

Aeclectic Tarot
presents

How to Read Tarot Cards

By Bonnie Cehovet

**Get started with Tarot.
Learn how to use your cards
in your readings and more.**

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The Power of the Tarot in Your Life

The 78 cards of the Tarot are magical tools that we can all put to use in our lives, no matter what cultural, social or religious background we come from. The symbols of the Tarot are universal, representing archetypal qualities that we all experience in our lives.

The 22 cards of the Major Arcana talk about the Fool's Journey (or, as some people refer to it, the Hero's Journey). This is the journey of individuation that we all take through life as we evolve physically and spiritually. The 40 pips of the Minor Arcana (the numbered cards) show us what is happening in our daily lives, the obstacles/challenges that we are facing, and the energies that are there to support and heal us. The 16 Court Cards can represent several different things: actual people in our lives, a part of our inner self, or a situation that we are facing.

Before you purchase your first deck, before you purchase your first book, take the time to think about what part the Tarot will take in your life, what its place will be on your personal path of self discovery. These are but a few examples of what the Tarot can do/be for you:

- A tool for personal exploration.
- A tool for personal growth, and achievement of self-knowledge.
- A focus for meditation.
- A tool for use in rituals.
- A tool for seeing the choices available to you.
- A tool for problem solving.
- A tool for clarifying goals.
- A tool for seeing into the past.
- A tool for understanding the present.
- A tool for creating the future.
- A tool for accessing our unconscious.
- A tool for helping us come into our own power.
- A tool for accessing the knowledge of our ancestors.
- A tool for understanding and working with the Elemental energies (Fire, Water, Air and Earth).
- A tool for enriching our lives.
- A tool for helping create and give power to personal affirmations.
- A tool for practising the ancient sacred art of story telling.
- An oracular tool, used for fortune telling in its most basic form, and for dialoguing and personal insight in its highest form.
- A tool for helping you to access and develop your psychic powers/abilities.
- A tool for helping to understand dreams.
- A tool for helping to "create" dreams.
- A tool for working with journaling.

- A tool for developing characters, plots and story lines for writers.
- A tool for developing a personal profile through the use of birth cards, personal day and year cards, and more.
- A tool for whatever you want it to do!

The process of purchasing your first Tarot deck can be confusing. It can be very confusing if you give credence to the old wives' tale that your first Tarot deck must be "given" to you, rather than purchased by you. There is nothing wrong with purchasing your first deck yourself. Think of it as a gift to yourself, a tool that will open up your life.

There are two decks available today that are considered to be "primary" decks: the Rider-Waite Tarot (sometimes called the Waite-Smith Tarot), and the Thoth Tarot. Each of these decks comes from a slightly different esoteric background. The Rider-Waite Tarot is the deck of choice for most Tarot classes/seminars, and is the deck most referenced on internet Tarot sites and in internet chat rooms. To make the initial study of Tarot a little easier, I highly recommend purchasing the Rider-Waite Tarot deck as your first deck.

Personally, I found the Rider-Waite Tarot easy to understand but difficult to work with. I simply was not drawn to the imagery, and was not really connecting with the cards. After listening in on the chatter in a couple of internet e-groups, I decided that my second deck would be the Morgan-Greer Tarot, which is considered a Rider-Waite "clone". It follows the imagery and symbolism in the Rider-Waite deck, but adjusts it to make it a bit more palatable. I immediately connected with this deck, and have been using it as a primary reading deck ever since (including over ten years of professional reading). Other decks considered to be Rider-Waite clones are the Robin Wood Tarot, the Hanson-Roberts Tarot, the Aquarian Tarot, the Ator Tarot, the Golden Tarot, the Illuminated Tarot, the Sharman-Caselli Tarot, and the Universal Tarot.

No Tarot deck will hold value for you if you do not personally connect with it. For this reason, I prefer to see the cards in person before I make the decision to purchase a deck. I am lucky enough to be within driving distance of more than one metaphysical store that not only carry a large choice of Tarot decks, but have open decks that can be handled. This is important for me because I have small hands—cards beyond a certain size are difficult to handle. This would also be important if you were considering a non-traditional deck form such as circular decks. Large book stores may have a limited choice and, generally, they do not have open decks. They also have a tendency to keep single decks (decks that do not have an accompanying book) behind the counter, so that you have to ask for them specifically.

