

*Dear friend,*

*I'm excited to share with you a small chunk of the hard-hitting original magic from my book *Mysteries of Mind and Matter*. I wrote this book as a collection of my best ideas, which have established my reputation among friends, family, strangers, and paying clients as a close-up magician.*

*I compiled this as a collection of new, cutting edge routines that you can incorporate into almost any style of close-up performance. I'm delighted to know that these effects will go on to entertain, mystify and inspire thousands of spectators I could never meet on my own, in the hands of hundreds of magicians like you.*

*Even if you can't invest in the full book, I hope you will invest the time to practice and perform the following magic for any spectators you come across. Please enjoy, and let me know how it goes.*

*Best,*

*Dan Skahen*

# Mysteries of Mind and Matter

\*\*\*Secret Sampler Special\*\*\*

By Daniel Skahen

*The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious.*  
– *Albert Einstein*

# Thoughts

*You don't need proof. You just need an inclination. – Mary Roach*

The passion for magic is hard-wired into our nature from birth. Our desire for mystery, drama, and intrigue makes us human. The quest to believe in the unbelievable makes us feel alive. We don't ask for explanation or understanding, we don't even ask to see the whole picture – we ask only to see a glimpse of possibility, the box cover of the puzzle even if the pieces remain scattered. We don't need proof, but we do crave evidence that there is something more to the reality than what we perceive.

Magicians take that essential passion to the next level. Instead of sitting back and looking for magic in our lives, we pursue magic itself. And in our pursuit, we use it to enrich lives of others. Our art may deal in trickery, but our purpose is far more authentic. Real magic can exist within tricks, just as real characters can exist within actors. While we may only be as successful as a good director, who uses lights and cameras behind the scenes and hopes that the story is compelling enough to steal you away and become real in your mind. Francis Ford Coppola noted that “the very earliest people who made film were magicians.”

It is a well-known saying that “seeing is believing.” But this is, at best, only half the truth. *Believing is seeing*. Perception creates reality. When the selected card appears behind the window, we create the perception of magic in our spectators' minds. In the present moment, we let them believe, and in that belief, we instill a feeling of wonder. Despite whatever means of trickery led to it, that wonder is real.

We set the stage, train the actors, and create a show. Our show provides the opportunity to believe in the unbelievable. Wonder is a constant in human nature. We do not create it. We create the bait, the magic that brings it to the surface. We crumble the boring routines stacked up in its way and invade the monotony that so often defines daily life. We expose the mere possibility of something more than the redundancy of reality and uproot emotions that only magic can tap into. In this moment, we enrich lives.

One might look back on a magic trick and rationalize it, come up with some legitimate or illegitimate reason to its workings. Your mind can only handle the possibility of defying reality for so long before rejecting it. The spectator's afterthoughts are as valid as they are out of our control. But by that time, as we say, the work is done. The purpose of our art is to make them believe in magic for just a moment in time. If we do that, we will stir emotions that stay with the spectator long after the rationalizations and even the effect itself are forgotten.

Anyone can be a trickster. Learn a couple of tricks. Practice them. Master them. Show them. You *will* entertain. You'll get some laughs, maybe a scream or two, certainly some puzzlement. If that's what you're looking for, great. You'll be the life of the party.

But the spectators of a trickster do not believe him. Don't expect them to. The top six synonyms for trickster are *cheat*, *hypocrite*, *imposter*, *jester*, *joker*, and *liar*. If you want to be a magician, if you want them to believe you, you'll need an accelerated curve. Expand your own beliefs of the possibilities stored within a single magic trick. Learn and practice beyond the mechanics of every effect. Think and explore beyond the cleverness of the method. Discover the infinite possibilities of magic.

This context in which I'd like to present this collection. I've compiled this book as a series of original thoughts that have helped establish my reputation as a magician. All of them are practical, powerful, and – provided you believe in them – very believable.

There are thousands of tricks and sleights, hundreds of authors and books, and centuries of knowledge that came before this book. All performers and innovators of today stand on the shoulders of giants. A magician could spend all his life learning magic and never learn everything – or perform anything. My contribution to this art is a handful of salt into the ocean, but its value is up to you.

My advice is this: love magic and perform with all your heart. If you enrich the lives of your spectators, they will enrich your life in return. I hope this handful of salt aids you in *your* art of magic.

# Mysteries of Mind and Matter

(Tutorials included in this special are labeled in red.)

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# Section I

## Routines, Effects & Trickery

*What the eye sees, the ear hears, the mind believes. – Harry Houdini*

## Author's Note

These are the tricks that I have spent years conceiving, developing and refining. For some time, I have kept most of them to myself. Anyone who has ever invented a trick knows the selfish pleasure of being the only one in the world to perform it. But eventually I decided to share them with a small group of magicians who have served as mentors for years, and here I discovered the even greater pleasure of having people around the world performing tricks that I created.

The material you're about to learn is about one percent of the ideas that have gone in and out of my head like cars on a freeway. As a magician I hold myself and my material to the highest standards. I love everything I use, and I use everything I teach. This is the small selection of original magic that I'll be sharing in the following pages.

This section presents a collection from my repertoire, tricks that I use all the time. They are practical, powerful, and perfected. They have been field tested countless times by myself and other magicians, receiving the consistent reactions of many spectators. These are solid tricks, and I'm comfortable to put my reputation on the line with all of them.

