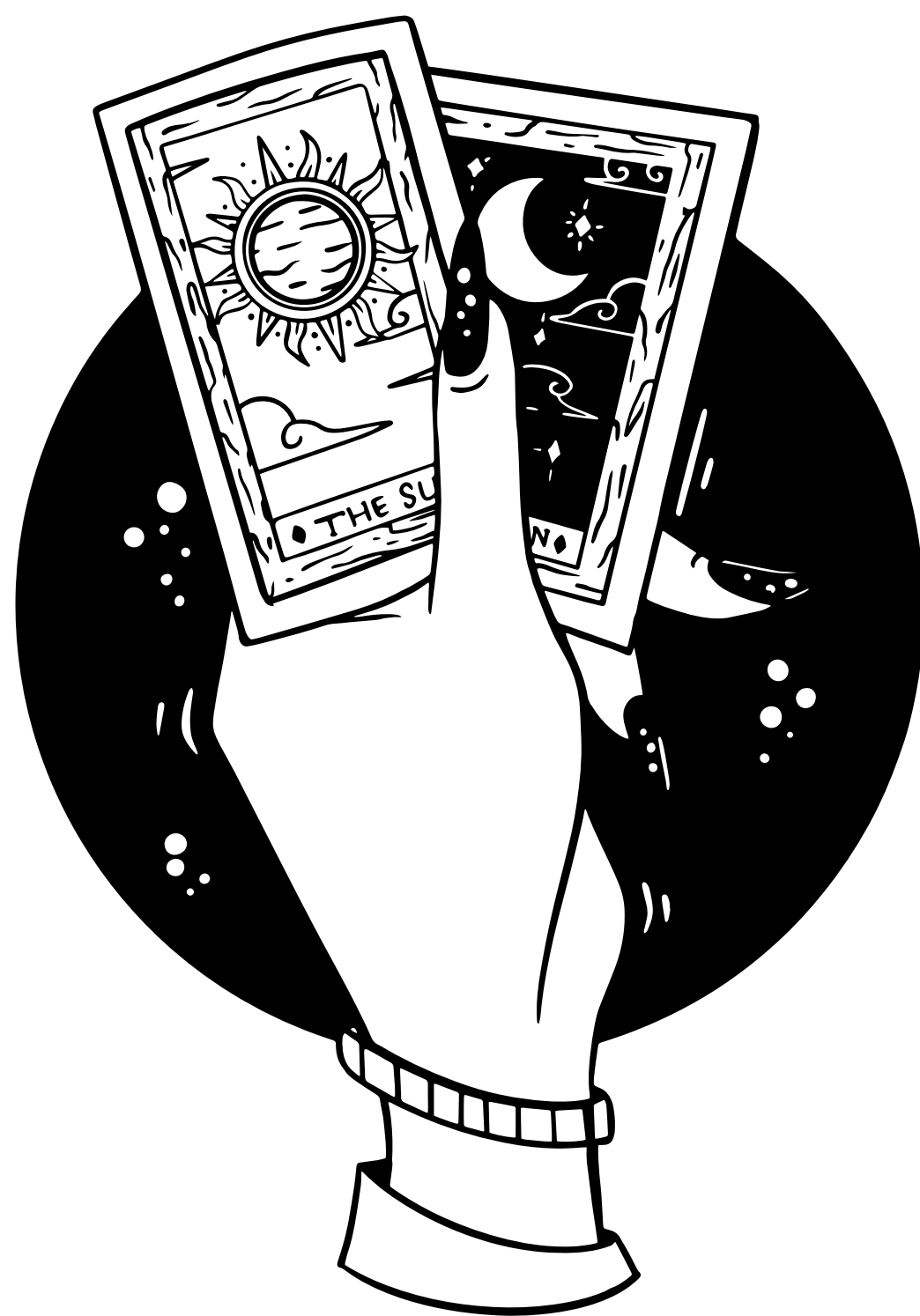


# TAROT 101

Begin your own personal tarot practice



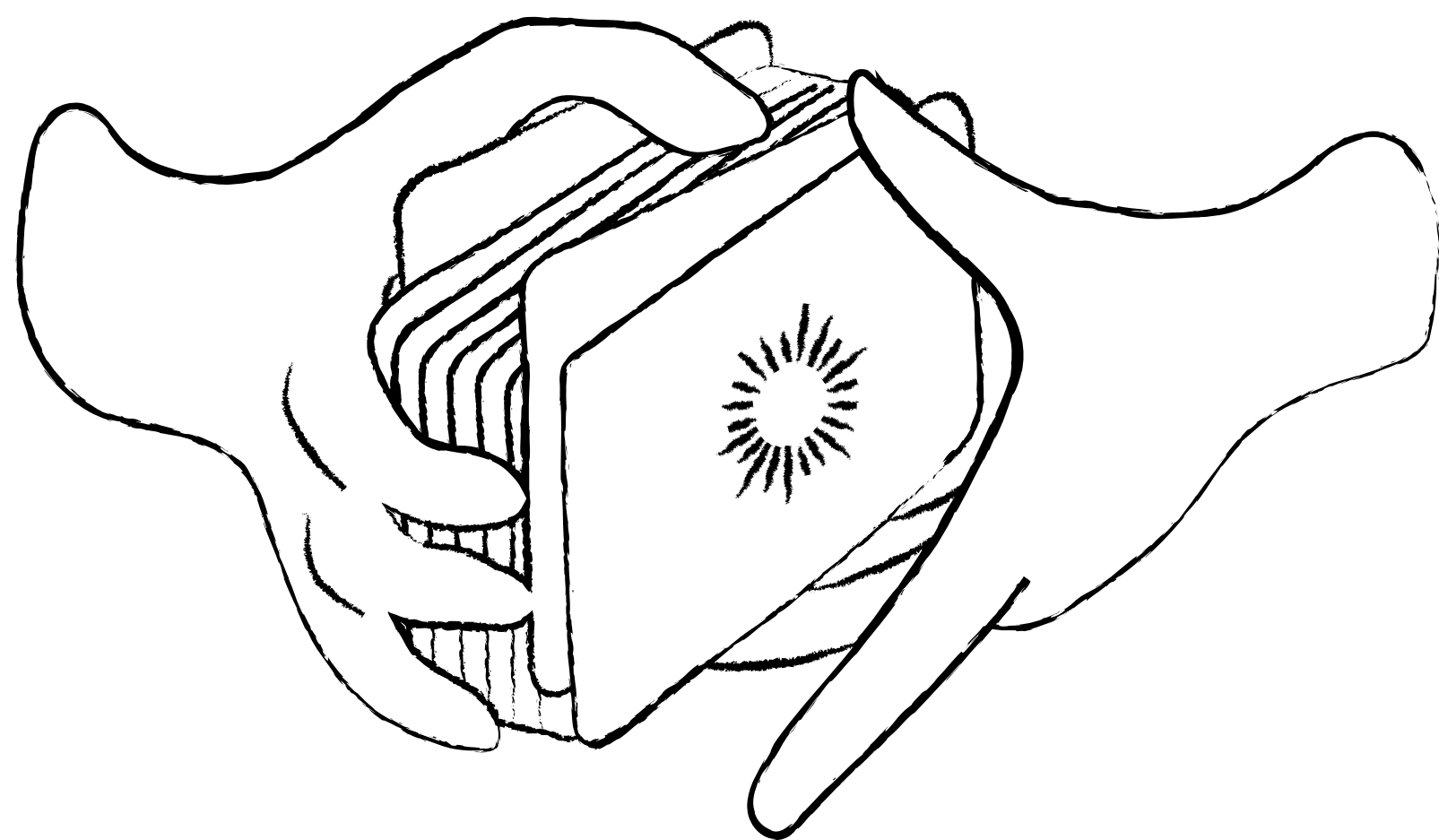
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# TAROT 101 - TOPICS

1. A Brief History of Tarot
2. Tarot Structure & Choosing a Deck
3. Getting to Know Your Deck
4. The Major Arcana
5. The Minor Arcana - Suits
6. The Minor Arcana - Numerology
7. The Court Cards
8. Simple Spreads
9. Building Your Personal Tarot Practice
10. Further Study & Recommended Resources



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF TAROT

**c. 1450** - Contrary to popular belief, tarot is not ancient. Some of the earliest surviving tarot decks were created in Italy during the 1400s. The **Visconti-Sforza Tarot**, produced for the elite Sforza family, was made shortly after 1450, these decks were made for a game called **Tarocchi**, a parlor game more similar to MASH than to fortune telling. It is unknown whether or not the designers of these decks deliberately imposed any esoteric symbolism onto the cards, and much of those associations likely arose later on.

**18<sup>th</sup> Century** - By the 1700s, Tarocchi and other tarot-based games had increased in popularity across Europe, and the **Tarot de Marseille** tradition had become established in France. This pip-style, wood-cut fashioned deck established much of the tarot designs and symbols we still see today, and led tarot imagery to become increasingly well known.

**1781** - Amidst the increasing popularity of the Tarot de Marsaille, occultist **Antoine Court de Gébelin** published his theories about tarot, proclaiming that its imagery derived from the teachings of the Egyptian god Thoth and helping to establish the enduring myth that tarot came from Ancient Egypt. Soon after, one of the first deliberately esoteric tarot decks was created by the French occultist **Etteilla**, who fittingly called it **The Book of Thoth**.

**1800s - 1900s** - As tarot became increasingly intertwined with occultism, this period saw it further transformed by ceremonial magicians associated with **The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn**. Members and associates of this tradition went on to create some of the most well-known

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF TAROT

tarot systems of the modern era, including **The Rider-Waite-Smith**, created by A.E. Waite and Pamela Colman Smith in 1909, and **The Thoth Tarot**, developed by Aleister Crowley and Lady Frieda Harris in the 1930s.

It is also important to note that much of the mainstream understanding of tarot stems from depictions of **Romani** readers, who have been unjustly persecuted against for such practices for hundreds of years. Additionally, much of tarot's symbolism stems from **Jewish mysticism** and **Kabbalah** which is not often recognized. Tarot is not a closed practice, but it is very important for modern readers to acknowledge how certain groups have been unfairly left out of tarot's history and rising popularity.

**2026** - Today, there are thousands of different tarot decks available to the public with various themes, art styles, and more. Most decks follow the structure of one of their three most popular predecessors: **Marseille**, **Thoth**, or **RWS**. Beyond fortune telling, and even esoteric study, the tarot is widely available to modern audiences as a tool for **personal growth**.

