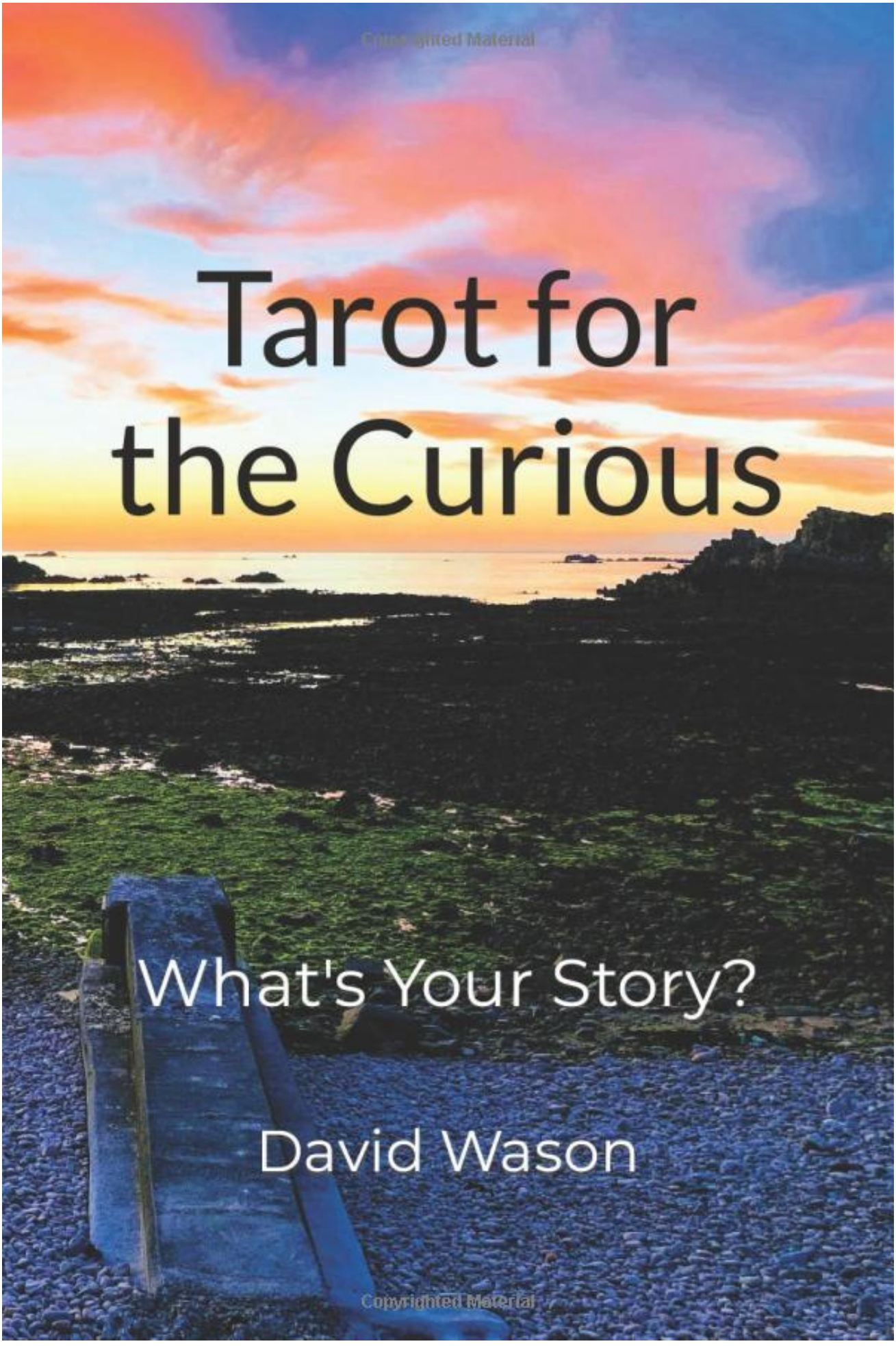
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Tarot for the Curious

What's Your Story?

David Wason

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there are secrets
hidden everywhere
if you only know
where to look



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“*What am I supposed to do, think of everything? I brought the comb!*”

Tarot for The Curious

I was a curious child.

There are nine years between my brother and I so, whilst my brother is my best friend, I still feel like an only child on the inside. Bit of a loner. Usually trying to figure out how to get my own way. Have been called a brat, or worse. But in some ways that also makes me the same as everyone, curiously normal, normally curious. I'd a boss at work once who also called me "curious", I think in terms of both definitions of the word. I was and am deeply interested in Figuring Things Out, but also very keen to do so on my own terms. Living in a way which resonates, with harmony… which is exactly what we'll be talking about here.

We all feel that way sometimes: out on a limb, or out on our own, not sure what to do with ourselves. A head full of wonder but sometimes full of things we can't really describe in words. There's a delta between the world we experience in everyday life and the world of our imagination. Trying to vault it can at first seem like a stretch, an adventure that we're not quite yet ready, willing, or able to take the first step into.

As a child I tried to bridge that gap by filling my head with what a lot of my current friends would call "The Mental Stuff". I can still vividly remember being about eight years old, reading the story of the "Green Children of Woolpit" and realising that if this was true, and as I had no reason to believe otherwise, then there was far more out there in the world than I had heard about so far. So in some version of reality, maybe the one we inhabit, there are civilisations inside the earth. Sometimes those people visit us on the surface and tell us stories about their inner sun, their ecosystem, their way of life which isn't too far removed from our own. A fire was lit! I hungrily devoured any similar content I could get my hands on but as I evolved from flights of childhood fantasy to a more mature understanding of the esoteric, my first true revelation was whilst reading Biocentrism by Robert Lanza and Bob Berman. This book posits a very basic sentiment: the world which exists "*out there*" only really exists "*in here*"! Put another way, **consciousness is primary** and creates the material world, and not the other way around as we're more commonly taught to believe. For me, this was a game changer!

My exploration of the weird world out there continues to this day. My brother and I make an annual pilgrimage to our favourite UFO Conventions; my podcast app is full of shows like "The Higherside Chats", "Tin Foil Hat" or "My Family Thinks I'm Crazy". I love the mystery of the unexplained, the stuff that happens on the fringes, things you only see out of the corner of your eye, (mind's or otherwise). Being a

weird kid was what helped me become aware that the weird world out there was part of me, and vice versa, that I could influence the world and not just be a passenger within it. Then I discovered Tarot… and another door creaked slowly but enticingly open!

I started learning only the Major Arcana thinking, as a lot of us do, that 78 cards is a mountain to climb so I'd just start small. Then, slowly and over time, I read a lot of books, found a few teachers that seemed to be on the same wavelength as me, and worked out a way to learn the full pack with a balance of the logical and the intuitive. I'm still learning, mindfully and with daily application, that it's not so much about rote learning as it is about integration: taking time to reflect each day, to consider my place in the world, my role within my family, my community, and the world. Seeking to harmonise what I have still to learn with what I am already able to teach to those of a similarly open mind and heart, to bring empathy and balance and growth.

Which brings us here: the very beginning. Stay curious, keep an open mind, and let's start this journey together with some very simple questions:

- Who are you?
- Why are you here?
- What do you hope to achieve, or do, or become?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses, your obstacles and opportunities to achieving those goals?
- How can you truly realise a Growth Mindset?

Those types of questions, amongst many others, are what we'll explore in the study of Tarot. In my experience it is THE ultimate can of worms. The whole wide world of the weird and wonderful welcomes you with open arms, novice reader! In this short book, we're going to walk through the basic knowledge and tools you'll need to read Tarot for yourself, for your friends and family and, with enough practice, who knows where else!

One very important point to remember: Tarot is as much an art as it is a science. It's as much about trusting your gut, letting your intuition guide you, as it is about rote memorisation of 78 cards. That does not mean you need to be an "artist" in the traditional sense to read Tarot, I for one cannot draw or paint nor do I have any aptitude in what you might call the aesthetic arts. But I do have an open mind, and that's what we'll aim to cultivate here.

As well as an open mind, (and those of you who have done Mindfulness or Meditation work may already have heard this term), we'll also cultivate **Shoshin (or "Beginner's Mind")**. This Japanese Zen term refers to a paradox: the more you know about a subject, the more likely you are to close your mind to further learning. As the Zen monk Shunryu Suzuki put it in his 1970 book Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind: '*In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's, there are few.*' It refers to having an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions when studying a subject, even when studying at an advanced level. Just as a beginner would.

Ready?

What is Tarot?

The traditional story says that Tarot started as a card game played in 15th century Italy, in a slightly different but still recognisable form than today, called “tarocchini”. Whilst the format has changed over the years, and there are literally thousands of different artistic interpretations of the cards, the core format has remained the same. We’ll talk about each part of the deck in more detail later, but the main component parts are the Major and Minor “**arcana**” (defined as a repository of occult or secret knowledge). The Minor arcana closely resembles a traditional playing card deck, split into “pip” cards numbered one through ten and court cards of the Page, Knight, Queen and King. The Major arcana also known as “**The Fool’s Journey**” represents major milestones or opportunities in our story.

That’s what Tarot is, what but does Tarot *do*? Simply put, Tarot allows us to take time to reflect on the past, give insight into the present, and empower us to take control of our future.

One hugely important thing to call out already: all Tarot cards are *inherently neutral*. Some cards highlight challenges and some highlight opportunities but awareness of how that interpretation is influenced by our perspective, or by our perception, is pivotal. There's no such thing as a "wrong" or "bad" tarot card to pull, even cards that fall out of the deck by accident when we’re shuffling (we call them "jumpers") can give us insight. Most importantly, every card is a snapshot of an energetic archetype, a force which acts, and a chance to discover and learn something new.

