

Tarot Basics

By Kasandra Tinajero (Kat), Mountain Crow Tarot LLC

You are drawn to Tarot but unsure where to start! Not to mention all of the things you should and shouldn't do when it comes to Tarot! That, and having to know the meanings to 78 cards?! The whole thing seems intimidating. When will time be found to learn ALL the meanings just so that a reading can be done with them? These questions and more have crossed the mind of EVERY Tarot reader (whether or not they want to admit it or not!). The good news that I have is: You don't need to know the meanings to all 78 cards. What if I told you that you just need to grab a deck? Well, let's get to it, my Friend!

Some things to know about your first Tarot deck...

1. Do not wait for someone to buy you your first deck! Seriously. Why wait on someone else to provide you with the tool you need for insight? That leads into another thing to remember (in general): Do not give your power away to anyone.
2. Google is your friend. Type in the name of the deck you are considering. Look at the images to check out what the cards look like. Check out the reviews. You really want to get a deck based in Rider Waite Smith (RWS) which is the foundation of Tarot. If you get an unconventional deck not based in RWS, learning may prove to be more of a challenge because many Tarot authors and artists can take a lot of artistic liberties with their decks. If you absolutely must have one not based in RWS, I would recommend getting an alternate deck so that you could put a RWS card beside the non-traditional card in your deck. That, or consider a book with the RWS images and interpretations to use as a reference or consider googling the card as you are learning.
3. Back to the subject of checking out images on Google: The minor arcana which is comprised of 56 cards (also called PIP cards) can sometimes simply be the numerical equivalent of the card instead of beautiful imagery to derive meaning from. This will make it a challenge to perform a reading for sure. Just like a good friend of mine once said, Tarot decks are a lot like dating: You cannot judge a Tarot deck by its cover. Yes, the box may look cool until you get it home and determine you are not into it. That, too, has happened to many people (including myself!).
4. Once you get your deck home, take off the wrapping and cleanse it. A couple ways to do this would be by using sage, palo santo, or leaving your deck under the light of a full moon. Essentially, you want to cleanse the deck of any previous energies that made contact with it prior to it getting in your hands. Take your time and look at each card. What mood does the deck have overall? How does it feel in your hands? Take care of it: Keep it in its original box or a Tarot bag of some sort.

So, now what?

Okay, my Friend! It is time to do your first reading. I believe in you: You got this! Anyone can perform a Tarot reading. First and foremost, read intuitively. Your intuition is that "gut feeling" that you have heard about before. Be aware of the tightening of your abdomen, that pull that tells you something is just off. It could be something that makes your heart race or even ponder for quite some time over your favorite beverage (for me, it's coffee). Basically, your intuition is the inner voice that has always been there but possibly choose to ignore because you may not fully trust yourself. Well, it is time to stop that too. Trust yourself and your abilities! Read on to find out some Tarot basics to perform your first reading.

How to do your first reading

I would recommend pulling one card daily. This can be in the morning (preferably) but can be done in the evening as well as a tool for reflection. What I want you to do is to pull the card, and interpret based on the imagery and/or even what you may know about the meaning of the card. You can write this down but it isn't required. Revisit the card in your mind or even at the end of the day to see how it was present in your day. Sometimes, you may not believe it was accurate because you cannot make any mental connection between the energy of the card and your day. It happens. Sometimes, it can be something that just hasn't happened yet. That, and Tarot is not linear. We may get a card that represents one thing but there are a series of things that haven't happened that may totally lead up to that card totally manifesting itself. **The most important thing is to intuitively interpret the card first before looking it up in the book that accompanies your deck.** Your intuitive interpretation is going to trump the book: humans are complex where certainly a one size fits all approach doesn't work!

As you gain a bit of confidence, work up to three card spreads and eventually a Celtic Cross (one of my favorites). Some people use only the Major Arcana which is comprised of 22 cards before adding one of the four suits from the Minor Arcana which has 56 cards total (each suit has 14 cards including the corresponding court cards). **The most important thing is that you consistently get started.**

Numerical Meanings

It is helpful to know what the numerical correspondences in Tarot mean. They are important, and add meaning to the card and its interpretation. Here is a guide to get you started:

One = Beginning

Two = Partnership/Collaboration

Three = A product of two people/things. Think alchemy. A third thing being created.

Four = Stability "Stable like a table".

Five = Conflict/Challenge. Uncomfortable but offers a lesson/opportunity for growth.

Six = Moving past/away from conflict or challenge. Growth/expansion.

Seven = The unknown. Possible feelings of vulnerability. Reevaluation.

Eight = Balance. Lemniscate (aka Infinity symbol). Law of Attraction. Equal give and take. Magical.

Nine = Manifestation of intent. Accomplishment.