Some considerations when purchasing a deck are theme, symbolism, type of artwork, illustration of the pips (the numbered cards), and price. (The

Marseilles style decks do not show illustrations beyond the suit symbols for the Pips.) You also want to take into consideration what the deck is to be used for. If the deck is for class study, you may want the Rider-Waite, a Rider-Waite clone, or the Thoth deck. If the deck is for meditative purposes, you will want the symbolism to reflect that. If your studies are Kabbalistic or Hermetic in nature, you will want decks that reflect this. If you are looking for a gender-specific deck, there are several decks out there that reflect gay and lesbian themes. There are also theme decks for almost any theme imaginable.

The artwork is another big consideration. Are you more comfortable with contemporary style, traditional style, or Renaissance style? Are borders acceptable, or do you want the illustration to go to the edge of the card? Are you looking for fantasy style artwork, primitive artwork, or perhaps line drawings that are colored in? Do you prefer "cartoon" type artwork? Are you comfortable with keywords on the cards? Do you prefer hand-drawn work, photo-collage, or a mixture of both? Do you appreciate esoteric symbolism on a card, or would you rather not have it there? Are you looking for bold, vibrant coloring, something more subdued, or perhaps even something in the pastel range?

Keep these questions in mind as you are looking for a new Tarot deck. Finances permitting, you may decide to have more than one deck and use them for specific purposes. I also advise getting a kit (deck and companion book) if one is available for the deck that you want to work with. In this manner, you will understand the intent of the author/illustrator, and will perhaps get to know your cards in a manner a little differently than if you took a random deck and tried to apply traditional Tarot thought to it.

I recommend purchasing at least one good Tarot book along with your first deck. I highly recommend *Tarot For Your Self*, by Mary K. Greer; *Learning the Tarot*, by Joan Bunning; and *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom*, by Rachel Pollack.

This is only the beginning of your journey. Fun, wisdom and magic await!

Learning the Tarot

The Tarot is a very exciting tool of empowerment, but, as with many things, you have to get to know it before you can use it with confidence. How do you develop that confidence? By getting to know the cards. Whatever use you plan to make of the Tarot (readings, meditation and personal growth, ritual or ceremonial work, etc.), you need to have a base from which to work.

The first thing that you need to do is purchase a deck. For the beginner student, I highly recommend purchasing either the Rider-Waite Tarot, or a clone of the Rider-Waite, such as the Morgan-Greer Tarot. The reason for this is that most Tarot classes are based on the Rider-Waite deck and its symbology. Look through different Tarot decks and read reviews from more than one person on the same deck so that you can see differing viewpoints.

The next thing that I recommend to a prospective Tarot student is to purchase a good, basic book. I highly recommend both *Tarot For Your Self*, by Mary K. Greer, and *Learning the Tarot*, by Joan Bunning. Both of these books cover the basics of Tarot in a systematic, thorough manner that encourages student participation rather than memorization.

There you are, sitting with your deck in one hand, your book in the other, trying to make sense of life. Put the book down. The book, while it will set you on the right track for learning the basics of Tarot, needs to be used in conjunction with your intuition. The best way to start this process is to define what you think of each card, then go to the book and see what else is there. This will keep you as an active participant in the process of learning the cards, and it will take away the fear of "Did I memorize these keywords correctly? Do I have this card down pat?". Your readings will flow because you will have developed a personal connection with the cards.

Now you are sitting there with your cards in both hands. This is a good start. Time to shuffle. Keep shuffling – allow your mind to empty, and keep shuffling. Handling your cards – shuffling them, ordering them (placing them in order from Fool through to The World, followed by each of the suits, from Ace through to Ten, then Page, Knight, Queen and King) – places your energy within the energy of the cards and helps to make you "one" with your deck.

Time to stop shuffling. Time to start playing. Begin now. Choose any of the suggestions below, and begin playing!

Card-a-Day:

Drawing a card-a-day can be a nice way to get a quick peek at the energy of your day ahead, but it can also be a wonderful way to get to know your cards.

You can draw your card in the morning, or the night before. If you draw the card the night before and you are trying to see what kind of day it represents, remember that you are looking at the next day (unless you specifically hold the thought in your mind that you want the card to represent the day that you have just experienced).