In modern times, many readers use the cards not just to read fortunes for others, but to develop a **personal practice** that includes introspection, goal setting, manifestation, and more. The tarot cards summarize nearly every aspect of the human experience through an artistic lens that evokes a visceral response within many of us. Tarot reading is a beautiful way to get to know yourself on a deeper level.

# TAROT STRUCTURE & CHOOSING A DECK

The tarot is made up of **78 cards** divided into two sections. The Major Arcana and the Minor Arcana.

The **Major Arcana** is made up of 22 cards and deals with archetypal energies and major life lessons. These are the more well-known cards with titles like The Lovers, Death, and The Moon.

The **Minor Arcana** makes up the remaining 56 cards of the deck and includes four suits- the Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles. Each suit contains an Ace - Ten, and four court cards- a Page, Knight, Queen, and King.

The **twelve zodiac signs** each have a corresponding Major Arcana card, Court Card, and even three additional cards from the rest of the Minor Arcana. The seven classical **planets** and four **elements** also have their own corresponding cards throughout the deck.

You may find that some decks have different names for certain cards or suits, such as **Discs** instead of **Pentacles** or **Princesses** instead of **Pages** but their core meanings remain the same.

When choosing a deck, select one that **calls to you** and where you truly love the artwork. It is important to **resonate** with your deck and be excited to use it often. The RWS is recommended by many for beginners, but may not be the best fit for everyone. However, keep in mind that many resources will refer to the **RWS** and you will need to keep in mind any differences or nuances your deck may have.

# GETTING TO KNOW YOUR DECK

**Get in touch with your intuition:** The best tarot readers combine their knowledge of the cards' **traditional meanings** with their own **intuitive responses**. A great way to get to know your deck is to go through each card one by one and write down the first word or words that come to mind before you open up the guidebook or study external resources.

This way, you will set a foundation for your tarot practice that is based on your **unique intuitive skills**, and on what the cards communicate to you.

## **Some fun ways to bond with your deck:**

- Pull a card each morning to set an intention for your day. This is a great way to slowly study the cards!
- Sleep with it under your pillow or near your bedside
- Carry it with you in your bag or purse
- Pair a crystal with the deck based on the feeling or intention it sparks within you

# THE MAJOR ARCANA

The Major Arcana is made up of **22 cards** that embody archetypal energies and impactful life events. They are numbered from 0-21 and have memorable titles like The Lovers, The Moon, and The Hermit. These are the cards that many people think of when they first hear the word "tarot."

A great way to understand the Major Arcana is through what is called the **21 Doors Method**. This is a story that is based off a common theme known as **The Fool's Journey**, where our main character, the Fool, encounters many people and situations on his journey to self discovery.

The Fool, numbered at 0, is the first card in the Major Arcana. . .



## 0 - The Fool - Air

The Fool represents **new beginnings**, taking risks, blissful ignorance, and childlike wonder. He is the main character of the tarot, and represents all of us on our journey through life.



## 1 - The Magician - Mercury

The first door the Fool opens on his journey shows him The Magician, who embodies **personal power**, manifestation, consciousness, and independence. The Fool learns that he is equipped with all the tools he needs to create the life he desires.

# THE MAJOR ARCANA



## 2 - The High Priestess - Moon

The next door opens to The High Priestess. She is the yin to The Magician's yang, and symbolizes **intuition**, receptivity, and the subconscious mind. The Fool learns from her to trust his instincts and to receive the beauty that is learning.



## 3 - The Empress - Venus

The third door opens to The Empress. If The High Priestess is the mystery of the divine feminine, The Empress is the maternal creatrix, representing sensuality and creativity. She is **mother nature** and represents maternal to The Fool.



## 4 - The Emperor - Aries

The fourth door opens to The Empress' counterpart, The Emperor. He is the divine masculine and represents **structure**, discipline, and rigidity. To The Fool he is the archetype of the father.



## 5 - The Hierophant - Taurus

Next, The Fool opens up the door to The Hierophant who introduces him to the themes of **tradition**, religion, and societal expectations. The Fool is now exposed to people outside of himself and his parental figures.

# THE MAJOR ARCANA



## 6 - The Lovers - Gemini

The next door opens to The Lovers, who introduce The Fool to concept of relationships, duality, and **choice**. He now learns the importance of interpersonal relationships and staying true to himself.



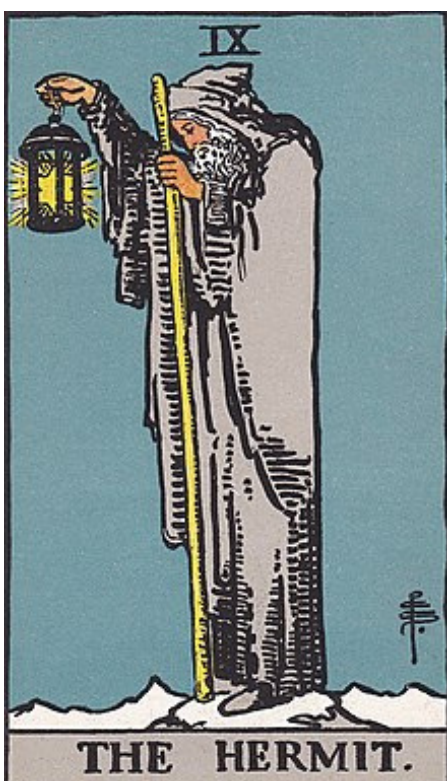
## 7 - The Chariot - Cancer

The Fool then opens the door to The Chariot, where he comes to understand the power of **dedication**, purpose, and pursuing goals. He sees that he must effectively navigate his complex emotions to succeed through life.