Also, Tarot card reading isn’t “fortune telling”, at least as far as the image which that phrase may conjure up in your mind goes. Yes, there’s an element of “ritual space” which ensures our environment allows us to be calm and provide the opportunity for introspection. Yes, there’s an element of pulling back the curtain, giving us a glimpse into the otherwise occult liminal spaces in our individual and shared realities. But rather than fortune telling I much prefer the phrase “**divination**”: accessing information from your subconscious mind to kindle intuitive knowledge into your conscious mind. Put another way, we’re using our senses and sensibilities to divine a path forward, a way to develop understanding, a way to realise who you are, where you are, what you could become, and how to keep growing positively throughout your journey.

The sign above the Oracle at Delphi read: **Know Thyself.** The root of that statement is also the cornerstone of modern Psychology, which we can define as either: "*the scientific study of the human mind and its functions*", or "*the mental characteristics or attitude of a person or group*". One of the founding fathers of the Psychodynamic school of Psychology, Carl Gustav Jung, described Tarot as "a tool for personal storytelling and personal growth, the development of the Self through a process called 'Individuation'". So Tarot helps us understand who we are as individuals but also as an important and inherent part of the collective.

Tarot reading as such is an *interactive* experience where the Reader will help reveal the best version of you by focussing on a specific area of your life, for example: love, family, career, your life path. No form of divination can paint a perfect picture of the future, but it can help you understand where you are right now, and the options you have available to you.

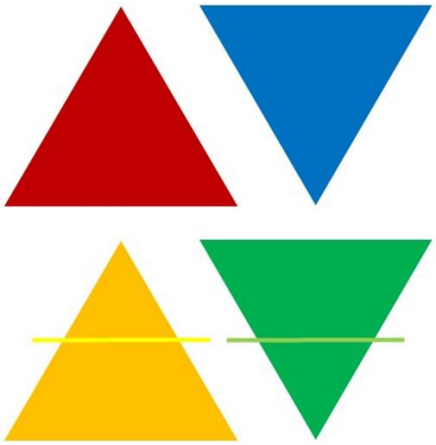
Let's start by looking at the main components of the Tarot: The Minor and Major Arcana.

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“Let us prepare to grapple with the ineffable itself and see if we may not eff it after all!”

The Minor arcana

represents the elemental energy at play within our story



The Minor arcana is split into 4 suits, Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles. Some Tarot readers may even use a traditional deck of playing cards in place of the Minor. Those four core elements are everywhere, particularly in the media, and it can help to consider how the main characters in some of our most loved TV shows and movies represent those energies and how they interact. (But remember the *fifth element* representing spirit, ether and the connection to the divine is You!)

- Note for non-nerds, these are characters from: Harry Potter, Star Wars, Ghostbusters, Scooby-Doo and Lord of the Rings 🤓
- **Fire**: Harry Potter, Luke Skywalker, Peter Venkman, Fred Jones, Aragon
- **Water**: Ron Weasley, Han Solo, Ray Stanz, Daphne Blake, Galadriel
- **Air**: Hermione Granger, Leia Organa, Egon Spengler, Velma Dinkley, Gandalf
- **Earth**: Rubeus Hagrid, Yoda, Winston Zedmore, Norville “Shaggy” Rogers, Frodo Baggins

Much like when we watch the plot play out in a movie, interpreting Tarot is all about the interplay of the elements, how they unite and combine or detract and distract us from the path that we’re trying to divine for ourselves or our client. We’ll walk through a “cheat sheet” of meanings for each card in a later section, but I believe it’s important to understand the context of each suit before we dive into the specifics, so here’s an overview of the basic associations of each element and what they could represent during a Tarot reading:

- **Wands** represent the element of **Fire and the colour Red**: the primal connection to source from which your vitality, your drive, your ambition, your passion, determination, and creativity derive.
    - Wands are **Masculine**, related to “father” and primarily external energy

    - The associated cardinal direction is **South**
    - The energy of Wands is strongest during the **Full Moon**
    - In traditional playing cards, this is the suit of Clubs
    - As a general rule, we can associate Wands with the Spring or the time period of Days

- **Cups** represent the element of **Water and the colour Blue**: the emotional level of consciousness which dictates your emotional experience, your connection to love and relationships, the ebb and flow of energy.
    - Cups are **Feminine**, related to "mother" and primarily internal energy
    - The associated cardinal direction is **West**
    - The energy of Cups is strongest during the **New Moon**
    - In traditional playing cards, this is the suit of Hearts
    - As a general rule, we can associate Cups with the Summer or the time period of Weeks

- **Swords** represent the element of **Air and the colour Yellow**: the mental or intellectual level of consciousness, your beliefs and attitudes, how you communicate with the world, and the stories we tell ourselves and others. It also relates to Prana, the breath of life, and so represents our connection to other souls and our journey together.
    - Swords are **Masculine**, related to "son" and primarily internal energy
    - The associated cardinal direction is **North**
    - The energy of Swords flows with the **Waxing Moon (growing, attracting, internalising) energy)**
    - In traditional playing cards, this is the suit of Spades
    - As a general rule, we can associate Swords with the Autumn or the time period of Months

- **Pentacles**, or Coins, represent the element of **Earth and the colour Green**: the physical level of consciousness which is realised through your self-image and self-esteem and onwards into the material world and so mirrors outer manifestation for example, of our chosen career path or of our family or home life.
    - Pentacles are **Feminine**, related to "daughter" and primarily external energy
    - The associated cardinal direction is **East**
    - The energy of Pentacles flow with the **Waning Moon (receding, externalising)**
    - In traditional playing cards, this is the suit of Diamonds
    - As a general rule, we can associate Pentacles with the Winter or time

period of Years

Top Tip!: I like to remember those representations with the mnemonic "*We Can See Perfectly*", for Wands, Cups, Swords, Pentacles, representing Fire, Water, Air and Earth.

Each element is also related to Yin or Yang and so inherently active (Yang is primarily Active, i.e. acts upon or transmits energy) or passive (Yin is primarily Passive i.e. is acted upon or receives energy), summarised as:

- **Fire**: Active (Masculine with a capital "M")
- **Water**: Passive (Feminine with a capital "F")
- **Air**: Active (masculine with a small "m")
- **Earth**: Passive (feminine with a small "f")

We can take that gender aspect of the energy into account when looking at which suits appear in our Tarot reading, particularly where we have specific combinations of elements:

- **Fire** (Active) and **Water** (Passive) are *enemies*, or antagonistic. They create tension and so weaken each other, e.g. water in its liquid state can extinguish fire but water vapour or steam can also accelerate it

- **Air** (Active) and **Earth** (Passive) are also enemies which weaken, dilute or ground the energy of each other, e.g. clouds condense as they touch mountain tops

- **Fire** (Active) and **Air** (Active) support, amplify or accelerate each other: air fuels the fire

- **Water** (Passive) and **Earth** (Passive) also support each other, think about water flowing through a mountain stream; but also remember that water carves its own path and can erode through the material beneath it over time

- **Fire** (Active) and **Earth** (Passive) are neutral to each other. We can in a sense say, "fire scorches earth", or earth is the fuel through which fire burns, but more generically speaking, fire sits upon the earth

- **Water** (Passive) and **Air** (Active) are also neutral to each other, think of the horizon as where the sky meets the sea, separate but related elements of the overall continuum

As we already touched on, the art of Tarot involves "*painting the spaces*" so pay attention to the elements that are in your spread but also to those that aren't; this will help identify an area we might need to pay more attention to going forward. In the (albeit very rare) case that your spread contains 100% of the same element, please take note as there is some very intense energy at play here, the universe is sending a very clear and singular message!

Assuming that we have a mixture of elements, let's look at how they interact and use some Minor Arcana combinations to illustrate, with their common definitions in parenthesis for reference. As a general example first: a spread containing lots of Wands (fire) and Swords (air) cards could tell us that the client is driven and ambitious but is still in the "thinking things through" phase. Conversely, lots of Wands (fire) and Pentacles (earth) might imply that they're feeling driven to dive into a situation potentially without giving it due thought and consideration, there's literally an airgap between what we plan to do and we're actually doing.

Other examples using specific Minor arcana cards include:

- The Ace of **Wands** (the "spark") and the 4 of **Cups** ("apathy") can dampen the initial enthusiasm we have for a great new idea; or the Page of **Swords** ("think for yourself, question authority") meets resistance against the 2 of **Pentacles** ("the juggler") in deciding which is the best way to proceed.

- The 9 of **Wands** ("battle-scarred") is tempered by the 7 of **Pentacles** ("the Gardener") by reminding us that hard-won lessons are still lessons nonetheless; or the 7 of **Cups** ("analysis paralysis") meeting the 3 of **Pentacles** ("collaboration") reminds us that we don't have to make tough decisions by ourselves, but we can rely on the guidance and counsel of others to navigate through.

- The 8 of **Wands** ("stay on target!") meeting the 9 of **Pentacles** ("abundance") are related insofar as they could be talking to the same overall goal we're seeking but are also two separate paths to achieving it; or the 2 of **Cups** ("healing unity") and the 2 of **Swords** ("stalemate") talk to the same duality of realising we need not go it alone but also that the path to finding that community may not yet be clear.