If you are drawing a card to get the tone for your day, you will do so in a random manner. If you are doing card-a-day as a way of studying the cards, you can do a random draw or a conscious draw. In the conscious draw, you can choose to work with a card that draws you to it in a happy way, or you can choose to work with a card that is a bit edgy and perhaps represents a shadow for you.

However you chose your card, have it in front of you now. Give yourself some time to simply gaze at the card. Note the colors used, and how you react to them. Note the general atmosphere of the card. What emotions does it bring out in you? What are the figures in the card doing? Are they seated? Are they standing? Who do they remind you of? How do you feel about them? What symbols are in the card? What do they remind you of? What words come to your mind when you look at this card? Writing your thoughts down—journaling them—is a wonderful way to keep track of your progress as you study the cards, and to note how often the same cards come up to represent days in your life.

If you are working with the card-a day method for studying the cards, then I suggest writing down your first impressions, your intuitive thoughts in one color of ink, and use a second color of ink to write in further information from other sources (books, e-groups, friends). Wait a few days, then review the material you have written, adding comments in a third color of ink.

Constellations:

Tarot constellations are defined as all cards that carry the same prime number numerologically (the numbers being the numbers one through nine). For the number four, the Tarot constellations would be the number four card from each of the suits, the Emperor (which carries the number four), and Death (which carries the number thirteen, and reduces to the number four ($1+3=4$)).

Take all of the same numbered cards out of the deck and line them up in front of you. How do you feel about each of them? What attracts you? What annoys you or makes you anxious? What colors are predominant? What colors are most obvious from card to card? How are the environments the same? How are they different? What symbols seem to move from card to card?

Do you see how each of these cards carries the same predominant energy even though it is expressed in a different manner? Try this for each of the nine

prime numbers. Make notes on your impressions. Once you have a good understanding of the energy of each of these cards you will know how to treat multiples of the same number when they come up in a reading. In other words, your readings will flow much more smoothly as you won't be thinking about what each individual card means, but about the energy they bring in as a group. This is a huge hint about what the reading is all about – and it may not actually be about what the Seeker asked!

Note: An excellent book to work with here is *Tarot Constellations*, by Mary K. Greer.

Journaling:

Journaling is a wonderful way to keep track of your progress with the cards. You can keep separate journals for card-a-day picks, readings, and the study of specific decks. And you may choose from several different journaling methods: electronic (which may also be printed out and placed in a binder, or kept on disk), audio tape, or hand written. You may choose to work with an open binder, where pages may be added at random, or you may wish to work with anything from an expensive leather bound journal (this, Capricorn that I am, is my favorite!), to a spiral bound notebook. (Small notebooks work well if you are planning on taking your journal with you so that you can make entries in it at random times.)

The format can be anything from very, very formal, to stream of consciousness. I would suggest that, at the very least, you place the date, day of the week, and time at the top of each entry. I would suggest using a system here very similar to what I talked about under the card-a-day format. Write down your initial impressions first, then add information from elsewhere (books, e-groups, internet sites, friends) in a second color of ink. Use a third color for going back after a few days and reviewing your entry.

If you like to play around with artwork, add sketches to your pages or print out a scan of the card (or cards) that you are discussing. Add sayings or whatever else you feel adds worth to the page. This is, after all, your journal!

A leather-bound journal provides its own "being". However, any other type of notebook is fair play for decorating! Think collage or glue-on fabric. Add beading, or lace, or whatever else suits your fancy. This is your project, your journal, and it should reflect you. Each journal, in the end, will have its own "persona".

Note: An excellent book to work with here is *Tarot Journaling*, by Corrine Kenner.

Let's Pretend: Card Resolution

Go through your deck, and find cards that you see as being difficult. Study those cards and note why you find them difficult. Then go back through the deck and find one or more cards that bring resolution to the difficult cards. This is a fun game to play and only takes a few minutes at a time to work through the cards.

What you have developed is an excellent tool for use in readings – when a difficult card comes up and you want to help the Seeker bring resolution to that issue, you have the option of having them go through the deck and pick a card that they think would help them, or you can suggest a card that will counteract the energies of the more difficult cards (hint: all of the cards have difficult and not so difficult sides!).

Meditation:

Meditating with the Tarot allows us to enter the energy of the cards on a very subliminal level. We set aside the chatter of our conscious minds and enter into the world of universal knowledge and experience. Meditation is also a wonderful tool for entering our own personal "inner space", leaving behind the shoulds and should nots of the outer world.