## 8 - Strength - Leo

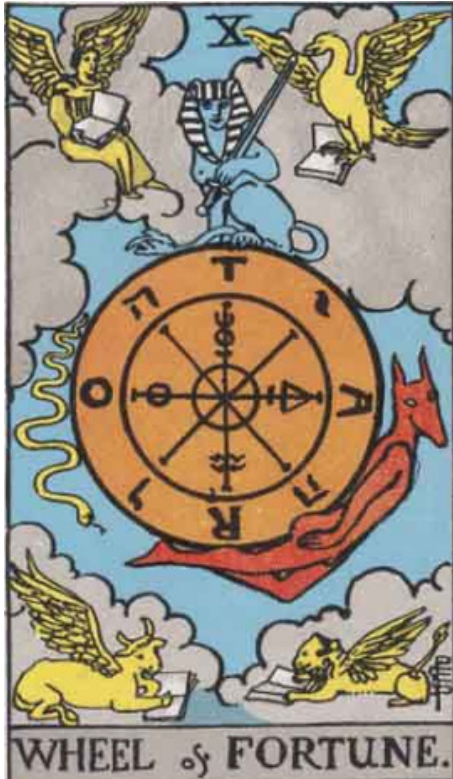
The eighth door opens to the scene of Strength, who shows The Fool that power is not always outward, but inward and that one must treat people and situations with tenderness and **compassion**.



## 9 - The Hermit - Virgo

Next, The Fool discovers The Hermit deep in contemplation. He learns that sometimes we must retreat and **go inward** to learn and reflect. The Fool must return to himself and his needs to stay on the right track.

# THE MAJOR ARCANA



## 10 - The Wheel of Fortune - Jupiter

The tenth door comes as a surprise as there are no people behind it, instead The Fool sees the unpredictability of life. The Wheel represents **destiny** and chance, and shows that not everything can be planned.



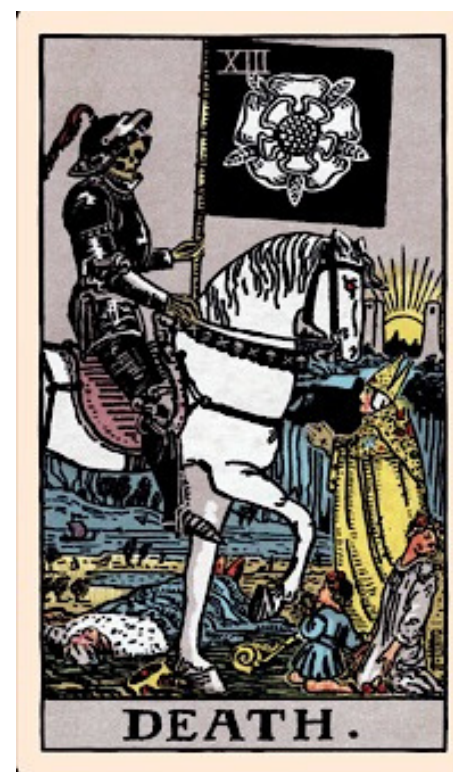
## 11 - Justice - Libra

Next, The Fool learns that things tend to **balance** out with Justice, representing harmony, law and fairness. After the chaos of The Wheel, there is a drive to find a place between the positive and negative.



## 12 - The Hanged Man - Water

The twelfth door shows The Fool that sometimes you must take a step back and see things from a **new perspective**. The Hanged Man stands for sacrifice, liminality, and a time of pause.



## 13 - Death - Scorpio

Next, The Fool opens the door to the dark scene of Death. This scenario teaches him that all things must come to an end. However, with all **endings** come new beginnings, rebirth, and transformation.

# THE MAJOR ARCANA



## 14 - Temperance - Sagittarius

The following door opens to a serene scene of an angel combining the waters of two cups. This teaches The Fool to combine the good with the bad, **be patient**, and alchemize his life experiences.



## 15 - The Devil - Capricorn

Next, The Fool opens to the door to The Devil who represents temptation, addictions, and **unhealthy attachments**. He comes to understand that limitations are often self-imposed.



## 16 - The Tower - Mars

The door to The Tower startles The Fool and shows him that the foundations he had built were in fact on shaky ground. Sometimes things **shatter spontaneously** and require rebuilding from the ground up.



