

Cartomancy in a Nutshell. Helpful tips for the BEGINNER

Cartomancy is the art of divining by reading cards. It's an old-fashioned word, which is why I like it. It evokes the warm, mysterious ambiance of Victorian Parlours with Séance tables and the honey-glow of gas lamps. Or in our case, a cottage, with of that... So let's get cozy in our wingback (or Adirondack) chairs and start at the very beginning.

Shuffle your deck (tarot, oracle, Lenormand, Kipper or playing cards, for example) and then randomly select either a single card for a quick interpretation, or a predetermined number of cards, which you will now position face down into specific (and numbered) positions in a *spread*.

Think of a spread as your template for a reading. There are a number of spreads that have been created to explore specific questions and themes such as romantic love, self-love, career, problem solving or a just a classic, general past/present/looking toward the future layout. Some cartomancers have an arsenal of spreads; other's rely on one or two tried and true go-tos. (see the *Spirit spread*).

I like to keep all of my cards face down and prepare for the big reveal. Overturn the cards one-by-one or all at once. You'll begin looking for *syntax*, or how the basic components are combining to form a narrative or story that your inner voice can interpret. In a very basic nutshell, there are a few key ways that cards like to be read, and their core meanings will change slightly according to where they fall, and how they combine with other cards. We'll get to that momentarily. But before we do, it's helpful to understand the power and beauty of a single card.

I look at each card as a faceted crystal, and each luminous facet as a unique radiation of the central meaning or definition. In this way, one card can also be energetically affected by other cards and intuitively, we learn which of its facets it wants to reveal. Every new card that's turned over and added into the mix will begin to expand the story and dictate what direction the narrative will want to take. When these cards all come together, they form an aura. It's like a bright light being shined down into the nooks and crannies of the original question.

One last detail: The goal of any reading should always be to raise vibrations.

Here are some of the leading roles that cards want to play in a spread and reading:

1. A QUERENT or SITTER or SIGNIFICATOR.

This is the person who is asking and receiving the reading - or YOU. This card is only a characteristic of the individual, who they are *energetically* as a result of how a situation, person or attitude inhabits them.

2. An ISSUE:

This is what's relevant, germane, upfront and personal to the Querent whether they acknowledge it or not. It's central and key to the reading. It's why we (reader and Querent) have crossed paths. By the way, a Querent may very well have something else in mind that has nothing do with this, but it shows up anyway. Welcome to cartomancy! Always go *above* the Querent's head.

3. A CHALLENGE:

An obstacle, a hiccup or simply a speed bump in the Querent's path of progress.

4. An ILLUMINATION:

Cards are positioned purposely in a spread so that they can reveal or illuminate a very specific part of a puzzle. Each card brings a meaning; and each position in a spread has it's own function. Together they combine to give us context.

For example, a past/present/future spread. 3 cards laid left to right. I turn over "Collapse" in position #1, and it illuminates something that's relevant in the "past"; "Defense" is in position #2, and it reveals something about the "present"; now, "itheewed" lands in position #3 - illuminating the "future". Now I see that my Querent is struggling with letting go the disappointment of a broken relationship in the past. Her offense has been a carefully maintained defense. But she isn't doing herself any favours by keeping herself emotionally isolated. It's time to rebuild her faith in love because there could be a significant, committed relationship on the horizon.

5. ADVICE. Guidance. Or a theme. This is usually the first or last card pulled. It's a Special Teams card. It's separate and plays a wind-beneath-the-wings role. This is a news flash from the Divine or Higher Self. It could come in the form of a warning, a theme, a thumbs up, the suggestion of an action or change in attitude that leads to a solution, a choice or a new path forward. Sometimes this message is actually for me, the reader. (A spirited aside telling me to try something with the Querent).

And then, there's all of that wonderfully tingly stuff that happens in between the lines as the cards begin to create a narrative.

One more thing: positively vs negatively or ill-aspected

A card can also be positively influenced, or *aspected* or it can also take on a slightly more cautionary nature. But then life is full of complexity. This deck has been designed as a tool that helps us weather the seasons; take responsibility for our own actions; and, to inspire us to keep pursuing our highest potential.

Here are a few examples of the core meanings vary according to where they land in a spread:

- If the issue is "Sanctuary" or home and it's crossed by "Barbed Wire." Now this quaint home becomes a confined space, and is perceived more like a prison. Might be some enforced boundaries or rules that we may not want to play by. It might also mean that there's been a break-in or an invasion of space.
- If the Sanctuary card is crossed by "Change", an impending move takes center stage. We see that the rusty, heavy rim of the wheel in "Change" is flying loose so now there's an atmosphere of reluctance and chaos which presents quite a threat to someone who loves warm, safe and predictable. The other cards in the spread might reveal that the move is entirely auspicious, but it might not seem that way at the time.
- If "I am..." card is crossed by "Chatter" Communications now become a challenge or obstacle. Instead of the benefits of networking or skillfull negotiation, *Chatter* becomes criticism, rumours or gossip. Either your own limiting thoughts and self-criticism or someone else's bossy *blah blah blah* could be hijacking your sense of self.

(I personally don't read reversals with this deck. I don't have to. If, however you intuit that an overturned card that falls upside down is significant, than by all means, work with that instinct.)

A few additional miscellaneous notes.

- That oracle or tarot cards are the "devil's tools" says more about the fear of the person that believes it. This is an empowering, psychological tool that opens doors to your own growth and positive development.

- That you must be given your deck by someone else is pure, unbridled hogwash. Pick a deck that resonates with you, one that you can infuse with your own beautiful energy.
- After readings (particularly involved ones) I fan my deck down in front of me, cross my hands at the wrists and then pull apart my hands quickly, creating a clearing breeze over the cards. I then clap, pull my hands apart and push down, grounding the energy. I keep a spray bottle of Florida Water by my side; and I put my wrapped deck (see Spirit of the Lake spread cloths) into its bag with my favorite reenergizing crystals (which are also wrapped in cloths so they can't tear the lay cloth or scratch the cards).