

# Terminology and Structure of the Deck Switch

## 1. Terminology

Let's first look at the terms used in this book. Most are intuitive, but to name and organize them here will make it easy to refer to them at any moment, should there be any doubt of their meaning.

### *Cold Deck or Cooler?*

Is the deck to be switched in called a “cold deck” or a “cooler”? I asked Johnny Thompson, who answered:

The term *cold deck* is and always has been the basic title used to describe the switching in of a pack of cards. The term *cooler* is a slang term for the move, as one would intuitively assume, that came out of the 1930s. In the 1950s and 1960s, the move was referred to as *a package move* or *putting in a package*. To my knowledge, just about all of the hustlers I have known over the years have always used the term *cold deck* as the basic name for the move.

In correspondence I had with Jim Swain, he wrote:

I wanted to make you aware of something which was brought to my attention several years ago by a retired card hustler. A *cold deck* is a scam used by a gang of hustlers, and works like this: During a game, one of the gang spills a drink onto the cards, forcing the deck to be thrown out. A brand-new, unopened deck is then introduced. This is the *cold deck*. The deck is in a prearranged order and will “kill” several of the players in the game (suckers). One of the gang removes the deck from the box and takes out all the Jokers and junk cards (a wonderful touch). The deck is then false shuffled by another member of the gang, while one of the gang tells a story or joke (the shade). The game is then resumed, and the suckers are fleeced. The “cold deck” scam using the box and junk cards has been around for over a hundred years. It's a wonderful way to switch in a deck without having to do any sleight-of-hand, and always gets the money.

The terms *cold deck* and *cooler* have both been used extensively in the literature and in common parlance. As can be inferred from the above, they do not refer only to the actual deck switched in, but also to the whole procedure involving the switch.

## *Cold Deck!*

We will call the deck to be *switched out*—that is, the deck with which we are performing and which we want to switch—the “deck in use”, and the deck to be *switched in* the “cold deck”.

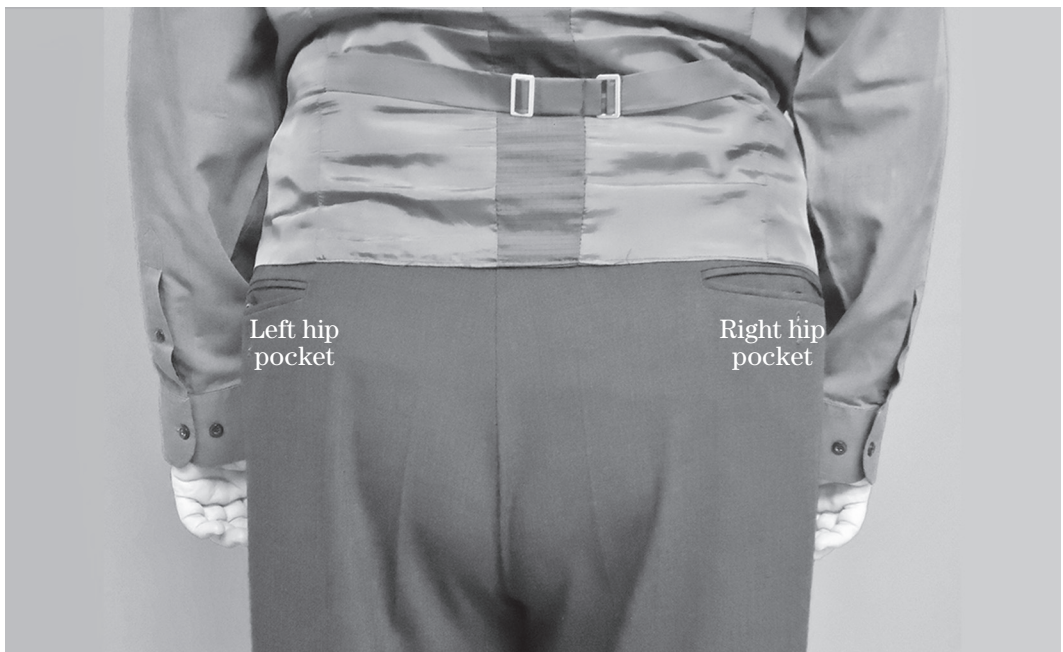
The rather colorful term “cold deck” comes from the fact that a deck in use that has been shuffled, cut, dealt and held will naturally be warm, while a fresh deck that has just been brought into play will feel cold. Of course, this was even truer in earlier times, when card games were played in places less well-heated than today’s gambling outposts.

## *Dress Map*

Coat, vest and trousers pockets will play an important role in this book. The terminology we will use is mapped out in these three photos.

