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Simple Card Trick

Playing cards are the most versatile tools magicians can have in their arsenal, and although pick-a-card tricks are some of the oldest in the book, they continue to captivate magic lovers. In the basic pick-a-card trick, the magician fans out a deck of cards, faces them down, and prompts a volunteer to pick one. Once the volunteer has picked a card, that person can look at it and show it to anyone else except the magician. The selected card is then inserted back into the deck face down, and the magician is left with the task of finding it. There are many different variations to this type of trick. The following example will be the basic pick-a-card trick with a twist, literally.

To start off, you need a deck of playing cards, and it doesn't really matter if it is a complete deck. The number of cards you have isn't important, but to make the trick more convincing, it is a good idea to have a full deck. When you determine if you have enough cards, before you execute the trick, flip the bottom card upside down. From this point, you should see the back of a card on the top and bottom of the pack.

Now, choose a volunteer, and prompt the volunteer to choose a card. An effective method for allowing the volunteer to choose a card would be to hold the deck in your dominant hand, palm up, and thumb through the cards, shifting them to the other hand, being careful not to flash the flipped card on the bottom. It would be a good idea to thumb through them kind of slowly so that there is less of a chance the person will pick the last card.

When the volunteer has chosen a card, the card must be remembered by the volunteer. You could say something like, “Don’t forget your card; it is about to do something crazy!” This piques the volunteer’s interest and makes the volunteer ponder your comment for a second. A split second is all you need in order to flip the deck without being noticed so that the flipped card from earlier is on top. A method I have found useful for the deck flip is flipping the deck into your non-dominant hand after the volunteer selects a card. From there, just transfer the deck back to your dominant hand, and square all the cards up so they are all flush with each other. From this position, it is important to keep the cards squared up because if any of the cards shift too much, you may reveal that you aren’t holding a deck of face-down cards.

Now that you have your flipped card on top, tell the volunteer to place the selected card back into the deck. Instruct the volunteer to stab the card face down into the deck somewhere. While the volunteer is stabbing the card into the deck, make sure to keep a semi-firm grip on the deck while keeping the cards squared. Don’t allow the volunteer to pry the cards up using another hand to create a slot for the card because face-up cards in the middle may be revealed.

From this position, say something like, “Now I am going to find your card behind my back!” While saying that, take the pack of cards behind your back, and flip over the card currently on top. This move should now mean every card is facing the same direction except for the volunteer’s selection. Flip the pack over before returning it from your back. When you bring the pack from your back, you can now spread the cards and point out that the selected card is the only one flipped in the entire pack.

For the aspiring magician or hobbyist, playing cards can be a good way to segue into more advanced magic and also can be a versatile tool for tricks.