The first thing that you want to do when practicing meditation is to find a quiet space where you will not be disturbed, whether it is indoors or outdoors. I prefer the room to be as dark as possible so that I can use the flame of a candle as a focus point. At times I also include soft background music, but not always.

Place the card that you wish to use for meditation in front of you, using the light from the candle (or some other soft light source if you do not wish to work with candles). To begin the meditation, take three deep breaths. Breathe in slowly and fully, seeing yourself filled with white light. As you slowly breathe out, feel all of your cares leaving you. (If you are using a candle, try focusing on the flame of the candle as you do this.)

Now it is time to focus your attention on the card in front of you. Allow your vision to soften, and gaze at the card without thought. Allow yourself to become part of the card, and allow any impressions that will come to you. When you are ready, bring yourself slowly back into your meditation space. Stretch your arms and legs, move your head and shoulders, and fully re-enter the physical world.

Meditation can be done to get to know a card, or can be used with a specific card to obtain answers to specific life issues. All of the cards in the deck can be used: the Major Arcana providing spiritual advice, the Minor Arcana showing

actions that can be taken in everyday life. Court Cards can be used if the situation revolves around a particular individual, or if you wish to get to know a certain part of yourself better (or if you wish to integrate parts of yourself).

Every reading that we do provides the opportunity for meditation. You can do this either at the beginning of the reading, after all of the cards have been turned up, or at the end of the reading. Simply gaze at the cards and hold the thought in your mind, "What do I need to know?".

Internet sites that have interactive Tarot meditations include the Osho Zen Tarot, and the Enchanted Tarot. These are both excellent resources, and show the many different ways that we can incorporate meditation into our lives.

Hint: You may wish to jot down information brought to you in meditation, as it can tend to leave your conscious mind much in the same way that dreams do if they are not written down.

Story:

Tarot stories are a great deal of fun! You can develop your story alone, with a partner, or with a group of people. Start out by choosing a deck that interests you, then choose a theme for your story – or decide to let it flow as it will, which can make for some very fast moving action! Choose a method for your story-telling: will it be written, will it be taped, or will it be for the joy of the moment, and not recorded at all? Now decide on a method for choosing the cards: they can be placed in a bowl or bag, mixed up and drawn blindly, they can be taken from the top of the deck; or the deck can be passed around and each person can choose a card by their own method.

If you are developing the story on your own, keep the pace moving fast. Say the first thing that comes to your mind and then move on to the next card. No stopping to think, just see where the cards take you. If you are working with a partner, take turns drawing the cards and adding to the story. If you are working with a group of people, form a circle, and move quickly from person to person. The story ends when the cards end, which could be at the end of all 78 cards, or at the end of a predetermined number of cards.

This is a great way to end a class (or a meeting), as it brings people together, allows the cards to dance to their own tunes, and creates a huge amount of joy and laughter!

Visualization:

Visualization combines two elements: meditation and the art of stepping into another reality. This can also be considered journeying. You prepare for

working with visualization in the same manner that you prepare to meditate – by creating a space where it will be quiet, and where you will not be disturbed. You place the card that you wish to work with in front of you, with enough light so that you can see it clearly. Use the same breathing technique that you used in meditation. Breathe in slowly and fully, seeing yourself filled with white light. As you slowly breathe out, feel all of your cares leaving you. (If you are working with a candle, try focusing on the flame of the candle as you do this.)

Focus on the card in front of you, softening your gaze so that the card is slightly out of focus. Holding your intent in mind (are you trying to get to know the card better? Are you going to ask the figure(s) in the card for advice?), focus on the card. When you are ready, close your eyes and enter the card.

There are several methods for entering a card. One method is to simply allow the edges of the card to disappear, which leave you free to walk into it in your mind. Note the environment (are there trees, streams, birds chirping?). Note any buildings that appear and what their functions seem to be. Note any animals in the card. See if the animals have a message for you.

Now focus on the main figure in the card. Introduce yourself and ask if he/she is willing to talk to you. If the answer is no, thank them, and leave the card. There will be another day to visit here. If the answer is yes, start out by asking the figure if there is anything that they would like to ask you. If there is, answer them to the best of your ability. Now is the time to ask any questions that you have of them. At the end of your conversation, thank them for their time and for their advice. If you entered the card by a path, turn around and follow that path out. If you did not enter by a path, simply allow yourself to come back into familiar surroundings, slowly becoming aware of the atmosphere around you, and the room or space that you are in.

