… Is that yours?"

While pushing the top card over to reveal that you've found the Card Shark's target card, the 5C, push off two cards and get a pinky break underneath the second card down, the Magician's target card, the 8H. After revealing the 5C, return it to the deck face-up and gesture with your right hand toward the other volunteer.

"but yours wasn't the 5 was it?"

Return your right hand to the deck and with your thumb and middle fingers at the index corners of the face-up 5C, remove both the 5C and the 8H from the deck, back to back, as one, as if preparing for the 'twirl change', with the 5C facing the audience. Say,

"Was it a 5 at all?"

You emphasize the 5C in your right hand before letting the card fall to hip level and drawing attention back to the deck. You say,

"No… Now the magician's turn. For the magician it's a little bit different. You see, because a magician only uses one hand…"

All attention should be off the right hand and on the deck. Raise the deck up to eye level (and a little to the left so not to obscure your face) in your left hand. Look at it and execute a Charlier (one handed) cut. Your right hand is still at waist (or table if seated) level, and as execute your one-handed cut, spin the right-handed cards (ala the twirl change), to reveal the 8H. Nobody should see this action, as they are looking at the left hand. After the cut, finish the line.

"…but never the hand you're watching."

Diviner / Deceiver

The audience will switch their gaze to the newly revealed 8H and register the surprise. Drop both cards on top of the deck, extend the right hand to your second volunteer to shake, and thank your audience.

Afterthoughts

- This routine began with the ending in mind. The scripting and the mechanics were devised for the purpose of logically getting to the final moment when the audience is watching a one handed cut up high, while down low a card which is out of focus changes to the second selection. Sometimes that's the way a routine is created, in this case I'm very happy with the results.

- Notice that throughout this routine, whenever a card is placed back on the deck in preparation for a change or to clean up the mess, there is an implied reason to do so. Usually it's just to free ones' hand. Even the two differing methods for card selection are justified by the scripting. During your own routines, ask yourself, "Why do I put the card back on top of the deck?" or "Why do I turn this card back face down again?" or "Why do I have them select in this way?" If the answer is "so that I can prepare for a sleight", I suggest reexamining your script.

- I have found that the most effective way to select and return the card shark's card (second selection, first return) is any method which appears to leave the selection in the center of the deck without shuffling but brings the selection to the top. The reason is that once the 'magician's' card is inserted back into the deck using the tilt move, both cards are already on top of the deck in the right order with no shuffling necessary. I find this economy of motion exceptionally pleasing for this routine. The deck can be squared all around and for both revelations you have apparently found the cards from the center with no funny business.

- In the explanation I mentioned two controls that work perfectly for this.

These are the 'Losing Control' by Lee Asher, and the 'Shinobi Control' by Emran Riaz. You can find them easily by searching each of their names online.

- Ideally your first control will leave the switched out 'center' card out-jogged,. It's a beautiful illusion after the tilt to push one card in from the front using your left hand first finger, and one card in from the back using your right-hand thumb. Both into the center, fair and square.

- When raising the deck up and to the side, it's important that the right hand move slower than the left. Think of it more as 'relaxing' to the side. In some lessons that I took with sleight of hand genius, Al Shneider, I learned that he would say that this hand 'dies' while the other hand comes to life. Just be aware that the eyes track movement, and you want the eyes of your audience to track the deck as it's raised up for the cut.

Diviner / Deceiver

Poker Face

Effect: The magician not only finds the card the volunteer has selected but has predicted a lie that they would tell.

Details: The magician places a card face down on the table for later. He then asks a volunteer to select a card from the deck and memorize it. The selection is returned to the deck and the magician asks the volunteer to lie about the card they selected. The magician is not only able to determine what the selection was based on the lie, but it is revealed that the card previously placed face down on the table is a perfect match for the lie that they told.

You'll need:
- A deck of cards
- A duplicate card. In this example we'll use the Ace of Hearts (AH)

Presentation and Method

You address the group.

"Who here would you say is the best liar?"

Listen to their answer and introduce yourself.

"Really? What's your name?"

"Jon"

If it suits your style, pleasantly engage that person for a moment or two, as if sizing them up.

"Would you lie to me Jon? Before you do though, allow me to set one card aside."

Spread through the deck, facing you, so that only you can see the faces of the cards. Cut one of your duplicate cards (AH), to the top of the deck. Continue spreading through the cards until you come to the other AH. Up-jog it and look at your volunteer, as if for confirmation.

"Yeah, this is the one."

Place the duplicate AH face down on the tablewith a long side of the card toward you. Slide the card away from your working space, isolating it.

"This card will stay here until the very end, and nobody will touch it, not even me. For now, I'm going to have you select a card for yourself"

This is where you'll perform a variation on the Hofzinser Under the Spread Force, which I execute as follows. The deck is resting face down in left hand mechanic's grip with the force card, the A.H. on top. You'll now move 4 indifferent cards to the top of the deck.

With your right hand, grab the deck by the short edges and transfer to a right-hand Bid-dle grip as if you're about to do an overhand shuffle with the faces of the cards exposed. Run 4 cards singularly and toss the remainder of the deck on top of them to complete the "shuffle". No attention is called to this action, and it should come off as a quick overhand shuffle. The AH is now 5th card from the top of the deck.

Turn the deck face down and spread the first four cards into your right hand in preparation to cull the fifth card (AH) underneath the spread. You then look the volunteer in the eyes and say,

"just touch a card please"

At that moment you gesture the spread toward them. In the larger action of the gesture you'll cull the 5th card out of the spread.

The Cull

From above, your left thumb contacts the 4th card down. From below, your right fingertips contact the 5th card down (AH). As you gesture the deck toward the volunteer, your left thumb holds the 4th card steady, while your right fingers pull the AH underneath the spread, aligned with the top card of the deck.

The moment the A.H. is free from the spread, continue to move cards from the left hand to the right hand, offering the volunteer a free choice of which card to touch. Notice that while you're spreading the cards, the AH, which has been pulled free from the spread, is now free to "ride" underneath the spread.

When your volunteer touches a card, break the spread that location, leaving the card they touched at the bottom position of the cards in the right hand. Really, the AH is at the bottom position, but this is hidden by the spread. After squaring the cards in your left hand, turn them perpendicular to the spread in your right and use the left-hand cards or the left-hand fingers to push the right-hand cards square. This action will secretly move the culled A.H. to the bottom position of the right-hand cards, which they believe is the card they touched. In squaring the cards in the right hand, you have switched the culled-out card for the card that they touched.

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Turn your head away and move the right hand up to show the volunteer the card which they have apparently selected, the AH, bring the two packets together, burying the ace in the center of the deck while handing the cards to the volunteer to shuffle.

> *"Please, shuffle if you'd like. Now, you've got a card in mind. The game is very simple. I'm going to ask you what your card is, and all you have to do is lie. Tell me ANY other card. Make it totally random. So, Jon, what is your card?"*

> *"the 9 of hearts"* Jon lies.

> *"My job will be to try and figure out what your card ACTUALLY is based on your lie."*

From this point on, your job is to create a convincing pathway as to why Jon would have chosen to 9H if his card were the AH. Here is an example.

> *"Pretty convincing. Straight face. Well done. Now Jon, we all know that the best lies contain a little bit of truth, right? It adds credibility."*

Please use that line, it works **really** well.

> *"I think you can be a good liar when you want to be, and I think this lie contains a bit of truth. Maybe that the card is red… yes. I'd go so far as to say that you left it the same suit."*

While this is going on, you're searching through the deck for the original card, the AH, and cutting it to the top. Then, search for their "lie card" (the 9H in this case), and out-jog it. Turn the cards face down in your left hand and remove the out jogged 9H with your right hand without revealing it.

> *"I think this is the card you started with"*

You're now holding the 9H (lie card) in the right hand while insinuating that it's the original selection, which remains on top of the deck, which is held in mechanics grip in the left hand. While pondering the face of the not revealed card, a pinky break underneath the top card, the AH.

Place the lie card face down on the deck, above the force card and take a moment to check in.

> *"Same suit, different value, probably a very high card. Yes. I think this is it. You said the nine of hearts, right?"*

> *"Yes"*

The following sequence is reviewed in photographs from the performer's point of view on page 29.

Lift both cards as one at the break for a stage double, similar to a Biddle grip, with your fingertips at the front short edge, thumb at the back, and turn them toward yourself to look at the face of the AH.

> *"Be honest. Is the card you started with the Ace of Hearts?"*

Turn at the wrist to show the card to the audience.

> *"Yes!"*

> *"Thank you! Now, this was fun… but we all know that I'm a magician and there are many ways that I could have known which card you were thinking of..."*

During the thank you you'll be dropping off the A.H. on top of the deck, effectively switching it for the 9.H.

Your hand is still elevated, showing the audience the AH at the front of the double. After a moment of this isometric exercise, it's only natural that your arm will lower, allowing the double to come close to the deck. Touch the double to the deck and then use your right first and middle finger to slide the top card off the deck toward yourself while your left hand, holding the deck, drops down to your side. If done correctly it should appear as if you've simply lowered both hands, and the double kissing the deck should go unnoticed. You should now be holding the 9.H. with fingers on the back, thumb on the face of the upper short edge on the right side of the card, the opposite side of the index. To the audience, you're still holding the A.H. you just showed them a moment ago.

"However…"

During the next line you'll perform a card switch that may remind you of a sort of Mexican turnover. Approach the tabled AH with the 9H you're holding. Slide the far short edge of the 9H underneath the long edge of the AH. Your right second and third fingers contact the AH and pulls it farther up onto the 9H forming a cross with the face down cards. Rotate at the wrist to turn both cards over along the diagonal axis between your fingers and the opposite corner. Your thumb now releases the 9H face up, longitudinally, onto the table. The 9H is face up in the same position that the duplicate AH was resting face down a moment ago.

"…the thing that I never could have known… was the lie you were going to tell."

After the switch has been made, bring the face up AH back to the deck in your left hand, leaving it face-up on top. If you're playing to a larger crowd then you may want to lever the 9H up with the AH so that everyone can see for a least a moment, but ultimately you want them to remember this image, the A.H. on the top of the deck, and the 9.H. down there on the table. If playing to a parlor crowd, it may make sense at this point to pick up the tabled 9.H. with your right hand for a better display.
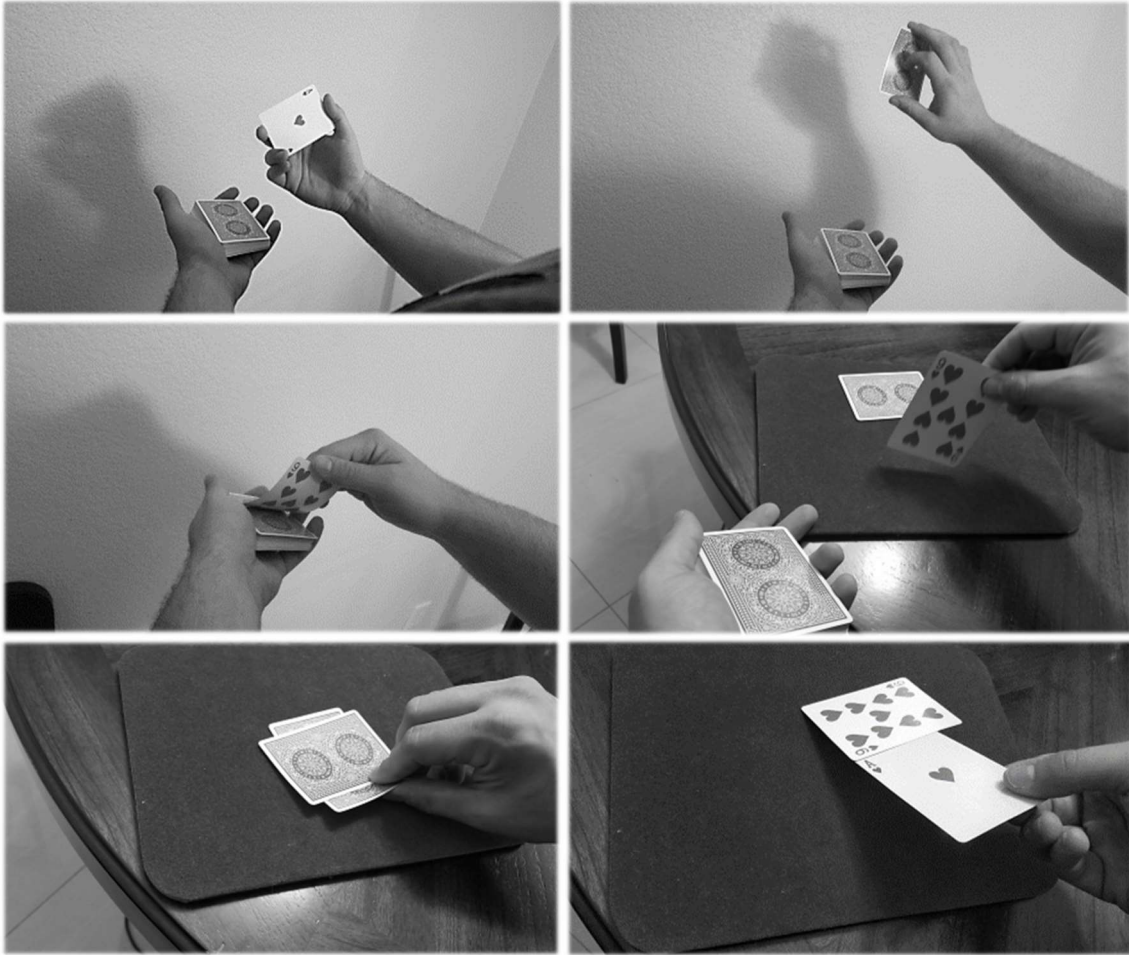
Afterthoughts

- Take a moment to appreciate the beautiful retention of vision that this switch allows for. One card is horizontal, and one card is vertical, and after the switch, they're still apparently in the same orientation. Now add to that the fact that, due to the duplicate card and the double lift, the switched 'out' card that you're now holding appears to be the card that you were holding beforehand. It's a beautiful deception.