The **Court cards** in each suit can represent personas, different people you'll meet as we tell your story, but I personally prefer to think of them as representing the "graduation of energy" or how advanced or mature a potential opportunity may be. For me this adds more context to a reading. Let's explore both angles below:

- **The Page** is our conceptual or "**messenger**" card: s/he embodies curiosity, dreams, ideals, beginnings
    - Related to the **Fool** card in the Major Arcana
    - As a persona, can be children or anyone with a "youthful" aura

- **The Knight** is our developmental or "**momentum**" card: s/he embodies ambition, taking ownership, responsibility, the application of will, to a concept or idea
    - Related to the **Magician** card in the Major Arcana
    - As a persona, can be a young adult normally 18-30 years old, or anyone with that mindset or outlook
    - In Astrology, we'd relate the Knight to Cardinal, or initiating, Sun signs

- **The Queen** is our "**mother of mothers**" or Yin energy card: she develops and **nurtures** those concepts or ideas, encourages, and stimulates growth
    - Related to the **Empress** card in the Major Arcana
    - As a persona, can be older females or anyone with a more mature mindset or outlook
    - In Astrology, we'd relate the Queen to Fixed, or sustaining, Sun signs
    - In Kabbalah, the Queen would represent the Pillar of Form

- **The King** is our "**father of fathers**" or Yang energy card and he has "*the final say*", representing the entirety, the fruition or culmination of the energy of the element which the suit represents
    - Related to the **Emperor card** in the Major Arcana
    - As a persona, can be older males or anyone with a more mature mindset or outlook
    - In Astrology, we'd relate the King to Mutable, or transferring, Sun signs
    - In Kabbalah, the King would represent the Pillar of Force

In summary: the Page conceives of an idea, which is developed by the Knight, nurtured by the Queen, and granted finality by the King.

In a reading therefore, when we're addressing the posed question and a Court card appears, we can gauge how developed the idea is, or conversely how impactful the opportunity we may have to face could be. So for example, if someone asks advice on whether they should apply for a new job and we see the King of Wands, that's a big "*Yes!*" - their energy is advanced, they have the drive and ambition to move forward; if we see the Page of Pentacles that'd be more of a "*maybe you should explore other options or do a bit more homework first*",

intimating that a move at the moment could be premature rather than already well thought-out.

Top Tip! Those pillars of Form and Force mentioned for the Queen and King, also known as Boaz and Jachin, appear on several of the Major Arcana cards... see how many you can spot!

Numerology of the Minors

Numerology is: "*the belief in an occult* (meaning hidden)*, divine or mystical relationship between a number and one or more coinciding events.*" which sounds very similar to how we think of the archetypes illustrated on the Tarot! Opinions as to the "textbook" definition of each number definitely vary so we'll firstly look at how we can divide one (Ace) through ten into "realms", "planes" and "worlds" which we can broadly define as:

- **Realm**: the primary territory of each energy, its "*comfort zone*"
- **Plane**: within each realm, the place from where that energy *emanates* its worldly mode of experience
- **World**: within each plane, from which that energy *manifests* into the material or physical

If we consider the journey from Ace through ten as from source (or spirit) down to the material, we can see how the energy becomes less malleable and more fixed, less ephemeral, and so denser the closer to the material world we go. Each suit embodies that journey, so whilst each number that we'll walk through below can be interpreted through the energetic lens of each suit, some numbers have more significance within some suits. For example the Ace of Wands (Fire #1) is not only the spark of inspiration or desire or ambition but also ignites the minor arcana; and the Ten of Pentacles (Earth #10) is not only the fruition of earthly abundance but also the theatre of our manifested will in a spiritual sense.

We'll also layer in the **Chakra** alignment, the seven "water wheels" through which universal energy flows through our bodies, from source to root. The italicised definition relates to the Kabbalah, referencing the Sephiroth or node on the Tree of Life associated with each number which helps to add further depth.

Before we get started, here's another quick general rule:

- Odd-numbered cards are off-balance, in transit, in transition, transmitting
- Even-numbered cards are more stable, *relatively* static, absorb or resolve

Numbers 1, 2 and 3

- Realm of **Fire**
- Plane of **Will or Intention**
- **Archetypal World**
- Ruled by the Crown (1) and Third Eye (2:3) Chakras
- Defined as:
    - **1**: Essence, creation, new beginnings, potential, *source*
    - **2**: Intention, Duality, division, *wisdom*
    - **3**: Collaboration, self-expression, birth, division, *understanding*

Numbers 4, 5 and 6

- Realm of **Water**
- **Emotional** Plane
- **Creative** World
- Ruled by the Throat (4:5) and Heart (6) Chakras
- Defined as:
    - **4**: Integration, expansion, pragmatism, stability, *mercy*
    - **5**: Conflict, contraction, challenge or "sorting", *strength*
    - **6**: Harmony, love, balance, nurturing, *beauty*

Numbers 7, 8 and 9

- Realm of **Air**
- **Mental** Plane
- **Formative** World
- Ruled by the Solar Plexus (7:8) and Sacral (9) Chakras
- Defined as:
    - **7**: Transition or "cycling", tenacity, individuation, *victory*
    - **8**: Determination, resilience, strength, sufficiency, *gratitude*
    - **9**: Compassion or empathy, attainment, introspection, *foundation*

Number 10

- Realm of **Earth**
- **Material or Practical** Plane
- **Physical** World
- Ruled by the Root Chakra
- Defined as: Continuity, beginning of the next cycle, manifestation, *kingdom*

In summary: adding further depth to our previous examples, the Ace of Wands is the emanation of intention into the world of Formation so contains the essence of our internal drive, of the fire in our belly; and the Ten of Pentacles is the end of

the Material journey in the element of Earth and manifests the “kingdom” of that realm into existence.

Minor Arcana + Numerology

Let’s bring those elemental and numerological concepts together next with a final lens on how the interpretation develops as we progress from numbers one (ACE) through ten to define the archetype of the suit more fully:

- **Fire**: does not like to be reined in or contained! The lower numbers are open, ambitious, dignified; the higher numbers start to “feel the burn” and emphasise the burden of that ambition, the price of passion. We can see that illustrated in 1:3 as representing “the spark, the resolve, the realised ambition”, through 4:7 being the journey through the mid-point, stopping off to enjoy success as it lands, before using the last of our reserves to come home in cards 8:10.

- **Water**: is inherently transient, depending on how much energy it contains, from gas (steam) through liquid, to solid (ice). This is reflected in the journey: numbers 1:3 represent that energetic, gaseous state, 4:7 the fluidity of the liquid state, becoming more solid and so more “resolved” in 8:10.

- **Air**: represents our thoughts and the way we communicate them but also “prana” or the breath of life which interconnects us all and allows us to flow freely, so as such the element of Air rejoices in the freedom of the lower planes represented by numbers 1:6 but actively resists the world of action represented in 7:10.

- **Earth**: is the physical world and conversely to the element of Air, is happier on the material plane. The journey of our fourth element represents the “integration” aspect of the number four: so 1:3 shows us opportunity, 4:6 shows us how to put that opportunity into action, 7:9 puts us to work on those opportunities and 10 is the ultimate manifestation. (Look out for the Tree of Life from the Kabbalah clearly illustrated on the Ten of Pentacles!).

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“Roads? Where we’re going, we don’t need roads!”

The Major arcana

represents major forces, milestones, opportunities



The 22 cards of the Major arcana are known collectively as "*The Fool's Journey*" and are linked to the Kabbalah, the journey through the 22 paths of the Tree of Life, from the world of spirit to the material world in which we live our daily lives. Each card in the Major arcana represents a path on the Tree of Life. There are an almost infinite number of ways to undertake that journey, there are as many different stories as there are people, but it could go a little something like this:

"I suddenly realised the potential that's laid out in front of me, the options I have ahead of me, filling me with the wonder of opportunity that lies ahead for me to explore **(The Fool)**.

Within an optimistic mindset, I focused my intention on acquiring knowledge, to understand my place in the world and my ability to influence or control both how I think and act but also realise what is and isn't within my sphere of influence **(The Magician)**. Having set that intention, I quickly realise that it's not all about me, it's about everyone and everything, that controlling my place in the world means controlling my mindset and trusting my gut **(The High Priestess)**. With that understanding, I see my place in creation, I understand that I am accountable for my own destiny but that it's a two-way street, you get what you give **(The Empress)**. That two-way street is based in the consensus reality that we share with all other living things. Some people have more control or influence than others in shaping that consensus reality depending on their intention and where their path leads **(The Emperor)**. With great power comes great responsibility, and there's a fine line between being the figurehead, the poster boy, and the person who sometimes has to make difficult choices, who stands where the rubber meets the road. In order for things to run smoothly there needs to be a system, a place for everything, and everything in its place **(The Hierophant)**. Within that system, we

sometimes do the wrong things for the right reasons, sometimes we do the right things for the wrong reasons. Life is a test; lessons can be hard won sometimes but if our heart is in the right place we can always learn from our mistakes **(The Lovers)**. The most important thing is don't burn any bridges, try to see both sides of the story. Sometimes you just need to get out of your own way, harness your will, realise that the way out is through **(The Chariot)**.

Winning those hard-won lessons gives the gift of higher-level understanding: we often become the things we try to fight so I'm determined to choose reconciliation over conflict **(Strength)**. That's not always an easy thing to do! So sometimes we need to retreat to our cave, find a safe space to mull things over, find a mutually beneficial perspective **(The Hermit)**. Even from that place of relative abstraction, we can't always escape the pull of the Past or the draw of the Future, we're all accountable to Karma and its effect in the Now **(The Wheel of Fortune)**. But knowledge is power and understanding that there is *a* system, even if we don't always fully understand *the* system, allows us to set some boundaries, to put some guard-rails in place **(Justice)**. Rules are made to be broken, and boundaries are made to be tested; if I don't ask, I'll never find out; if I don't go, I'll never know. So much like at the start of this journey, we feel things out, we learn as we grow. Sometimes it feels good, sometimes it feels painful, but we learn either way **(The Hanged Man)**.