For the terminology of the hands, the deck and the card case, please refer to the front endsheet of this volume, where maps of the hands and deck can be found.





## 2. Structure of the Deck Switch

Now that we have established the basic terminology, let's get an overview of the basic problems to be solved in the context of deck switches, as well as a general idea of the types of deck switches and in what situations they can be used. The flow diagram on the facing page tells it all at a glance. The following text simply represents my comments on it.

### *The Diagram*

With any deck switch, there are four basic problems to surmount. They are listed in the top box of the diagram:

- ◆ **Infrastructure**
- ◆ **Logistics**
- ◆ **Technique**
- ◆ **Clean-up**

Let's examine each problem separately.

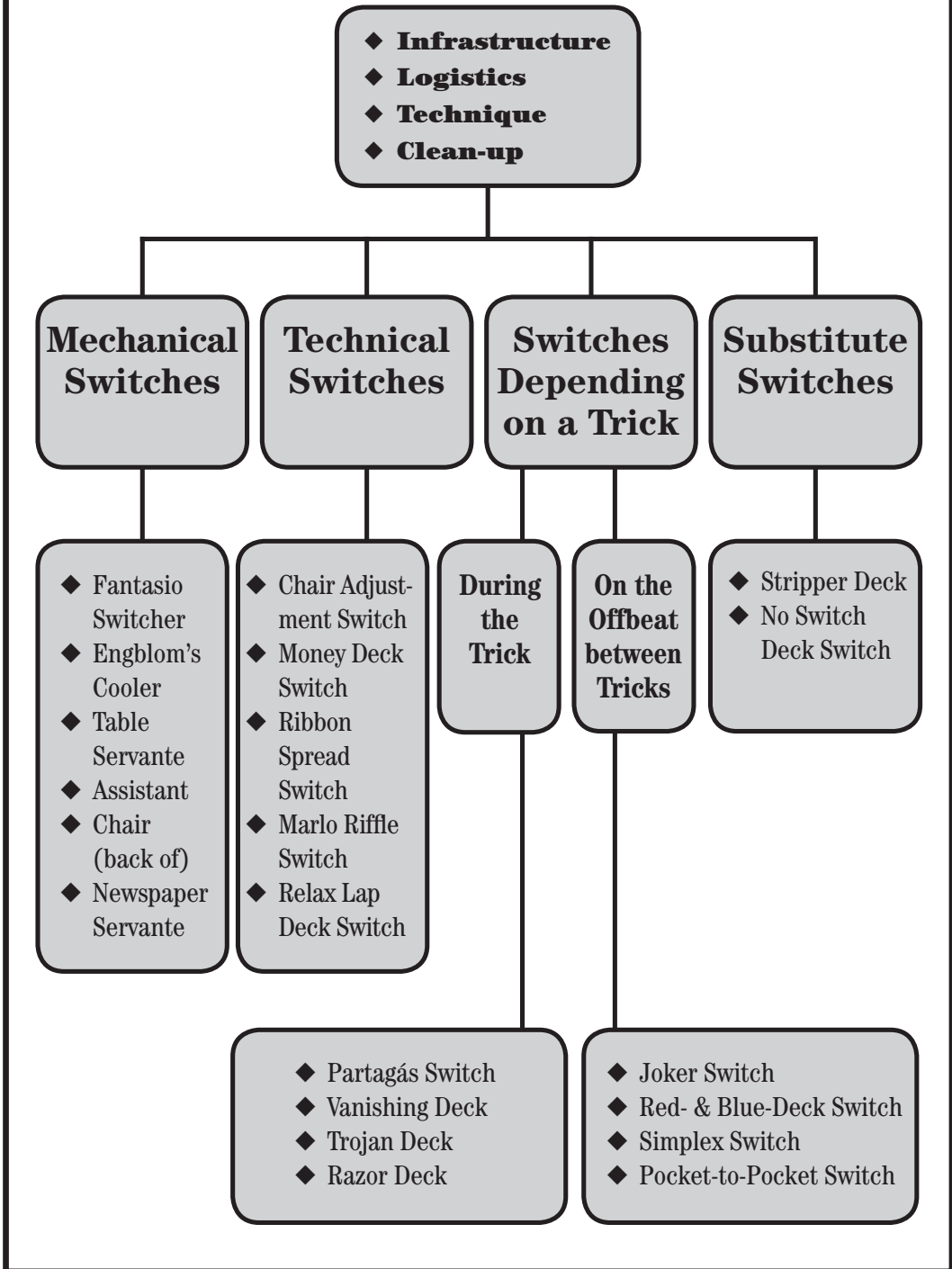
### *Infrastructure*

The infrastructure is the physical structure that supports the switch. This can be a complex stage setting, a piece of apparatus such as a specially prepared card box, or simply what you wear.

