



# Inside Ed's Head

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## Predicting the Past (It's Much Easier Than Predicting the Future!)

I don't remember where I first read the principle used in the following trick, I do remember when I first saw it performed—it was a performance by the late Don Engstrand, in a Ring 244 meeting. I remember that Don fooled me but upon further reflection, I recalled the basic principle was the associative property of addition.

I wrote this up a little over five years ago with the idea of including it in the "Ring 244 Hocus Pocus Parade" that was eventually published in October of 2012. I used the principle differently than Don did, but I figured he'd be happy to take credit for it. When I showed it to Don, he thought I had changed the effect too significantly to call it his own, so I more or less forgot about it until now.

I use a Tarot deck for this trick. Tarot decks have four suits (typically Wands or Sticks; Coins, or similar objects; Swords; and Cups.) Each suit has fourteen cards, one through ten and *four* court cards. There is also a Major Arcana. This consists of twenty-two cards such as "Death," "The Fool," "Lovers," etc. These are easily distinguishable from the suited cards. I ignore the Major Arcana and the court cards in this effect, so there's no reason you can't use a regular deck.

### Effect

The mentalist displays a Tarot deck, and says, "Whenever I show people a Tarot deck, I always get the same two questions. The first is, 'Can you *really* predict the future?' I always answer, 'Yes I can.' The second question is always, 'If you can predict the future, why aren't you rich?' My answer is simple, 'It's because, most of the time, my predictions are wrong.'

"So, rather than risk failure, I'm going to ask some of you to help me 'predict' something that has already happened."

The mentalist asks five spectators to help him with the prediction. One spectator cuts the deck and deals out four numbered cards—ignoring court cards and Major Arcana—to each of the other four

spectators. You'll use these cards to generate four random four-digit numbers.

The mentalist now reveals the past event he intends to "predict." Prior to the show, he asked an audience member to think of a five-digit number, write it down, and seal it in an envelope and have it available at showtime.

The four numbers are now added to produce a five-digit total. It matches the number in the envelope.

### Set-Up

Prior to the show, you will need to approach an audience member, and ask her to write a five-digit number (between 15,000 and 30,000) on a piece of paper, and seal it in an envelope. You must learn this number. There are myriad ways published on how to do this—impression pads, gaffed envelopes, etc. I'll mention a simple way of doing this in the Afterword.

Once you know this number, you will have to determine four four-digit numbers that will add up to this five-digit number. This is not hard to do, and should only take a few minutes with a pencil and paper.

Let's say the number chosen is 21486. You must start working on your solution from RIGHT to LEFT. First, you'll need to come up with four numbers that add to a number that ends in six. A simple solution would be:

21486

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Ones Place} \\ \text{or} \\ \begin{array}{r} 1 \\ 5 \\ 3 \\ 7 \\ \hline 16 \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{r} 0 \\ 0 \\ 1 \\ 5 \\ \hline 6 \end{array} \end{array}$$

Similarly, you then figure out digits for the tens place, hundreds and thousands place. (Be sure to use only digits 1 - 9 for the thousands place and remember to take into account any carry over from the previous calculation. You'll also need to be careful to use no more than four occurrences of any digit, as there are only four of any digit

in the deck.)

$$\begin{array}{r} 5831 \\ 8745 \\ 2513 \\ 4397 \\ \hline 21486 \end{array}$$

You will now need to remove sixteen cards from your deck that correspond to the numbers you just developed. (I prefer using a Tarot deck because it is “logical” to use this deck in a trick involving a prediction, and it justifies ringing in a stacked deck.)

The first four cards (from the top down) are the thousands place of each of the numbers you’ve calculated. (In this case, FIVE, EIGHT, TWO, and FOUR.) The next four cards are numbers from the hundreds place: EIGHT, SEVEN, FIVE, and THREE, The next two sets will be: THREE, FOUR, ONE, NINE, and ONE, FIVE, THREE, SEVEN.