Ten = The end of a suite prior to beginning a new journey. Mastery.

I would recommend making a list of what the numbers mean to you. Consider your personal meanings when you do your readings.

Suite meanings

There are **four suites** in the Minor Arcana which cover the day to day energetic shifts/events:

Pentacles: Earthly. As humans, we are earthly. Think tangible things: home, finances, car, career, etc.

Wands: Fire. Passion. Fire that must be contained and focused to manifest instead of devouring/overwhelming. Creativity. Passion. Sexual appeal. Confidence.

Cups: Emotions. Intuition. Mental health (How do we keep our theoretical cups full?).

Swords: Thought processes. Action. Communication.

Court Cards

These cards can represent ourselves or other people. Here are some generalized definitions of what they mean:

Page: Youthful. Idealistic. Wanting to learn everything although not ready to actually do anything. Cautious.

Knight: Take action. Knowledgeable. Confident. The slowest moving Knight of the four suites in the Knight of Pentacles (his horse remains still while he thinks about where to plant this new thing, his theoretical seed). The fastest is the Knight of Swords who tends to rush in!

Queen: All of the queens are Intuitive. They use logic although balance their inside knowing with what their minds tell them. Balanced.

King: Logical. Balanced. They, too, have intuition although not as much as their queens. Firm.

Major Arcana Meanings

Here are some meanings to help with your readings. The Major Arcana is made up of 22 cards although The Fool is generally not included because they are the one on the journey through Life as me and you know it. It is not linear. We can go forward and backward on this journey. The Major Arcana are the big things, the major life shifts in life:

0 The Fool: New beginning. Taking the theoretical leap into something new. Like an egg = holds potential.

1 The Magician: What tools are needed for our journey? Knowing how to manifest intent. As above, so below. Can be a trickster energy.

2 High Priestess: Intuition. Inner knowledge. The Moon.

3 Empress: The mother of Tarot. Giving birth to someone/something. Nurturing.

4 Emperor: The father of Tarot. Firm. Structured. Rule abiding. Defender. Not flexible.

5 Hierophant: Teacher/Mentor. Rules/Policy/Protocol of an organization or society. Conformity.

6 Lovers: Love. Passion. A choice to be made.

7 Chariot: Taking ownership of something (the reins) and making forward progression/momentum. A fast, turbulent energetic. Victory. Achievement. Mastery.

8 Strength: Compassion. Empathy. Self control. Confidence. Grounded. Resilient. Balanced relationship.

9 Hermit: Introspective. Seeks solitude to eventually return to being around others to share their knowledge and help them (being their light in the darkness like the Hermit's lantern).

- 10 Wheel of Fortune: A decision being made. A new season (sabbat). A turning point/change.
- 11: Justice: Consequences of actions. Karma. The legal system. Restoration of balance.
- 12 Hanged Man: Gaining a new perspective. In limbo. A time of rest and reflection.
- 13 Death: Endings. Change. Rarely means an actual death.
- 14 Temperance: Rest. Balance.
- 15 Devil: Feeling bound by someone/something of our own choosing that is not good for us. Possibly addiction.
- 16 Tower: Things come to an unavoidable event. Destruction with release. Offers the opportunity to rebuild.
- 17 Star: Hope. Inspiration. Rest. Stillness. Cleansing.
- 18 Moon: The unknown. What is real and unreal? Dreams. Psychic. Surreal.
- 19 Sun: Growth, Illumination, Warmth, Clarity, Success, Triumph, Happiness.
- 20 Judgement: A new slate/a new start. Rising above. Starting anew.
- 21 The World: Full circle. An end of a journey. Completion.

Final thoughts for now:

I see that I was able to keep this information within four pages so I believe that is a good thing! The most important thing is that you get started! Consider keeping a journal to write down the date, card, and interpretations of your card pulls. Personally speaking, I write mine down in a wire bound notebook from Wal-Mart, and burn them on New Years Eve to represent letting go of the old to make room for the new. You don't have to buy an expensive journal unless you want one (which then you should totally do it!).

If you want to continue to learn more about Tarot, consider joining my group on Facebook, Mountain Crow Tarot LLC. Send a friend request to Kasandra Tinajero so that I can invite you to the group (because it is a private group). I also have a book club that I run with my dear friend/fellow Tarot reader, Honor Noble, where we review a Tarot/Magickal book selection monthly. I have a YouTube channel with all 78 card meanings with some spreads under Mountain Crow Tarot. I also have a website if you would want a reading from me: www.mountaincrowtarot.com. If you use the code STLWITCH23, you can get 20% off the reading of your choice! However, you do not have to buy a reading from me for me to be a friend who helps you on your Tarot journey! Find me on Facebook or email me at mountaincrowtarot@gmail.com for any Tarot related questions/correspondence.