But never forget that the impact of any effect lies in its performance. The freshest piece of steak is worthless without cooking, spices, serving, and eating. For each of these tutorials, practice until your fingers hurt, perform with passion, and enjoy the material as much as I have.

## Countdown

*At a Glance: The spectator freely selects any card from any deck, and any number between one and fifty-two. The magician fairly counts off this many cards, always landing on the selection. Can be repeated any number of times with a different card, deck, number, or spectator.*

Of the card effects that I've created, this is one of my current favorites. Borrow a deck or use your own, shuffle it up, and you're ready to go. This trick is skill-dependent, but the practice required is tolerable for the effect achieved. They are, in order: a pinkie break, the classic pass (with built-in misdirection), the *Deep Double*, the *Slip Control*, and *Slip & Slide*. These sleights are all you need to produce this two-phase, powerhouse effect.



Here's the sequence of the method. Shuffle and cut the cards, then riffle down the top right corner with your right index finger and stop when they tell you to. Turn your head and let them peek into the break, spot their card, and then snap the deck closed. As you do this, slip your pinkie in to retain the break. Hand them any sheet of paper (I carry a 3x5 notepad for my nail writer and center tear routines, both of which work well alongside this) and ask them to write down the name or symbol of a card they're merely thinking of.

As they're writing down the card, use a classic pass to bring their selection to the bottom of the pack. If you shudder at the sound of "classic pass," I feel your pain. But in this situation, you could probably get away with openly cutting the deck. As they're writing their card, simply, silently, even sloppily do the pass. All you've done so far is had a card selected and controlled to the bottom.

Now for the fun part. Table the deck (face-down, of course) and raise your hands empty in the air saying, "I'm not going to manipulate, cut, shuffle, do anything to the deck from here on out." You're lying, by the way. "I just want you to think of a number between one and fifty-two and commit to it. Write it down next to the name of your card if you'd like." They call out the number and you pick up the deck in dealer's grip. Deal through the cards, slowly, one at a time. With all the second and bottom deal methods of doing this trick, enjoy the opportunity to dispel any such suspicions. When you get to their number, stop and pause.



"For the first time... what's the card you were merely thinking of?" Perform *Deep Double*, and let screaming ring. This alone is one of the strongest card tricks, in my opinion, that you can show people. And they don't even know that you're about to repeat it under circumstances that are ever *fairer*. Once the reactions have settled, ask them: "Would you like to see that again?"

Collect the cards that you dealt onto the table and bring them back into the deck. Turn the double lift face-down. Your next action will be determined by your boldness I tell them to take the top card and blindly place it somewhere in the deck. The "blindly" cue suggests not looking at the card, and 99.9427% of the time, they won't.

If you're uncomfortable letting the spectator handle the card, just take the top card off and slide it somewhere in the deck. Either way, you end up with the selection on top without the knowledge of the spectator. From here I do one cut (via *Slip Control*), one overhand shuffle (which brings the top card to the bottom), and one riffle shuffle (retaining the bottom card). Now you're in the same position as last time, with the added convincers of them returning the card themselves and the deck being cut and shuffled.

The second phase goes just like the first, only accelerated. You've already built the anticipation and exploded it with the first phase. Now all the spectators want is action. Have them name any number (no more writing things down), deal through the cards a bit faster (though still fairly), and *Deep Double* again. Reactions will go through the roof at this point. During this time, turn the double over, get out of it via *Slip & Slide*, and throw the card out on the table for examination.

Because there are no gimmicks or setup, you can use it as an opener, closer, or in-between effect. However you use it, present it well and you'll drive incredible reactions.

The one indispensable move of this trick is the *Deep Double* – the only double lift I know that can accomplish this method. The other two are auxiliaries, designed to spice up your *Countdown* routine. *Slip control* can be replaced by any other false cuts or shuffles or not be included at all. *Split Ends* has alternatives to accomplish the same objective, such as the Kardiro Marlo Move. Still, I recommend learning them both, as they are part of my performance of this routine.

(You can find *Deep Double* on page 100, *Slip & Slide* on page 90, and *Slip Control* on page 95.)

# Section Two

## Techniques, Sleights & Tools

*What is a great secret? Something that is there for everybody to see... and one recognizes it, the other doesn't. – Lao Tsu*

## Author's Note:

This section of the book serves more as a set of tools than a series of tricks. These sleights and utilities may not stand on their own (although several will), but they will enhance the magic you're already doing. I hold the "tools" of my arsenal in the highest esteem. With great tools, you build a stronger foundation for the tricks, and thus a stronger repertoire. Tricks are expendable; tools are invaluable.

Let these tools serve as quickies to fill your routines, boosters to tricks you already know, and inspirations for your own innovations. I hope you enjoy this second part of the book as much if not more than you did the first.

## Side-Note:

The following two tools are methods of double lifting that I use all the time. *Deep Double* is my personal favorite approach to this sleight, because it's easy, flawless, and undetectable, among laymen and magicians alike (you may recognize it from its use in . *Spin Double* is also nice as it allows you to double lift with one hand and can be presented under the context of you not seeing the card (you may recognize it from its use in *Bottomfeeder*). All in all, I think both of these doubles will be useful to your toolbox of sleights.

