



Nireye

A PRACTICAL BEGINNER COURSE

TAROT 101

Rider-Waite-Smith based
Learn the cards. Read with care.



READ FOR INSIGHT.
LEAVE ROOM FOR CHANGE.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

A map before the cards

This course gives you a reliable first method. It does not ask you to memorize 78 fixed definitions.

01

ORIENT

Recognize the deck, tradition, suits, ranks, and card orientations.

02

QUESTION

Formulate a focused question and choose positions before shuffling.

03

READ

Move from observation to a contextual interpretation.

04

PRACTICE

Complete a one-card and a three-card reading, then review your work.

05

LIMIT

Know when tarot is useful, when to stop, and when professional help is needed.

Recommended pace: read one section, handle the matching cards, then do the exercise before continuing.



NAME THE SYSTEM

This guide uses the Rider-Waite-Smith tradition

The images were created by artist Pamela Colman Smith under the direction of A. E. Waite and first published in 1909. Its fully illustrated Minor Arcana makes it especially useful for learning through scenes.

RIDER-WAITE-SMITH

Story-rich scenes across all 78 cards. In this system Strength is VIII and Justice is XI.



MARSEILLE

Earlier European pattern. Numbered Minor cards are usually arranged suit symbols rather than narrative scenes.

THOTH

A later occult system designed by Aleister Crowley and Frieda Harris, with different titles, correspondences, and emphases.

TAROT VS ORACLE DECKS

Tarot normally follows a recognizable structure of Major and Minor Arcana. Oracle decks may use any number of cards and their own rules.

Meanings, numbering, titles, and elemental correspondences can vary by school. Use the guidebook for the deck in your hands.



A STANDARD 78-CARD TAROT DECK

Two systems working together

Major and Minor do not mean "important" and "unimportant." They describe different scales and kinds of attention.

22

MAJOR ARCANA

Archetypes, values, thresholds, and turning points. A Major can still describe a quiet inner shift.

56

MINOR ARCANA

Everyday action, feeling, thought, work, relationships, and resources. A Minor can still describe a major event.

56 MINOR CARDS

40

numbered cards
Ace through Ten

16

court cards
Page, Knight, Queen, King

4

suits
Wands, Cups, Swords,
Pentacles

First reading rule: notice which system is speaking most loudly, but let the actual question decide the scale.



0 THROUGH X

The journey begins

These are memory keys, not complete meanings. Read the image and the question before selecting a theme.

0 THE FOOL
beginning, openness, risk

I THE MAGICIAN
agency, skill, focus

II THE HIGH PRIESTESS
intuition, privacy, mystery

III THE EMPRESS
creation, nurture, abundance

IV THE EMPEROR
structure, authority, boundary

V THE HIEROPHANT
tradition, teaching, belonging

VI THE LOVERS
relationship, values, meaningful choice

VII THE CHARIOT
direction, discipline, momentum

VIII STRENGTH
courage, patience, gentle power

IX THE HERMIT
solitude, inquiry, guidance

X WHEEL OF FORTUNE
cycle, change, turning





XI THROUGH XXI

Crisis, integration, and return

The later sequence contains consequences, reversals of perspective, rupture, renewal, and completion.

XI JUSTICE
truth, fairness, consequence

XVII THE STAR
hope, renewal, authenticity

XII THE HANGED MAN
pause, surrender, new perspective

XVIII THE MOON
uncertainty, imagination, distortion

XIII DEATH
ending, release, transformation

XIX THE SUN
vitality, clarity, joy

XIV TEMPERANCE
balance, integration, moderation

XX JUDGEMENT
awakening, review, answering a call

XV THE DEVIL
attachment, temptation, constraint

XXI THE WORLD
completion, wholeness

XVI THE TOWER
disruption, revelation, collapse



Spelling note: this guide uses the RWS title "Judgement"; "Judgment" is a common modern variant.



FOUR LENSES ON EVERYDAY LIFE

The suit tells you where to look

These Fire-Water-Air-Earth links are common in RWS-based teaching, but other schools may differ.

FIRE

WANDS

will, initiative, creativity, identity

What wants to begin, move, or grow?

