



# Audience Management: „The Open Prediction“

*„If you understand something, you don't have to remember it.“*  
Roberto Giobbi





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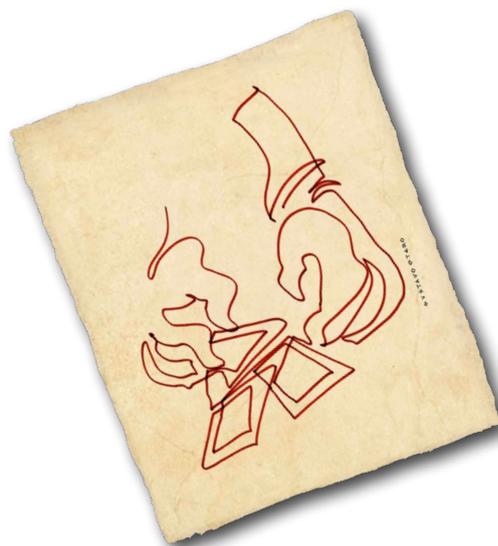
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## Introduction

You have now learned the fundamentals of elegant card handling. This lesson will allow you to put that acquired skill into practice with a beautiful trick that is in the repertoire of many a professional magician. We will also discuss important points of audience management which will help to make each of your performances a success.

## Learning Goals

In this lesson you will learn...

- ...how to deal with your audience and what criteria to apply when you pick a spectator to assist you.
- ...an excellent close-up card trick.
- ...what a glimpse and a force are and how to use them.
- ...a few fascinating facts about the rich and intriguing history of magic, the origin of tricks and some of its colourful characters.

## More Audience Management

In lesson 5 we have looked at how to handle members of your audience. Before proceeding to teach you the trick in this lesson, let me discuss a few more things related to audience management, specifically *how to choose an appropriate spectator* to assist you in a trick.

Although there is no guarantee when it comes to human interaction, there still are rules that have stood the test of time and that will make success very likely. Here are a few of them with my comments.

### Break the Ice

To start with you want to meet your audience and let them meet you. What you say and do at the beginning will create a first impression and establish who you are. The first minute is therefore important. Experience has shown that people will judge you by four criteria:

- Your facial expression and the way you look at them.
- The tone of your voice.
- Your general body language.
- What you actually say and do.

You might be surprised to learn that there are more important things than the content of what you say, at least *at the beginning*. The simplest and most straightforward way of managing your signals is not through acting, but through *an attitude of sincerity*. If you are in tune with yourself, love and respect what you do because you have understood and practiced it, and if you enjoy being with other people, all the necessary unconscious signals will take care of themselves. This is especially true in close-up as opposed to parlor or stage situations.



There is no doubt that after a minute or less *it will matter* what you say and what you do. This is the reason why you should *thoroughly understand* the trick you are about to perform, what the effect is that you want to create in their mind and how you want to achieve this. There is no way around it: practice and rehearse your trick over a period of time, at least a few days, and know what you are going to say, *before* you attempt to perform it.

You want to calibrate your audience before you ask individual members to do things. This will allow you to observe your audience and allow you to pick the ideal spectator, rather than leaving this to chance.

As a general rule, which you can break once you have understood it and have enough experience, do not open with a trick that needs an assisting spectator. It is fine to have a deck shuffled or a card selected, but avoid having him follow complex instructions, such as dealing cards in various packets or similar procedures.

### What Kind of Spectator?

What kind of spectator should you ask to assist you in the execution of a trick? Make sure to take a *friendly* person, one who has been following along well and who has shown by his or her reactions that he or she is interested in what you do and that he or she likes you. These people will usually have an open body language and smile at you.

Do not by any means take a skeptic spectator and think that you can convert him or her with a particularly good trick. You can do this when you have accumulated enough experience. Leave them alone and let your magic speak for itself. If you do what you do well and if the other spectators react favourably and applaud you, this person will be converted automatically.

### Ladies or Gentlemen?

Usually it won't matter whether you take a man or a woman, although men seem to have more of an affinity for playing cards than women (unless you perform for the Ladies' Bridge Club...). However, if your presentations are intelligently thought out and emotionally appealing – and we will take great care to teach you that – your magic will please either sex.