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## Deep Double

*At a Glance: You're in the middle of your ambitious card routine, when you hand the deck to your spectator and allow them to examine the top card, or even the top twenty. Not a moment after the deck is back in your hands, you flip their selection from the top.*

I love this method for two reasons: First, it fools magicians every time because it is a seemingly implausible way to get two cards off the deck. Clearly free of a break, you are sliding the card backwards and flipping it face-up. It's a natural motion that dispels any thoughts of foul play among magicians. The second reason I love it is that it opens new doors. This is a very different approach to the classic sleight, in that it takes a card from the bottom of the deck, making it the face card of the double lift.

With a deck of cards in the left hand, the grip is critical to the flow of the illusion: your thumb is on the left long edge, your index finger is at the front, and your other three fingers run along the right long edge. The only difference between this and Straddle Grip is your left pinkie, which stays on the right long edge instead of the back short edge. Your right hand comes over and your right index and middle fingers plant on top of the face-down deck. If you're using a Bicycle deck, a good reference is to cover both angels with your index and middle fingers. This should give you the best coverage for now, although it's not a dogmatic principle. As these two fingers cover the angels, the right thumb comes beneath the deck and presses

directly below the fingers above. You're essentially clipping the deck between the right fingers and thumb. This grip should be firm.



Now slide your right hand back, taking the top card and the bottom card as a unit. As you're learning, do this very slowly. You're sliding these cards back, and when they touch, pivot your right hand up and forward, flipping them face-up on top of the deck. The cards will stay about 80% square through this sequence, which is fine because your right hand gives you all the cover you need, and the flipping of the double should be done just as fast as you would flip a normal card. The edges of the double lift don't need to be square during the flip-over phase.

To complete the double lift, squaring the cards completely, squeeze with your left hand. Because of the grip, you will tighten the double lift square onto the deck. This is also the moment when your right hand pulls away. *Deep Double* is complete. It's a very natural, undetectable way of double lifting a card.

Why would you use this instead of another double lift? Well, first of all, it's a very natural, undetectable way of double lifting a card. But it also affords opportunities that other methods do not. If you're not working with a selection, then I recommend doing this every time, simply because it doesn't matter what card ends up at the face of the double lift and it'll produce a much stronger illusion. If you are working with a selection, just rework your

setup. If you want the selection at the face of the double lift, control it to the bottom. If you want the selection behind the double lift, control it to the top.

Let's say you're working an Ambitious Card routine and you place the card in the middle. Normally, you might control that card to the top, snap your fingers, and reveal the effect. Instead, control it to the bottom. This way you can literally thumb off five or six of the top cards into your right hand and show them. None of them will be the selection. *Then* when you double lift to show the card as risen to the top, reactions will double, not to mention you'll be one-ahead for the next phase.

There are different advantages to each of the double lifts out there, but in the past year or so, *Deep Double* has become my favorite. I hope you enjoy it as well.

## Spin Double

*At a Glance: You turn your head away, put one hand behind your back, and extend the other hand in front of the spectator. You swivel to show them the top card, their selection. You turn back around, and flip the top card over, to show that their selection is now gone.*

I created this sleight when I was trying to piece together the method for *Bottomfeeder*. It is a means of double lifting with one hand that conceals the card from your point of view. It fits *Bottomfeeder* perfectly, but since then I've found it to be practical and even superior to alternative methods under certain circumstances.

Say you are doing a double lift force. That is, you spread the deck and have the spectator touch any card. Once they do, you pull that card out, put it on top of the deck and double lift to show them the top card (their "new" selection). If the routine demands that you not see the selection and are as fair as possible, wouldn't it be better to have a double lift that is done with one hand and that never faces you? This is the function of *Spin Double*.

Here are the steps. Read closely, follow the respective images at the bottom, and move from one to the next. It's complex on paper, but straight forward in presentation.

1. Deck is held in your left hand, Mechanics grip, with a break held beneath the top two cards of the deck.
2. The base of your left thumb gets out of the way, and the left side of the double pops up. I learned this technique from Daryl Martinez.
3. The tip of your thumb contacts the left edge of the card close to the top left corner. By nature of the grip, your left middle finger should mirror the thumb's position. The tip of your left index finger moves to the center of the front edge of the card.
4. Your thumb and middle finger pivot the card counterclockwise around the index finger until it begins to feel unnatural, at which point your index finger then takes the place of your middle finger to further the pivot. When the card is held between your index and middle fingers, it is now perpendicular to the deck.
5. Reverse these actions to return the card to the deck.



The card stays square, you never see it, and this is all done with one hand. It is a very practical way of accomplishing the double lift. I'm sure you'll find this to be a nice change if you're looking for variation.

# Section Three

## Shifts, Subtleties & Spices

*The only way to improve a trick is to find a simpler and more direct way of doing it. – Paul LePaul*

## Author's Note:

In the time I've been creating magic, I've achieved varying degrees of complexity, intensity, and success. Through everything I've created, and among the small selection that appears in this book, I've gained the most satisfaction from those that are subtle. I've made the most use out of those that improve upon the classics, be they additions or subtractions, altering presentation, smoothing rough edges, or filling certain holes.

The improvements that make up the pages to follow range in significance. Some have meant the difference between performing an effect or letting it rot in my desk, as in *Case Closed*. Others are very simple, even hard to notice, merely designed to pepper the routine, as in *Sharpie Twist*.

However significant the changes, and however useful you consider them, keep this section of the book handy. Let them inspire you to look at even the best effects with a critical eye. Always seek room for improvement, because it is always there.