Make notes of any information that you brought back with you from this journey. This is wisdom from the ancient ones, and has an important place in your life.

There is another manner of entering the cards that I have been working with lately, but I don't remember where I got it from. (This is important, because this is not my system, but I don't know who to attribute it to. If any of you who are reading this know where it came from, please e-mail me and let me know, so proper attribution can be made.) The system is the same all the way through to focusing on the card. At the point that you wish to enter the card, you simply ask the main figure in the card to present themselves to you. They may do so in the environment of the card, or they may present the environment, and themselves, in a different manner. This can be quite an exciting journey and opens many different avenues of thought!

There are many ways that you can get to know your cards. There is no one "right" way – the right way is the way that works for you. A combination of intuition and a solid understanding of the basics of the cards will make your readings flow and give you easy access to the archetypal knowledge that they hold.

Simple Steps to Performing a Tarot Reading

The Tarot is one of the oldest divination oracles still in use today. It can be used in many ways, including meditation, visualization, and ritual work, but its widest use is in performing Tarot readings. The archetypes that make up the Tarot lend themselves to acting as a gateway between our conscious and unconscious selves, enabling us to connect with ancestral voices (and universal knowledge).

There are many different reasons for wanting to do a reading: to better understand the past; to bring the present into sharper focus; to see what our current options are; to see what the effect of taking a given action (or actions) will be on our life; as a tool for spiritual growth; as a tool for both mental and physical healing; as a tool for understanding/healing our relationships; as a tool to help us guide our careers – these are just a few of the myriad reasons for doing a reading.

So you sit down with your deck of choice. You may or may not have an idea of what you want to read for, or how you want to phrase your question. You may be at a loss as to which spread you want to work with, and you may truly be at a loss as to how to best interpret the spread once it is laid out. Time to take a deep breath and exhale slowly. There is magick in the Tarot, but the key to unlocking that magick lies within the reader. Every reader needs to be open to allowing information to come through to them. Do not be afraid of what you see – you may see some shadows, but we all have them. They are a part of every reading that has ever been done.

Let's start our reading by defining the question/issue at hand. That is all we are going to think about right now. If you are reading for someone else, ask them to take some time to think about what they want to ask. If, in the end, the question is open ended (i.e. along the lines of "What do I need to know about?"), then form the question in exactly that manner. The answers that we receive are only as good as the questions that we ask. We want to state the question (which acts as the foundation for the reading) in as succinct a manner as possible. In other words, it should be brief and to the point.

Note: As readers, we also need to make it clear to our clients that questions about finances, health, or legal advice are best left to professionals in those fields.

Then there is the issue of "third party" questions. "Third parties" can be defined as anyone who is not present during a reading. My personal point of view is that if my client has a direct relationship with the party they are asking about, I will read for them, however, I place definite boundaries here – I will read only in the areas that affect both people. If a client asks about a significant other, for instance, I will read for that. But I will not read for the

significant other and someone else in the significant other's life, nor will I read for areas in the significant other's life that do not directly affect my client. I firmly believe in sacred space (personal boundaries), and I feel that we should not cross these boundaries.

If you decide to read for yourself, try to be as objective as possible. Pretending that you are reading for someone else may help here. Your own emotions, if they enter too far into a reading, will essentially negate it.

I have found that questions are best expressed in the form of "What", rather than "Why". "What is the lesson that I need to learn?" will elicit a deeper response than "Why did this happen?" If you (or your client, if you are reading for someone else) know the general issue that you want to address, but are having a hard time formulating a specific question, take a few minutes to write down all of the questions that you might have. Go over these questions, define what is similar about them, and form a question that is relatively inclusive. For instance, if all of the questions are formed around career, a good question to ask might be, "What do I need to know about my work environment, and what actions will allow me to feel in greater control?"

Once the question has been defined (and don't be afraid to help your client reformat their question into something that will bring them a more inclusive, deeper answer), repeat it back to your client. Ask your client to hold the question in their mind as they shuffle the deck, or as you shuffle it, if that is your choice. (Note: If you choose to read with reversals, make sure that a certain percentage of the cards are reversed before they are shuffled for the reading.) It is this focus on the question that will allow the Tarot to bring through the most in depth answers. A lack of focus at this point will result in a reading that may make little or no sense at all.