For a close-up performer, this will usually be just his clothing and his pockets. But even with such a minimalist infrastructure, one has to think about the type of pocket, whether it is a front or hip pocket in the trousers, a vest pocket or an inside or outside coat pocket. It may even be an extra pocket. You must also consider how deep and wide such a pocket has to be for it to accommodate the deck without creating a visible bulge, whether it has a flap covering it, how to keep the mouth of the pocket open so that you can easily deposit the deck in use or obtain the cold deck, etc.

One has to think also about the use of this pocket before and after the switch. Does it contain other props for other tricks? In other words, you must consider the context of the whole act, as it plays a role. This is especially important for stand-up and close-up performers, who usually don't have many external places to deposit things. These performers will want to give careful thought to which pocket they want to devote to just one trick, and to which pockets they want to reserve for multiple uses. These questions are by no means trivial, and good answers have to be found to lay the groundwork for an effective and deceptive deck switch.

# Deck Switch Structure



## *Logistics*

Logistics concerns itself with the ways and means—the management—of how the decks are transported from one place to another in order to start clean, execute the switch and end clean.

In a deck switch, the cold deck has to be brought from its initial position to the place in which the switch will occur. There it meets the deck in use and is switched for it. After this, things must be cleaned up. Even if very short distances are involved, they have to be carefully, coherently and logically inserted into the overall action. Far too often I've seen objects placed into certain positions on the table or elsewhere just because it was necessary for the method, but without concern for what the spectator would think about such an action. *The performer's reality, which is concerned with the operative aspects of the trick, has to be carefully compared and balanced against the reality the visible actions are creating in the minds of the spectators.* To marry these two realities is only one of the challenges in every trick—and one of the great difficulties of magic.

## *Technique*

Technique, at least as a concept, is probably the most obvious of these four basic problems and deals with the specific fingering, handling and management of the switch itself, which can be procedural, mechanical or based on sleight-of-hand, as we will see in the many examples within this book.

## *Clean-up*

Eventually, after the decks have been switched and the cold deck is already visible to the audience, the deck that was in use has to be disposed of. With some types of deck switches this may be automatically taken care of by the procedure of the switch, but more often than not the eliminated deck ends up surreptitiously resting in the lap, on a chair, behind some object or in a pocket from which it needs to be removed or at least repositioned. All actions used in the clean-up must therefore be as logically integrated into the staging and presentation as are any other actions perceived by the audience.

As you can see, there is little that tends to itself. Everything has to be carefully analyzed, and decisions made according to one's criteria and taste. This leaves plenty of space for personal interpretation and artistic execution.

# Categories of Deck Switches

Let's now look at the various types of deck switches. I have identified four categories, and every deck switch known to me will fit into one of these groupings.

The four categories are:

- ◆ **Mechanical Deck Switches**
- ◆ **Technical Deck Switches**
- ◆ **Deck Switches Depending on a Trick**
- ◆ **Substitute Deck Switches**

I will explain these categories and give examples in this book.

## *Mechanical Deck Switches*

As the term suggests, this category encompasses all switches in which some kind of accessory brings about the exchange of decks. Most of the time this will be a mechanical appliance or gimmick, but I would also include an accomplice or assistant as an accessory.

Card tables with a special opening-and-closing servante come to mind here, or a servante attached to a piece of furniture, such as a chair. In this regard, a good friend, Alfredo Marchese (aka Alan) of Argentina and Spain, brought to my attention a particularly clever method that can be used any time with practically any type of chair. A sheet of newspaper is used for some magical purpose, perhaps for a Torn and Restored Newspaper effect. Slydini's method would work very well here, as it is done with a double sheet. While this trick is performed, the rest of the newspaper is placed over the back of the chair. Unknown to the audience, the newspaper has a pocket containing the cold deck, which is made accessible when the external sheet is removed for the trick. The deck is later switched by briefly adjusting the chair for an assisting spectator to sit on it. Alan tells me that the idea of using a newspaper as a servante comes from no less than the great Fu-Manchu (David Bamberg), but Alan adapted its use to switching decks. If you are interested in the details of Bamberg's construction and use of this appliance, one place they can be found is in Charlie Miller's August 1974 "Magicana" column in *Genii* magazine (Vol. 38, No. 8, p. 337).

Other switches in this category include all types of card boxes that can be used for deck switches, such as Fantasio's very useful "Deck Switcher" and Christian Engblom's "The Cooler", which are commercial items.