- I've found that asking a group "who here is the best liar?" is an **amazing** line for approaching a table. It's fun, it's cheeky, and it immediately gets everyone pointing fingers at each other.

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- If when performing the routine, their lie has no "truth" value to it, you could just as easily continue by saying… *"The best lies have a little bit of truth… Which is why I believe that this is a terrible lie, you changed everything didn't you?"*

- Using a stage-double in this handling is designed to avoid having to turn the card back face down on the deck without motivation, and to allow for this routine to be done more effectively in a parlor or stand-up environment. Empirically I've found that in a close-up environment a standard double turnover and replacement works just as well prior to the card switch on the table. Simply leave the double face up and 'reach' for the prediction with an empty hand. Withdraw and say, *"I won't even touch it."* Then turn the double face down again, pull the top card off the deck and execute the table switch.

- And at the end of the routine, I find that slowing down on this last line and timing the word *'tell'* with the turning over of the tabled card is most theatrically effective.

Credits

This as a version of the R. W. Hull trick. After developing it I was told by some trusted colleagues that Christopher Hannibal had a nearly identical trick. It can be found in its original form in the Magic Menu, Volume two, and the Collected volumes. A more refined handling and update can be found in Hannibal's lecture notes and on his DVD, "The Truth from a Liar", which can be found here:

https://www.vanishingincmagic.com/magic/close-up-magic/hannibal-the-truth-from-a-liar/

Another great resource is Jon Racherbaumer's 'Hull-Scam', which is similar in texture with a completely different appeal. He has a full treatise on the Hull trick called 'Hull-A-Palooza' which can be found through lybrary.com, or you can contact him through his website to order a copy.

Everyone who performs is creating a world. Make sure your card forces and selections are congruent with the world you're creating. If you must have someone select a card by saying "stop", and if you've previously had someone select a card by simply removing it from the deck, then you'd better have a good reason that the new volunteer can't just touch one.

Better to choose someone in the second or third row center to select a card. Then the reason they must 'say stop' is implied by the fact that they couldn't reach the cards anyway, and it would be a hassle to get them on stage just to make a selection. In practice this would look something like this.

The magician sends someone back to their seat in the front row and begins searching for another volunteer. With a sweeping gesture to the front row he says,

"You've had your chance let's take someone from back here… You! Don't bother getting up, just say stop…"

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You could just as easily make this work across a table in a close-up setting. Someone's bound to be out of reach. In the previous effect I suggested asking the group who the best liar is, if you can do both a "say stop", and a spread force then you'll be set either way.

All of this is not to say that there aren't people who get away with these kinds of incongruencies all the time. Maybe you're the kind of performer who can. But if you can streamline your performance without sacrificing anything, why wouldn't you?

In the lecture I presented the 'Challenge Cards' routine. It's a piece by a friend of mine, Watkins, with a few of my own touches, improvements, and uses. I originally read the concept in Watkins' limited-edition book 'Positive/Negative', which explores the idea of using 'real' mental powers for good or for evil. I was completely floored by the simplistic genius of the concept and recognized its power as an overall utility device in mentalism. After some consideration and tweaking it went into my act. Since then I've developed many of my own ideas, additions, and subtleties around the concept. As part of these notes, Watkins has given me his kind permission to take a section from his own writings to explain the base concept and to show how it's developed in his repertoire. So, for now, enjoy the selection. I'll save my own comments and ideas for after.

"Dark Entries"
From Positive/ Negative

"Your Mind is Nirvana"
-Bodhidharma

EFFECT: The Performer approaches a group of three people and makes the claim of being a 'Mind Reader' which naturally leads to skepticism from the individuals watching. The Performer claims that because there is a 'challenge' from the offset, he introduces a stack of cards and explains that the cards contain common 'challenges' to his claims. He shows the group that written on each of the cards are different 'challenging' requests, such as: 'Can you guess my PIN code?', and 'Describe one of my childhood memories.' There are about 20 cards in the stack, all different. The Performer suggests that the test should be determined by a random selection of a 'challenge card' by each participant.

Diviner / Deceiver

The three individuals each select a card and they are then placed inside coin envelopes to insure their secrecy, so the Performer doesn't even know what the challenges are! One by one, the Performer accomplishes each of the participant's challenges to the astonishment of the witnesses.

METHOD: This method is basically a mini Q and A act done 'close up'. It incorporates a number of different principles and subtleties. This may be the most "complicated-sounding" explanation in this book, but it is actually very portable and easy to set up and perform! It involves a stack of "Challenge Cards" that you make with some blank business cards.

I love this concept because it makes the trick you do with your participant seem like a random choice. This is a utility stack of cards because you can use this stack in a number of different ways! You can do this for one participant up to three (and with a little creativity on your part- perhaps even more). You can always force the effect you want to do, and the idea of putting the effects on cards and allowing your participant to choose one adds just one more layer of impossibility to any effect you perform (especially if they think you don't even know what the challenge is). Think about it. The audience chooses the trick you do. This is something I have noticed a lot of lay people want to do anyway, so why not take advantage of it?

I will start by describing the set up for the actual stack of "Challenge Cards" and then I will describe the utilization of them for a 3-person stunt. Remember you can personalize your "Challenge Cards" to whatever your preferences are.

The Challenge Card Set Up
I begin by getting approximately 15 - 20 blank business cards and writing these three 'Challenges' on the faces of three of the cards:

"Can you guess my Mother's first name?" (Draw a line underneath for them to write the name)
"Can you describe to me the memory of my first bike ride?"
"Can you guess my Zodiac Sign?" (Draw a line underneath for them to write their Sign)

These are the three questions I will be forcing on each of the participants later on so keep these cards separate for now and place them in a stack in the order of which they

appear above from top to bottom (the top card being the 'Mothers Name' challenge card). On the rest of the cards, write a series of different "Challenges". These could only be limited by your imagination. Below are a few examples of things I write on my cards (the challenges you choose to write on your cards may even be effects you actually do perform, making this a great utility device to force the effect you want on a participant).

Examples

"Can you tell me the winning Lottery Numbers?"

"Can you reveal a childhood memory?"

*(This is an important one I use as a convincer for something later on)

"Can you tell me my PIN Code?"

"What is my Address?"

"Can you describe my living room?"

Those are just a few examples of the cards I use. I like to include a lot of 'Challenges' that would be impossible to actually achieve. This creates the illusion that the participant COULD have chosen them and the fact that you do accomplish the one they actually chose proves that you could have achieved the (actual) impossible challenges. An example being the Lottery challenge. This proves, by implication, that I can actually give the winning lottery numbers without having to do it.

One of the best ways to use these "Challenge Cards" is when you have an audience member challenge you with something! I always use this line of scripting in those situations (regardless of what their challenge is): "You see, I get a lot of skeptics when I do what I do. And in those situations, I have created a stack of cards based on all the different challenges I have gotten over the years (mentalist shows the different cards). I will allow you to choose one of these challenges and I will do my best to meet the challenge. However, I offer to double the risk of my reputation by allowing you to choose one of these at random and not even let me know what the challenge actually is!"

Now of course you can force the one you want. This entire system is created specifically to add a layer of impossibility of what you are doing. It's impossible to really guess someone's PIN Code (unless you are really lucky!), It's even more impossible if you don't even know they are thinking of their PIN Code. With these cards, you can do both.

The Envelope Set Up

Now that we have got the "Challenge Cards" created, the next step is to set up three-coin envelopes. One of them is going to be a 'window envelope' and the other two are going to be unprepared. A window envelope is created by cutting out a segment from the back of the
envelope to get a peek. This can be done by placing a card inside a coin envelope and using an exacto-knife to cut out a section large enough to get a full billet peek (or just large enough to peek the required information).

In our case, we are only going to create one window envelope to get a peek of the "Mother's Name" challenge card. The other two are legitimate un-gimmicked envelopes. Now you are going to take your three envelopes and stack them in an order where the gimmicked envelope is
on bottom underneath the other three, with the window face-down. Place these in your pocket, and your "Challenge Cards" (with the three force cards on top of the stack) in another pocket and supply yourself with three pens or pencils and you are now prepared to perform the following
routine.

Presentation (for three participants)

Now we are going to introduce the "Challenge Cards" to the audience you are performing for. While introducing these cards, show the faces of all of them and read a few out loud as examples. It is very important to show the audience the card that says "Can you reveal a
childhood memory?" because later on, this will be used as a subtle convincer in the routine (more on that later).

It is also important to point out to your audience that some of the cards have a space on which to write a piece of information. This makes sure that the participants who get the cards for the Name and Zodiac Sign know what they are doing. I then do a false shuffle with the stack, while retaining the three force cards at the top. I will then force the top three cards to the three
participants I am working with from left to right. This means that the person on my left will have the card that says, "Can you guess my Mother's first name?" the person in the middle will have the card that says, "Can you guess my Zodiac Sign?" and the person on my right will have

the card that says, "Can you describe my memory of my first bike ride?"

Now that each person has their challenge cards, hand them all a pencil and explain:

> *"I am going to turn around, so I cannot see what you are doing. I don't want you guys to even show each other what your challenges are, so keep them to yourself. If your card has a space to write down the information you are thinking of, write it down. Let me know when you three are finished"*

Allow some time for your participants to complete their tasks. Meanwhile, I like to talk to the rest of the audience (if there are more people watching) to get past the dead time. This shouldn't be a long process anyway as they are just writing one piece of information.

Remember that the "Bike Ride" card doesn't require anything to be written down.

I also explain to the participants that I am going to turn my back to them, so I won't know whether they have written anything or not. This is because some of the cards don't require anything to be written. Once your participants are finished, ask them to keep their cards face down when you turn around to be sure that there is no way you can see what their information is. Bring out your stack of envelopes, remembering that the "Window Envelope" is on the bottom of the stack.

Start by handing the two legitimate envelopes to the participants on your right (the Zodiac and Bike Ride challenges). Once you get to the participant who is thinking of their mother's name, you are going to ask them to place it into the "Window Envelope" while you are holding onto
it. This is done as an example for the other two participants to do the same thing.

After the participant on your left has put his billet into the "Window Envelope", you are going to ask him to hold his hand out palm-up and place the envelope in his hand, meanwhile getting a peek of his mother's name. Ask him to place his other hand on top of the envelope and to remain in that position. The other two participants are instructed to do the same.

Now we are in a position where we know the first participant's mother's name, and everyone is holding onto their envelopes. This technique of peeking one piece of information as an example while the other participants put theirs in their own envelope cancel out the idea that a peek is going on. This is because if a lay person saw that the

two participants could put the billets in the envelopes themselves, and you were still able to get their information, then a peek is not possible. And so, it is seen as improbable that a peek would have been used in the case of the first participant's billet (the one you do actually peek). This idea of getting a peek of one billet as an example for the rest of the participants is inspired by the 4th dimensional telepathy routine in "Practical Mental Effects" by Annemann.

Revealing the Information

Now you have the essential peek, you are ready for the reveals. I always start with the "Mother's Name" billet because I want to get rid of the 'Window Envelope' as soon as possible. You can reveal in any order you wish- that is just my recommendation. Once the 'Window Envelope' is out of play, you are home free.

I am of the opinion that revelations of a Name ought to be more about revelations of a person. This is not just simply name we are revealing. Make it about the human being attached to the name! You should at least do some form of reading on the person. After all, you are
definitely getting the hit at the end anyway. 'Psychometry from A to Z' by Richard Webster is a great place to start learning how to give readings based on a name.

Always write the name down on a piece of paper and place it face down to the side before taking the envelope from the participant to verify the name, THEN have them turn over the paper for the reveal. Otherwise it makes no sense to reveal the name verbally then open the envelope for verification. Doing it this way also leads to a great misdirection from the gimmicked envelope:

Once they are turning over the paper to see what you have written, you can now put the gimmicked envelope away. The heat is totally displaced (not that anyone would suspect the envelope anyway due to the logical disconnect, being that the other two participants could put their cards in their own ungimmicked envelope). As another devious ploy, you can also take the 'Challenge Card' out of the gimmicked envelope and misread it to imply that the participant never wrote down their mother's name! After writing the name on a piece of paper, I would take the card out of their envelope and say something like:

> *"Let's see what the challenge was... 'What was my mother's name?' can you tell every-one here what your mother's first name actually is?"* (Participant says the name aloud)

> *"Would you turn that paper over and see what I've committed to..."*

Casually take the billet they wrote on and put it in your pocket with the envelope. Remember the misdirection is placing their attention on the revelation on the paper you committed a name to!