Growth means change and real change starts within (as within, so without), and it's the only constant. Change can be small things, doing the same things in a different way, but it can also be transformative, trying something completely different towards a better understanding of our place in this world and how we can evolve within it **(Death)**. Conscious of our boundaries, and with a few lessons learned so far, we soon realise that jumping in at the deep end isn't always the best idea - sometimes we just need to dip our toes in, take baby steps. "*Slow is smooth and smooth is fast*" is a good mantra, as much as the cliched "*teamwork makes the dream work*" so I'm never afraid to ask for help from others or give it when asked **(Temperance)**.

By this point, there have been a few struggles, a few lessons learned, a few tight spots I've had to negotiate my way out of, but I'm a better person for it. If I've learned anything it's that it's pretty easy to fall down the rabbit hole, to get stuck in the details rather than see the big picture. If I'm not paying full attention, not trusting my gut, or learning from my mistakes then I can be blinkered to my true calling and potential **(The Devil)**. Even when I do keep my eyes and mind open, the rug can get pulled from under me! Some of those bolts from the blue are the hard advice I wasn't really allowing myself to hear, or the lesson that was staring

me in the face, but I wasn't yet ready to accept. Sometimes the Universe takes that decision for us and guides us back onto the path or true will and intention **(The Tower)**.

I still remember how it felt at the start of this story, that sense of wonder has never really left me. After all I've been through, I now understand what I want from this world, and that what I want and what I need are sometimes two different things. So with a renewed sense of hope I continue on my journey **(The Star)**. I'm also now more conscious than ever that I'll only ever really know *my* story, and even at that there are things I'll never really fully understand about myself, that sometimes you only see what you're allowed to see or know what you allow yourself to know. It's a good thing that I learned early on to rely on my intuition, that thinking and acting with the best of intentions is really the only thing I can consciously control **(The Moon)**.

The more I rely on my intuition, the more I realise that *my* story isn't a single thread, a single narrative; that there are aspects of "me" that I don't fully control in the sense that I had originally considered. There's a difference between knowing something and acting on something. As the saying goes, we can only have the "*strength to change what we can, the patience to put up with what we can't, and the wisdom to know the difference*". With that enlightened perspective, my energy is renewed, I find contentment **(The Sun)**.

Man, what a ride that was! I'm knackered but happy, ready for bed but ready for anything! My only wish is that, should I be allowed another ride around this particular amusement park, I don't need to re-learn *all* of those lessons again, but retain some of that perspective and evolve again from there **(Judgement)**. But, until that time comes, I've had a good run. I've leapt in and explored the world. I've met new people, learned new concepts, and understood different perspectives. I've found my place in the world. I've also learned to know myself and to work within my boundaries, and that *to be content means to want what you have, not have what you want* **(The Universe)."**

Here's a summary of the above and some keywords to help you remember each card:

0. Fool	Innocence, wonder, optimism, new beginnings, potential
1. Magician	Manifestation, willpower, "as above, so below"
2. High Priestess	Intuition, harmony, connection to source
3. Empress	Abundance, birth, motherhood, receptivity
4. Emperor	Control, stability, authority, fatherhood

5.	Hierophant	Guidance, domestic or parental responsibility, belief
6.	Lovers	Union, love, truth, beauty, openness
7.	Chariot	Will-power, self-discovery, transition
8.	Strength	Reconciliation, harnessed power, self-development
9.	Hermit	Introspection, meditation, self-reflection
10.	Wheel of Fortune	Karmic cycles, the movement and cycles of energy
11.	Justice	Cause & effect, the movement towards equilibrium
12.	Hanged Man	Surrender, wisdom as a result of self-sacrifice, atonement
13.	Death	Transformative change, new perspectives
14.	Temperance	Unite & combine, partnership, co-operation
15.	Devil	Integration, temptation, entrapment in the material
16.	Tower	Chaos, new foundations, sudden change, a lighthouse
17.	Star	Rejuvenation, optimism, illumination, courage
18.	Moon	Instinct, the unconscious, predestination
19.	Sun	Contentment, enlightenment, potential for growth
20.	Judgement	Self-determination, endings and beginnings, awakening
21.	World	Fulfilment, completion, finality, self-actualisation

Astrology of the Majors

As well as the connection to the Tree of Life, the 22 Major arcana cards relate to 12 signs of the zodiac and 10 planetary bodies visible to the naked eye. We'll only cover the basics of Astrology here to help us better understand the energy of the Major Arcana, but if you want a deeper dive into the connection between Astrology and Tarot I highly recommend "Twist Your Fate" by Theresa Reed,

Starting with the 12 signs of the Zodiac: each astrological sign has an assigned "**modality**" or quality which intimates how they operate or what mode of elemental energy is associated with each sign.

- **Cardinal signs Initiate**, are action-oriented (and mark the start of each new season of the year)
    - Fire: Aries
    - Water: Cancer
    - Air: Libra
    - Earth: Capricorn
- **Fixed signs Sustain** or maintain, are more practical, adding stability or organisation:
    - Fire: Leo

    - Water: Scorpio
    - Air: Aquarius
    - Earth: Taurus
- **Mutable signs Adapt**, help with change or transition:
    - Fire: Sagittarius
    - Water: Pisces
    - Air: Gemini
    - Earth: Virgo

We can relate those signs to their ruling planetary bodies we mentioned above, with a keyword for each summarised as:

Zodiac Sign	Keyword	Ruling Body	Keyword	Cardinal	Fixed	Mutable
Aries	Passionate	Mars	Energy	Fire		
Taurus	Patient	Venus	Love		Earth	
Gemini	Curious	Mercury	Communication			Air
Cancer	Nurturing	Moon	Emotion	Water		
Leo	Bold	Sun	Ego		Fire	
Virgo	Meticulous	Mercury	Intellect			Earth
Libra	Balanced	Venus	Relationships	Air		
Scorpio	Intense	Mars	Courage		Water	
Sagittarius	Honest	Jupiter	Abundance			Fire
Capricorn	Responsible	Saturn	Structure	Earth		
Aquarius	Innovative	Uranus	Unconventionality		Air	
Pisces	Sensitive	Neptune	Intuition			Water

Taking an example from above: Aries is a Cardinal (initiating) Fire (masculine, willpower, and ambition) sign ruled by the planet Mars (energy, drive) which we can sum up as the keyword “passionate”.

Notice the “mirror image” in the table above, where the moon & sun in the middle reflect the Mars / Venus / Mercury alignment on either side. We’ll look at another example of this below, but also note the elemental correspondence here, how the signs balance out, e.g. Aries Fire balanced by Scorpio Water, or Taurus Earth balanced by Libra Air.

With those relationships in mind, we can now bring in the 12 Major Arcana cards associated to each zodiac sign and the 10 Major Arcana cards associated to each planet and see how those correspondences can help us better understand the meaning of each card. This method of comparing the Major arcana cards and their astrological and elemental connections is a great way to better understand the core meaning of each but also how they manifest in a practical sense. This gives us the ability to not only provide insight to ourselves or our clients, but also at least a thread to pull on when it comes to practical application.

Whilst each Major arcana card has, in some Tarot decks, both a planetary and zodiac alignment, I've grouped them here based on their primary association into two separate tables for ease of reference.

Major Arcana		Keyword	Ruling Sign	Element
4	**Emperor**	Control	Aries	Fire
5	**Hierophant**	Guidance	Taurus	Earth
6	**Lovers**	Union	Gemini	Air
7	**Chariot**	Will-power	Cancer	Water
8	**Strength**	Reconciliation	Leo	Fire
9	**Hermit**	Introspection	Virgo	Earth
11	**Justice**	Cause & effect	Libra	Air
13	**Death**	Transformation	Scorpio	Water
14	**Temperance**	Unite & combine	Sagittarius	Fire
15	**Devil**	Integration	Capricorn	Earth
17	**Star**	Rejuvenation	Aquarius	Air
18	**Moon**	Instinct	Pisces	Water

Major Arcana		Keyword	Ruling Body	Element
0	**Fool**	Innocence	Uranus	Air
1	**Magician**	Manifestation	Mercury	Air
2	**High Priestess**	Intuition	Moon	Water
3	**Empress**	Abundance	Venus	Earth
10	**Wheel of Fortune**	Karmic cycle	Jupiter	Fire
12	**Hanged Man**	Surrender	Neptune	Water
16	**Tower**	Chaos	Mars	Fire
19	**Sun**	Contentment	Sun	Fire
20	**Judgement**	Self-determination	Pluto	Fire
21	**World**	Fulfilment	Saturn	Earth

You'll notice **Pluto** making an appearance here which, despite being relegated to being a Dwarf Planet by popular science, is still a big gun in astrology, representing rebirth, awakening, and transformation (as represented on the Judgement card).

In summary: there are many ways we can interpret the Major Arcana cards and, whilst we should always rely on our intuition, those Astrological connections can give us a deeper understanding of the archetypes each card represents and so how the energy is flowing in your reading.

As an example: the Lovers card embodies the energy of Gemini (curiosity), through the element of Air (the mental realm) and the planet Mercury (the messenger, communication). So no wonder the average Gemini is curious and intellectual, and that type of openness and need for understanding is what's embodied in the Lovers!

Or, thinking about our friend The Fool: he represents the energy of Uranus (unconventionality), channelled through the element of Air (which in this context could be defined as "wonder"). So our keyword "innocence" represents that "*Wow, look at this!*" feeling when we encounter something new, or think about something existing in a new way, with an open mind.

