



Mental Card Read

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You produce a normal deck of playing cards and ask a spectator to cut the deck anywhere they like. They remove the card they've cut to without letting you see it and concentrate on its design.

After a few moments concentration, you announce the exact card they've chosen. You have read their mind!

You'll need a normal deck of cards but you need to arrange them in a special order. Mentalists refer to this as a stacked deck.

One of the easiest methods of stacking a deck is the Si Stebbins system. In this system, each card has a value; a jack is valued 11, a queen 12 and a king 13. All the other cards take their respective value, with an ace valued 1.

The suits are also arranged in the order clubs, hearts, spades, diamonds. The easiest way to remember this is by the word 'chased':

Clubs Hearts Spades Diamonds.

Start with any club, then for the next card in the stack add 3 to its value and make it a heart. For the next card, add 3 again and make it a spade. For the next card, add 3 again and make it a diamond. When you're adding 3 to 11, 12 or 13, subtract 13 to get the value of the next card. The system repeats like this until the whole deck is stacked.

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For instance, if you started with the 3 of clubs (3C), the stacked order would be:
3C, 6H, 9S, QD, 2C, 5H, 8S and so on.

Place the cards face up as you stack them.

When displaying the deck to your spectator, make sure you fan them and let them see the faces. Don't make a point of this - just fan them as you say "normal deck of cards". Whatever you do, don't say "As you can see, they're in no particular order!" Statements like this should be implied non-verbally.

This is important later on, if the spectator tries to 'reconstruct' the trick and work out how it was done. If they can remember you casually spreading the cards, they'll discount any theories about the deck being in a special order or perhaps all the same card.

Put the stacked deck face down on the table and invite a spectator to cut the deck anywhere they like. Get them to place the top half of the deck face down next to the bottom half. Invite them to take the top card from the bottom deck and keep it secret.

Pickup up the bottom half of the deck, place it on the top half and then pick up the whole deck. You now need to glance at the bottom card on the deck and there are a couple of ways of doing this. You can either put the cards back into their box, casually glancing at the bottom card as you do so. Better still, hold the deck in front of you, as if demonstrating to the spectator how to hold their card. Either method will need a simple verbal misdirection such as "Now hold your card up, still keeping it secret and concentrate on the design."

As they concentrate, ask them to look into your eyes. Pretend you are looking for subtle psychological clues as to the value of their card. Look at micro-movements in their facial muscles also.

All you need to do to name their card is work out the next one in the sequence. So if the bottom card was the ace of hearts, their card is the four of spades. Rather than just simply naming their card, increase the drama and effect of mind-reading by revealing it bit by bit. The color first, then whether it is a low, high or picture card. Then name the card in full.

To really play with the system, you can subtly suggest that you are about to read the wrong card. For instance, if the spectator's card is the nine of clubs, you might reveal it in the following way:

"OK, its a black card, yes?" Look for visual confirmation.

"I'm getting an 'i' ... 'i' ... five ... a five? No, sounds like five - its a nine, yes?"

"Definitely not a spade so it must be the nine of clubs!"



Another method of revealing the chosen card is to draw it on a notepad. Keep your drawing hidden, then invite the spectator to turn around their card and announce the design. You can then flip over your notepad, revealing the same design.

This is a terrific routine and with a little thought, the Si Stebbins stack can be used for many other mind reading effects. What's more, the stack is instantly ready to use again simply by putting the spectator's chosen card on top of the deck face down.

That's it. I hope you enjoyed your free trick!

Ryan Even
(and "Mr. X")

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