## Case Closed

*At a Glance: In Brainwave, certain selections will turn up red in a blue deck, others will be blue in a red deck. This presents an issue for the color of the deck's case. The following patter negates this issue and furthers the original presentation.*

There are a dozen ways of explaining this solution. Perhaps the most efficient would be simply to deliver the basic script with some italicized commentary. I will also assume that you own a Brainwave Deck and know how it operates, as the secret to that method won't be revealed here. I hope you enjoy this presentation to this classic of magic.

*I bring out the deck in its case. Choose a color, red or blue, and stick to it. Personally, I use a blue case, and I have the blue side of the Brainwave Deck always facing one way. "Something very strange is about to happen with this blue deck of cards. It all comes down to you. Do me a favor and think of a card. Make it random, not like the Ace of Spades. Just think of any one that comes to you. Got it? Good. Now, don't feel like I'm cheating you here, but I want you to just name your card out loud. But before you do, I want to commit to the fact that whatever card you name, I will make the color of that card different than from every other card in the pack." They name one. The script now breaks into two scenarios.*

### **Scenario #1:**

**The card they name will be a red card, face-up in the blue deck.**

*The deck is removed, blue side up. Start spreading through the cards as you say... "Now I promised you that you're card would be a different color, but <...pause...> it seems something else has happened." Outjog the face-up card, square the deck, spin the card out of the deck, and lay it on the table. Then hold your stomach and feign breathlessness...*

### **Scenario #2:**

**The card they name will be a blue card, face-up in the red deck.**

*Before ever removing the cards from the case, you give them a sly smile and say... "Now, I told you that your card would be a different color." Half-laugh. "I'll bet you were expecting a red card in a blue deck. But I like*

to push myself. What if –” *Take the deck out of its case mid-sentence, with red backs this time. “What if I could change the color of the entire deck, except for your card?” You see where this is going. Your spectators will be shocked as you go through the red cards and come across the face-up one. They will be even more shocked if you have been using a blue deck in previous tricks (refer back to Sync Switch for getting into this situation). Out-jog the face-up card, square the deck, spin the card out of the deck, and lay it on the table. Then hold your stomach and feign breathlessness...*

### **Scenarios Merge:**

“Well, let’s see if I did what I claimed I could do...” *Have the spectator turn the card over and examine it.*

I hope this makes you more comfortable with the Brainwave Deck, as well my own *Blush*.

# Section Four

## Thoughts, Essays & Theory

*He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards ship  
without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast.  
- Leonardo da Vinci*

## Author's Note:

The ideas I present in this final section are not my own. At least, they didn't start out as my own. My perspectives on and presentations of these ideas are original. But I am in the debt of fellow magicians and spectators for everything I understand about magic.

If my words are similar to another's, and I haven't paid them due credit, please email me and I will. That which I have independently conceived universally works. If others have conveyed these ideas before me, or presented them from a different perspective, please let me know. I'd like to hear more of what they have to say and mention them in this book.

Don't attach yourself to any of these ideas, but take them in with an open mind. Whether or not they agree with your ideas, you will be stronger in your conviction for considering them. It's somewhat bold to present fundamental theories on an art as vast and historical as magic, but then again, no harm can come of it if readers can think for themselves.

Without qualifying them further, I do believe in my theories and believe they will serve anyone who puts them to practical use. I hope you affirm my prediction.

# Presentation Perspectives

*Make them think they have been fooled by a gentlemen. – Howard Thurston*

We live in set realities. Sure, life can be unpredictable at times, and the specifics certainly change from day to day. But if you step back and look at it, we are masters of a daily routine. Along with the routine, we have a set of fundamental expectations. Maybe we can't count on the traffic of the morning commute or evening's dinner. But we can be sure to rely on gravity, hunger, sleepiness, emotions, attraction, and interaction. Collectively, these expectations form reality.

What if you took all of these expectations away? What would remain? I suggest that the breaking of these rules and expectations is true magic. What would happen? I suggest that the person bearing witness to this would step out of their own reality, and have an experience unlike any before. Across individuals, religions, and cultures, the debate can go on and on whether true magic exists. But as any magician knows, that experience is available to everyone who can let their mind be captivated by the false appearance of broken rules. This false appearance is illusion. The magic trick.

A great magical performance gives the spectator a break from their reality. Whether you are defying gravity or using invisible thread, the appearance of defying gravity and the open imagination of the spectator is all that's necessary to create this break. In the spectator's reaction, magic can become real, on both the sending and receiving end. You may feel the tug of invisible thread from your earlobe, but in that reaction, you'll feel the same magic in your own heart.

To me, there are no more disappointing words a magician can hear than, "Cute trick," or "Nice sleight of hand." The way to eliminate reactions like these is to build the appearance that you are representing true magic. The closer this representation is, the further you will lead the spectators astray from their reality, and the better, more genuine reactions you'll receive. Your only legitimate alternative is to openly perform tricks. Here is the dictionary definition:

*trick (n.)*

1. *An act or procedure intended to achieve an end by deceptive or fraudulent means.*
2. *A mischievous action; a prank.*
3. *A stupid, disgraceful, or childish act or performance.*

How do we create the best illusion of true magic? The best filtration device of the *magic* from the *magic trick* I know is called *presentation*. You have an attitude about anything you do, including the material you perform. Presentation is the expression of that attitude. Reactions are the reflection of that attitude. So if your attitude toward your magic is one of indifference, frustration, boredom, or insincerity, that will come through in your presentation and be returned in your reactions. How you view your magic is directly connected to how your spectators view your magic.