### What Age?

The thumb rule is: take a good-natured person between the age of 25 and 55 and who you think can follow simple instructions easily.

Avoid taking very young and very old members of the audience. Children may not understand all instructions you give them. They may be too shy or too cheeky, either thing being undesirable. Teenagers, who are still fighting with finding their identity and role in adult-society, are often self-conscious and will convey a sensation of inhibition. The same is true, for different reasons, of VIPs. Old people may be hard of hearing and be handicapped in their motoric skills. It should go by itself that you *do not* take an obviously handicapped person, nor a pregnant woman or a mentally retarded individual. Also stay away from excessively obese people or such with some kind of blemish, especially in their face. All of these people might not enjoy being pointed out or standing in front of an audience.



## They Make a Mistake

If in spite of all your precautions an assisting spectator makes a mistake, or doesn't understand a piece of instruction that is otherwise clear to the rest of the audience, *try to help them rather than chastising them in front of the others*. Immediately take the blame on you and apologize for not having made your instructions clear – even if it wasn't your fault. Tell them that it's no problem at all. Normally you can just repeat the actions and all will be fine.

## Hecklers

You might occasionally run into a spectator that will heckle you. Most of these people just need a little attention and you can deal with them by simply looking at them for three seconds, smile and nod your head. If necessary do this again and say, „That's OK.“ Every intelligent person will understand, and most of the others, too. It's another of the complex subjects that I have dealt with in my books. Meanwhile the above strategy should get you out of most situations, or other spectators will shut the heckler up for you, provided they like you and what you do.

If, however, the heckling continues, finish the trick and stop your performance. You are doing this for fun and not for money, so there is no obligation on your side to proceed. Don't attempt to get into an argument with the heckler as there is nothing to be gained by showing your superiority. Simply put the cards away, smile and get on with another subject. If the others insist that you continue, say that you might do so, but a bit later and tell them to consider this as a break, like in a theatre. It's wise not to perform again on this occasion, unless the heckler has left.

## Conclusion

Use common sense and the experience you have built up during your private and professional life along with a healthy portion of intuition. Everybody has this and so have you.

Maybe the best piece of advice I can give you, is to *neither take yourself nor your magic too seriously, but still keep in mind that you are doing something important and do it as well as you can*. If you show respect towards yourself and towards what you do, this will automatically translate in respect for your audience. If you are nice to people, they will be nice to you.

Let's now see how you can apply this knowledge of *managing your spectators* in the performance of the following card miracle.

## The Open Prediction

Conjuring has a long and fascinating history, with many colorful characters. Throughout this course you will meet a few of them, learn a bit about their lives and above all about their outstanding contributions to the art of magic.

The trick I'm about to teach you goes back to a problem Paul Curry (1917–1986), one of the great creators in close-up card magic, posed in 1949 that seemed impossible - it was also known under the name of the „Curry Unsolved Card Problem“. To this day the top minds in magic are still coming up with solutions. Here we will look at an easy-to-do method that I created some years ago and which is published here for the first time.



## Effect

A spectator thoroughly shuffles and cuts a deck of cards. Before anything else is done, the performer writes the name of a card on a piece of paper, so that all may see it – this is an „open prediction“. A second spectator deals the cards face up on the table in a pile, but in the process leaves one single card face down. The predicted card doesn't turn up. It is seen to be the only card that the spectator had left face down during the dealing process!

## The Effect in a Photogram



Two spectators shuffle and cut a borrowed deck. The performer



... makes an „open prediction“, the Four of Spades.



The spectator deals the cards from the deck face up on the...



...table, put leaves any unknown card face down.



The only card, which was left face down during the deal...



...turns out to be *exactly* the openly predicted card!

## Prologue – The Prediction

„Let me demonstrate a most unusual experiment using this deck of cards.“ Hand the cards to a spectator for shuffling and cutting.

Remember that any good trick starts with a prologue that should arouse the audience's interest. In this case it is merely a single sentence, and an example of a minimalistic prologue. Nonetheless it serves its purpose and will lead to the plot which you'll expose in a few moments.