With the Zodiac reveal you have plenty of methods to choose from now days. I personally use the classic "RAISE" anagram myself. Fraser Parker's "Seeing Signs" is another great method. I also recommend getting Peter Turner's monthly PDF master class on "Zodiac Mentalism" for some really great ideas. Pete has a great concept called "The Frame", which is as close to the real thing as you can get! Here is the RAISE Anagram for divining any Star Sign. Simply throw out these letters one at a time, spelling the word "RAISE". Once you get a "No" move to the right/ when you get a "Yes"- move down, and keep spelling 'RAISE':

R- Leo, Pisces, Gemini
A-Virgo, Scorpio
I-Cancer, Taurus
S-Libra, Capricorn
E-Aquarius, Sagittarius
(Yes to All Letters)-Aries

Peter Turner has a lot of great work on more subtleties toward using this anagram. You should notice that if the participant says "No" on the letter 'R', then you are left with three possibilities (Leo, Pisces, or Gemini). In our situation, we can use this line of scripting to eliminate one of the possibilities (we will talk about nailing the exact one later on):

> *"Focus on the first letter and repeat it in your mind over and over again. Now the second... Now the third, and this one is really coming in strong like 'M, M, M'!"*

If they react to the letter 'M' than we know it is Gemini. If not, we know it is either Leo or Pisces. Now let's talk about how we can get to the exact Star Sign. In the event that

you are down to two different possible Signs, you can use this ruse (Also by Peter Turner). Write down one of the signs on a piece of paper, and verbally reveal the other possible Sign. If you hit on the verbal reveal- you're done. If not- you can say, "Good thing I committed to this..." and turn over the paper showing you had in fact got it right!

What makes this entire routine really great is the fact that the participant (and audience) do not know that you know what the challenge is in the first place! So, what would usually be a rather transparent anagram suddenly seems so much more impossible. This is because as far as the audience is concerned, the participant could be thinking of ANYTHING. So, you can throw out as many letters as you wish and nothing will seem too transparent. That is the beauty of the "Challenge Cards" concept.

Now back to the original routine.

We are now ready to reveal the 'Bike Ride' memory. We are going to do this in a very sneaky way. The goal is to imply that the participant got the card that says "Can you reveal a childhood memory?" which is why we actually show that card as an example at the beginning of the routine when we are introducing the cards. The audience HAS to know that that card was in the stack!
So, when we first introduce the "Challenge Cards", we make a point to show the 'Childhood Memory' card to the audience so they know that it was an option from the get-go. Here is how I reveal the 'Bike Ride' memory while simultaneously implying that they had a free choice of
ANY childhood memory.

You have to remember all of the logical disconnects (a concept expounded upon, and credited to Bob Cassidy) that are in place in this routine. Since there are so many methods piled onto each other in this effect, there is almost no way a lay person would ever be able to dissect the method.

When we turn to our third and final participant, we are going to start the reveal with this script:

> *"I'm sensing that your thought is a little more ambiguous than the previous two. I am feeling that this is a memory. I want you to close your eyes and imagine re living this*

memory as if it were happening right now. Think about the sights, sounds, emotions, and the atmosphere of the environment that this memory takes place in. I want you to also focus on who you were with at this time. Take a deep breath and begin to experience this memory now."

Now we are creating a pseudo-process for the audience to follow. While the participant's eyes are closed, I hold my hand up next to their head as if I were getting 'impressions'. It is very important and powerful to pause for a few seconds and really believe in what you are doing at this point in time. Believe in your own magic. If you take this moment to really feel it, I promise your participants will feel it too. There is a wealth of information on this topic in Richard Osterlind's book, "Making Magic Real".

After a few seconds have passed, start to give a description of a typical 'First Bike Ride' experience. I usually describe elements of my own first time I rode a bike. Here is a good outline to base your script on. I have incorporated some lines that I found 'Hit' quite often (this script will also be what implies to the rest of the audience that the memory could have been any childhood memory):

> *"Okay so I'm seeing that there is a male presence with you during this time... I also see that you are looking up at this person, which tells me that this is a childhood memory. I'm getting the impression that this is about new beginnings and there is a strong sense of pride here. There is also a feeling of heat, which tells me that this took place in the summertime.... Be honest, is this the memory of your first Bike Ride?"*

This is just a basic outline of the script I use. Of course, it will change from person to person. Be sure to give the participant enough time to respond and confirm all the impressions that you are getting from them. Every 'yes' you get makes you look more credible. You are now getting a great deal of 'Hits' out of what is essentially a card force! Notice that the script also implies that this could have been any childhood memory, which also adds to the impossibility of this routine. After I have revealed this information, I will usually take the envelope from them and just simply place it in my pocket (the participant usually doesn't care about the billet anyway). This leaves you completely clean at the end.

I hope you enjoyed this routine. I believe the "Challenge Cards" concept is a great tool to use in a number of different situations. You can always force the effect you want to perform. There is also something else you can do with these cards that I didn't want to

tip at first, but If you enjoyed this routine, I think you will love were I have taken it to the stage...

Challenges:

Let's take another look at what we can do with these 'Challenge Cards' and how we can implement them in different situations. One of the things that I know some may have issue with in regard to "Dark Entries" is the fact that it requires an item to be written down (The Mother's Name) and in order to do that it also requires a window envelope peek. Here is a Close-Up variation that no longer requires any peeks, nothing written down, and is completely impromptu. It utilizes the principle from my effect, "The Flutter of Black Wings" found in "Jhana".

This version requires nothing but the challenge cards themselves and it will look exactly like it should: Three participants choose a Challenge at random and you proceed to reveal and answer each one in succession. The second and third challenges forced are the same (Star Sign and Bike Ride). The only difference is that the first participant will get forced a Challenge Card that says, "Guess the first digit of my Credit Card".

I revealed in "Jhana" that every Visa credit card begins with the number 4. And Visa cards are the most popular credit cards. So you have a pretty safe bet with going with a 4. This is a very simple and bold alternative where you have a 'nothing written' solution. The only issue you may run into with this version is if the participant is knowledgeable about credit card numbers. But that can be saved by the fact that you didn't know what the Challenge was in the first place! If this version doesn't satisfy you, here's another alternative:

Instead of using the first Challenge as a means to guess the first digit of a credit card, we are going to force a different Challenge on the first participant. This one will say, "Guess my facebook password". I know this seems insane, but that is actually the point. If your participant gets a Challenge Card that asks to guess their facebook password, I can guarantee that they will NOT want you to actually guess it, but we can use this to create a really interesting, and credibility-building situation. When using this version, save the Facebook password challenge for last. Reveal the Star Sign first and the Bike Ride memory second. The whole time you are revealing this information, your third participant will be sweating, believing that you really can guess this information. This is

all going to push them further into belief (and fear). Now you can turn to this participant and say the following:

> *"I am sensing a little worry from you in regard to your challenge. I can assure you that I can guess this, but only if you truly want me to and I am really getting the feeling that you don't sincerely want me to go for this. I will save you the anxiety and just tell you that Yes, I can guess your facebook password, but I will not do it here to protect your privacy"*

Now you have a really cool and dramatic ending, a 'hit' on revealing the challenge, an implication that you could guess facebook passwords, and you have them a little freaked out (which is as good as you guessing it for real).

Here's another way to do it. This was partly inspired by Michael Murray's "ATM" routine. After building up the fear of your guessing the third participant's facebook password, you can now create a wonderful effect that makes it appear as though you really did guess the password.

Once I turn to that third participant, I use the same script as before, but I add this really sneaky subtlety:

> *"I am sensing a little worry from you in regard to your challenge. I can assure you that I can guess this, but only if you truly want me to and I am really getting the feeling that you don't sincerely want me to go for this. However, I want you to imagine that this piece of information was written out in the air in front of you... I'm sensing there is an 'E' in this, yes?"*

Now the participant may say either 'yes' or 'no'. Basically, we are creating a pseudo process that is symmetrical to the process we use for the Zodiac Sign. If they say 'yes' to the letter, we are now implying to them that we are really going to guess their facebook password (remember the audience doesn't know that is what their challenge is at this point). After getting a 'hit' on a letter, I then grab a clipboard and write the words: "MY FACEBOOK PASSWORD". Now I can say this,

> "I know you were a little freaked out about this and that is understandable. Just so everyone is on the same page, can you say for the first time what your challenge question was?"

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They will tell the audience that they wanted you to guess their facebook password and you will immediately show the participant your clipboard saying, "And what does this say?". They will read it aloud and also be freaked out at the fact that you were able to guess the challenge. They will also be relieved that you didn't reveal it. What makes this great is that now you are totally justified in not showing the audience what the clipboard says.

I really do love the utility device that the Challenge Cards are. You can always carry them with you and have an impossible demonstration at all times. Another great thing these can be used for without anything being written down, is any of the great 'Billet-less Name Guesses' Ross Taylor and Fraser Parker have put out. For instance, it is always easier to guess a male Christian name. So instead of having to ask your participant to think of a male name, just force the Challenge Card on them that asks you to guess male name! I also recommend Seamus Maguire's work on the propless name guess as well.

One more idea with these cards is to use them as a 'Call Back Billet'. Let's say I stole a piece of information earlier in performance, a Birthday for example. Now I can force that particular Challenge Card on the particular participant and make the whole process look ultra-clean.

This can be used in preshow or even sneakily looking up information on a person's facebook before a show. If you see a picture of the person's living room you can force that card on them that says, "Describe my Living Room", and they will be none the wiser. As it has been a fair selection of the Challenge.

Thoughts on Challenge Cards
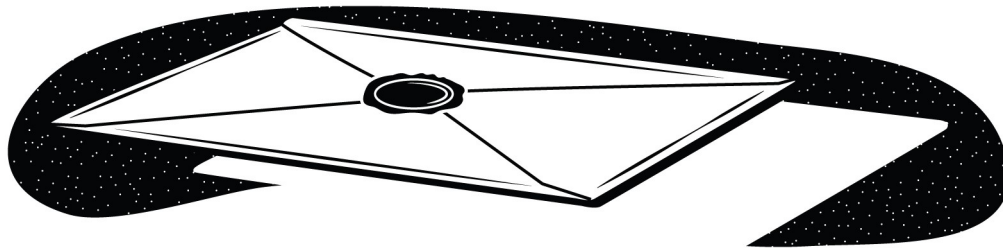
The Most Important Thing

The most important and revolutionary part of the 'challenge card' premise bears repeating. If the audience thinks that you don't know what the challenge is, then any methodology you use to obtain the information will be more deceptive. This is invaluable for prop-less or process heavy reveals which can be done under the guise of picking up on innocent letters or numbers such as progressive anagrams, as demonstrated with the Zodiac section. It's also incredibly effective for hot reading or revealing something about a person that you've learned without them knowing. We'll get into that later.

Creating a Window Envelope

Here I'll expand upon the creation of a proper window envelope. It's simple in concept but I think that many people get it wrong. Firstly, you should use a coin envelope of a size which suits you. It's said that the best coin envelopes for billet work or business card work are #3-coin envelopes and I've found this to be comfortably true.

Place a business card in your envelope. You'll be using the card as a guide, and as a cutting surface to make sure that you're only cutting one layer of the envelope. You're going to make a (mostly) rectangular window on the flap (non-seam) side of the envelope. It's important that the window be small enough that the business card can't slip out of the window. So, when you make the horizontal cuts that run parallel to the sides of the envelope, slide the business card all the way to the opposite side before using it as a guide. If you're making the long cuts **on** the card while it's positioned all the way to the opposite side inside the envelope, then your final window will be impossible for the card to slip out of. Start your cuts about an inch away from the flap and let them go about the length of the business card.

Now that you've made the two longs cuts, you're going to finish cutting out the window. But instead of cutting out a rectangle shape, cut the bottom line to be shaped like

an arrow pointing to the bottom of the envelope. This guarantees that a billet or business card can be slid into the envelope and not get caught up on the bottom 'edge' of the window.
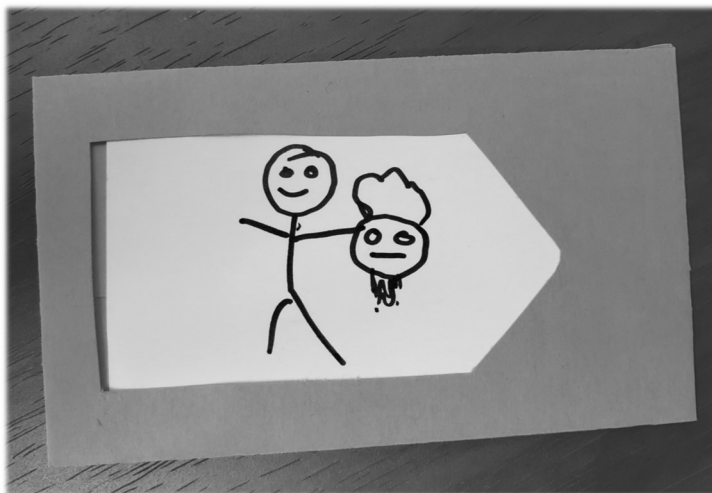
The Unanswered Question Cards

While it's good to acknowledge the potential strength in writing 'extra' impossible cards, the approach I tend to use is to make the extra 'shown' cards **equally** or **less** impressive than the selected (read: forced) cards. Then, theoretically, the expectation of correctly answering 'heads or tails', 'will it be a boy or a girl', or 'where's my birthmark' is weighted in performance against the seemingly more impressive force cards.

Some fun examples:
- Where's my birthmark?
- What's my favorite my little pony?
- What did I get for a tattoo, and where is it?

Showing an example like this also implies a justification for asking if the question they've received 'applies to them', because not everyone has a tattoo, or has ever seen my little pony, heathens they are.