## 17 - The Star - Aquarius

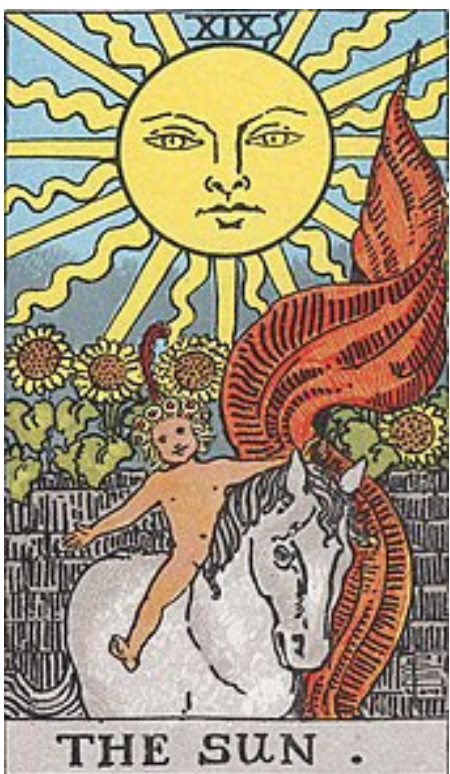
The seventeenth door opens to the tranquil scene of The Star. This represents serenity, hope, **authenticity**, and stepping into one's true self after a time of difficulty.

# THE MAJOR ARCANA



## 18 - The Moon - Pisces

The following door opens to The Moon, where The Fool must confront his shadow, his fears, and the depths of his **subconscious**. In order to truly heal, he must confront that which he has suppressed.



## 19 - The Sun - Sun

Next, The Fool steps into the light of The Sun and finds a true sense of **happiness**, fulfillment, and clarity. After confronting his shadow self, he now has clear idea of himself and his true calling.



## 20 - Judgement - Fire

The penultimate door opens to the scene of Judgement, where The Fool heeds to the call of his higher self. He takes time to reflect on and judge his decisions up until this point, seeking **absolution** in an effort to truly meet his highest self.



## 21 - The World - Earth/Saturn

The final door opens to the scene of a figure dancing, representing completion, graduation, and **individuation**. The Fool has met his higher self and feels at one with the universe and the world around him. The World represents self-actualization.

# THE MINOR ARCANA - SUITS

The remaining 56 cards of the tarot belong the **Minor Arcana**, which pertain to more **mundane matters** and aspects of **everyday life**. The Minor Arcana is divided into **four suits**, and each suit has cards numbered **Ace - Ten** and four **Court Cards** - a Page, Knight, Queen and King.

Each of the four suits correspond to one of the **four elements**, fire, water, air, and earth. They are as follows:

## **Wands** - Fire

Action, creativity, passion, sexuality, intensity, effort

*Think: Wands are made of wood, and wood burns into fire*

## **Cups** - Water

Emotion, relationships, intuition, feelings, friendships, love

*Think: Cups are vessels that can contain water*

## **Swords** - Air

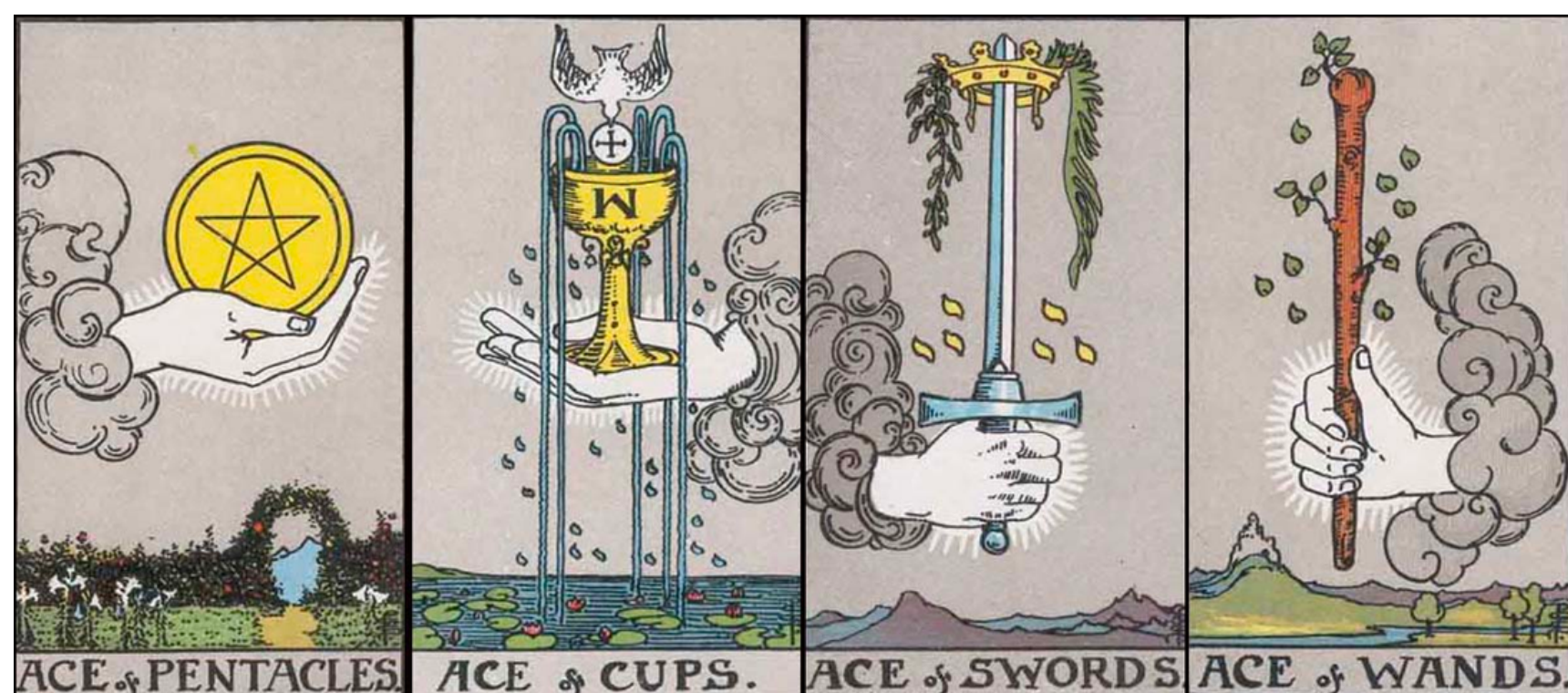
Thoughts, beliefs, communication, mentality, conflict