At this point in time, I silently ask my guides, and the guides of my client, to be with us during the reading. I ask that the information that is about to be brought through be of the highest quality, and that it bring clarity to my client.

Once the client is done shuffling, I ask them to take the deck in their left hand, and break it down into three piles, left to right. I then pick the cards up, placing the center pile over the pile on the left, and the combined pile on top of the pile to the right. There is no hard and fast rule here, this is just what I do. It is actually not necessary to do this at all.

Before laying out the cards, one more decision needs to be made. Some spreads have a built-in significator (a card drawn to represent the Seeker), and some do not. I have never felt the need to read with a significator, and I simply do not draw for that position when it is built into a spread that I am

using. There is no hard and fast rule about this. It really comes down to what the reader is comfortable with.

If you decide to read with a significator, there are various ways that the card can be chosen. A card can be drawn at random, you can use your client's zodiac sign to determine the suit (Wands are Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius; Cups are Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces; Swords are Gemini, Libra and Aquarius; Pentacles are Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn), or you can use physical characteristics.

In the method using Zodiac signs, once the suit has been defined, the Court Card that best matches your client is chosen. Pages are most often seen as children (or teens) of either sex, Knights as young adults of either sex, Queens as adult females (or married women), and Kings as adult males (or married men). In the method using physical characteristics, the traditional view is: Wands are fair, with light or reddish hair and either light or dark eyes; Cups are fair, with light brown or dark blond hair, and gray, blue, or hazel eyes; Swords are olive in complexion, with brown or black hair, and light eyes; Pentacles are dark skinned, with black or dark brown hair, and dark eyes. Use this same system for determining which card within the suit best defines your client.

A more complicated method is the Myers-Briggs method, which works with personality types. Excellent references for this method are *Understanding the Tarot Court*, by Mary K. Greer and Tom Little (Llewellyn Worldwide, 2005), and the internet resources on Myers-Briggs.

As a reader, you are now going to lay down the cards in some type of format, and interpret them. You can choose to use a formal spread here, or you can read the cards at random. In either case, you need to keep the question in mind as you do the reading. In reading the cards at random, the technique of "free association" comes into play. The colors and the images within the card determine the meaning of the card, and the context in which it is read. In *Haindl Tarot - A Reader's Handbook* (U.S. Games Systems Inc., 1995), the author, Rachel Pollack, states that for her, the best use for this type of reading is when she is reading for herself, or at the end of a more formal reading. It is also a technique that works well for psychic readers.

In most instances, a formal spread will be used. This can be a spread that has been created by the reader themselves, or it may be a spread that has been developed by someone else. Each position within the spread will be defined, as well as the format of the spread itself. Certain spreads will relate better to certain questions. The smaller the spread (the fewer cards that are used), the easier it will be for a beginning reader to interpret.

A one card spread can be used for any question, as can the traditional ten card Celtic Cross spread. (The Celtic Cross spread is also good to use when the question is more general in nature.) A three card spread can be defined in many ways and can bring out a great deal of information. The format can be linear or set in a triangle. Some of the ways that it can be read are:

- Past/Present/Future.
- Morning/Noon/Night.
- Opportunity/Challenge/Outcome.
- Issue/Challenge/Action.

However you want to define this reading, it is great fun and will bring out a great deal of information.

A simple four card format that looks at the question or issue from the perspective of the four levels of life is the Elemental Spread. I define the positions here as: East/Spiritual, South/Emotional, West/Physical, and North/Mental. A fifth card, to represent the Seeker, can be drawn and placed in the middle of the other four cards (which form a diamond pattern).

Tarot spreads can be found in most Tarot books as well as on the internet. There are books specifically devoted to Tarot spreads, such as the *Complete Book of Tarot Spreads*, by Evelin Burger and Johannes Fiebig, and, for those who wish to understand how to create their own Tarot spreads, a book such as *Designing Your Own Tarot Spreads*, by Teresa Michelson.