Take the deck from the spectator and briefly ribbon spread it from left to right face up on the table, saying, „This is a perfectly shuffled, complete deck and before we start doing anything whatsoever, I will make a prediction – that's a statement about something that has not happened yet, but is going to happen in the future.“



As you begin forming the ribbon spread, you will be able to see the index of the deck's top card – in our example it is the Three of Diamonds. The technical term for this is „to glimpse a card“, i.e. you gain knowledge of the identity of a card without the audience being aware of this fact. You can learn more about this powerful principle in advanced books that teach some refined methods of how to secretly learn the identity of one or even several cards. Meanwhile you have just learned an excellent „self-working“ way of doing this. As soon as you have seen this card, lift your gaze and look at the audience, *finishing the spread without looking at it*. This will create the impression that you haven't even looked at the cards and that you are merely making a comment.



*When you look, where you look and how long you look are important techniques of directing and leading the audience's attention.* The famous Scottish amateur magician John Ramsay, who was one of the most inspired sleight-of-hand artists in the history of magic, used to say, „If you want them to look at something, look at it yourself; if you want them to look at you, look at them.“ This simple sentence contains a lot of what is the essence of artistic magic. We will come back to it many times. Meanwhile, when you perform, become aware of where you look and why you do so – it will make you a better magician.

Gather the cards and place the deck face down aside for the moment, as you take a piece of paper and openly write on it the name of the card you've just glimpsed, i.e. „Three of Diamonds“. If available, put the prediction under an inverted glass, in view of all.



My suggestion is to put the prediction in view under a glass, as glasses are easily available wherever you perform. The idea, however, is simply to try to stage the prediction in some interesting way, to give it focus and importance, and to make its display attractive and intriguing. Think about this, and you will come up with some idea of your own for doing this. Notice: the prediction doesn't need to be written on a piece of paper, and it doesn't need to be put underneath a glass...

## Double Intelligence

Set the face down deck in front of a spectator and explain to her, „Everything you are going to do now has been inexorably predetermined. Although you will think that everything is happening under your control, this prediction over here will ultimately prove that fate is guiding you.“

This is indeed an intriguing claim and should ensure everybody's undivided attention. Take care



not to make this sound like a challenge to your audience through your tone of voice and attitude. Rather deliver the statement tongue-in-cheek with a twinkle in your eyes – you don't want to scare your audience, but provide an entertaining, yet unusual and intelligent experience.

I suggest you take a female spectator to assist you in this trick, as women have a tendency to go along better with this kind of „esoteric“ subjects.

Make sure to take a spectator sitting furthest to your left, or have her sit next to you on your left – you'll see later why. Continue, „To ensure this, let's use both your emotional *and* intellectual intelligence.“ Ask her, „Are you right or left handed?“ Let's assume she says right-handed. Tell her to take her left hand, which is closer to her heart, and to lift off a small packet of cards from the top of the deck.

Have her turn the packet face up....



.... and replace it squarely on top of the balance of the deck. Continue, „Now take your right hand, and with it also cut off a packet, but make it a bit larger than the first, since the right hand is the hand you use more.“ Like before ask her to turn the cut-off packet over and then to replace it on the balance of the deck. If she answers „left“ to your question, have her do the cutting accordingly. Thank her and quickly remark that the deck has been shuffled and that she has cut wherever she liked – all actions have apparently been haphazard.



Although all of these actions are quite simple, you must take care that they are correctly executed without giving the impression you care. An easy and safe way of guiding your spectator through her actions, is to accompany your verbal instructions, „...cut off a small packet from the deck... turn it over... and replace it on the rest of the cards...“, by pantomiming each of these three actions and performing them in the air together with the spectator.

You have just accomplished what is called the „cut-deeper



force“, which is a simple force and always succeeds. If you were to ribbon spread the deck now, you would notice that about one third of the cards are face up and the following two-thirds face down. *The first face down card is the originally top card*, the Three of Diamonds. Let's see how to use this now.



## Dealing to the Finale

Instruct her to take the deck and to start dealing the cards on a pile on the table.

Again, this is a simple set of instructions, but since it consists of *four* pieces of information, you want to make sure that she gets it right. The first thing you want is that she holds the cards correctly so that they don't fall out of her hand and thus ruin your trick—many spectators can be very clumsy, and you can't know this before. Use clear instructions in a *laymen terminology*.