Focus first on seeing your magic as real, because on a certain level, the level of your imagination, it's as real as can be. When you perform with that attitude, you'll create real magic. Without it, don't be offended when your "tricks" are called "cute" or your "sleights" are considered "good." Your presentation can make a miracle of a cheap trick or a disaster of a great trick. In my perspective, presentation is the most important part of magic.

We can compare film to performance. We can compare the story and the special effects to the presentation and the tricks. If the story and the special effects are both bad, you'll judge the film accordingly (ala bad movies and bad routines). If the story is good, but the special effects are bad, you're likely to judge the film as good, if a bit hokey (ala old horror movies and simple routines). If the story is bad, but the special effects are good, you're likely to say something like, "Wow, impressive effects," just as spectators would say "Nice sleight of hand." A great story with great special effects, like great presentation with great tricks, will draw a compelling reaction every time.

Presentation can make magic real. All the while, keep in mind that I can only present my perspectives. Perspectives are only maps, and a map is not the territory. If you get attached to any of these perspectives, or any of the theories in this section, you will lose touch with the genuine feeling of magic that you can only find in a spectator's reaction. However, good maps can make your exploration of the territory far more fulfilling and expand your journey beyond what you ever thought possible.

Also keep in mind that even the best presentation will be about as powerful as a great story in a great film. The goal of a filmmaker should be to make the story so good that viewers are absorbed in the special effects, to the extent that it doesn't even occur to them that the special effects are "good." But the filmmaker only needs to achieve this absorption in the moment. You only need and want to make the magic feel real in the moment, and perhaps for a few moments after. They will inevitably return to their set realities on the ride home, but if you can help them escape for just a moment, the feeling of magic can linger in their hearts for a lifetime. Your presentation will provide that escape.

### *The foundation of presentation*

At this point in my journey with magic, I consider presentation more important than material. Presentation is as important to magic as oxygen is to life, which is why it's the focus point of this essay. But without material, presentation has no place, meaning, or value. And without a structure for your material, performance itself is hardly possible. If magic was tennis, the structure would be the court, the material would be the equipment, and the presentation would be the way you play. Before addressing presentation, I want to discuss the foundation of presentation itself.

As for material, I recommend investing in the highest quality magic suitable to your performance style and within your range of budget. That's the most advice I can give. As for the structure of your material, I recommend forming effective routines, above all else. On that topic, I'd like to share some thinking that has worked well for me. I find a good routine to be like a good meal. Start with some drinks and an appetizer (a few small tricks to inspire intrigue), then serve the entrée (the bulk of your routine, including your richest and most lengthy effects), and finish off with a dessert (the last and most flavorful trick).

It may seem obvious, but it's critically important that there is consistency throughout a routine. Consistency can be expressed through venue (cards, coins, etc.), theme (monte, triumph, etc.), and/or style (light-hearted, disturbing, etc.). Routines can be strung together to form a set, in which case these qualities can vary, but within a routine itself, I think the consistency is more important than anything.

It's important to realize that there are times when a routine is not appropriate, just as there are times when you only want a snack. When someone requests to see a trick, or if you're only performing in passing, your best bet is to hit them with a single, powerful effect. Recognize the effects that are better standing alone, and give them that standing. Often great tricks are just too long, with smaller tricks built into them. Such punching-bag magic should stand alone. Other great tricks are just too unique to fit in with anything else (i.e. linking rings).

The other distinct tricks to recognize in your repertoire are those I call "bridges." Think of these as the O blood type of magic. These are your tricks that fit in almost any context, and with good presentation, can transition between stand-alone effects and other effects, stand-alone effects and routines, or routines and routines to form a set. The most common bridges I've come across are characterized by multiple venues, multiple themes, and multiple styles. Alternatively, a good bridge is vague among all of these qualities, and not powerful enough to set the frame for any particular one. They are rare, so treasure them when you find them, and use them to your advantage.

If you have high quality magic structured into high quality routines, you have set the playing field for a high quality performance. The only focus that remains is presentation.

### *Eliminating competition*

Magic can create a tension between the magician and the spectator. It doesn't take much to turn magic into a puzzle, performance into a test, and reactions into arguments. Here exists a natural yet destructive competition between magician and spectator, that blocks the connection necessary to create the feeling of wonder. In my opinion, there are three major sources from which performance competition develops. Sure enough, they all come down to presentation.

1. *The Trick as a Puzzle:* Are you presenting pure, unconditional magic? Or are you presenting blank spaces in a crossword puzzle? Either way, the spectator will enjoy your presentation... until the end. When you haven't filled in any of the crossword spaces, you've wasted their time. The only outcome that can come of this is disappointment, resentment, or defeat – on your part or the spectator's.

2. *The Magician as a Trickster*: A performance can be presented as a series of lies to your spectator, or a mysterious event with which you and the spectator are mutually intrigued. In the words of Robert Giobbi, “The worst reason to do magic is the desire to display your superiority to your fellow humans.” This desire, which we must all overcome in our own way, will spawn endless competition.