Note: When not using it in performance, one of my favorite cards to show is "Can you guess my PIN?" It's a very **powerful** piece of information to be able to extract from someone, but in this context, it appears to have reasonably similar odds to guessing someone's mother's maiden name. I mean, surely there are at least 9,999 possible

maiden names, right? This of course would lead someone to think, "Thank god I didn't pick the P.I.N. one," which is exactly the impression that you want to give.

The last thing that you want is for them to be 'wishing' that they had chosen something 'harder' or 'more fun'.

The Zodiac Card

When I'm performing with 'Challenge Cards' and using a zodiac sign card, I write "Reveal my zodiac sign". This is because that phrase contains all the letters used in the R.A.I.S.E. progressive anagram explained by Watkins in the Challenge Cards section from Positive Negative. Therefore, when I get the 'no' I can say "Oh… wait… that was in the question, wasn't it? Just focus on the answer"

While it's true that the challenge cards concept lends itself to some astonishing possibilities, the technique that I believe benefits the most in a cold performance is by far the progressive anagram.

Think about it. The challenge with progressive anagrams has always been that you're "simply" name letters. Much hay has been made around how to hide that fact. You could give readings around the letters. You could say "this isn't working, let's try something else" and then go into a faux 'real' method once you have the relevant info. You could bonk them on the forehead and run away. Etc. All of these are valuable ideas, and with challenge cards they all are still viable.

Watkins stated it in the explanation, but I'll expand upon it here in relation to the progressive anagram. With challenge cards in play, they think you don't know what the question is! So, you could just blandly go through the letters without making any attempt at all to hide your anagram, and they'd **still** be baffled!

They could 'ostensibly' have **any** card! So how could your knowledge that there **is** an 'R' but there **isn't** an 'A' help in any way? It couldn't. You could be trying to guess their hometown or their middle name.

Narrowing it Down

In the explanation of the anagram Watkins describes two methods for getting down to the final answer. The first is writing one of the two answers, naming the other one, and playing to their response. The second is using letters again after the first 'no'.

> *""Focus on the first letter and repeat it in your mind over and over again. Now the second... Now the third, and this one is really coming in strong like 'M, M, M'!"*
> If they react to the letter 'M' than we know it is Gemini…"

Both absolutely work. Consider though this third option which is kind of a combination of the two. Once you've got your first no and you've narrowed it down to only a few options you can then reveal that you know the question. (Let's say they said no on 'I')

> *"This is your zodiac sign isn't it?"*

They'll say yes, and then you say…

> *"Great, just say the whole sign in your head over and over again… like 'Cancer', 'Cancer', 'Cancer'."*

Just like the letters, if they have a reaction then you know that they are a cancer. If they simply nod along with the "instruction" then you know they're a Taurus.

Ruling out Leo

One method for ruling out Leo right off the bat is to ask them this question before going into ANY of the letters.

> "I feel like this is a one word answer your sending to me. Do you know how many letters are in your answer?"

If they immediately say yes, and then they say "No" to "R", then they are very likely a Leo, because Leo only has three letters and it's very easy to count quickly in your head. If they appear to be "counting" in their head, then they are almost certainly **not** a Leo.

Either way, as soon as you get the reaction, interrupt them with "I mean, can you spell it?" And then they'll very surely say 'Yes'. Then you begin your progressive anagram.

The No Force Challenge Deck

Any 'prop-less' mind reading is instantly made more effective with the introduction of challenge cards.

One could imagine having an entire deck of **marked** challenge cards, all with questions answerable by progressive anagrams or other prop-less methods like dual reality, psych forces, or Hellstromism.

- What's my favorite Disney movie?
- Reveal my star sign?
- What kind of car do I drive?
- Which of these 5 images am I focusing on?
- Name the planet I'm thinking of.

    Etc...

Literally any card could then be fairly selected, out of your hands, and you'd be able to tell them the answer to the unknown question, which only exists in their own mind.

The No Force Challenge Deck 2.0

Another interesting way to use the challenge cards came to me recently. Admittedly, at the time of writing, I'm yet to employ this idea, but I'm very interested to see how it works.

There's an app by Greg Rostami (of 'Inject' and 'Cosmos Duo' fame) called Telephoto. The magician guides a volunteer to an online photo gallery on their own phone and the app allows the sorcerer to know which of a group of photos that the volunteer is looking at. I like this as a general concept, but it always seemed to me that the original 'Inject' was a more 'impressive' feat, because you could essentially do the same thing, but with any photo on google. If you were able to effectively hide your own phone, then you'd have pretty much the same effect. A question about Telephoto nags me. What is the purpose of this special online photo gallery?

(I know that there are differences and the method for Telephoto is more streamlined, and I encourage anyone to research Greg's work. He has a vast online community of people sharing ideas on all his apps and I'm certain that there are dozens, if not hundreds of viable solutions to any problems I have. This is just my first impression)

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Regardless, the reason I bring it up is because teleFoto allows you to upload **your own photos** to the site! What a perfect opportunity to use the Challenge Cards Concept. You could, with one purchase always have the full deck of challenge cards with you! All you'd have to do is upload JPEGS of the questions, dressed up and decorated however you like them, or maybe simple black text for a clinical feel. You would guide a spectator to the online photo gallery, which could be a link to your "favorite questions" on your own website, and then, without ever going near the volunteer, you could not only know the question they've decided to stop on (or photo), but you'd know the answer by means of a progressive anagram or some other prop-less solution.

Find Greg's material at https://rostamimagic.com/ or by searching his name online. He sells through many magic dealers including Penguin and Vanishing Inc.

Progressive Anagram Resources

But where can I find all these progressive anagrams?

Other than the RAISE anagram for Zodiac signs what you've already seen here from Positive Negative, some of best work on progressive anagrams is currently being done by Atlas Brookings. Check out his book 'The Prodigal', and his penguin lecture, as both are great introductions to his work, and wonderful resources in and of themselves.

If you want to create your own progressive anagrams it's not difficult. Brookings goes into it in his penguin lecture. There's also a website that has a progressive anagram generator to help you create your own.

http://www.cavemanchemistry.com/anagram/

Q&A Challenge "Billets"

And lastly, we come to my preferred use of the challenge cards concept is during my Q&A set. The Q&A I perform at the moment is basically Bob Cassidy's 'jazz Q&A routine'. A great routine with multiple layers of deception, based on a one-ahead principle and given form with a through line of his version of 4th Dimensional Telepathy. One touch that I've added is the challenge cards concept.

In the third 'phase' just before the finale of the drawing duplication, I'll reach into the bowl and take out a small handful of billets, three to be exact. With my head turned away I'll pass them one at a time to some audience members in the front row.

"If I've handed you a question, please stand up"

The three of them do.

"Open up the paper and take a look at the question. And just let me know if that question COULD apply to you."

They open the billets and read the questions. Of course, these questions are one's that I've previously written down myself and have now 'forced' on them, by palming them from my pocket on the offbeat and either switching them with billets chosen by a volunteer or pretending to remove them from the bowl myself. The billets read…

- "Reveal my zodiac sign"
- "Tell me about the first time I rode a bike"
- "Reveal THIS P.I.N. 2-6-4-6"

The first two people will of course say yes. Most people know their zodiac sign, and most people have ridden a bike before. If, for some reason, they say that it doesn't apply to them, or they can't answer the question, then simply have them pass the billet to the next person.

The only hesitation you should receive is with the P.I.N. Just say…

"But you could verify if I got the answer correct, right?"

"Yes"

To them, of course, you're just asking if they could tell you if you got the written numbers right. To the audience, this flies by because it sounds redundant, and by the time you get to the volunteer with the PIN that moment of hesitation is completely forgotten.

"Great. Look the questions over and read it to yourself five or six times to really get it clearly in your head."

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This implies that it's necessary for the mind reading process, but really this is an attempt to make sure that the PIN person memorizes the number you're written for them. The implication I'm going for is that I'm revealing **their P.I.N.**, and that reveal is much less effective if they must continually refer to the billet to tell me if they number that I've guessed is correct.

From this point on I simply continue with the routine described by Watkins. When I get to the P.I.N. person I'll go through the same hemming and hawing about how maybe they wouldn't want this information written down and turned toward the audience. After guessing three numbers correctly I say excitedly,

>   *"Oh my god… This is a P.I.N. isn't it?"*

For me this always gets a laugh.

>   *"Yes"*

You break your pattern with concern and laughter.

>   *"OK. Wow. I think I know the last number, but I'm not going to say it out loud. I'll write it instead and you can just tell me if it's correct. The rest of you will just have to rush to the A.T.M. and just try ten times to get it."*

This joke always gets a laugh too. It doesn't even make sense. They'd have to steal his card to make it work. Either way, I'm happy for the chuckles. I then write the last digit on a blank billet, fold said billet in half and hand it to the PIN person for confirmation on the last digit.

>   *"Is that it?"*

>   *"Yes"*

Uproarious applause.

Notice that taking the challenge cards concept to the Q&A act has added yet another layer of deception. Not only do you have the normal challenge cards layer of 'not

knowing' which question they have, but now, you shouldn't even know what the pool of possible questions are! In other words, this isn't a stack of questions selected and written by you, this is supposed to be a small handful of questions written by other people which you have not yet seen.

The Creation of Challenge Cards on the Spot

One of my favorite techniques for challenge cards is hot reading. If you carry challenge cards around, be sure to have some blank ones handy. Like Watkins, I like to have the challenges written on business cards so that people can just keep them afterwards. Imagine the power of secretly learning something about someone and then creating a challenge card on the spot about them!

Watkins touched on this idea briefly at the end of the challenge cards section in Positive Negative, but I wanted to expand upon it here because I think this idea deserves some attention.

Image. You're out to dinner with some new friends and you notice another member of the party taking off their coat, and when they do so their shirt comes untucked and you see a tattoo of a four-leaf clover on their hip. What a perfect opportunity to excuse yourself for a moment and write up the 'Where is my tattoo, and what is it?" challenge card.

Or imagine that you learn someone's name second hand at a party, and a quick facebook search tells you their dog's name, or where they last went on vacation. Making up a challenge card for that information is a great way to get an amazing hit later in the night.

Remember, while they could fathom how you might be able to get that information if you had learned their name, the slow reveal of the **answer** before you're supposed to know the **question** can turn the revelation of any piece of secret information into real mind reading.

A Little Touch on Coin Bending

Here's a fun way to give the impression to a group of onlookers that your volunteer is **feeling** the coin bend in their hand.

This is a touch to add to your previously existing coin bend routine. If you don't have one already, I highly suggest researching the 'Quantum Bender' by John Sheets, or the Ox Bender by Menny Lindenfeld. Even though I tend to just switch out the normal coin for a bent one before holding it for them to sign, I have used both, and they're excellent.

Let's assume that you're in front of a group of people and you've pulled someone forward to perform your favorite coin bending routine. You're facing the volunteer with his outstretched fist holding the object, and the audience is on your left side, (volunteers' right side)

Now, of course, one should almost **always** try to cause the volunteer to feel the coin bend by suggestion, but sometimes they simply won't feel anything. Here's a cheeky way to force a response if they're just not 'feeling' it.

1. Place your open palms about 6 inches above and below the volunteers outstretched fist. Rotate them around the hand slowly and seriously. One might say you appear to be 'sending energy' into the coin.
2. Ask "Do you feel that?" Assuming you have the presentational chops to set up an expectation of feeling something, you may be surprised at how often the suggestion is enough for them to gasp and say, "Yes I do!" If they say no, then it's time to try the following saucy ploy.

3. Shake your hands out and 'try again', this time approaching from the sides of her fist with both hands wide open and fingers spread. Your right-hand ring finger is hidden from the crowd by his wrist, and further obscured by your open left hand.
4. Without moving the rest of your fingers, bend your right ring finger in at the knuckle and drag it along the side of his fist. (This is hidden from the audience)
5. Ask, "Did you feel *that*?" He'll say yes. Very likely with an awkward smile or a laugh.
6. Look him directly in the eyes and ask, "Weird right?" He will say yes.
   - This is a funny moment, so don't try to play it overly serious at this point. There's a lot of room to play here and the audience is unaware of the context you and the volunteer are experiencing. To him, you're acknowledging the weirdness of the moment and laughing it off. To the audience, you're relating to him in a moment of coin bending weirdness.

Worst case scenario: Everyone sees you tickle your volunteer's hand and suspects that that tiny action has something to do with bending metal. Or even worse, they understand the dual reality you were trying to get away with.

It doesn't matter, the coin still bent.

Best case scenario: The shock of the effect causes your volunteer forgets the moment entirely, and everyone else thinks that they felt the coin bend in their hand.

You can disassociate the bend from the location of the touch by moving your right hand a few inches toward her elbow and the left hand back toward the front of her fist. With all the focus on the coin and her arm obscuring your ring finger, there's plenty of cover for you to graze her forearm instead of her fist. The question "did you feel that?", to everyone will still apply to the area of focus, the coin in the hand.

Afterthoughts

- This doesn't have to be done in the context of a coin bend. This technique can be put to good use in any context in which a volunteer has something in their hand which is about to change in some way.

Instant ACAAN

Effect: The volunteer can name the location in the deck of the card matching the performers prediction.

Details: The performer removes a card from the deck, let's say the 10 of Spades, and the places it face down on the table. The volunteer is asked to shuffle the deck and name a number between 1 and 52. Say they name 17 cards are dealt to the table, with the 17'th card being dealt on top of the tabled prediction. The cards are turned over, and the 17'th card is shown to be the 10 of Clubs, the mate to the prediction.