We talked about the “mirror image” of the Zodiac-Planetary alignment above, and we can use a technique called “**Gematria**" to do the same exercise with the Major Arcana cards. By adding together the double-digit Major card numbers to a single digit, we can see the correspondences between them, (and keeping our elemental colour coding here for continuity):

Major Arcana		Keyword	Mirrored by		Keyword
1	Magician	Manifestation	10	Wheel of Fortune	Karmic cycle
2	High Priestess	Intuition	11	Justice	Cause & effect
3	Empress	Abundance	12	Hanged Man	Surrender
4	Emperor	Control	13	Death	Transformation
5	Hierophant	Guidance	14	Temperance	Unite & combine
6	Lovers	Union	15	Devil	Integration
7	Chariot	Will-power	16	Tower	Chaos
8	Strength	Reconciliation	17	Star	Rejuvenation
9	Hermit	Introspection	18	Moon	Instinct

Key things to remember about the Major Arcana are:

- It represents the “Fool’s Journey”
- That’s the path from Source to the Material down the Tree of Life
- That same path is illustrated in the sky, through association with the zodiac and planets
- It’s all energy!
- Always go with your gut: once you’ve a basic understanding of the energy of each card, remember context is everything, the story we’re telling represents Right Now!

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“We’re all pretty bizarre. Some of us are just better at hiding it…”

Questions & Spreads

how to lay out the cards to help tell your story



Words have power, stories are magic.

My favourite place to be is by the fire, either in silence watching the flames dance above the glowing embers or sharing a story between friends like our ancestors would do, of the gods, of the stars, or simply of the events of the day. That environment allows us to adjust and open our senses, gives us time and space to consider ourselves and our place in the world, to better understand and appreciate the layers of the stories that we hear or that we tell ourselves. Which is also exactly what we're doing with a Tarot reading!

Our clients trust us to always work for their highest good, to have their best interests at heart, and to give guidance based not only on our understanding of the message in the cards but candidly conveyed with kindness. As such, before we give our interpretation of the story, always consider: *is it true, necessary, and kind?*

This links to the core conditions of a formal Counselling relationship: congruence (standing side-by-side), empathy (understanding or sharing of our client's thoughts and emotions) and unconditional positive regard (being supportive and accepting of our client regardless of their situation). As such, before giving an interpretation we should embody those conditions and ask ourselves:

- Is it true? Will that story resonate with your client, are you speaking with them on the same level?
- Is it necessary? Is it a story which they're ready to hear, particularly if they're working through tough times or in an emotionally vulnerable state?

- Is it kind? Are we acting with empathy and compassion, will your message allow your client to take a positive step forward in their journey?

As I've mentioned already, there are as many stories to tell as there are people in the world but, in my experience, there are generally 3 types of clients that you'll receive:

1. Those who are just generally interested in Tarot with no real question in mind, they're just here for the experience
2. Those who initially say they have no real question in mind, but there's one or two things which we uncover as we progress. (Those one or two things could also be questions which they weren't yet ready to verbalise, so Tarot helps open the door to facing the related thoughts and feelings).
3. Those who have a specific question, problem, or opportunity that they're seeking guidance on

Client #1 we could maybe call our "Seekers" who are looking for a deeper understanding of themselves and/or their place in the world. We don't really need a question to instigate those types of readings, but here's 5 questions that we can use as conversation starters which may initially deepen our understanding of the client and so deepen the insight which we both gain from the reading:

- What did 8-year-old you love, or love doing?
- What are you willing to struggle for?
- What makes you forget to eat?
- How are you going to save the world, or at least contribute to making it a better place?
- If you knew you'd be dead a year from now, what would you do; how would you like to be remembered?

For Clients #2 and #3, the most common questions revolve around something like:

- How do I know if I'm on the right path in my life?
- What support do I need or what support can I provide to my friends and family?
- How can I succeed in my career?
- What do I really need from a romantic relationship?
- What opportunities or relationships should I pay more attention to?
- How can I more clearly understand my purpose or my goals, and how to achieve them?

Let's look at different spreads, or layouts, of cards we can use to help tell a story. We'll also consider how much time you have to discuss the reading, from a quick one or two cards through to a more thorough synopsis. We can of course discuss a single card at great length or immediately see the through-line in a more complex spread. Just like people, each question is unique through being imbued with and reflecting the energy of our client, so the approach we take to answering it should be too.

Also, consider the layouts below as the "starter" or foundational cards in our spread, upon which we can always add "clarifier" cards which serve to add a bit more detail or specificity. Please remember, a clarifier is not the same as saying "*I don't like that answer, give me a different one please!*" but adds further context to what the originally drawn card is telling us.

Depending on your shuffle technique, you may also pull cards which appear upside down which we call "reversed". There are a number of ways to interpret reversed cards, from simply meaning the opposite of the traditional definition through a change or imbalance in the energy of the card to a watered-down or weakened version of the traditional definition. The core word here is energy: I personally interpret reversed cards as representing an internalisation of the energy of the card, meaning the message is one that we particularly need to take to heart. Simply put, reversed cards are telling you "*Pay attention to me!*".

I like to imagine that each card in the Tarot is a scene from a movie, a still-frame image captured from dramatic action in flight, or even as an illustration from a book. If that were so, what would the *sensory experience* of that scene be, what could you see, touch, hear, smell, taste? Relate that experiential perspective to the question being asked - how could that reflect the experience of your client?

Lastly, there are commonalities in the approach we take to interpreting the card, regardless of what our query is, which help us explore the facets of the imagery, including but not limited to:

- Archetypal imagery: what common objects or people or scenes do we see playing out here, what connotations can we associate with those?
- Context: not only what's happening in the scene, but what could have happened before and what may happen after; how would that affect the protagonist(s) in the card, how would they think, feel or act differently during that process?

- Elements and colours: as we discussed in an earlier section, pay attention to the colouring of the scene.
    - What does the red wings on the central figure of The Lovers represent?
    - Why is the protagonist on the Eight of Swords wearing a red dress?
    - Why is one of the characters in the Five of Pentacles wearing a green dress?
- Specific details: even after years of staring at the Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot deck I still notice little "anomalies" or find other ways to interpret the imagery by asking questions like:
    - What does the little lobster (or langoustine!) in The Moon mean?
    - Why is there an armed guard in the Six of Cups?
    - Why is the protagonist wearing odd shoes in the Seven of Wands?

One Card (5 minutes to... however long you've got!)

We can use a single card reading in one of three ways:

1. To give us a quick Yes or No answer to a specific question: what does your intuition, your gut, tell you at first glance?
2. To give us some insight into the query based on the archetypal imagery of the card including those elemental connections and sensory experiences that we talked through earlier: what is happening in the card, how do we imagine the character(s) are thinking, feeling, experiencing and what does that mean in context of our query?
3. As a tool for meditation: as an extension of #2 we can simply spend time allowing our subconscious mind to absorb the imagery of the card and allow responsive thoughts to help consciously guide us. (This is also really good if you're going through Shadow Work, which is where we work with our unconscious mind to uncover repressed or hidden parts of ourselves).

Two Cards (5 to 10 minutes)

My favourite two card spread, which I would encourage you to do every day or as a great journaling prompt, is an Energy & Action spread which is exactly what it says on the tin: we're telling the story of how energy transforms into action!

1. What energy is acting upon me today in general, or in the context of my specific question?
2. What action should I take to either negate, counteract, or use that energy to my advantage?

We can add a third card in here asking what the outcome would be if I take that action - but I personally generally enjoy the process of looking back at yesterday's reading and reflecting on how exactly that energy did play out, and if I acted in accordance with the guidance on the card.

Three Cards (15 to 20 minutes)

This is the most common way to start a reading with a client and there are many formats to choose from, but here's some examples of what I find works well in practise, where we lay out three cards to signify:

- Past / Present / Future
- You / Me / We (both of you)
- Option 1 / Option 2 / How to choose between them OR What they have in common
- Strength / Weakness / Practical Advice
- Within (thoughts) / Without (actions) / Practical Advice
- Who you are / Why you are / What you can do about it
- What do I need to see / What do I need to realise or better understand / What will happen when I do
- What everyone knows or sees / What only you know or see / What no-one knows or sees

Four Cards (~20 minutes)

We can also supplement that latter three card spread to represent a tool for self-reflection called Johari's Window, in which we ask the cards to reveal the:

- Open Self: information that both you and others know
- Blind Self: information that you don't know but others do
- Hidden Self: information that you know but others don't
- Unknown Self: information that neither you nor others know

Six Cards (30minutes)

There are two options here, the first of which is to build a pyramid of 3+2+1 cards which build on the cards in your initial Three Card spread and allow us to add a bit more context and guidance. A couple of examples being:

- [3 cards] Past / Present / Future
- [2 cards] What changed between the past and now / What should I be aware of between now and the future?

- [1 card] What do both those periods of change have in common?

- [3 cards] Who you are / Why you are / What you can do about it
- [2 cards] What influences affect Who you are to determine or influence Why you are / How can we affect positive change?
- [1 card] What is the common theme between our influences (external) and our ability to affect positive change (internal)?

The second six card option is also a great start for our Seeker client mentioned above. I call this the "Artemis Spread" named after the Greek god Apollo's twin sister who is the Goddess of the Hunt and also of the Moon and as such is able to hide or reveal herself at will. This spread allows us to check in with who a person is right here, right now, and give some direction based on the overall elements of their energetic persona and how that's steering their life. (I also borrowed the "Cross" from the Celtic Cross spread here for the last card).