3. *The Performance as a Challenge*: Returning to my earlier tennis metaphor, you see one player on each side of the court, separated by a net. They hit the ball back and forth, each hoping to hit their opponent’s shot in such a way that it cannot be returned. It’s all too easy to let a performance become a tennis match. It’s your natural instinct to “serve” the trick, in such a way that it cannot be returned. Instantly this makes your spectator an opponent, who will do anything to return your serve (or figure out the trick). A performance should never be set up as a win-lose situation.

As obvious as these may seem, they can be hard to recognize and even harder to admit in examining your own presentation. Turn your examination to the spectators instead. They’ll let you know, loud and clear, whether you are performing or competing. Keep in mind that reactions are a reflection of your attitude. If you see them turn from amazement to frustration, competition is often to blame. If you see the spectator watching your hands more than they are watching the trick itself, competition is often to blame. If they start coming up with completely ridiculous explanations to your tricks, it’s a sure sign of competition. Pay close attention to these warning signs. If they come up for you, do something about it.

In teaching his routine *Silas and the Slickers*, Jeff McBride explained how the spectator and the magician could be on the same side, by observing a character in a story who achieved some magical feat and presenting the routine as a reenactment. I do think this method demystifies the magic itself, which I don’t think is necessary to eliminate competition. Still it’s on the right track, and if you’re having a tough time leveling the field between you and the spectator, try telling a story. A milder approach is to explain something that people can do, and then doing it with an added twist. A great example is *Two Card Monte*. Along those lines, you can teach a spectator how to do a simple, throwaway trick and then show them a better one. If you don’t want to reveal anything, give the spectator the credit for the miracle, as in *Out of this World*. There is a classic presentational scheme that is

designed to neutralize the situation: Make a mistake and then rally. Perhaps the most automatic way of defusing competition between you and any given spectator is to perform for a crowd of two or more people. I use at least one of these techniques, these antidotes, every time I perform.

As long as you reduce the things that foster performance competition, and recognize the competition when it comes up, you'll have no problem creating a pleasant atmosphere in which to connect with your spectators.

### *Switching gears*

Have you ever seen a couple out on a date? Have you noticed that they mirror each other? Both lean in at the same angle, both make the same gestures, both laugh at the same time, both tilt their heads at the same angle. The next time you're in a room with someone you love, pause and notice how you are mirroring each other. This is rapport, which the dictionary defines as "relation marked by harmony, conformity, accord, or affinity."

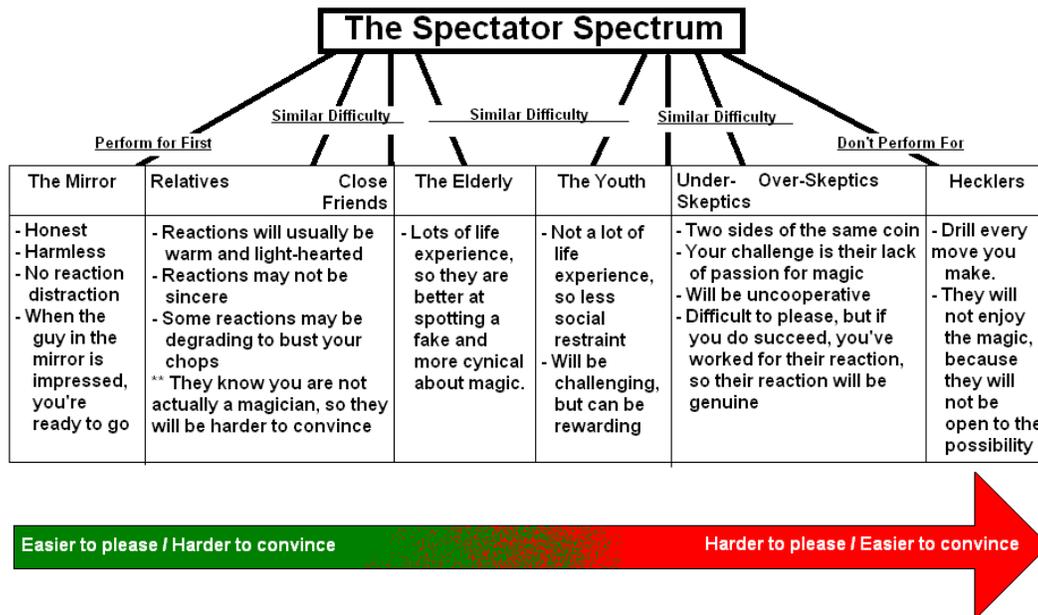
You can establish rapport consciously or unconsciously in any social interaction. And though it typically develops over months and years of a relationship, but it can happen in the first five minutes of meeting a person. Try to match the rate of the other person's breathing, orient your posture to theirs, and speak in a similar tone of voice – and watch how they open up. In the context of magic, this simple truth about communication can increase the comfort between you and your spectator, and amplify the reactions accordingly.

One of the best ways to build rapport in the first seconds of a performance, is to mirror them not only physically, but conceptually as well. If you imagine that you are a layman, with the mindset of a layman, and perform magic from that frame of mind, the reactions you get will almost always be improved. Your spectators will be more relaxed, more comfortable, and feel that they can relate more closely to you and your magic. You'll feel the same, respectively. You'll see Astonishment in tricks that lost their spark years ago. You'll feel the spectator's anticipation as if it were its own. All of this will come through in your presentation and the spectators' reactions.