Explain, „Please take the deck as if you were distributing cards in a card game.“ Once she holds the cards correctly, give her the second, third and fourth piece of instruction, step by step, „Please deal the cards (2)...here on the table (3)...“, pointing to a spot on the table in front of her, „...in a packet (4).“

As soon as she has dealt the two or three cards, stop her and add, „As you are dealing the cards, please watch out for my predicted card, the Three of Diamonds, and stop the deal.“ Point to the open prediction under the glass - visible to all – to remind her. To maintain the interest as she is dealing, you can make a comment, such as, „Of course we cannot know when the card will come, as you have shuffled and cut the deck yourself.“ All of this is certainly true ... well, in some way.

She will deal until she runs out of face-up cards and reaches the face down portion of the deck. *Immediately stop her*, if necessary even by putting your hand on her dealing arm.



This is an important moment in the management of your spectator, as you must make sure that in her enthusiasm she doesn't continue the deal, otherwise she will expose the force card and all is kaput.

Explain, „Good – that's were you cut the deck yourself.“ This



is certainly true, in some way, but due to the principle involved in the cut-deeper force this is now the original top card, our Three of Diamonds. „Deal this card face down on the other cards, and then please continue the deal.“ She will do so by dealing the Three of Diamonds *face down*...



... and the following cards again *face up*. After she has dealt a few more cards, remind her that she should stop when she arrives at the Three of Diamonds. She will deal until the end, as the sought after card won't turn up.



As she deals the last few cards, suspense will build up. All you need to do is not to spoil this moment which leads to the climax. What you do next needs to be done and said not too quickly and not too slowly, but just right. Your common sense and a few trials before real audiences - besides the following instructions - will help you.

## Perfect Match!

Take the deck very deliberately and ribbon spread it on the table, revealing all face-up cards and one single face-down card. As you do this, make it clear, that you are not performing any kind of sleight-of-hand, because that's what your audience expects you to do – they have no idea that everything happened before they even knew what was going to come.



Say, „You have shuffled this deck thoroughly yourself (1)...you have dealt the cards yourself (2)... and left one card, and one card only, face down (3).“ The „...“ in the sentence denote a pause of one second, not more, to let the audience recreate the associated images they have in their memory and acknowledge what you say. The first two things you said (1 & 2) are absolutely *true*, the third utterance is a *generalisation* that in its linguistic form is also absolutely correct, but in terms of content allows for multiple interpretation. Delivered in a steady rhythm and accompanied by the spreading of the deck, with its visible impact that matches what you are saying, the first two statements will elegantly lead to the third.

This is an interesting piece of linguistic manipulation – „sleight-of-tongue“ if you will – that we will have a closer look at in advanced courses. Meanwhile you'll notice how magicians and politicians share some common techniques...

Without missing a beat point to your open prediction, „Remember that I made this prediction



before you even touched the deck.“

Take the face-down card from the spread, holding it at its inner end. Slowly turn it over towards yourself and show it first to the spectator who dealt the cards, without showing it to the others, yet. This is the reason why you had your spectator sit to your left to begin with. Then turn it so that everybody can see the card. *Hold it still for three seconds in the same spot* before you throw it on the table. It is indeed the Three of Diamonds. This is the climax of the trick.



Pay particular attention to how the card is revealed. If you simply turned it towards the audience you would lose suspense as well as a double dramatic effect. The first effect is the spectator's reaction when she sees the card. If you have picked the right person, she will react emotionally – *her face will become a mirror of the effect*. Then you show the card to everybody and get the effect and reaction of all. Notice how much better the moment of the climax can be dramatized and extended in time just by the way the card is turned over. *No detail is too small if you want to become an accomplished performer.*

## Epilogue

As an epilogue you might hand the prediction and the Three of Diamonds to the spectator who dealt the cards, and remark, „You did everything by yourself, and still it was predicted. Was it fate or just a coincidence of the other world...?“