## *Technical Deck Switches*

This category contains deck switches achieved mainly by sleight-of-hand, although accessories such as a Topit or similar internal or external device may be involved. Many of these are methods originally used in card cheating and have been adapted for magical purposes. The earliest reference to such a manipulative switch I could find is in *How Gamblers Win*, written by a “retired professional” (Gerritt M. Evans) in 1865 (p. 33). This most interesting publication has been reprinted recently by David Ben’s *Magicana* organization. Many but not all of these switches happen within a specific overt action, such as cutting the deck or completing the cut, and require more than average skill.

## *Deck Switches Depending on a Trick*

This is possibly the most interesting category for the performing magician. In contrast to the technical deck switches employed at the gaming table, where the “official protocol” has to be strictly respected and all moves adapted to this standard, the magician can create his own rules and procedures in the way he stages the actions of the specific trick requiring a deck switch—as long as the story is coherent, anything goes. As you can see in the diagram on page 5, I have made two subcategories: “Deck Switches during the Trick” and “Deck Switches on the Offbeat between Tricks.” Let’s examine them separately.

**DURING THE TRICK**—This entails all types of tricks in the performance of which the deck is switched, while at the same time presenting an excellent effect. Not only are these switches typically easier to do—technically speaking—but the effect, which obviously has to be good, will completely misdirect from the fact that a switch has occurred. You’ll find many excellent examples in this book (The Partagás Switch Plus, p. 45; “Because the Cards Know”, p. 55; “A New Look at Humber’s Razor Deck Trick”, p. 101).

**ON THE OFFBEAT BETWEEN TRICKS**—The offbeat is the moment of relaxation that occurs right after the climax of an effect. First-rate examples of this category are The Joker Deck Switch (p. 87), The Equivoque Red- and Blue-Deck Switch (p. 91) and the Simplex Deck Switch (p. 115).

## *Substitute Deck Switches*

This is an interesting category, as it encompasses deck switches without a switch. To understand this, we have to return to the basic premise by asking what purposes a deck switch serves. You might say: To bring in a special deck or a deck with a complex stack, the benefits of which cannot be readily managed from a normal deck in



use. An example is the use of a Stripper Deck (Belly Strippers or standard tapered Strippers): You use such a pack as a normal deck until you would need your cooler. Now, with just a cut, you can separate the reds and the blacks, or bring the nine or eighteen cards for a Ten-Card Poker Deal to the top, or obtain any other set of cards that would take too long to gather and arrange during performance. In cases like the Ten-Card Poker Deal, you would have to prepare a deck of Belly Strippers with the relevant cards needed for just this one trick, but it might be worth it.

Another example is the No Switch Deck Switch, to which I have dedicated a whole chapter. This deals essentially with logical ways of putting a deck in use aside, or giving it away, and then openly taking out another deck to be used in a subsequent piece.

Now that we have agreed on the terminology to use and addressed an overview of the various types of deck switches, let's discuss a few basic concepts before proceeding to the switches themselves.

<i>Table of Deck Switches</i>									
<u>SWITCHES</u> ↓	<u>CATEGORY</u> →	<u>Page</u>	Seated	Stand-up (most can also be done seated)	Technical	During a specific trick	On the offbeat	No coat needed	No pockets needed
Pocket-Search Deck Switch		23		✓			✓		
Looking-for-a-Pencil Deck Switch		26		✓			✓		
“Topless” Deck Switch		28		✓			✓	✓	
Rapid Deck Switch		29		✓				✓	
Ninja Deck Switch		31		✓			✓		
Behind the Back Switch		33		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Pocket-to-Pocket Switch		37		✓			✓	✓	
Turning Around Deck Switches		41		✓		✓			
Triple Partagás		45		✓		✓			
Two-Pocket Partagás		48		✓		✓		✓	
Hugard’s Method of Changing Packs		51		✓		✓			
Because the Cards Know		55		✓		✓			
Ribbon Spread Deck Switch		59	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Relax Lap Deck Switch		63	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Chair Adjustment Deck Switch		65	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Money Switch		69		✓	✓			✓	
<i>Mani Pulite</i> Deck Switch		73	✓	✓	✓				
Flip’s Deck Switch		77		✓	✓				
Chivalrous Deck Switch		81		✓			✓		
Gambler’s Coat Deck Switch		83		✓	✓				
Joker Deck Switch		87		✓			✓	✓	✓
Equivoque Red-and Blue-Deck Switch		91		✓			✓	✓	✓
Real Pseudo Deck Switch		95	✓						
Himber’s Razor Deck Trick		101		✓					
One-handed Switch		107		✓				✓	
Casing the Deck Switch		111		✓			✓	✓	
Simplex Deck Switch		115		✓			✓	✓	
Cool Man’s Deck Switch		119		✓			✓	✓	
Trojan Deck Switch		123		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
No Switch Deck Switch		127		✓			✓	✓	✓