Building rapport goes hand in hand with eliminating performance competition, and its by far the most effective method to do so. It's also one of the best things that I know of to enrich the performance itself.

*The honorable judges*

Magic is structured on the response it gets. You're only as good as your spectator's reaction. However experienced you are, the layman makes the final decision. Thus it's safe to say that knowing your spectators, and being able to perform effectively for each and every kind of person you come across, are critical skills in presentation. There are commonalities among all spectators, but every spectator is unique. Below is a chart I've come up with that organizes some common spectators:



While I hope you find this chart useful, I want to remind you that this is my perspective from my personal experience. These are complete generalizations, all of which have legitimate exceptions.

Remember never to let any spectator bring you down completely or make you too confident. If you get a bad reaction, let it go immediately. There are too many people that love magic in this world to waste your time on those who don't. If you get a good reaction, enjoy it only for as long as you're with the spectator. Few things are as repulsive as the arrogant

magician. Just have fun with each spectator you come across, never putting all your eggs in one basket, and you'll have a good time.

Also remember that you are not superior to any spectator you come across. After all, you may be able to experience the method, but they're the ones who get to experience the effect. They are also the ones who have been gracious enough to share their time with you, perhaps even pay you. Appreciate and learn from each spectator you encounter, and that in itself will reflect in your presentation.

### *Improvisation*

It's important to have your material well structured into routines. It's important to have a general idea of what your patter is going to be and what you are going to do for each trick. But what of the situations in which you are taken off guard? Improvising is one of the single most important skills in presentation. It takes experience to master, but there are some basic principles that you can fall back on in a tight spot.

*1. Keep composure at all times.* Let your heart race and your head spin, but don't let them connect to your voice tone, facial expression, and body language. After you've calmed down physically, you can then move to mental composure. Simply act as though everything that happens was expected to happen.

*2. Never be so proud of an effect that you can't change it.* You have to be willing to go in the opposite direction if it is going to save a performance. As the proverb says, no matter how far down the wrong road you've gone, turn back!

*3. Don't be afraid to be bold.* In an improvisational situation, you have nothing to lose. This gives you a lot of freedom. If your bold action doesn't pay off, it doesn't make the end result any more painful than it would be otherwise.

*4. Throw humor in for cover.* Think about how many "magician messes up and rallies" routines there are. If you mess up legitimately, treat it like one of these tricks. Let the audience laugh at you, and while they are

laughing, quickly think of some follow-up thing you can do to recover the trick.

5. *Provide yourself with default outs.* This isn't so much an improvising technique as it is a safeguard from having to use improvising techniques. Entire books and videos have been made on this topic, and I'm sure you have a few outs of your own. The more you know, the more control is in your hands.

### *Anticipation*

The more your spectators want to see magic, the more they'll react when they do. This raises a simple question: how do you make someone want something? You could tell them they can't have it, or not tell them quite what it is. You could make it seem valuable and rare, or you could make them wait for it. The answers to this question are endless, but they all come together in the simple principle of anticipation, defined in the dictionary as "a pleasurable expectation."

Every rollercoaster fan's favorite rollercoaster is the one with the largest drop. Perhaps its because of the rush, the speed, the wind, or the screaming that comes from the drop. But is all the excitement that makes us crave steep coasters really contained in the average two seconds of a drop? That may be when it is released, but I don't think that's where the excitement comes from, when it is registered, and how it is appreciated. The real excitement comes from the ride up, the thirty second wait, the "clickety-click, clickety-click, clickety-click." These are the moments, in which we really consume the excitement. I suggest that we crave these rides more for the anticipation than the release. I suggest that we crave the *wanting* of the drop more than the drop itself.

The rollercoaster drop is like your final effect. However fantastic it may be, it is absolutely dependent on the things that get it there beforehand. Without the climb to the top, you would not have enough excitement stored for release. The purpose of anticipation is fill your spectator with emotions, without letting them be released. One of the chief purposes of presentation is to fill your spectator with anticipation. Fill them with a burning desire to see magic, and the reactions that follow any effect will be out of this world.

Given the question “How do you make someone want something?” as the answer to “How do you create huge reactions?” I’ve discovered one method that works 100% of the time: Two steps forward, one step back. This is the formula for anticipation. Advance through a trick to a given point, and then pause and slightly backtrack, by calling attention to something earlier in the trick. Then advance further, and at another point, pull back a little bit. Then pull back a little bit. Keep doing this, with a natural patten that compensates for slightly unnatural presentation, and in a general ratio of 2:1, and you may be amazed by the reactions at the end.

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└ Anticipation → Reaction ┘  
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The two are directly proportional. How the spectator reacts is hard to control directly. But the anticipation the spectator feels is entirely in your hands. Focus on building it through your presentation, and the reactions you receive will follow suit.

### *Cooling the nerves*

All of your knowledge and experience of presentation can be made worthless, in an instant, by anxiety. Anxiety is a drug, and it eats your performance from the inside out. For some it is worse than others. Some magicians can be in any environment with any spectator and feel completely comfortable in their skin. Others can be so consumed by nerves that they are physically and mentally paralyzed, like a car that won’t start. Being in the latter shoes, I did some active searching for a way to overcome these nerves, and to fill their seat with confidence. These are ten things that I remind myself of every time I go into a performance. They’ve worked for me, and I’m sure they’ll work for you as well.