Method and Presentation

Begin by spreading the deck toward yourself and glimpsing the top card, in this case we'll use the 10S. Find the mate for that card, the 10C, remove it from the deck without showing it and put it top. Announce that this is your prediction and miscall it for the 10S. Do a stage double lift, as described previously in these notes in the **Poker Face** effect and lift the two cards off the deck to show the 10S to the audience. Your thumb is at the bottom short edge of the double near the middle. Your middle finger is at the top short edge of the double near the middle. Your first finger rests on back of the double.

You'll now place the double face down on the table. The common method for doing this is to press your first fingernail into the table through the back of the two cards and carefully and simultaneously release your thumb and middle fingers before lifting your fingernail off the double. With some practice this can look pretty good. However, my preferred method is as follows.

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With the same hand position, press your first fingertip to the table through the cards as if you're about to drop the double. Now release your middle finger from the front short edge, allowing it to snap down onto the table. Because of the vacuum this move has placed between the cards, they will stay together through the next action. The thumb is still holding its side up about a centimeter from the table.

Hold this hand position but pull back at the wrist to simultaneously lift your first finger off the double and thrust your thumb forward. If done correctly, the double card will slide across the table for a few inches before coming to a stop. It should look something like this.

The cards will stay together because you've pressed them together against the table, creating a small vacuum, and because when you push them forward with the thumb the front-edge will come up as the back-edge lowers, creating a pocket of air that the cards will ride until softly coming to a stop.

For my money, this is the **best** way to place a double on the table for most situations. It looks so impossible that that could be more than one card that it never even crosses the spectator's mind.

I once heard Danny DaOrtiz say that the best false shuffle was casually tossing the deck on the table. He was making a point about attitude. If your audience believes that the cards aren't important to you, then they will find no reason to suspect any trickery within the deck. The same applies here. To all appearances you've just casually tossed a card onto the table, rather than gingerly resting it in front of you in **just** the right spot.

Now that the prediction and mate are on the table, hand the cards to a volunteer to be shuffled. As the cards are being shuffled, ask them,

> *"Do you know what it means when two cards match?"*

They'll likely say no…

"It means that they have the same color and value, so the match, or the mate to the ace of diamonds will be the ace of hearts. I placed down the ten of spades… Name any number between 10 and 20."

"17"

Now that they've given you the number, you'll deal down 16 cards onto the table and apparently deal the 17'th card on top of the prediction. What you really do is hold back the last card and using your thumb you spread the tabled double to make it appear that you've dealt the 17'th card down.

When dealing the first 16 cards, start a bit away from the tabled double and deal them in a line with each card moving closer to the prediction. This allows each individual face down card to be fairly counted and gives the audience an 'animation' of sorts, which will draw their eyes away from the tabled double. At this point they'll be looking for your hands to do something funny to find the matching card. They have no idea that was already in play before you even started.

By the time you reach the 16th card you should be within a few inches of the tabled double. When "dealing" the last card, push the 17'th card off the deck and position your right (dealing) hand on the card as if you're going to deal it on top of the prediction. Keep a loose grip on the dealing hand and don't grab the card at all. The "grip" for the dealing hand should visually match the grip you normally have when dealing cards. Ideally though, the card will be slightly deep in the hand with some front end cover from your first finger, although this is not necessary.

Now, retract the 17'th card back onto the deck ala the 'Rub-a-dub vanish' and move your dealing hand toward the tabled double. Keep your hand in the same position while coming down with your thumb on the top card of the tabled double and slide the top card 1-3 inches over. It will appear as though you've dealt the 17'th card just to the side of the original prediction that you laid on the table.

Now, set the deck to the side face up. I like to flip over all of the first 16 dealt cards and spread them face up while saying,

"None of these…"

Pick up the face down prediction, and show its face, and then use it to turn over the matching card.

"The 10 of Spades. And the matching card, the card at the 17'th position… The 10 of Clubs"

This is one of hundreds, maybe thousands of solutions to the 'open prediction' problem, and at this moment it's one of my favorites. Have fun with it.

Alternate Presentations

The restriction of having them name a number from 10-20 is only to prevent you from having to deal through 47 cards to finish the trick. But if you overthink this just enough, you can see some interesting implications to this restriction. How did you **know** that the card would end up being between 10 and 20? Did you influence the volunteer to shuffle it into just that range? Did you track the card with your eyes while they shuffled and 10-20 is your best guess? And now that you're asking them to name a number, are you relying on the volunteer's intuition to guess the right number? Or maybe the number that they name is only relevant insofar as it's the number that you will use your skillful hands to place the card when you the cards are returned to you. Here are a few different presentations to try with this handling.

1. **A Proper ACAAN:** They shuffle the cards before and after the prediction is set aside, and then they name a number between 1 and 52. You deal to the number and reveal an intuitive miracle.
   a. Consider experimenting with them dealing some of the cards and come up with a reason in scripting to take the cards back at the right moment.
2. **The Complete Card Shark:** The 'prediction' in this case would be referred to as a 'target'. After they shuffle the cards, you take the deck back and your job becomes 'finding the match' in the way that suits you most. Here are some options.
   a. As the luckiest gambler in all the land you don't actually gamble. You intuit the correct position just like you always knew how far down to

b. As a mathematical and visuospatial prodigy, you've followed the card throughout the shuffling process and know for certain that it's exactly 22 down.

c. As the consummate card cheat, you can position the matching card to any location during a shuffling process involving yourself and perhaps some other volunteers. As long as you were the last person to touch the deck, the card has indeed been placed at exactly the right number.

Afterthoughts

- For this routine it's good, but not necessary) to adopt a style of dealing like in the photos, where (as in the photos) you're dealing hand's first finger extends over the front of the card. This allows more cover when you retain the last card and deal a false one onto the table.

Credits

Similar methods of placing doubles on the table have been invented and refined by many of the world's top magicians, including Paul Harris, R. Paul Wilson, Martin Nash, Howard Hamburg, and Jon Racherbaumer. As I understand it, tossing the double in this way was popularized by Ed Marlo. The first time that I saw the double card "dealt" at any number in this way was by Magick Balay at Tannen's Magic Shop. Since then I've learned that several other sources use this technique. Jason Suran introduced me to the idea of dealing the first cards in a line.

In the world of prop-less mentalism there are rarely guarantees. If you're trying a quick, well executed psych force, the audience is likely to be astounded, but only if the force lands. The more you do the secure the force or learn the secret information, the more people are likely to notice the process and the less astonishing it will be. If you're working with a heavy process piece which is (mostly) guaranteed to work, then you have no guarantee that the audience will be amazed because some may view the heavy process as suspicious. There are of course exceptions, but generally I find this to be true.

To allude to an old colloquialism, there's baby and there's bathwater, and it's in case of propless mentalism it seems impossible to throw out only one. So, what's a mentalist to do?

Hide the Bathwater

Hide your prop-less mind reading inside another effect which is guaranteed to work. Execute it as a means of *aligning their thoughts with yours* or *getting their mind off the target to lower their defenses* so that you can read their mind. With the guaranteed hit for the finale, you can risk it all during the presentation. These risks are no longer risks, because they're excused as means to the end, which is the revelation of, say, a written down name, or word chosen from a perfectly ordinary, very expensive book.

Imagine you've asked someone to write down their favorite food on a piece of paper and you obtain that information via a peek or an impression device or whatever method you choose. Let's say they've written "burritos".

Now you say,

"Let's get your mind off that for a moment and start with something simpler to align my thoughts with yours. Do you know your zodiac sign?"

Then you go right into the progressive anagram for a zodiac sign. There's an added benefit to performing a progressive anagram during another mind reading stunt. The fact that there are two pieces of information allows (sometimes) to turn the 'No' into a 'Yes' by pointing out that the *'No'* letter "must have been from the other word. For instance, in "bu**Rr**I**toS**" there are 3 out of 5 letters represented in the Raise anagram. If they say 'No' on the **R**, the **I**, or the **S**, then you say,

"wait… no the 'S' is in the food isn't it? At the end, right? Try and ONLY focus on your zodiac sign for now"

Then you'll be able to move forward with the progressive anagram, and directly into the reveal. The implication being that you were accidentally picking up on the spelling from the food. Now the process of the anagram has implied a hidden process for the food and has thereby made the reveal of the food more believable and impressive.

"Naturally, Capricorns love Burritos"

With a little work you can combine pretty much any prop-less effect with any guaranteed mind reading effect, and the real beauty is that if the prop-less effect falls flat, it was all just 'part of the process' of getting to the big reveal.

Try learning some of the prop-less 'which hand' effects. Like Peter Turner's 'Which Hand' from "Freeform Mentalism" or Patrick Redford's "Prevaricator". These could be powerful tools as a quick 'game' to 'get their defenses off the target'. Win or lose, you're about to tell them what their favorite movie is anyway so the loss vanishes and the win adds yet another incredible moment.

There's also the old idea of planting metaphorical landmines in your show, which if triggered will have massive effect, and if not, will go unnoticed.

Surely, you've seen this old idea before. The mentalist needs a random volunteer. The method of selection is simple enough, a crumpled ball of paper tossed out into the audience. The person who caught the ball is asked to name any color of the rainbow. They

say, "Blue". The audience is told that prior to the show you wrote something on that paper, and the volunteer is asked to open it up.

There is indeed writing on the paper, and it reads, "The chosen color will be blue". The audience loses their minds, and the mentalist says

> *"I think this next thing will work with you. Give him a round of applause as he joins me on stage!"*

That's a land mine. A perfect hit on a free choice, but how? Well, simply put, had they named any other color the mentalist would have skipped the part about opening the ball, and like a missed land-mine, nobody would ever be the wiser. Without opening the ball, everything is still justified. The ball is a random selection tool, and the question is a qualifier for what you're about to do with them on stage. Apparently, nothing has failed.

> *"Green? Wonderful! Most people will choose either Red, or Blue, but this next thing won't work with most people, which is why I need you to join me on stage! A big round of applause for the gentleman!"*

The following effect, inspired by a long history of window envelope work from many Mentalists, more proximally inspired by a piece from Watkins work, is an example of adding a prop-less piece to a standard peek envelope drawing duplication.

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Test Condition Drawing Duplication

Ideal Effect: The Volunteer intuits a drawing that you've made, and then…

Effect: You intuit a drawing that the volunteer has made.

Materials:
- A normal envelope
- A window envelope
- 2 business cards or billets
- A writing utensil

Setup
I've already gone into detail on how to create a window envelope in the 'challenge cards' section, so refer to that for instruction on creating one.

Place the window envelope in the pocket which will be least visible to the spectator. Draw a picture of two easily psych forced (or at least commonly named) objects on one of the two business cards, for me it's a house and a tree, and then cross out one of the drawings. I cross out the house. Then place both business cards inside the normal envelope with the drawing card on top, such that if both cards were pulled out together, the drawing would be hidden by the second card. Then place the envelope in your pocket with the window envelope.

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Note: Because there will be an envelope switch in your pocket, this routine is best performed seated at a table with the envelopes in a jacket pocket. With some modification you should have no problem performing it standing but seated is ideal.

Presentation
Phase One

"*Do you ever feel like you have psychic intuition?"*

You ask your volunteer.

> *"I'd like to test that with you right now."*

Remove the normal envelope containing the business cards from your pocket.

> *"First question, without removing the contents, do you know what's inside this envelope?"*

Hand them the envelope. This allows them to 'inspect' it, without knowing their inspecting it. They'll say,

> *"No"*

or maybe they'll 'feel' it and guess,

> *"A business card?"*

> *"It's actually two business cards, but one of them has a drawing on it. Let's try something with this. Hold onto the envelope and close your eyes. I want you to imagine that you're sitting in school daydreaming, looking out the window onto the streets with the cars driving by. You look down and notice that there's a crayon in your hand of a single color. And you doodle a quick drawing of some object on a piece of scrap paper. Now commit that drawing to memory and don't change your mind. Don't tell me what you drew just yet. First, open your eyes."*

You take the envelope from them, remove the cards from it, and place them on the table. Your hand, which is now holding the empty un-gimmicked envelope, drops to your side. At this point all of the attention is on the business cards and it's the perfect time to make the switch.

"What is the drawing that you made in your mind?"

At this point one of three things will happen.

1. **Ideally:** *"A Tree."*
    "Flip the card over."

   At this point all eyes will be on the card being flipped. Place the normal envelope in your pocket and switch it for the window envelope, which you'll find the right moment to surreptitiously toss back on the table.

       "That's amazing, your intuition must be well honed."

   Stop the routine or move to phase 2. With the following line

       "Let's see if you can send information as well!"

2. **Second best:** *"A house"*

       "Wow! I should have gone with my first intuition. Flip over the card!"

   They flip the card and see the crossed-out house with the 'tree' as the second drawing.

3. **Worst case, they don't name anything on the card:** *"A basketball!"*

   It doesn't matter one bit, because trying to guess has confirmed that you can't see the contents of the envelope. And you can "hide the bathwater" by saying this line which I've heard many mentalists use, but I think it's credited to Peter Turner.

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> *"That's alright, maybe you're more of a sender than a receiver"*

And then you move on to phase two.

Phase Two

Slide the blank card toward the volunteer.