*Think: Swords cut through the air in battle*

## **Pentacles** - Earth

Finance, career, home life, family, work, security, comfort

*Think: Pentacles resemble coins, representing money*



# THE MINOR ARCANA - NUMEROLOGY

The **Aces - Tens** of each suit tell their own unique story, however you will find commonalities between the cards that share the same number. For example, the Two of Wands and the Two of Pentacles both represent choice, just in different ways.

Additionally, you will find that by pairing the **Major Arcana** cards with the **Minors** that match them numerically, common themes emerge which can help you remember the cards more easily.

**Aces** - New beginnings, opportunity, potential  
*Think: The limitless potential of The Magician's power.*

**Twos** - Choice, balance, unity  
*Think: The High Priestess' choice to trust her intuition.*

**Threes** - Creativity, expansion, growth  
*Think: The Empress' creative and abundant nature.*

**Fours** - Stability, structure, consistency  
*Think: The Emperor's stable, secure presence.*

**Fives** - Conflict, change, disruption  
*Think: The Hierophant and the inflexibility of tradition.*

**Sixes** - Exchange, reciprocity, recognition  
*Think: The intimate exchange of The Lovers.*

# THE MINOR ARCANA - NUMEROLOGY

**Sevens** - Transition, waiting, challenges  
*Think: The Chariot traversing tough terrain.*

**Eights** - Liberation, commitment, determination  
*Think: The dedicated tenderness of Strength.*

**Nines** - Solitude, reflection, completion  
*Think: The solitary nature of The Hermit.*

**Tens** - Excess, transformation, conclusion  
*Think: The end of a cycle in the turn of The Wheel.*

This list of **numerological meanings** can be paired with the **element** behind each suit to help you discover the meaning of each of the numbered cards.

Here are some examples. . .

Ace (Opportunity) + Pentacles (Finance) = Prosperity

Two (Choice) + Swords (Thoughts) = Decisions

Three (Expansion) + Wands (Action) = Progress

Four (Stability) + Cups (Emotion) = Apathy

Five (Conflict) + Wands (Action) = Competition

Six (Exchange) + Cups (Emotion) = Joy

Seven (Challenges) + Swords (Thoughts) = Strategy

Eight (Determination) + Wands (Action) = Speed

Nine (Solitude) + Pentacles (Finance) = Independence

Ten (Excess) + Cups (Emotion) = Bliss

# THE COURT CARDS

Each suit of the **Minor Arcana** also contains four **court cards**, typically a Page, Knight, Queen, and King. These cards can represent **people** in our lives, personality types, or even aspects of ourselves. I like to think of them as the "persona" cards of the tarot.

A great way to memorize the court cards is by learning their **astrological correspondences**. The Knights, Queens, and Kings all represent different zodiac signs. Therefore, if you learn or know the traits of a specific sign, you will also understand the characteristics of its associated court card.

Pages are a bit different, as they represent **elements** rather than signs. The Pages can be thought of as the "students" or even the children of the tarot. They represent the very human experience of learning something new, or the energy of the inner child.



## **Page of Wands** - Student of Fire

The Page of Wands is passionate, fiery, and eager to embark on an exciting adventure. He ponders the wand in his hands with wonder, knowing he must learn to wield it properly before his journey can really begin. In a reading he represents **inspiration, excitement, and passion.**



## **Page of Cups** - Student of Water

The Page of Cups is **dreamy, sensitive, and theatrical.** He gazes upon the cup in his hand and sees a fish jumping out, representing the subconscious mind and **psychic abilities.** This page is learning to use his intuition and inner feelings to his advantage.

# THE COURT CARDS



## **Page of Swords** - Student of Air

The Page of Swords is full of new ideas. He is eager to learn and to communicate. However, he glances behind himself with **apprehension**, not quite ready to wield the sword in his hand. This page represents **curiosity** and **mental restlessness**. He is learning to clearly communicate his personal thoughts and beliefs.



## **Page of Pentacles** - Student of Earth

The Page of Pentacles gazes upon the pentacle in his hands with wonder. Before him is a new opportunity to build a foundation and put down roots in the material or physical sense. He represents **seizing a financial or career opportunity** with the understanding that these endeavors need the proper level of **dedication** to fully manifest.

Next, we have the Knights, Queens, and Kings of each suit.