*1. Most people are good people.* Think about the last time you went up to a complete stranger to ask directions or to get the time. Did they snuff you bitterly or accommodate you with a smile? If you approach someone with a pack of cards in hand, and you present yourself in a polite and respectful manner, they’ll respond in kind.

*2. Everybody wants to see magic.* Magic is fun. People enjoy it. And they don’t get an opportunity to see good magic often, if ever. While it may be unusual for them to see a magic show, they’ll probably jump at the

chance. Those who aren't receptive are likely hecklers, who you wouldn't want to perform for, anyway.

3. *Expectations are always low.* Most people go through life never seeing high quality magic. They've seen cheap tricks for sure, but that's the only context they have to go on. It's also the context on which they will judge you. In all likelihood, you could demonstrate your worst trick, it'll probably rise above their expectations.

4. *You've put in the practice; there's nothing to be worried about.* If you miss a day of practice, you know it. If you miss two days of practice, a magician will know it. If you miss three days of practice, everybody knows it. So practice every day, and master each trick you plan to perform, and then trust that your work will pay off in performance.

5. *Take deep breaths.* This is borderline cliché, but it works just the same. If you inhale and exhale, deep into your belly, at a slow and controlled pace, you'll be far more relaxed and focused in just thirty seconds. Imagine breathing in confidence as though it were tangible and breathing out anxiety. Keep this state while you perform, and nerves will melt away.

6. *Carpe Diem! Seize the day.* You've developed the extraordinary gift of leaving a permanent impact of wonder with any person you meet. But who can say how long that gift will last? Each performance could be your last, so make each performance the best it can be. And certainly don't let something as temporary as nerves get in the way.

7. *You are the best magician there is.* Marlo, Vernon, Roth, Banachek, and onward... Perhaps these are your favorite magicians, your heroes, but they are entirely foreign to laymen. Not only are they unaware that Daryl won the FISM award for his Ambitious Card Routine, they don't know who Daryl is, what FISM is, or what an ambitious card is. You may feel weak against other magicians, but take this comforting guarantee with you: spectators have nothing to compare you to.

8. *It's all in your head.* You may feel nervous, but nervousness is just misused energy. The feeling of anxiety – lightness in your head, tingles in your chest, butterflies in your stomach – is not far removed from a feeling of excitement or anticipation. You may not be able to get rid of the chemicals, but you can change your interpretation of them to one that will serve you.

9. *The conditions are perfect.* You have a deck of cards in your pocket, the necessary gimmicks on hand, a sunny day, a full night's rest, comfortable clothes, eager spectators, and plenty of practice. Go into each performance with the right attitude: Everything is perfect for a performance today, and nothing will get in the way of that.

10. *You perform 40% better when you're not nervous.* It's a statistical fact, worth keeping in mind when you need motivation to relax. This is a shot in the arm of confidence. If you can totally relax yourself, perhaps from one of the above techniques, you will perform forty percent better. What a great thing to know.

Once your nerves are clear and your confidence is sound, you have a paved road for an solid presentation. You have the freedom to establish rapport, break through performance competition, perform your routines, improvise if necessary, build anticipation, and receive the kind of reactions you would receive from real magic.

*Magic is seeing something that extends beyond the visible. – Ken Kesey*

# Thoughts

Thank you for having the faith to invest your time in this book. I commend you for having the dedication to go through this book and learn from it. With instructional videos as the predominant source for learning magic, books carry with them extra risk, effort, and worthiness.

But there is eternal value in them as well, and writing will never be outdated. Before you close this book, I want to leave you with a few thoughts so you can get the most out of this material.

As I write this, I'm could be communicating with fifteen year old magicians just starting out in this hobby, fifty year old professionals who could smoke me at a convention, and everyone in between. It's fascinating to think that everyone reading this will get something different from it, distinct to their proficiency, venue and style.

But there is one thing that I recommend to every magician...

Use what you learn. Knowledge is half the battle. If you don't combine the information that's in your head with application and experience, it will stay in your head as trivial, useless knowledge. Some of the tricks you've learned in these pages may be too complex or too simple for your taste. They may not be your style or venue of magic. But I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone. Try everything in this book and observe the reactions you receive. Performing creates learning every time, whether you're dealing with the worst magic trick in existence or the best.

I love everything I use, and I use everything I teach. I hope you do as well. And when you do have success with this material, I'd love to hear about it. I've never met a magician that didn't enjoy recapping a great performance, so if you find a great experience with these tricks, shoot me an email and share it with me. I wish the best in your personal journey through this wonderful art.

- Daniel Skahen

[www.skahenmagic.com](http://www.skahenmagic.com)

## Where can you go from here?

If you enjoyed the material in this free sample, I guarantee you'd enjoy the full-length book *Mysteries of Mind and Matter*, which has an additional 150 pages of high-caliber routines, effects, sleights, subtleties and ideas.

If you'd like a special discount on the book, I encourage you to join the VIP section of *Skahen Magic* by joining the free mailing list newsletter. In this section, you can access not only more free samples like this one, but also a 25% discount if you decide to purchase the book.

Where can you go from here? I'd like to see your next step be practicing these effects and tools to mastery, and then moving them into the real world, performing them for every spectator you can find. I'd also like to hear your feedback, so send an email to [Daniel@skahenmagic.com](mailto:Daniel@skahenmagic.com) and let me know how your experience of this material is going.

Thanks again for taking the time to take on this sample, and I hope you make the most out of this magic.