So we lay out six cards, adding each clockwise and starting with:

1. Fire to the South: what is something to celebrate, something which represents my deepest desires, in line with my highest good?
2. Water to the West: what do I need to embrace or let go of from an emotional perspective?
3. Air to the North: what is my message from spirit or the ancestors, what advice do they have for me right now?
4. Earth to the East: what is the best practical direction for me to take?
5. In the Centre: who truly am I, what is the best version of me which will bring balance to the other elements?
6. On top of that centre card: … but what is blocking or slowing down my progress to becoming that best version of my true self?

We can use that holistic approach to uncover a specific area of our client's life on which we could focus our attention during a subsequent reading by replacing the first 4 cards in the above with:

- South (Wands): In my working life, which career goals should I pursue?
- West (Water): In my relationships, what emotional support do I need to give or receive?
- North (Air): In my academic life, which areas of study will resonate with me?
- East (Earth): In my private life, where should I focus my practical energy?

Seven Cards (30+ minutes)

This was the first ever spread that I learned, called the Split Hexagram Spread from the book “Modern Magick” by Donald Michael Kraig. I’ve slightly tweaked the book version of the spread to allow me to read it in two different ways: to illustrate the spiritual and practical factors at play, but also using the three-column structure to show us a slightly more detailed view of the Past / Present / Future spread we mentioned earlier.

Traditionally, this spread calls for cutting the deck into three piles after shuffling, laid out from left to right. You then lay out the spread in the order below, taking one card from each pile left to right, so the last card number 7 should come from the left pile.

We’re forming 2 triangles here, the first triangle is upside down with card 1 to the left, 2 to the right and 3 in the middle, representing:

- 1 & 2: spiritual influence, but with 1 carrying more “weight” than 2
- 3: the overall spiritual advice, or message from spirit that helps us interpret and act upon those influences

Next, and below that triangle, we lay out a second triangle, with card 4 to the left, 5 to the right, and 6 in the middle:

- 4: unconscious desires, motivations, or fears
- 5: conscious desires, motivations, or fears
- 6: the overall practical advice which we can consider when releasing those desires and motivations or facing those fears

In the middle of both triangles, so in the middle pillar of the spread between cards 3 and 6 is card 7 which represents the final outcome, or the balance between the spiritual and practical.

As mentioned above, we can also read card 1 and 4 as representing the Past, card 3, 6 and 7 as the Present, and so card 2 and 5 as the Future. I think this helps explain why card 1 is “heavier” than card 2 in the original layout as the past has associated energetic baggage which takes more energy to carry forward.

Nine Cards (30+ minutes)

We can expand the Split Hexagram into a 3 x 3 card spread with the horizontal rows representing our Body, Mind and Spirit and the vertical columns representing Past, Present and Future. We can read this a number of different ways, either telling the story of our material then mental then spiritual lives across those time periods (by reading horizontally), or by looking at how Body, Mind and Spirit influences and drives us across those same time periods (by reading vertically). I personally prefer to read each pillar at a time and move from past through present to future, to help holistically understand who my client is and how they're evolving over time. This also helps us answer the most frequently asked questions in one spread too:

- Body equating to Practical or Material concerns
- Mind pertaining to Work or Career
- Spirit relating to Love or Relationships

In summary: experiment and see which spread or spreads work best for you, and what helps your client tell the clearest and most helpful version of their story. There is really no "right" answer except what works!

Top Tips!

- When phrasing your question, avoid those with binary (Yes or No) answers. "How" or "What" questions are generally more open-ended and so more effective in broadening our understanding than more singularly focussed "Who" or "When" questions.

- When pulling cards for your spread, take a sneak peek at the card on the bottom of the deck. That often represents an element that our client would rather not be thinking about, and as such can be helpful in phrasing and positioning our story.

- Pay attention to the direction the characters are facing, how they're interacting and so what the "balance of power" may be, what they have in common or otherwise. If the characters were having a conversation, what would it be about? If they were discussing the question you posed, what advice would they give you, what perspectives do they have to offer?

- If you opt to pay particular attention to reversed cards, try adding “SELF” or “PRIVATE” to the traditional meaning to illustrate the reversed meaning. For example, the Page of Wands is about discovery, exploration, enthusiasm, realising there’s potential in an idea. A reversed Page of Wands therefore could represent a pending *self*-discovery or guide us to do a bit more *self*-exploration on the question we posed.

- Pay attention to the distribution of the cards in your spread:
    - Do you have lots of Major Arcana? Big stuff is on the road ahead!
    - All minor arcana cards? Focus on the details, getting from A to B, connecting the dots.
    - Lots of a particular suit? Focus on the abundance or absence of the energy that suit represents.
    - One suit missing entirely from the spread? What could the absence of that energy in the story the client is trying to tell mean, and how can they address that gap to help restore balance?

- Once we’ve sought and found at least a thread or two to pull on with our client, remember that to “realise” something means to make it real. Tarot readers aren’t (necessarily!) Life Coaches but it never hurts to relay the adage that:
    - A dream written down with a date is a GOAL
    - A GOAL broken down into steps is a PLAN
    - A PLAN turned into action becomes REALITY

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“Patience, young ones. You will find both safety and danger ahead.”

Cheat Sheets
bringing it all together

Here's an overview which might serve as a handy *aide memoire* for the cards but please remember, as the High Priestess would remind us, that Tarot is equal parts art and science so if these meanings don't resonate with you, **trust your intuition!**

I've also highlighted where cards in the minor suit have particular potency, referencing our Numerology overview, and you'll see how the journey from one to ten in each element varies from our walk-through of elemental energy.

The Minor Arcana

Minor #	Number Keyword	Fire / Wands	Water / Cups	Air / Swords	Earth / Pentacles
1 / ACE	**Essence**	**Spark**	Source	Seed	Root
2	**Duality**	**Resolve**	Healing unity	Stalemate	The Juggler
3	**Collaboration**	**Realised Ambition**	Camaraderie	The Fear	Teamwork
4	**Integration**	Home-coming	**Apathy**	Respite	Material security
5	**Conflict**	Sibling Rivalry	**Loss/Less**	Fight, fly or freeze	Humility
6	**Harmony**	Mission accomplished	**Simple kindness**	Rite of passage	Charity
7	**Transition**	Perseverance	Fantasy	**Rhetoric**	The Gardener

Minor #	Number Keyword	Fire / Wands	Water / Cups	Air / Swords	Earth / Pentacles
8	**Determination**	Incoming!	The Seeker	**Strength, Patience, Wisdom**	Diligence
9	**Attainment**	Resilience	The Genie	**Analysis anxiety**	Self sufficiency
10	**Continuity**	Burden of success	Community	Re-evaluation	**Opportunity**
Page	**Inception**	Vitality	Inner child	Think for yourself	The Good Student
Knight	**Momentum**	Maverick	The Romantic	Impulsive	Diligence
Queen	**Nurture**	Instinctual	Make space	Unbiased candour	Homemaker
King	**Stability**	Visionary	The Diplomat	Rational logic	The Entrepreneur

Notes:

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The Major Arcana

Major Number	Title	Ruling Sign	Modality	Elemental Energy	Ruling Planet	Keyword
0	**Fool**	-	-	Air	Uranus	Innocence
1	**Magician**	-	-	Air	Mercury	Manifestation
2	**High Priestess**	-	-	Water	Moon	Intuition
3	**Empress**	-	-	Earth	Venus	Abundance
4	**Emperor**	Aries	Cardinal	Fire	-	Control
5	**Hierophant**	Taurus	Fixed	Earth	-	Guidance
6	**Lovers**	Gemini	Mutable	Air	-	Union
7	**Chariot**	Cancer	Cardinal	Water	-	Will-power
8	**Strength**	Leo	Fixed	Fire	-	Reconciliation
9	**Hermit**	Virgo	Mutable	Earth	-	Introspection
10	**Wheel of Fortune**	-	-	Fire	Jupiter	Karmic cycle
11	**Justice**	Libra	Cardinal	Air	-	Cause & effect
12	**Hanged Man**	-	-	Water	Neptune	Surrender
13	**Death**	Scorpio	Fixed	Water	-	Transformation

Major Number	Title	Ruling Sign	Modality	Elemental Energy	Ruling Planet	Keyword
14	**Temperance**	Sagittarius	Mutable	Fire	-	Unite & combine
15	**Devil**	Capricorn	Cardinal	Earth	-	Integration
16	**Tower**	-	-	Fire	Mars	Chaos
17	**Star**	Aquarius	Fixed	Air	-	Rejuvenation
18	**Moon**	Pisces	Mutable	Water	Moon	Instinct
19	**Sun**	-	-	Fire	Sun	Contentment
20	**Judgement**	-	-	Fire	Pluto	Self-determination
21	**World / Universe**	-	-	Earth	Saturn	Fulfilment

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“Life moves pretty fast. You don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it!”

Practical Stuff!

exercises to get you started

Now that we've covered the basics of the Minor and Major Arcana, talked through how to phrase your questions and how to lay out the cards accordingly, here are some practical exercises which you may want to include in your practice.