Since it would be very unusual to deal out sixteen cards in a row and not deal out any court cards or Major Arcana cards, you should intersperse some of these cards among the top sixteen.

Now, case the deck and you’re ready for the performance.

You will also need a whiteboard, or large pad, a marker, and perhaps a calculator.

### **Method**

Remove the deck from its case, and briefly spread the cards face-up, talking about how “believers” use Tarot cards in psychic readings and fortune telling. As you are doing this, give the deck a few false shuffles. The larger size of Tarot cards makes the use of Charlier shuffles very logical.

You will now give a spectator (the “Dealer”) the deck, and guide him into doing Jay Ose’s false cut on himself. Ask him to take about a third of the deck, and cut it to the table. (If you don’t have a table available, use Spectators #1 - #3.) Then tell him to take about half of the remaining cards and place them to the right of the first pile, and have him put the remainder of the pack to the right of both. Finally, have him place the leftmost pile on top of the middle, and that combined pile on top of the rightmost pile. (If you’re not familiar with Ose’s cut, you might fool yourself!)

Now, ask him to deal four cards face up to Spectator #1. If any of these cards is a court card or any of the Major Arcana cards, it should be placed on the bottom and replaced by the next card from the deck. Repeat this for Spectators #2 - #4.

You should now ask Spectator #1 to choose any one of his four cards, call out the number on this card, and discard it. You should now write this number on your pad, as the first digit of a four-digit number. (If the number is a ten, just write a zero.) Now ask Spectators #2 -- #4 to do the same. After this first round is completed, you will have written a four-digit number. In this example, it might be 4541.

Starting with Spectator #1 again, ask him to tell you the number of any one of his three remaining cards. Write this down as you did before, under the previous set of numbers. You might end up with:

4541  
2735

Repeating the process for the next two rounds, you might find yourself with:

4541  
2735  
8817  
5393

Do *not* add the numbers at this time; instead, tell the audience that you will now reveal the event in the past that these numbers have “predicted.”

Introduce the person who you contacted prior to the show, and explain that she thought of a random five-digit number, wrote it down, and sealed in an envelope.

Now ask someone to add the four numbers generated by the spectators and announce the total. Have the “dealer” open the envelope and read the five-digit number contained within.

Voila! You’ve predicted the past.

### **Afterword**

**Finding the number:** An easy way to know the five-digit number you’ll need for this effect is to approach a spectator before the show; give her a pad, a pencil, and an envelope; and ask her to *name* any five-digit number between 15,000 and 30,000. Once she tells you the number, ask her to write it down on the paper, seal it in the envelope,

and safeguard the envelope until she's called upon during the show. (You can also use this technique over the telephone with someone you know will be in the audience at the time you perform the show.)

Later, when you introduce her, you'd use the following Mavesque wording to explain what has happened in the past: "Earlier today, I asked you to think of a five-digit number, write it down, seal it in an envelope, and safeguard the envelope until now. Have you done that, and do you have the sealed envelope with you now?"

She will answer affirmatively, and as far as the rest of the audience knows, you have no idea of what the number is. As for the spectator who wrote the number; she will have no idea of how the four "random" numbers generated with the Tarot cards can add up to her number and will be fooled just as badly as the rest of the group.

**For the statistician:** The odds that *all four* of the spectators will have four unique digits dealt to them is a little better than one in four. If you think anyone but I would notice this, you might consider arranging the cards so that one spectator will have a duplicate number dealt to him.

**How does this work?** The associative principle of addition says that the order numbers are added is irrelevant.  $4 + 3 + 7$  is the same as  $7 + 3 + 4$ . Since each spectator will be adding up the same power of ten, the thousands place will be the same regardless of the order they are added, as will be the hundreds, tens and units. This means you'll always get the same number.

Of course, you can use this principle as a force as well. It would make a very convincing third prediction for a "Mental epic" routine, for instance.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.

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