These twelve cards correspond to the twelve zodiac signs, and are separated by the following types:

## **Knights** - Fixed

Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius, Taurus

*Dedicated & Deliberate*

## **Queens** - Cardinal

Aries, Cancer, Libra, & Capricorn

*Leaders & Initiators*

# THE COURT CARDS

**Kings** - Mutable

*Sagittarius, Pisces, Gemini, & Virgo*

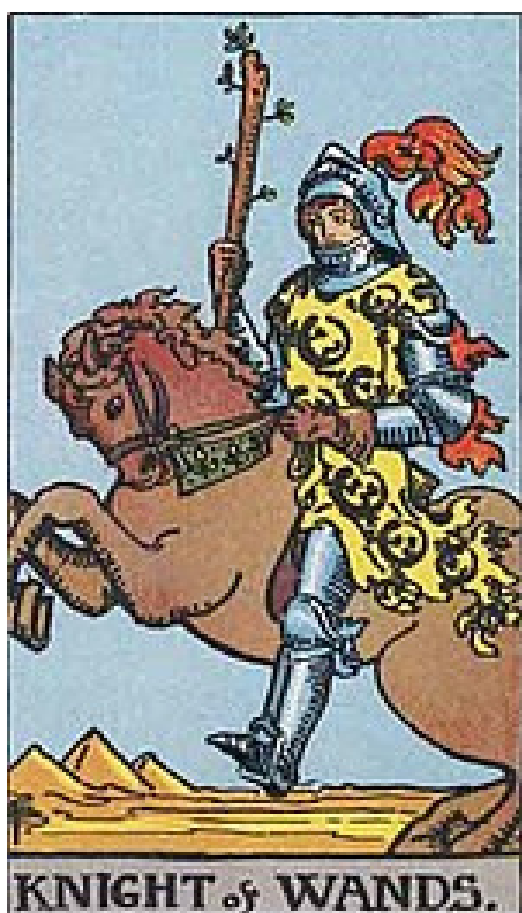
*Adaptable & Flexible*

With that in mind, you can combine the court with its corresponding suit to identify which sign it represents. For example:

Knight (Fixed) + Pentacles (Earth) = Taurus

Queen (Cardinal) + Cups (Water) = Cancer

King (Mutable) + Swords (Air) = Gemini



**Knight of Wands** - Leo  
July 23rd - August 22nd  
Fixed Fire

Both Leo and the Knight of Wands are **passionate, creative, and enthusiastic**. In a reading, the Knight of Wands represents inspired action- that may be a tad impulsive. He is the direct pursuit of a new idea, action, or creative spark.



**Queen of Wands** - Aries  
March 21st - April 19th  
Cardinal Fire

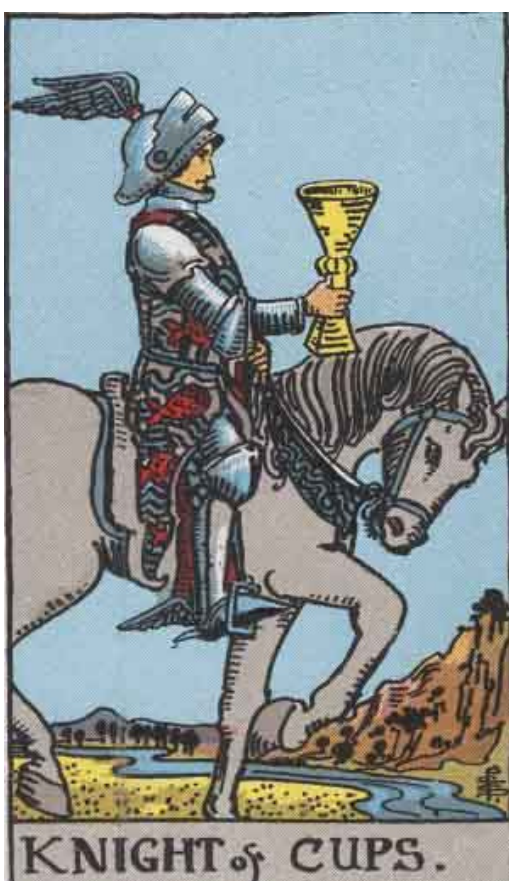
The Queen of Wands embodies Aries' **confidence, courageousness, and charisma**. She is a social butterfly who is alluring and charming, but also strong and secure. She represents Aries' determined nature.

# THE COURT CARDS



**King of Wands** - Sagittarius  
November 22nd - December 21st  
Mutable Fire

We can see this King is eager to jump out of his throne and get to **exploring the world**, much like a Sagittarius. Rather than creating on his own, he embodies fire energy when there is a strong desire to work with others-making for an influential leader.



**Knight of Cups** - Scorpio  
October 23rd - November 21st  
Fixed Water

The Knight of Cups is here to make an offering of deep emotion, much like the intense Scorpio. He is often **romantic** and **imaginative**, but his eagerness to put his heart above all else can lead to emotional upsets.



**Queen of Cups** - Cancer  
June 21st - July 22nd  
Cardinal Water

Both Cancer and the Queen of Cups are **nurturing, compassionate, and sensitive**. She is in-flow with her emotions and is deeply caring, allowing her to comfort both herself and others. She may however, get too caught up in her emotional tides at times.

# THE COURT CARDS



**King of Cups** – Pisces  
February 19th – March 20th  
Mutable Water

The King of Cups, like Pisces, is deeply **empathetic** and therefore, **emotionally intelligent**. He rules with sensitivity and understanding. He may at times become moody and overly effected by the emotions of others.