You have focused in on a specific question or issue, the cards have been shuffled, and the manner of reading (using a formal spread or not) has been decided upon. Now you need to decide, as a reader, whether to lay the cards face up or face down. This is an individual decision – do whatever you are most comfortable with. I have always chosen to read with the cards face up, because I want to see the larger picture before I begin my reading. Other readers prefer to allow the story to unfold as the cards are turned over. Determine for yourself what works best for you.

Take a deep breath, exhale, and allow the images on the cards to come to you. Now is your time to shine as you interpret the cards individually and as a group. The first thing that you want to do is to take a look at the overall pattern of the spread – which symbols are you drawn to, what do the colors tell you, and what kind of flow do the cards have? Is there a predominance of Major Arcana cards? If so, the outcome is largely out of the Seeker's hands, and the reading itself is highly spiritual in nature. What is the balance between the suits? If there is a predominance of one suit, the energy of that suit is predominant in the reading. (In general, the energy of Wands is active, creative, and having to do with personal will power; the energy of Cups is that of the emotional world, the subconscious self, and intuition; the energy of

Swords is the energy of intellect and communications; the energy of Pentacles is the energy of finances, work, and the environment around you.) I take this one step further, in that if a particular suit does not come up in a reading (especially in larger readings), then I feel that the "way out" of the Seeker's dilemma is to be found in that suit. Wherever Aces appear, you are looking at "potential" – at unmanifested energy. Wherever Court Cards appear, there will be people involved in the issue. If you read with reversals, look at which positions they fall in. Are they in the past? Are they in the present? Are they in the future? If you do not read with reversals (which I do not), work on another method of determining the strength or weakness of a card. Using Elemental Dignities is an excellent choice here.

Where do you begin a reading? At the beginning, of course! Start with the first card. Look at the landscape, the colors, the images, and the symbols. What stands out for you? How does what you see relate to the question the Seeker is asking? If you are reading for someone else, ask them how they feel about the card.

I normally tape readings that I do for others, so that they can take the tape home with them. Readings are ripe with emotion – no one is going to remember everything that was said, no matter how important it was. Having a tape of the reading will help your client work through the information with which they were presented. If you are reading for yourself, you may want to either make a tape for yourself, or make notes as you go along. Some readers, if they are reading for themselves, will choose to wait until the end of the reading to make notes.

The story begins with the very first card and winds through the labyrinth of cards to the last card. If a card seems unclear, draw one card from the deck to act as a clarifier then move on to the next card. If the end card is a Trump (Major Arcana card), there is little the Seeker can do to change the path of the issue. In this case, they need to work on understanding it. If the end card is a Court Card, then other people are involved with the resolution of the issue. If the end card is a Pip (numbered card), then the Seeker can take actions that will change their path.

Above all, a reading is a snapshot of the Seeker's life at a specific place in time. It is a reflection of the energies in their life, and it shows where their opportunities and challenges are. It is their story, a story that will unfold as it should from card to card, each card gaining meaning from the others. Each card holds a basic (traditional) meaning, but each card also holds a meaning that it gains from the cards around it.

When you first begin to read the cards, go through a reading intuitively, speaking what comes through to you from the images in the cards. Then, if you wish, go back and check the "traditional" meaning of the cards. Know

that as you do more and more readings, you will develop your own sense of what a card means and where it is taking you. Keeping a journal of your readings will allow you to see your progress on a very real level, as well as allowing you to see how specific issues develop in your life.

Happy reading – and remember to have fun!

Resources

There are many helpful resources for doing readings. Two that I would suggest are the excellent book *Tarot For Your Self*, by Mary K. Greer, and the internet site by Tarot author, Joan Bunning. The Comparative Tarot e-group on Yahoo Groups provides a wonderful atmosphere for asking questions, as does the forum at Aeclectic Tarot.

Learn the Tarot, by Joan Bunning

www.learntarot.com

Comparative Tarot eGroup

www.yahogroups.com

Aeclectic Tarot Forum

www.tarotforum.net

Author's Bio

Bonnie Cehovet is a professional Tarot reader with over ten years' experience. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and is certified as a Tarot Educator with the American Board for Tarot Certification.

Bonnie has served in various capacities with the American Tarot Association, is co-founder of the World Tarot Network, and Vice President (as well as Director of Certification) for the American Board for Tarot Certification. She has had articles appear in the 2004 and 2005 *Llewellyn's Tarot Reader*, and is a Tarot deck and book reviewer for Aeclectic Tarot.