> *"On the other card, draw a simple picture. Something that will take you only a few seconds and that you can clearly picture in your mind. Then place it face down on the table."*

They do, as you pick up the 'switched in' window envelope, window side down, opening toward them.

> *"We'll just slide this into the envelope."*

You slide the business card, drawing side down, into the envelope, and then rotate the envelope so that you're holding it near or by the flap in your right hand with the window toward you. You're about to peek the drawing.

> *"Hold your hand out palm up like this."*

Make a palm-up gesture with your empty left hand. As they look at your hand and bring their hand up to mimic the gesture, you'll place your left hand under theirs as if to stabilize it as you lay the envelope, window side down, onto their palm.

It is in these last few actions that you get the peek on the drawing. I've found that there are two ideal times to go for the peek. The first is when you hold out your hand in the 'palm up' position to demonstrate what you want to do. If you keep the envelope in full view but hanging a few inches to the side of your gesturing hand, then it's an easy matter to simply glance at the drawing while your hands are in motion. The volunteer will be looking at the left hand in this moment anyway, and it would stand to reason that your eyes would move in that direction as well. The second opportunity is when you're placing the envelope in their hand. This second moment is ideal because it makes sense that you'd be looking in the direction of the action and the image will move into view. No eye darting.

The lesson here, and with all peek work, is that you want to avoid your eyes darting off in an unmotivated direction. Ideally you want to be moving the information into view, rather than moving your eyes toward the information, and even better if this happens while the volunteer is focusing on something else.

At this point you've placed the envelope, window side down, onto the palm of their extended hand. Use your newly empty right hand to gesture or move their other hand on top of the envelope so that it's sandwiched between theirs palms.

> *"And now place your other hand on top."*

You may think be thinking, *"surely, they'll feel the window?"* Trust me, they won't feel it. Regardless, it's an admittedly nerve-wracking situation to have given your gimmick to the volunteer in this way, but there's great power in it as well. The more cagey or reluctant you are with your props, the more suspicious they become. Conversely, the more open you are with your items (within reason), the more innocent they appear to be. Who would have the balls to hand an envelope with a giant hole in the back of it to a person who their trying to fool? No one, that's who. And besides, they've already examined the thing, so what's there to suspect? This is one of those glorious moments in magic and mentalism when you **really** get to feel like you're 'getting away with something' so enjoy it!

If you're worried about it, here are some ways to prevent the volunteer from turning over their hands.

1. You could have them lower their hands to the table, which would hold them steady.
2. You could place your middle finger of you left hand on the back of their top hand, and your thumb on the back of their bottom hand, preventing them from turning.

3. You could sandwich the envelope between their hands, but with both hands palm up.

4. (My favorite) When initially placing their top hand on top of the envelope, place the hands palm to palm as if they're clapping, but at an angle. The fingers of the top hand wrap around the edge of the bottom hand between the thumb and first finger, and the bottom hand fingers wrap around the pinky side of the top hand toward the back. This hand position has many advantages. Firstly, it's much more natural and comfortable. Typically, when magicians have volunteers hold something between their palms, they have the hands laying on one another as mirror images, the fingertips touching, the fingers parallel and the wrists cocked uncomfortably. Not only is the suggested position more comfortable, but it makes it much **less** comfortable to flip the hands over, effectively locking them into place.

Back to the routine

Now, you'll proceed to use whatever mind reading presentation you like to reveal the information. I'll provide a bare bones example for you to start with.

> *"Put yourself back into that classroom in your mind. This time I'll join you. I'll see you there are desk and look over your shoulder. In your mind begin to draw it again and go over the lines one by one, making them thicker and darker each time. If there were color, just imagine what that color would be. Good. It seems like you kept it simple. I want to start here."*

Begin the drawing with a single line or shape.

> *"Your reaction tells me I'm on the right track. I think I know what this is."*

Tilt the card away from your volunteer and finish the drawing. Place it drawing side down on the table. Now you're going to retrieve the envelope from them, but you have to be careful not to inadvertently show the window. What I do is mimic their hand position as if I were a mirror image to them, and then lift my top hand straight up and say,

> *"Just open your hands and lift up your top hand like this."*

Once they do, take the envelope and, minding your angles, remove the card and place it face down next to yours. Let's see what you drew first. You flip over their card as your left hand, holding the envelope, relaxes down toward your pocket. You grin, realizing your success ala 'When Should You React' from 'The Test of Time' earlier in these notes.

"Flip mine over"

As they flip yours over, obviously all eyes are on the card and you can either ditch the envelope for good and call it a day or switch it back for the other one and place the un-gimmicked envelope back on the table in view. If you do switch the envelope back, you could either just leave it on the table, just in case someone grabs for it, or you could insert both cards into it and hand it to your volunteer to keep as a souvenir.

If you prefer to control the timing of the reveal to add a sense of drama, you could refrain from asking them to flip your card over and simply do it yourself. You'll have the same level of misdirection to ditch or switch the envelope.

Afterthoughts

- Notice how well the prop-less bit fits into the routine. It's simple psych force which hits roughly 60% of the time for me. If/when it hits, it serves to strengthen the routine. When it doesn't hit then it's a short introduction to the 'real' routine which serves the purpose of 'inspecting' the envelope, proving that this is challenging, and introducing the 'mind reading technique' of the ethereal 'classroom'. It also justifies the process by implication. They were trying to read your mind based on a drawing that you made, so it stands to reason in this made up wacky world that they'd have to draw something as well.

- If you don't get the peek the first time and need a second chance, ask them to put their other hand palm up, and get the peek while switching the envelope to their other hand.

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Drawing Dupe Drama

To be most effective in presenting mind reading or magic, it's important to control the ebb and flow of dramatic tension.

Too often I see mentalists or magicians presenting mind reading as merely brow fur-rowing. In my view this leaves a modern audience cold. The context of most drawing duplications makes it painfully clear where the routine is headed. The would-be miracle worker is going to try and draw the same picture that I did.

Many performers begin by tilting the business card away from the audience and pro-ceed to secretly make the drawing. Presumably keeping it hidden to help build 'dramatic tension'. Occasionally they will make eye contact with the volunteer as if siz-ing them up. They apply a sufficiently mysterious gaze and then return to the drawing. They repeat the process until the drawing is finished. Depending on the entertainer, this may be a funny and engaging process, but whether or not they believe in your mind reading, they must endure this obvious charade until they get their deserved treat, a successfully executed miracle.

It would be much better to start proving your capabilities early with a minor 'hit', and **then** get your ham on however you like. Here's one way to do it that might work for you.

Begin by drawing a simple shape on your card in the correct place.

Say they drew a stick figure. Say, *"For some reason I feel like I want to start here,"* and then draw a single line down the center of the card, the figure's body. For many audiences

this will elicit surprisingly strong reactions and build anticipation for the final reveal. It gives them the opportunity to experience the **_"there's no way…"_** moment in their mind.

After you confirm that you're on the right track, usually by a reaction from an onlooker, you tilt the drawing out of view and say…

"Ok, no more hints…"

Then you finish the drawing however you normally would.

This simple ploy accomplishes so much in the context of theatrical mind reading. It justifies hiding your drawing from the audience for the remainder while simultaneously making the effect stronger. You began by getting a direct hit, which gives them something to latch on to. _"Maybe he's really doing this?"_ The tension begins building. Then, because of that hit, you received a signal from the audience that you're on the right track and so you decide to hide your drawing for the rest of the effect. This strongly implies, without saying anything explicitly, that you're able to read their reactions, an implication which only makes performances of mentalism stronger. If they were to see you draw the picture, they'd be sending signals left and right about how well you were doing and make it far too easy, so for the sake of your performance, and drama, you'll make it **harder** on yourself by hiding the image until you've finished it.

You've now changed the entire process from a cheap gimmick into a controlled inflation of theatrical tension. As you finish the drawing out of sight the anticipation and energy are building, to be released at the final reveal.

On Effectively Hiding Your Pre-Show Work.

Throughout history, the world's best mentalists have had pre-show work in their toolkit. And why shouldn't they? Some of the most astonishing mental effects can only be accomplished with the use of well executed pre-show work.

Before continuing, it's worth saying that a prerequisite knowledge of, and some experience with, the basics of pre-show work is highly recommended before moving on to the following pages. This is not to say that you couldn't start a path to pre-show here if you so desired but attacking these concepts without an already established knowledge base will be challenging. If you're not familiar with the basic principles of pre-show, then I recommend the following powerful resources.

- Max Maven's 'PRISM' series, which, along with a metric ton of incredibly powerful 'standard mentalism, contains plenty of advice on preshow routines and includes the incredible 'Four-Sided Triangle'.
- Mark Strivings "Before the Curtain Rises", which is an exhaustive work entirely on the principle and use of pre-show.
- Paul Brook's "The Gift", which is another work entirely dedicated to the art of pre-show effects.

During my 2018 lecture tour I performed an effect from my repertoire which uses preshow as the method and employs several techniques designed to meet the following three requirements, which if met will implicitly prove to your audience that a presently decided upon and freely chosen thought has been plucked from a mind and that nothing has been prearranged.

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1. The apparent ability for the volunteer to **Change Their Mind** and decide between multiple options during the performance.
2. A seemingly **Random Volunteer Selection Method** to choose the pre-showed individual during the show.
3. An **Anchor Point** during the show in which the rest of the audience makes a decision or chooses a focal point and therefore assumes that it was *this* moment that the volunteer made their decision.

Meeting these requirements virtually guarantees that the audience will assume that they are viewing the complete interaction from start to finish. The instruction for the volunteer to change their mind several times just before the revelation is the icing on the cake. While it's by far the most difficult to artfully achieve, it is in my view very worth it as it bolsters the anchor point and adds to the deception by implying to the audience that this **is** the relevant interaction. The random volunteer selection method completely obliterates any thought that it could have been pre-arranged, because you can't randomly choose a plant. And the anchor point, which is the easiest to achieve and is likely the most effective principle at play, strongly implies that the selected volunteer has thought of their focal point at the same time as everyone else, and not prior to the show.

The techniques are also carefully applied with the following objectives in mind.

1. (Self-evidently) The audience has no suspicion of any pre-show interaction with the volunteer and therefore believes that they are seeing the full interaction start to finish and that the mind reading is happening live.
2. (Less commonly) The volunteer doesn't suspect that the preshow interaction could have any significance to the audience.

Too often pre-show effects cater to the audience at large but leave the volunteer with the dirty impression that they are a plant in your show. If they have an iota of empathy with the crowd it will completely dismantle any clever double-speak and your volunteer will be made painfully aware that they are a pawn in your game to give the rest of the audience a very false impression of a spontaneously occurring moment of telepathy. Even though they are still impressed at how you knew which of the playing cards they

picked from the deck or which breed of dog they flipped to on the off brand pad of paper, there is still the potential of feeling 'used' in a small way; a feeling that, in my view, we would do well to eliminate.

The solution is to provide the volunteer with a coherent and logical narrative which justifies everything that will be said on stage in the context of their experience off stage. This way, anything that they hear or see will resonate with them as fully understandable and there will be no need to carefully examine the experience of the audience at large.

It's like you're conducting two symphonies at once, each one hidden from the other and both playing just for you. The following is my attempt at orchestrating perfect counterpoint.

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Michel's Deception
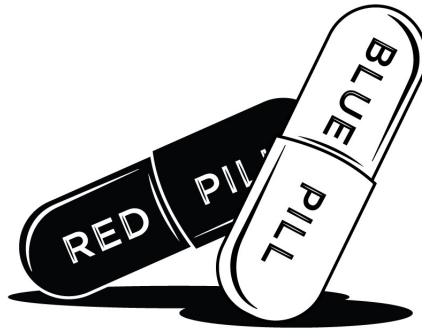
The Effect: The Seer is able to correctly name the city that a randomly selected person has thought of on the spot after changing their mind multiple times.

The Details: The Sorcerer asks the entire audience to 'Think of a city" and then asks them to change their minds about half a dozen times. He informs them that someone in the room has a business card under their chair with a triangle on it, and that that person should stand. That person is then asked to change their mind several more times before locking into a choice, at which point the magician writes the name of a city on a pad and the volunteer is asked to name their thought of city out loud. Of course, it's a perfect match.

The Deception: Very careful lying, and a peek.

I'll begin by sharing with you the full pre-show interaction transcribed from an audio recording, slightly edited for clarity, and then we'll examine these techniques in context one at a time. I've added reference numbers so that the commentary won't break up the scripting. This way you can choose to take in the entire script on its own, or jump back and forth to read it along with the comments.

This interaction was with an individual who happened to be standing alone outside the theater, perhaps waiting for a friend. You won't need to find a lone person though, pulling someone away from a small group to '*help with something for the show*' has a certain mysterious appeal. If all else fails, doing this in front of a small group works fine, and perhaps offers you the opportunity to pre-show someone else from the same group for another part of the show. In this particular instance I used an Acidus Novus peek to obtain the information, but you can use whatever method you prefer, and I'll suggest a few different options in the following pages. My ultimate goal here is for you to have an

overall understanding of the principles used so that you can apply them to whatever particular context you like.

The Pre-show Script

Kent: Hey there, I'm the guy on the poster. What's your name?

A: Amy.

K: Pleasure to meet you Amy, I'm Kent. Would you mind helping me out with something for the show? It's super simple and all you'll have to do is focus on something for me.

A: Sure!

