



# Inside Ed's Head

**March 2014**

**Counts  
(We're not talking about royalty)**

**Featuring the Elmsley and E.Y.E counts.**

Last month we covered a method for a no-get-ready double lift from a four card packet, one of the sleights used in the Peter Duffie trick I promised to teach. This month I'll be writing about the other two: the Elmsley count and the Victor E.Y.E. count.

You might wonder why I'd use space in this column to write about a sleight as well known as the Elmsley count. It's because it's often done badly. This is not necessarily the fault of a poorly practiced magician. It's because that, sometimes, the Elmsley count is taught in a manner that's beyond execrable. Imagine this: someone has a packet of four cards in dealing position in his left hand. He places the bottom three cards of this packet into his right hand. He then uses his left thumb to retake those three cards, one by one back on top of the card in his left hand.

No one has ever handled a packet of cards like this—other than a magician. A spectator's eye will follow the cards moving from the left hand to the right. When the action is reversed, and the cards are counted from right to left, the moment of disorientation will ruin the naturalness of the move. Either the spectator will be unable to follow what the magician is trying to do, or will become suspicious. Neither of these is what you'd want during a magical performance. (This is not just theory; it's exactly the way I reacted when someone first used this variety of Elmsley count on me.) As odd looking as this handling is, that's the way it's taught in some of my magic books by prominent authors, and I've seen it performed that way by a well known professional, and uncounted amateur magicians.

I urge you not to skip what follows. I believe very strongly that the Elmsley count from a dealing position is a more natural, and therefore better, way of handling cards. If you play with this a little, I hope you'll agree with me.

## **The Elmsley Count From Dealing Position**

I first encountered the Elmsley count from dealing position in the book *Real Magic*<sup>1</sup>, by Jose de la Torre, p. 18. J.K. Hartman also teaches it this way in *Card Craft*, p. 22. I hope you find my explanation and photographs useful. If not, please let me know.

Starting from dealing position is a little more difficult than starting in pinch grip, because the push-off is somewhat more difficult, as is the retake. Start with the cards gripped between the thumb and the side of the index finger; the tip of the middle finger is at the side of the top-right

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<sup>1</sup> de la Torre also thought the pinch grip was unnatural in its own right—when it was done from right hand to left by a right-handed magician.

corner of the card. Hold the ring finger and pinky away from the cards, to allow for the retake of the first card.



**Photo 1**  
**Magician's View**



**Photo 2**  
**View showing gap between cards and palm**

Start the move by pushing off the top card with your left thumb, taking into the right hand—thumb on top, index and middle fingers underneath.



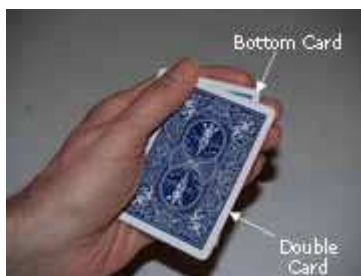
**Photo 3**  
**First card taken**

A point of difficulty with this method is getting used to the two card push-off. All you have to do is place your thumb on the upper-left-hand corner of the card so the middle of the ball of your thumb contacts the corner of the three-card packet.



**Photo 4**

By applying light downward pressure on the cards as you simultaneously move your thumb to the right, the two top cards will move rightward.



**Photo 5**

The bottom card will remain motionless, held by pressure against the side of the index finger. (Note: if you have trouble with this move, it might be because of dry skin. As with all sleight of hand, the condition of your hands is important. It's even more important when learning a new sleight.)

As the right hand moves back to the left to take this (double) card, the index and middle fingers push the right hand card squarely under the packet as the right thumb tip rises slightly to receive the double.



**Photo 6**  
**Right hand's card in process of being taken under the left hand packet.**  
**Double being taken into right hand.**

Take the last two cards into the right hand, one by one, on top of the right hand's cards to finish the count.

If you're not crazy about starting from a dealing grip, arrange your handling so that the cards start off in left-hand pinch grip. Then count them one at a time into your right hand. (Again, I'm assuming you're right handed. I'm also assuming you realize that this should be a motivated action, not just an adjustment to allow you to perform a false count from an unusual grip. You want to arrange it so the cards *arrive* in your left hand in pinch grip. In "Twisting the Aces",<sup>2</sup>) Dai Vernon created the "twisting" move to allow him to have the packet in left-hand pinch grip when he began the Elmsley count

## **Victor E.Y.E. Count.**

The E.Y.E. count ostensibly displays three cards but hides the bottom card. There are two alternative ways to handle the count. To illustrate what I mean, we'll first do two real displays. Start by taking an ace, two, and three, and hold them face up in left hand mechanics or pinch grip.

### **Display number one.**

Take the top card of the packet, the ace, from the top with your right hand, and put it back on the bottom of the cards held in your left hand, so the two is now on top. Now do the same for the two and the three. The ace is once again on the top, and you've cleanly displayed the three cards, returning them to their original order. The cards started and ended in the same left-hand grip.

### **Display number two.**

Take the top card, the ace, into your right hand. Now take the two on top of it, then the three on top of both. You've shown all three cards, reversed their order, and the packet has gone from the left hand to the right

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis Ganson, More Inner Secrets of Card Magic, p. 5.

You can use the E.Y.E count to simulate either of these two displays. For the Peter Duffie trick, I'll describe it as if we're doing display number one.

For the purposes of illustrating the move, I've taken the photographs holding an ace, a picture card and an indifferent card that will not be seen. These are *not* the cards used in the Duffie trick; I'm using them for illustrative purposes only. It's unlikely that this move would be done with different faces showing, as I imagine that people would notice the discrepancies. I'm also using pinch grip here, as the photographs are a little easier to see. The difficulty level is pretty much the same if done with a mechanic's grip.

### Step 1.

Start with the three card packet in left hand pinch grip or mechanic's grip. The right hand grips the packet on the right side, thumb on top, fingers below. The right thumb pulls the top card off to the right. The right fingers assist by pushing the two bottom cards leftward, as you take the top card into the right hand. Pause a beat, and then put the card underneath the packet in the left hand, retaking the grip on the right side with your right hand.



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9

### Step 2.

Without pausing, use your left thumb to push off the top two cards, as one, into the right hand. (Similar to the familiar action of an Elmsley Count.) Pause a beat, and place these cards underneath the packet in your left hand, retaking the grip on the right side with your right hand.



Photo 10



Photo 11

### Step 3.

The right thumb pulls the top card off to the right, as in step 1. Pause a beat, and then put the card underneath the packet in the left hand.



Photo 12



Photo 13

You've now "shown" three cards, but you've really hidden the bottom card. The order of the cards has changed; it is now: picture card, indifferent card, ace. If you do this count from the left hand into the right, the order will be unchanged (unlike the "real" count, which would have reversed the order). The technique you'll want to use will depend on needs of the particular trick you are doing.

Next month: I'll finally get to Peter Duffie's trick, "Impulse."

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