## Lest I forget...

1. What you are getting here is an excellent cost-benefit ratio, as you have a great effect that is achieved by a practically automatic method. However, as my good friend Gordon Bruce, an inspired Scottish amateur magician and scholar, once remarked to me, „There might be self-working tricks, but there are no self-working presentations.“ What this trick doesn't need in digital dexterity, it needs in a captivating presentation, good pacing and capable audience control.
2. A word on pacing. Pacing refers to the rhythm used in the actions and the delivery of your text. Every trick that involves dealing needs to be carefully managed and presented, as *dealing is a potentially boring procedure*. In this particular trick we have three problems: first, the spectator is doing the dealing and is therefore even slower than if you did it, second, she has to deal through the whole deck, and third, she is looking for a specific card at the same time. Go back to the description above and check out my suggestions of when and where to say something as she is dealing. Use my suggestions, or come up with your own, but be at all time aware that you need to keep the deal going. At the same time, know when to be silent, as the dealing itself has an inherent dramatic quality. Thanks to the great plot of the trick, some spectators will already become alert when you ask her to deal the card she cut to face down – they sense a connection between this card and the open prediction initially made. When she continues the deal and you repeat to her that she should stop when she reaches the card, a few more from the audience will catch on, until almost everybody will be totally absorbed and wait for the inevitable and inexplicable climax. That's the idea.

## Credits



### Paul Curry

Learn a little more about Paul Curry, the inventor of this card problem, here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Curry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Curry). Follow the links on that page and you will obtain some remarkable information.

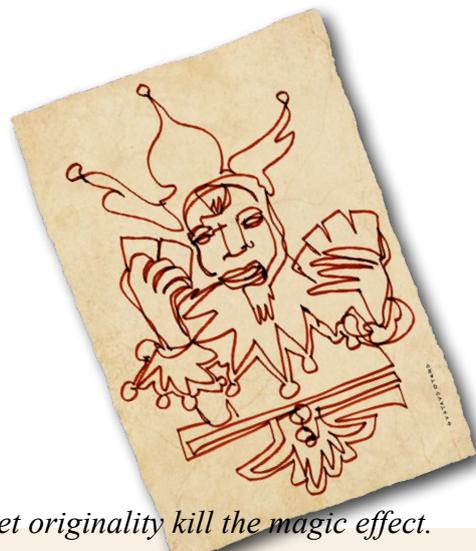
### Cut-deeper Force

The cut-deeper force utilized in this trick was long credited to Henry Christ, an amateur magician, who invented many ingenious tricks. According to Stephen Minch (see his book *Ken Krenzel's Close-up Impact*, Hermetic Press, Seattle 1990, page 13), it was Ed Balducci (1906-1988) who created this particular handling, inspired by Henry Christ's 203rd force. Christ's idea was published in Annemann, Theodore, *Sh-h-h! It's a Secret*, p. 41, Balducci's development in *Hugard's Magic Monthly*. More recently, Karl Fulves discovered a close precursor to the cut-deeper force in Sam Mayer's „Another Do as I Do“, in the July 1946 *Sphinx* (Vol. 45, No. 5, p. 143). Mayer used a sequence of four increasingly deep cut-and-turnover actions to force the top card. However, whether four cuts or two are used, the principle is the same. Therefore, Mayer predates Balducci by ten years.

### A Note on Historical Credits

As you can see in this example, every idea in magic has a creator, and an incredible amount of publishing is available that at least proves when a creation first saw print. Sometimes these published ideas are original creations, sometimes they are unintended reinventions by another clever magician, sometimes they are ideas deliberately stolen from others. To know one from the other is not always easy, and once a source has been established, it might be proven incorrect the next day by an earlier reference in an obscure and rare publication of the past.

It remains a fact that every small and great idea has been thought up by somebody, and when we practice and perform our magic, we should be at all times aware that „we are standing on the shoulders of giants“, as Sir Isaac Newton once wrote. This should keep us humble and respectful towards the rich heritage of magic. I can assure you, that this translates in a more artistic attitude that will show in each and every one of your performances...



## Golden Rule Number Nine

### Be Original... and Good

*Always strive for originality in your performance, but never let originality kill the magic effect.*

Sir Isaac Newton said, „If I have seen further, it is because I’m standing on the shoulders of giants.“ Be aware that you are building on a legacy that has been created over centuries by innumerable brilliant inventors and performers. Respect this and don’t ignore the brilliance contained in what has been brought to you, but at the same time constantly strive for some degree of personal originality in method and presentation.

However, remember: Good is better than original. The more experience you acquire, and the more thought and practice you put into your magic, the better you will be able to balance these two ingredients.