K: Great. [1] **I've already got a few others doing this for me**, *but I just need one more person. I'd like you to think of a city, any city in the entire world. [2]* **Ideally it would be a place that matters to you, maybe you've been there before or that you're really hoping to visit someday**.
Once you've got one (preparing acidus card with X_____) I'll have you write the city down right here on the line and then fold the card in half, and in half again like this. You can go and do this anywhere you like, come back to me when you're done.

(She goes off and writes her city, folds the card, and returns)

A: All done! What now?

K: Finished? Great, [peek procedure] keep that in *your pocket, we won't need it again, it's just to help you remember the choice you locked in, if you need it.*

During the show, [3] **if I think I can do this**, *I'll ask everyone in the room to [4]* **think of a city**, *that's when you'll begin focusing on the city you wrote down. Now, I'll be asking everyone to change their mind multiple times, and for them of course that will mean changing from one city to another, [5]* **but that's going to mean something different for you**. *For you, every time I say, "change your mind", I want you to change your mind from one aspect of your city to another. Say you chose Chicago, you might*

*start by thinking of the Bean, and then the Basketball team, or even just the spelling, C, then H, then I, and so on, giving me more and more mental clues for the city you're thinking of. Just as long as at all times you're focusing on a different aspect of that same city, you will act as a constant in the chaos to help me focus down and read your mind. Do you understand? Even if I choose you and have you stand, [6] **I may ask you to change your mind a few more times just to be sure**. And then when I ask you "Amy, what's the city you're thinking of?" [7] **you'll just tell me whatever it is that you've written down. Deal?"***

A: So, when you call on me, I'll just stand up and think of the city.

*K: Yes, and as I mentioned, [8] **I may ask you to change your mind a few more times**. Always be thinking of that city, and always be changing your mind from one part to another as if you're giving me little mental tour of the place.*

A: Got it.

*K: Now, no offense Amy, but if I choose to do this it's going to take a tremendous amount of mental energy. Combine that with the fact that I've got several other people who are doing this, and [9] **I may forget your name if I go to call on you**, so I'll associate you with a shape, [Drawing a triangle on a business card]. [10] **Circle, square, and star are already taken** so I've drawn a triangle on this card. If I choose you and I think that I can get [11] **your city**, [pointing at card] **I'll call for the triangle**. Please take the card with you and when you get to your seat [12] **just put it under your chair on the floor**, that's going to help me find you later on during the show, ok?"*

A: Ok, put it under my chair.

*K: That's right. [13] **So to recap**, when I say, 'think of a city' to everyone, you think of the city that you wrote down and when I say, 'change your mind', you change your mind to all different parts of that city. If you're doing this well and I think I can get yours then I'll call for the triangle, that's you. I may have you stand up and 'change your mind' [air quotes] a few more times to different parts of the city to help me confirm, and then when I say, 'What city are you thinking of', you just simply say the one the you wrote down. [14] **Do you have any questions?***

Analysis

The following is an in-depth analysis of the key points in the pre-show conversation.

Priming and Narrowing

[1] I've already got a few others doing this for me:
Simply stating that you have more than one person involved in this experiment accomplishes two things. Firstly, it reduces the amount of pressure or nervousness that the person feels, and secondly, it sets you up for another important element of the overall deception of the volunteer, the triangle. It's important to note that, in reality, you do not have any others doing this for you, the volunteer is the only person. Details to follow.

[2] Ideally it would be a place that matters to you, maybe you've been there before or you're really hoping to visit someday:
During any effect that I perform that requires someone to freely think of something, the context heavily effects what kind of choice will be made. While I do not subscribe to the generally lazy philosophy of making magic "meaningful", it's undeniable that reactions tend to be stronger when revelations are more personal. So, the highlighted caveat will tend to prevent someone from choosing a city which they consider deliberately challenging. This is especially helpful if you're using a peek, because whatever they write will likely be far more recognizable at a glance than if they were to think of some random island off the coast of Italy. Lampedusa, Pantelleria, and Isola del Giglio may be well known to some, but the first time I saw these for a quarter of a second scrawled on the bottom right hand corner of a folded-up business card… let's just say I'm glad I can jazz. So, the fact that most of the people you meet will, given this caveat, think of a popular city which is also meaningful to them in some way will not only make the revelation stronger and will also help assure that you get the peek.

[3] …if I think I can do this:
This statement implies the reason that you're speaking with them before the show. It suggests that doing this stunt is very challenging, and that it's not something that you can guarantee works every time. Therefore, a clever volunteer will recognize the logic in having this interaction before the show rather than during, just in case it didn't work out. It's almost as if you're letting them in on a secret, telling them about a potentially very strong effect that very few people 'maybe' get to be a part of, and letting them know that if it's not going to work, then we're just going to skip it… no harm no foul

*[4] …**think of a city:***

The words **"Think of a city**" become very important during the show, as they will be an anchor for the audience member to trigger the memory of this conversation. To that purpose I do two things. Firstly, I slightly emphasize the words during this conversation. Secondly, while saying these words during the show I make eye contact with the volunteer. More details on that will follow in the breakdown of the on-stage script.

Change Your Mind

Sections [5] through [8] deal with how to prime the spectator to focus only on the city they've written down while receiving explicit instructions from stage to "change their mind".

*[5] …**but that's going to mean something different for you**:*

This sentence and the following few lines are the crux of the spectator's apparent ability to change their mind during the show. In this particular script, you're blatantly telling them that their experience will be different to that of the audience at large. Usually a realization of this fact ruins the dual reality, but in this case, there are a few points working in our favor.

Firstly, in accordance with the principal of providing a coherent narrative for the volunteer to follow, they are providing for you a focal point to help you 'do the mind reading', not 'deceive the audience'. And in the grand scheme of things this is **very nearly** as impressive as the claim made to the rest of the audience. They have all made a free choice and held it in their mind. The only difference is the 'way' in which they are focusing on the item. If your method for collecting their information (I highly suggest a peek) is strong, then you have nothing to fear from asking this small favor of them, so long as you can really sell it.

Side note: If there is something that you need to achieve in pre-show scripting but can't think of a way to make it work logically outside of the volunteers awareness without crossing the line, a simple solution is to paint it red and give a logical narrative. You can be honest with them to a degree without collapsing the illusion, and perhaps even make it more fun with the implication that they are *'in'* on something very special, but only if they follow these certain rules. And remember, you create the rules, so any pseudo logical justification will do.

[6] …I may ask you to change your mind a few more times just to be sure:
This prepares them for the moment when they will be standing up in the audience, and informs them that in that moment, the direct request to change their mind (as opposed to the general request to the full audience) is still a request to focus only on different aspects of the same city.

[7] …you'll just tell me whatever it is that you've written down. Deal?:
The last line about "You'll just tell me whatever it is that you've written down" is very important. I believe that without being this specific you risk the volunteer getting caught up in the moment and actually changing their mind to different cities. **"Deal?"** Provides you with a verbal confirmation that no matter what else happens, no matter what other implications they've picked up on, believed, or not believed, that they understand that when you ask them to finally name the city they're thinking of, then they will name the one that they wrote on the damn card.

[8] I may ask you to change your mind a few more times.
This is another moment to help solidify exactly what you need them to do.

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Random Audience Selection Method
The Oprah Technique: Preshow
If you create the impression that the real time selection of your audience member is truly 'random', then it makes it seem impossible that you could have coordinated with that person before the show.

Sections [9] through [12] examine the specific scripting I use to give the impression to the spectator that they are one of multiple people who are focusing on a city and *could* be selected. This is important to round out the experience of the volunteer, as I will explain during the breakdown of the on-stage script. This also sets the groundwork to safely imply to the audience that there is only one randomly selected person involved.

[9] … I may forget your name if I go to call on you, so I'll associate you with a shape:
This sentence sets up for the onstage moment when you ask for their name and prepares them to give it to you a second time. This is not for the benefit of the rest of the

audience, as the narrative they are experiencing totally justifies you asking the person's name; they have been randomly selected after all.

This line also justifies assigning them a shape, which is *easier for you to keep track of*. While a shape and a name aren't all that different when they're assigned to a person, it is implied and accepted that you have a system for remembering the locations of the shapes and therefore will have to spend less mental energy on the names.

I have recently been playing with a script to try and explicitly eliminate the question of "How is a shape different than a name?", while simultaneously streamlining the whole process. I'll touch on the idea in the 'afterthoughts' section and you can try it if you like. The script we're working with here though is better for explaining the concepts separate from each other.

*[10] **Circle, square, and star are already taken…:***
There are no other shapes, and there are no other people who you've spoken to. This is to **reinforce** the **idea** that there are multiple people who could potentially be called upon, which, as you will see later, is very important to the experience of the volunteer.

*[11] …**your city**, [pointing at card] **I'll call for the triangle.:***
This is more reinforcement. Firstly, you point to the card (or the pocket that the card is in) to remind them again that **their** city is ultimately the one they *wrote down*. Secondly, that *they are the triangle*. All of this reinforcement may seem like a lot, but in a situation like this, trust me, you're better safe than sorry.

*[12] …**just put it under your chair on the floor***
There you have it. They put it under their own chair. Later in the show you will tell the audience to check under their chairs to see if there's a card with a triangle on it, more on that later.

Make this instruction clear and repeat it if needed.

For Clarity

*[13] **So to recap:***
It's not complex, but it is a **lot** of information for a person to take in who just wanted to enjoy a night out, so be sure to go over it again in short hand.

[14] ***Do you have any questions?:***
They cannot walk away confused. That is not an option.

The Show Script

During the show.

> *"I'd like to ask everyone in here to [1]* ***think of a city****" [looking directly at pre-show volunteer]*

> *"Good, now [2]* ***change your mind, and again****. Where do these thoughts come from? Notice that each new city just pops into your head, [snap fingers] without your prior knowledge, [snap] and without your consent. The thoughts just arrive there and are revealed to your conscious mind. If you look closely enough, you'll realize that your conscious mind isn't participating in the decision at all. Its involvement is experiential, not creative. [3] [Pause]* ***Everyone's on the wrong city****, so change your mind again. Each new city is revealed to your conscious mind out of total darkness and you don't know what you're going to think until you've already thought it. Think about that. The entire concept of free will is predicated on the notion that you have control and authorship over your own thoughts and feelings, but if you pay close enough attention, you'll realize that this is simply not the case. How can free will exist if you don't know what you're going to think until you've already thought it? Stop on that city, right there, and hold it in your mind.*

> *[4]* ***Someone in here has a business card under their chair, and it's got a... triangle on it. Check.*** *[Much bending and shuffling will ensue.]* *If it's you make some noise.*

> *A: "It's me!"*

> *K: [5]* ***"Great, sorry, what's your name?"*** *[place hand behind ear]*

> *A: "Amy"*

> *K: [6]* ***"Ah, Amy, will you please stand?"*** *(Give Amy a look as though you're not quite sure which city she has yet) [7]* ***Ok Amy, you're focusing on a city. Change***

your mind again, and one more time. (Give a small smile, as though you've finally got it) Ok that should be it. Right out loud so that everyone can hear. What is the city you're thinking of?"

A: "Boston"

K: "Boston?"

You flip over the pad revealing 'Boston', and accept your well-deserved cult following.

Analysis
And now a closer look at what happens on stage.

The Anchor Point

Sections [1] through [3] will dissect the **Anchor Point** moment, in which the audience will project their own experience of thinking of a city *during the show* onto the volunteer.

*[1] "…**think of a city"** [looking directly at volunteer]:*
During those last key words, you look at your volunteer to trigger their memory of the preshow interaction and let them know that **this** is the moment you were referring to. As a good performer, generally you'll be looking over your audience and making eye contact with many people over the course of the show. So, the audience, not knowing what's coming next, will not have any reason to question you looking at this particular person in the sea of faces.

[2] …change your mind, and again…:
After looking away for a brief moment, I'll look them directly in the eyes again in this moment and shoot them a sly grin. This is just for me, because it gives me a sense of ease when I get a look of understanding and a nod in return.

*[3] [Pause] **Everyone's on the wrong city…:***
What you've said in the script just prior to this is a pretty big statement about free will, so the pause allows for a moment of tension before the release in the joke. The joke also implies that…

1. This could fail, which adds drama.
2. You do in fact have a sense of what people are thinking.
3. The involvement of everyone is important, which by implication bolsters the idea that the selected person could have been anyone.

The Oprah Technique: During the Show

Section [4] is an analysis of the implications and assumptions involved in 'The Oprah Technique' during the show, and an examination of the importance of the 'shape' on the card for the volunteer's experience.

[4] *Someone in here has a business card under their chair, and it's got a... triangle on it. Check.*

It should be clear to you by now that in this moment the audience will believe that a random person has been selected. The implication here is that the business card was placed underneath a chair at random prior to the show, and that the volunteer just so happened to choose that chair with no knowledge of the card. The audience is meant to think that *they* could have sat there and been in the 'volunteer' position right now. It could have been anybody, right?

They will all project their own experience onto this person and assume that the volunteer is just the lucky soul that chose the relevant chair.

But why add the element of the shape?

The answer becomes clear when you dedicate a moment's thought to the experience of the volunteer.

It all comes down to the word **"check".** This word is necessary because it implies to the audience that it could be literally anyone in the room that has this card under their chair and that you don't know who you're going to be dealing with, so, to move forward in the show, everyone must check underneath their own chairs. They are participating in and creating their own dual reality. It also implies that you don't know who you're going to be dealing with.