Please remember, it isn't cheating to go back and check your notes, your favourite Tarot book or app of Tarot meanings. Whilst we're aiming to build an intuitive understanding of the cards, don't beat yourself up if your first impression is "*Nope, no idea!*". The most important factor is that true understanding of who we are, why we are, where we're going and how we can apply the insight that Tarot can provide will only come in time and dedication to that practice, so: **Patience, padawan!**

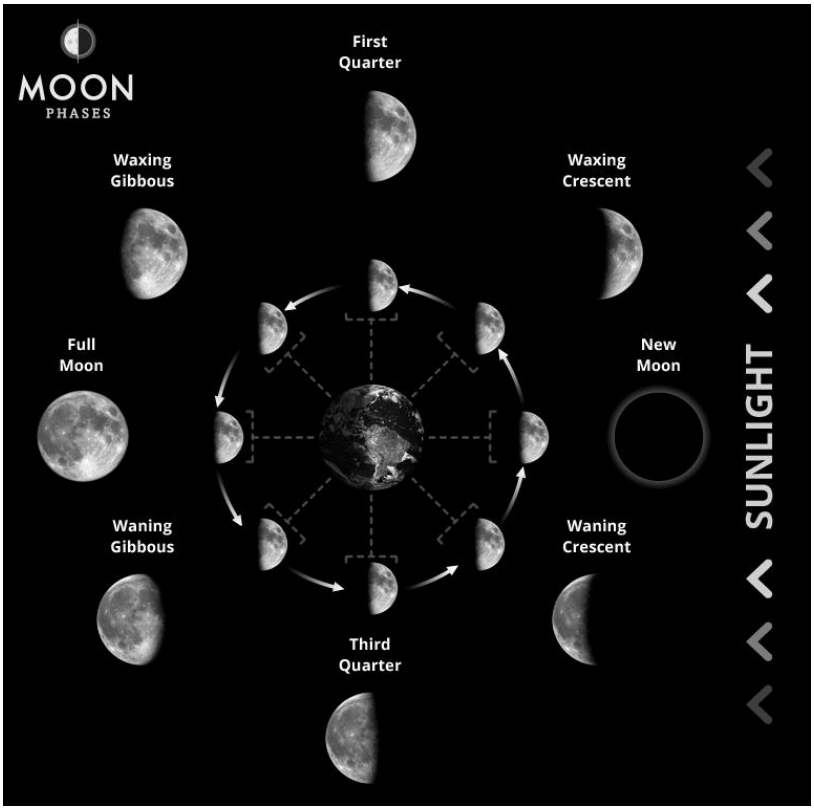
1. Watch out for the Elements and Tarot archetypes in the media

As we touched on earlier, Tarot should be a sensory experience, one which ignites our imagination, and we started this journey off by looking at how elemental energy can be illustrated through some of the main protagonists in our TV shows and movies. So when we're consuming such media, try and understand not only what's going on but who the protagonists are: what's driving them, how are they feeling or acting or interacting, why do you think they're feeling or acting that way. Does that relate to a particular element or Tarot card(s)?

2. Aligning your energy with the moon

We talked before about how Astrology is deeply embedded in the symbology of the Tarot, and one way we can practically integrate that into our lives and use it to guide not only a deeper understanding of the Tarot but also of the patterns of our own life, is by paying attention to the 28-day cycle, or the eight phases of the Moon.

Aside from the more esoteric connections which we'll look at next is a very basic one: human beings, or at least our physical bodies, are composed of 65% water and as such we're as susceptible to the energy of the moon as are the tides that give life to the earth! There are certain phases where certain elements are more active and so more significant in both our daily journey and in how we may interpret Tarot, so we'll overlay those into the eight phases. But, as we've talked about a few times already, if you experience that energy in a different way or find an interpretation which resonates more with you personally, stick with that!



Source: moonphases.co.uk

Read this image anti-clockwise starting with the New Moon at 3 o'clock above

- **The New Moon**: our "blank page" to plant seeds, consider and phrase intentions for the next cycle
    - **Air Time!** Conceptualise, visualise, frame ideas
- **Waxing** (*growing, attracting, internalising*) **crescent** *(less than half)* is between New Moon and First Quarter, where we conceptualise and declare intention
    - **Water Time!** Evaluate, assess, become emotionally invested
- **First Quarter Moon** is often a period where we become aware of obstacles to realising that intention and so where decisions need to be made.
    - **Fire Time!** Gather, teach, discuss, exchange information and ideas
- **Waxing gibbous** *(more than half)* is between First Quarter and Full Moon, where we grow in clarity or and begin to nurture those ideas and intentions and put a plan in place to counter those obstacles
    - **Earth Time!** Work hard, turn ideas and intention into action

- **The Full Moon** is time to celebrate! This is the peak of our energy, full of joy, abundance, and gratitude
    - **Fire Time!** Party time! Give thanks, recognise abundance, share joy
- **Waning** (*receding, repelling, externalising*) **gibbous or "disseminating" moon** is where we have received our harvest, the fruits of our realised intention, and begin the process of reflection
    - **Air Time!** What would you do differently next time, what worked out this time that we can repeat or build on in the next cycle?
- **Third or Last Quarter Moon** is a time for releasing, letting go and cleansing as we begin the transition to the next New Moon
    - **Water Time!** Time to release what no longer serves you, and give thanks
- **Waning crescent or "balsamic" moon** is where we "surrender" or release our energy back to the universe, nurture our intuition, and begin the process of restoration (starting with a wee rest!)
    - **Earth Time!** Time for grounding and earthing, immersing yourself in the abundance of nature
- **Repeat!**

You might also recognise some of the Major Arcana archetypes in the moon phase descriptions above:

- **The New Moon**: The Fool, discovery!
- **Waxing Crescent**: The High Priestess, time to honour the sacred, within and without
- **First Quarter**: The Magician, where we become aware of our power and harness the energy of Gandhi's famous phrase: "be the change you want to see in the world!"
- **Waxing Gibbous**: The Wheel of Fortune, "the womb of potential" that is the Karmic cycle
- **The Full Moon**: The Sun & The Moon, the full potential, the peak of light or darkness. (This is why eclipses are so powerful: the Yin and Yang, the forces of Light and Dark, of Form & Force, unite and combine!)
- **Waning gibbous** The Star, an out-pouring of joy!
- **Third Quarter**: Judgement, the meeting of polarities, the weighing of pros and cons; or Death, a period of transformation or transition
- **Waning crescent** The Hermit, meditative, contemplative, the connection to the invisible

3. A Wee Morning Ritual

I like to start each day grounding then raising and aligning my energy and setting a positive intention. If you've ever studied Reiki, you might recognise the phrases below which I've only very slightly altered. Most importantly: take your time, concentrate on each phrase, repeating it either out loud or to yourself, but always from the heart.

Where below it says "BELL", I ask my Singing Bowl to chime, but if you don't have that then feel free to skip, or even clap your hands as an affirmation of intention and a release of energy. Same for the cardinal directions, keep this simple and easy so there's no need to buy a compass, the most important part is that you complete the circle and visualise the energy of each element building as you repeat the associated mantra.

BELL

Place hands over BELL, concentrate on the positive vibration, feel it emanate through your body, up through your hands, into your heart, up into your third eye and then flowing down to ground.

Face each cardinal direction and repeat the phrase:

- Face EAST (*Pentacles/Earth*): Just for today, I will do my work honestly
- Face SOUTH (*Wands/Fire*): Just for today, I will not be angry
- Face WEST (*Cups/Water*): Just for today, I will be grateful
- Face NORTH (*Swords/Air*): Just for today, I will not worry

Keep facing NORTH (*Spirit*): Just for today, I will honour my ancestors AND/OR, I will be kind

BELL

Visualise yourself in a bubble of shimmering white or golden light, emanating from above, flowing through your crown (the top of your head), down through your heart, into your arms and your hands, and back to ground.

Hands in prayer position, (known as Namaste position or Anjali mudra in yoga), and say: May I think, speak, act and be in accordance with my highest good, for the benefit of all living things.

Closing BELL

4. Tarot for Mindfulness

If you practise mindfulness or meditation, and as we touched on during the One Card spread section earlier, try pulling a card to use as the focal point. Use all your senses to immerse yourself in the scene of the card, ask:

- What's happening in the scene, how do you feel?
- What can you see, within and outside of the boundaries of the scene?
- Are there any smells or scents in the air?
- Is it noisy or quiet, what is the source of that?
- If you could reach out and touch anything, what would it be, how would it feel?

Top Tip! That same exercise makes a good quick and simple grounding meditation for anxiety!

Take a deep breath, look around at your current environment and notice:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can touch
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can (or could!) taste

5. Tarot Wisdom Boards

A Wisdom Board is a really fun arts & crafts project which involves creating a collage of positive affirmations, motivational quotes, personal statements of intention and more which, when combined with Tarot, can help carve out your own personal understanding not only of the cards but of yourself.

- Start with a blank sheet of paper, and create 3 columns, one labelled "Strength", one labelled "Patience" and the last labelled "Wisdom"
- Shuffle your deck and pull a card
- Looking at the imagery on the card, imagine how you would think, feel or act if you were a character in that scene. Use any medium that works for you, words, images, colours to illustrate how you would engage:
    - **Strength**: this is a scene in which you have an ability to affect positive change, so in context of a reading you would be able to give practical guidance on

- **Patience**: this is a scene which you have limited or no ability to affect change, so in context of a reading you may advise taking a more abstract stance on
- **Wisdom**: is knowing the difference between the two!

6. The same, but different...

The more you practise Tarot the more you'll start to see patterns emerge. Not just major synchronicities, of which there are many, but patterns in the type of people you meet, the types of questions they pose, the responses we see back in the cards. I've noticed that I can pull the exact same three cards and tell two people a very different story, or conversely pull three very different cards for two very different people but still end up with the same narrative.

So don't be either surprised or discouraged if the same thing happens to you, but remember:

- Everyone is a little bit like *most* people
- Everyone is a lot like *some* people
- Everyone is in at least one way unique

7. What's your "ikigai?

Ikigai is a Japanese phrase which roughly translates to "*reason for being*" and encompasses three main aspects, (elements, pillars and practises), which we can reflect upon to better understand our journey and our story.