**Knight of Swords** – Aquarius  
January 20th – February 18th  
Fixed Air

The Knight of Swords is **quick thinking** and **ambitious**. Aquarians too are highly intellectual, and are often concerned with important matters- like humanitarian efforts and acquiring as much knowledge as possible. It is important for this Knight to remind himself to slow down and to avoid burnout.



**Queen of Swords** – Libra  
September 23rd – October 22nd  
Cardinal Air

The Queen of Swords is **independent** and a **direct communicator**. Like Libra, she is flexible and focused on balance and harmony, and cares deeply about the truth and what is right. It is important for this Queen to not steer too far away from her emotions and become too stoic.

# THE COURT CARDS



## **King of Swords** - Gemini

May 21st - June 20th

Mutable Air

Both the King of Swords and Gemini are intellectually powerful, **logical**, and **strong communicators**. They influence others with their thorough research and impartiality. They may however, lack decisiveness and direction at times.



## **Knight of Pentacles** - Taurus

April 20th - May 20th

Fixed Earth

The Knight of Pentacles is the only Knight shown at a stand still, representing his **purposeful**, deliberate nature like that of a Taurus. He sticks to his tried and true ways of getting things done- but with that, may be inflexible or begin feeling stuck. He is **responsible** and a diligent worker.



## **Queen of Pentacles** - Capricorn

December 22nd - January 21st

Cardinal Earth

The Queen of Pentacles and Capricorn are concerned with comfort, stability, and security. She **nurtures** and **comforts** herself through her independence, but is also a strong support for others. At times however, her work and home life may come out of balance.

# THE COURT CARDS



**King of Pentacles** - Virgo  
August 23rd - September 22nd  
Mutable Earth

The King of Pentacles is **abundant, secure,** and disciplined. Like Virgo, his organized, structured nature has allowed him to build great things for himself and his kingdom. He may at times be too rigid and serious, needing to relax.

*But what about the **Major Arcana** cards that correspond to the zodiac signs?*

The cards of the Major Arcana can be thought of as the **signs as archetypes**, while the Court cards can be thought of as the **signs as people**.

Studying the **personality traits** of the different signs and applying them to the Courts is a great way to learn the meanings of the cards. The Court Cards in a reading sometimes even represent a **person in your life** that is born under that particular sign.

However, it's important to not just think of the Court Cards as other people but as energies, or even **aspects of ourselves**. Thinking of a Court Card as us **stepping into our power**, or expressing certain attributes can help us get to know ourselves on a deeper level.

*Which Court Card represents your sun sign? Which of the Courts do you resonate with the most?*

# SIMPLE SPREADS

**Single Card Spreads** - A one card tarot reading is a great way to start or end the day, or to use when asking the cards direct questions. You can ask questions like. . .

*What energy will best support me today?*

*What is the most important thing I can learn from today?*

*What energy is surrounding this situation?*

**Two Card Spreads** - Two card spreads are great for comparing options or for assisting with decision making.

*Card 1 to represent the outcome of one option, Card 2 to represent the outcome of a second option.*

**Three Card Spreads** - The three card spread is perhaps the most well-known tarot spread. Some common spreads are:

*Past / Present / Future*

*Obstacle / Action Recommended / Outcome*

*Mind / Body / Spirit*

*Person One / Person Two / Resolution*

**Preparing for a reading:** There is no right way to conduct a tarot reading, but these tips should help you get started. Feel free to do whatever you find works best for you.

- Set the scene with some candles, incense, or by spreading out a special tarot cloth
- Ground and center by closing your eyes, taking some deep breaths, and holding the cards in your hand
- Shuffle the cards and meditate on your question, then pull cards at random, or wait for them to “jump” out of the deck

# BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL TAROT PRACTICE

The most important thing to remember about tarot reading is that it is **individual to each reader**. Some readers only read for others, some only for themselves, some only use their intuition, while some only reference classical meanings.

If you are really dedicated to learning the cards, **pulling a card every day** in the morning or at night is a very common practice. However, you may wish to only consult the tarot from time to time when you are looking for specific guidance.

**Keeping a tarot journal** is highly recommended as writing down the cards and their meanings will not only help you learn them faster, but will provide you with a record that you can look back on and see how the readings came to light.

Something important to note is that not everyone uses the tarot **predictively**. Some readers don't consider the tarot "fortune telling" and instead view it as a tool for **self reflection**. Either belief is respectable and valid, go with what resonates with you.

The tarot can also be used in other **spiritual** and **magickal practices**. You can meditate on a specific card to channel its energies, use them in spellwork or manifestation workings, or even put one on your mirror or any place you see often as a reminder to embody its specific qualities.

The tarot can really be used in **any way you wish**. Personally, I love to use it as a springboard for journaling and reflection, to aid in spellwork, and as a topic of lifelong study.

# FURTHER STUDY & RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

## **Websites:**

<https://www.biddytarot.com/>

<https://labyrinthos.co/>

## **Books**

The Modern Witchcraft Book of Tarot by Skye Alexander

Guided Tarot by Stefanie Caponi

Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom by Rachel Pollack

The Creative Tarot by Jessa Crispin

## **Content Creators**

@pipscardstarot on Instagram

@thetarotprofessor on Instagram

@faesighttarot on Instagram

Kelly-Ann Maddox on YouTube - Tarot Trainee Series

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