How is this sentence heard by the volunteer? "***Someone in here has a <u>business card</u> under their chair,***" is heard as a sentence meant to prepare those few people who actually **have** cards under their chairs for checking the shape. "…***and it's got a… <u>triangle</u> on it. Check.***" From the volunteer's point of view, the mentioning of the shape along with the word **"Check"** is a clear command for *all* of the volunteers who are focusing on cities for you to check their card for a *triangle*.

To the volunteer, they are one of several people involved and therefore a small pause before saying the word 'triangle' communicates to them that you are considering which shape to call out and narrowing in on them in particular.

In short, the audience thinks someone is *checking* for a 'card with a triangle,' while the volunteer thinks that they are *checking* for the '*triangle*'.

If you did not prop up an illusion of multiple people being involved, and then further accentuate that illusion with an apparent on-stage decision of which shape to call for, then the volunteer may ask…

"Why did he give me a card at all? Why didn't he just ask for the person he spoke to before the show? I would have stood!" Allowing the opportunity for these questions to arise before, during, or after the show is an invitation for the double-speak to break down in their mind. Simply covering these bases creates a well-rounded and more astonishing experience for the volunteer.

Impressions Received and Impressions Delivered

[5] "Great, what's your name?":
Asking this question is justified by having warned them in preshow that you might forget their name. Placing your hand behind your ear encourages them to reply quickly with simply their name. In a stage setting it also implies that you can't see them under the lights, which is yet another reason for you not to know who (among all involved) that you're talking to.

In contrast, the audience simply believes that you've learned their name at that moment.

[6] "Ah, Amy, will you please stand?"
One of the issues with preshow work is that when you bring the volunteer on stage and perform the effect, their reaction is not as big as it 'should' be, given the impossible circumstances that you've constructed and that the audience has been led to believe. Consider this. You've just plucked a childhood memory or an in-law's name from the mind of the person with you on stage, and for some reason they're not giving you all of their money and joining your cult. In essence, the problem is that the individuals in the audience are having a stronger reaction than the person whose mind you've just read.

One simple solution is to have your volunteer stand up in the audience rather than join you on stage. They will deliver the information to you from the crowd and all eyes will be on you to see if you've correctly guessed the thought. The people in front of the volunteer are looking forward and won't see them again, and those behind the volunteer will just see their silhouette in the darkness. Then, when you've made the reveal, any **lack** of reaction in the volunteer will go unnoticed because of the reaction of the audience at large.

Lastly, when saying her name, insert "ah", or some other sound of recognition which can be interpreted as a sound of learning. She hears this as remembrance that her name is Amy, the audience doesn't notice.

*[7] **Ok Amy, you're focusing on a city. Change your mind again, and one more time***:
The small smile you give in this moment will inform your volunteer that you think you've got it, but you want to make sure. Luckily, you prepared them for this in your pre-show script when you said, *"**I may ask you to change your mind a few more times just to be sure.**"* This is that moment, and if you've communicated clearly then they will be right there with you on this last leg of the journey.

Obtaining the Information

Any method you use for obtaining information live can be used in preshow. You could use a billet peek, an impression device, or with a small change in scripting you could even force the city using a forcing deck or a Sven pad.

When doing preshow I tend to use a business card peek called **Acidus Novus**. It's worth looking up and you can find it very easily online. At the time of writing, there is

a facebook group devoted to all things mentalism and bizarre called 'The Mesmers Mansion'. Once you join their ranks you have access to the files they've uploaded, and they have a wonderful video going into the intricacies of the peek. You can find them at the URL below. Once you're on the page the 'files' section is on the left-hand side.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/mesmersmansion

On the Complexity of this procedure

I know this seems like a lot, but the entire thing takes about two or three minutes to set up pre-show, including the writing and peeking, and the payoff is huge. Feel free to pick and choose the principles that you like out of this routine and alter the script if you think that you can make it work better for you. As I said, my goal here is to give you a full understanding of how I use language to control the experiences of both the volunteer and the audience, so once you get it, please work on it yourself and send me your results!

On Missing the Peek

Sometimes, for one reason or another, you're unable to get the peek or obtain the information. Maybe they didn't press down hard enough on the imp device, or they didn't write in the correct spot on the business card. It happens. Luckily, this is preshow, so rather than guess what you **think** you saw and risk botching a 5-minute routine with an incorrect revelation, just preshow someone else with a different shape. Alternatively, if you miss the peek, then you could just end the spiel there and tell them that you might go for it and you might not. Then don't.

Another Approach

I've been playing with another scripting idea which I think has the potential to improve and streamline the pre-show interaction. While it's not ready to be put into print, I'll divulge the basic concept here so that if it strikes your fancy you can play with it yourself and send me the results! The idea is basically that rather than 'associating' the person with a shape, you'd be 'assigning' them a shape early on in the pre-show interaction. Then, after peeking the city, when you'd normally tell them what 'change your mind' means, you say the following.

> *"When I ask the audience to "change their minds" that will mean something different to you. I want you to focus only on that one city, but every time I say, 'change your mind', you'll shift your focus to the triangle and then back to the city. Not only will keeping*

your focus on one city provide me a constant among the chaos, but if I'm able to pick up on the city, then the shape will come through too, and that's how I'll know who to call on…"

As you can see, this can effectively connect the shape to the city in a way that circumvents any question about why you would assign the volunteer a shape in the first place rather than call their name. For now, it's something you can experiment with. I expect that once I work out all the kinks then I'll be publishing that script as well.

On Fitting the Mechanics/ Procedure to the Routine

I love when the mechanics and scripting of a routine just work. So, not to blow my own horn, but I just wanted to point out that everything in this script fits, between the pre-show interaction to the audience's experience of the volunteer to the presentation as a whole. It's also fitting that everyone should think of a city and then change their minds multiple times as the script revolves around 'where our thoughts come from', and 'free will'. To have the most streamlined possible experience, this also suggests that the decision of which city to think of *should* be a free one which is written and peeked, rather than a forced choice.

On the Oprah Technique

While it *is* necessary for the person to hear and understand your instruction to place the business card under the chair, it is NOT necessary for them to actually follow through with that instruction. Of course, it's best if they do, but if you're worried about it let me put you at ease because it's happened to me before.

If they forget to follow through, maybe they left it in their pocket, maybe their purse, and it never made it under the chair, that's OK. Simply mentioning the card will trigger the memory of what they were **supposed** to do and they will simply retrieve it from wherever it is and stand up while everyone else is looking at the floor. They understand that it being on the floor wasn't the important part, only that the shape identifies them to you.

On Presenting this as a Prediction

This could be done just as effectively as a prediction of which city the person *would* land on at the end of the 'mind changing' process. For the pre-showed spectator, it still appears to be a mind reading experience.

Enter the piece by writing the city on the pad without revealing what you're writing to the audience, and then finish by showing the pad after the spectator says their city. Play the piece as if you're waiting for them to arrive on the right city, rather than trying to read their mind.

On Stooging

In my opinion, many pre-show type effects ignore the experience of the volunteer and may as well use a plant. This specific scripting, however, is my attempt to bring us one step closer to equalizing the experience of the volunteer with the audience at large, and to give them the most astonishing experience possible, while concealing the importance of the pre-show interaction to the method.

Mentions and Credits

It's difficult to pinpoint exactly where the inspiration for the 'change your mind' scripting came from. I've heard so many brilliant versions of this ploy. Some necessary mentions are Peter Turner, who constantly turns out amazing verbal ploys and dual realities in his work, and Ken Dyne, who represents the ultimate in commercial, corporate mystery entertainment.

Also, Luke Jermay, who is a master of beautiful, multi-layered mental deceptions and has several of his own incredibly devious 'change your mind' methods. The Oprah Technique described here is inspired by a preshow technique by Jermay which was published in his 'Distractions' in 2010. The stage scripting is heavily inspired by, and in some cases directly quoted from, the work of Sam Harris, a philosopher who has thoroughly convinced me that free will is an illusion.

On Memorizing Scripts
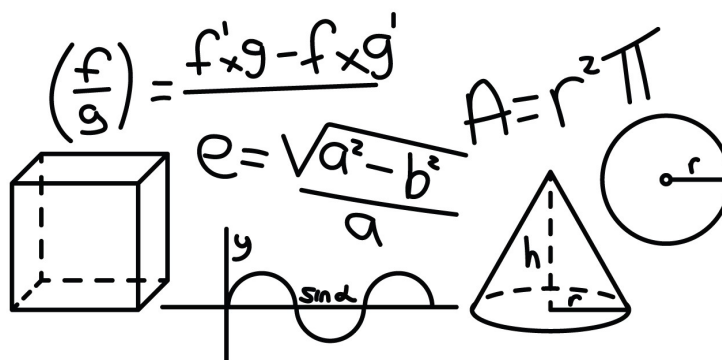
I have found that very few magicians even bother memorizing scripts. Even when they agree that script writing and memorization is important, they still tend to have trouble writing out a script and memorizing it. Whether this comes from lack of creativity, laziness, self-consciousness, or some other factor is on the individual, here is not the place for me to rehash all of the reasons why scripting is absolutely invaluable for the mystery entertainer. If you're not already convinced of that, keep an eye out for my other work for more good reasons. Ken Weber makes a convincing case as to why scripting and memorizing are important in his book **Maximum Entertainment**, currently available on Amazon and in audio book format, narrated by yours truly, through Vanishing Inc.

https://www.vanishingincmagic.com/magic-downloads/mentalism-downloads/maximum-entertainment-audiobook-download/

Fast and Loud

So, you think you have your script memorized? Are you sure? Try this test. Stand in the middle of a room, script within reach, or even better, give your script to someone who can watch and follow along. Now, relax your shoulders, take a deep breath, and... BELT OUT YOUR SCRIPT AS **FAST** AND AS **LOUD** AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN WITH ABSOLUTELY **NO PAUSES NO INFLECTION** AND **NO PUNCTUATION**. This will be like the real life equivalent of ALL CAPS.

> *"I'D LIKE TO ASK EVERYONE IN HERE TO THINK OF A CITY GOOD NOW CHANGE YOUR MIND AND AGAIN NOTICE THAT EACH NEW CITY JUST POPS INTO YOUR HEAD WITHOUT YOUR PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT THE THOUGHTS JUST ARRIVE THERE AND*

ARE REVEALED TO YOUR CONSCIOUS MIND IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY ENOUGH YOU'LL REALIZE THAT... "

Difficult right? Intense even. Try it again, and again. Really wrap your mouth around every word, and NO PAUSING.

Rehearsing scripts like this is the most effective way of committing them to rote memory for several reasons. Firstly, it will immediately reveal to you exactly where your memorization troubles are. In so many instances on stage we're inserting useless actions and pauses as band-aids and cover-ups for our memorization failures. And we do it so skillfully that we convince ourselves that in that moment we're being *dramatic* instead of what we're *really* doing, **searching for the next line.**

This technique will eliminate that problem by immediately, effectively, and embarrass-ingly illuminating exactly where you don't know what you're saying next. If you can get through your script FAST and LOUD from memory, then you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that those words are committed to memory.

You will feel silly practicing with fast and loud. You have to ignore this and press on. I have never found a more effective way of getting a script into wrote memory. If you have to wait until nobody's home, or if you have to rent a studio in a nearby rehearsal space, just do it. Thank me later.

Start with the End in Mind

When using the FAST and LOUD technique for memorizing a script, try starting at the last sentence and working your way back to the first. You look at the page while using the FAST and LOUD technique with the last sentence 5 to 10 times, then look away and do the same thing. Then come back to the page and do the last two sentences 5 to 10 times, then look away and do the same thing. And so on, until you're doing the **entire monologue** FAST and LOUD.

One of the benefits to this approach is that by beginning to learn the script at the end, you're not going to be associating as much meaning to the words. These are just *the sounds you're supposed to make*, and not part of a *meaningful grouping of sentences*. As you approach the beginning of the monologue in memorization, all of the words will start to

come together in meaning. In other words, the rote memorization of the words will come first, and the temptation to insert or even think about 'acting beats' will come last.

Another benefit in learning the monologue from the end to the beginning is that since you've spent more time on each word as the script moves forward, you'll be naturally more comfortable the farther into the monologue you get, which is the opposite of the usual experience.

Further Disassociation

Another way to work with FAST and LOUD memorization is to start learning each sentence from the middle of the sentence instead of the beginning. This is yet another way to disassociate the words from their meanings and focus only on committing the script to rote memory. You'd start with the last half of the last sentence, and then go back to the middle of the previous sentence, and so on.

This is a **very** frustrating exercise, but if you commit yourself to it and see it through, you will be more comfortable with your scripts than ever before.

Fast and Loud. The Next Level

So, let's say you can do your memorized script fast and loud, but you're a glutton for punishment so you want to take it up a notch. Here's how. Go to your TV or computer and find yourself a talking head. Whether it be a newscaster or a youtube personality, or better yet, another magician with their own script, what you need is someone talking at you. Do your FAST and LOUD exercise face to face with the talking head.

Having someone talking at you in this way is one of the most mentally distracting things for this type of exercise. If you can successfully get through your FAST and LOUD script under these conditions than you can be sure that not only do you have your script memorized, but at this point it's in your facial muscle memory. Now you can make real choices about your performance. And when you're on stage you can focus on connecting with your audience.

Afterthoughts

For me, fast and loud is bar none the best exercise not only for checking your memory of a script, but also for memorizing the script. Mnemonics are a great start and a better safety net, but that's for another time. For rote learning, nothing beats FAST and LOUD.

Diviner / Deceiver

Thanks