- **4 elemental components**
  1. What drives you, what do you love? (Fire)
  2. What are you good at? (Air)
  3. What does the world need from you, what can you give back? (Water)
  4. What can you get paid for? (Earth)

Putting those 4 components into practice therefore helps us realise the fifth element (you!) and bring balance to not only our energy but our practical lives. Next are the pillars and principles we can employ here. Consider these as tenets

or guard-rails you can use in general life, as well when reading Tarot.

- **5 pillars**
  1. Start small
  2. Release yourself
  3. Harmony & sustainability
  4. Find joy in the little things
  5. Be in the here and now

- **10 general practical principles**
  1. Take it slow
  2. Don't fill your stomach beyond 80%
  3. Surround yourself with good friends.
  4. Daily exercise
  5. Smile, think positively
  6. Reconnect with nature
  7. Give thanks, be grateful
  8. Stay active and don't retire

A condensed version of Ikigai could be the four principles through which the residents of Okinawa in Japan, which has the largest percentage of octogenarians and above in the world, live by. Note how they're all inter-related and mutually supportive, supporting the ecosystem of our core elements:

1. Managing Stress (water)
2. Community (earth)
3. Purpose (fire)
4. Spirituality (air)

7. It's Just A Ride

The comedian and visionary Bill Hicks once said, "*all matter is merely energy condensed to a slow vibration, we are all one consciousness experiencing itself subjectively, there is no such thing as death, life is only a dream, and we are the imagination of ourselves*".

He goes on to say that this life is just a ride in an amusement park so we should enjoy the thrills and spills, the ups and downs, the lights, and the laughter. By letting it go and letting it be, we can start to see those patterns we mentioned earlier, and through those understand the journey that we're all on. Spending time in stillness and silence is good for the soul, as much as a day out at the amusement park! In those quiet moments, spend time considering that quote:

where does Consciousness come from, what do we mean by “Everything” and how do we encompass and embrace the power of that Energy?

Now there’s a short question with a very long answer…

What’s Your Story?

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3
4
5
6
7

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”



What does the element of Fire mean to you, how can you ignite your senses?



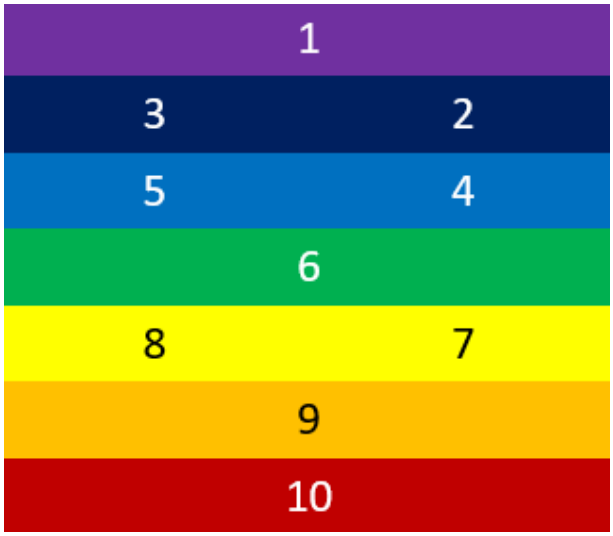
What does the element of Water mean to you, how does your energy flow?



What does the element of Air mean to you, how do you tell your story?



What does the element of Earth mean to you, how do your goals manifest?



Let's talk numbers! How many connotations or connections can you think of for each number, are there any general themes across those?

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General Theme(s) _____

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General Theme(s) _____

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General Theme(s) _____

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General Theme(s) _____

Use these next few pages as your Moon Diary!

Here's a reminder of the generic meaning of each Sun Sign, which the moon spends 2-3 days on per month... how do you feel during those days, do you notice any patterns?

Zodiac Sign	Keyword	Ruling Body	Keyword	Cardinal	Fixed	Mutable
Aries	Passionate	Mars	Energy	Fire		
Taurus	Patient	Venus	Love		Earth	
Gemini	Curious	Mercury	Communication			Air
Cancer	Nurturing	Moon	Emotion	Water		
Leo	Bold	Sun	Ego		Fire	
Virgo	Meticulous	Mercury	Intellect			Earth
Libra	Balanced	Venus	Relationships	Air		
Scorpio	Intense	Mars	Courage		Water	
Sagittarius	Honest	Jupiter	Abundance			Fire
Capricorn	Responsible	Saturn	Structure	Earth		
Aquarius	Innovative	Uranus	Unconventionality		Air	
Pisces	Sensitive	Neptune	Intuition			Water

Aries Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Taurus Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Gemini Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Cancer Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Leo Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Virgo Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Libra Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Scorpio Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Sagittarius Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Capricorn Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Aquarius Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Pisces Moon

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General Theme(s) _____

Found your new favourite Tarot Spread?

Use these pages to sketch the layout and what the cards in each position mean for you...

Spread Name _____

Spread Name _____

Spread Name _____

Spread Name _____

Spread Name _____

Create your own Minor Arcana cheat sheet

Minor #	Number Keyword	Fire / Wands	Water / Cups	Air / Swords	Earth / Pentacles
1 / ACE					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
Page					
Knight					
Queen					
King					

Create your own Major Arcana cheat sheet

Major Number	Title	Keyword
0	Fool	
1	Magician	
2	High Priestess	
3	Empress	
4	Emperor	
5	Hierophant	
6	Lovers	
7	Chariot	
8	Strength	
9	Hermit	
10	Wheel of Fortune	
11	Justice	
12	Hanged Man	
13	Death	
14	Temperance	
15	Devil	
16	Tower	
17	Star	
18	Moon	
19	Sun	
20	Judgement	
21	World	

Select Bibliography & Links

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- https://www.biddytarot.com/tarot-card-meanings/
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- https://astro.cafeastrology.com/natal.php
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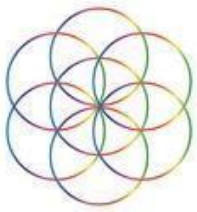
Apps:

- https://www.trustedtarot.com/app/
- https://www.sanctuaryworld.co/
- https://labyrinthos.co/
- https://apps.apple.com/us/app/timepassages/id488946918
- https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.astrograph.timepassages&hl=en_GB&gl=US
- https://www.calm.com/

Books:

- Secrets of the Tarot by Marcus Katz
- 78 Degrees of Wisdom by Rachel Pollack
- Tarot: No Questions Asked by Theresa Reed
- Twist Your Fate (Astrology & Tarot) by Theresa Reed
- The Magic of Tarot by Sasha Graham
- Modern Magick by Donald Michael Kraig
- Angels and Archangels by Damien Echols
- The Kybalion by the Three Initiates
- Biocentrism by Robert Lanza
- A Beginner's Guide to the Chakras by Marion McGeough
- Crystals for Beginners by Karen Frazier
- Wicca: a guide for the solitary practitioner by Scott Cunningham
- Outwitting the Devil by Napoleon Hill
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey

Why “Circles” Tarot?

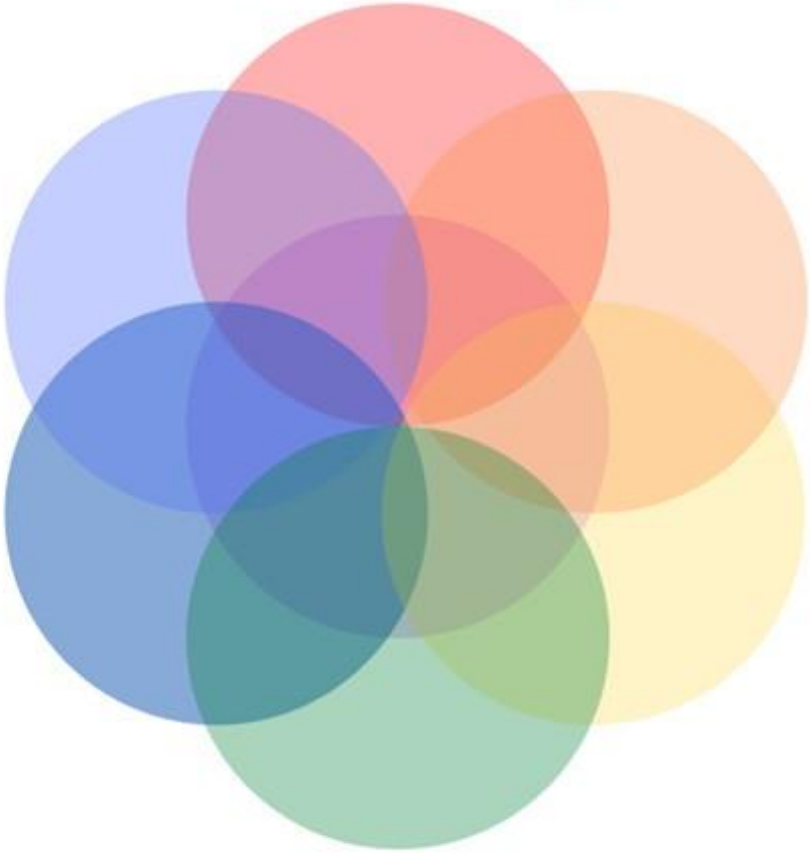


The Seed of Life image in the logo encapsulates the 7 aspects of the unity of creation:

1. Self-knowledge
2. Meditation
3. Egolessness
4. Service to others
5. Goodness
6. Balance
7. Freedom

Circles of awareness, circles of understanding, circles of growth… all of which we can explore in the study of Tarot!

circles tarot



What's Your Story?

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