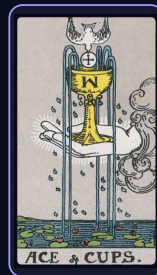


WATER

CUPS

feeling, values, bond, receptivity

What is being felt, shared, or received?



AIR

SWORDS

thought, truth, decision, conflict

What is being understood, chosen, or contested?



EARTH

PENTACLES

body, work, resources, long-term result

What needs material care or sustained effort?





A STARTING MODEL - NOT A UNIVERSAL RULE

Number gives motion. Suit gives context.

One useful learning method is to treat each number as a stage. It is a mnemonic, not the final meaning of every card.

ACE

potential

2

polarity

3

growth

4

stability

5

disruption

6

rebalancing

7

testing

8

movement

9

culmination

10

completion /
excess

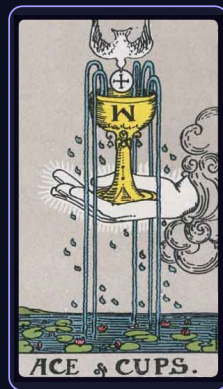
Three of Wands: 3 suggests growth; Wands points to plans and action. Together, the scene can suggest looking toward expansion.

But the picture and question can outweigh the formula. Nine of Swords is not simply “almost complete”; its scene emphasizes anxiety and mental distress.

SAME NUMBER, DIFFERENT WORLDS

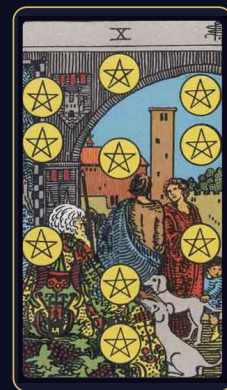
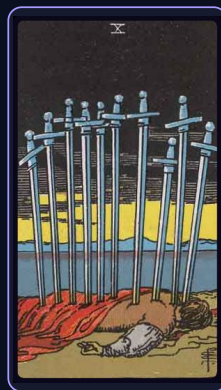
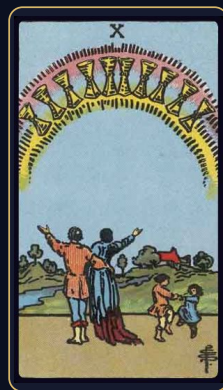
Compare across suits

The number creates a family resemblance. The suit and image show how differently that stage can appear.



ACES

One beginning may be inspiration, another emotional opening, a decisive idea, or a material opportunity.



TENS

Completion may feel like burden, emotional harmony, painful finality, or established material continuity.

Study the pattern, then respect the exception.



A FLEXIBLE RANK MODEL

Person, quality, message, or advice

This is a learning model, not a universal definition. Courts can also show relationships, communication styles, or levels of mastery.



PAGE
BALANCED

explores and learns

TOO MUCH

overdrive: naive,
scattered, performative



KNIGHT
BALANCED

pursues and intensifies

TOO MUCH

overdrive: reckless,
extreme, one-track

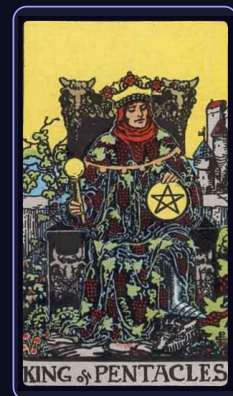


QUEEN
BALANCED

embodies and sustains

TOO MUCH

overdrive: absorbed,
controlling, closed



KING
BALANCED

directs and stewards

TOO MUCH

overdrive: rigid,
dominating,
overconfident

Read in this order: 1) a person or role, 2) a quality in the querent, 3) a message or social dynamic, 4) advice about the stance to take.



ONE CARD, FOUR LENSES

Page of Cups

The RWS image shows a young figure holding a cup while a fish unexpectedly appears from it. The scene combines receptivity, surprise, imagination, and a message from feeling.

PERSON

A curious, emotionally open, imaginative person - or someone still learning emotional expression.

STATE

Surprise, tenderness, creative receptivity, or a feeling that has not yet found mature language.

MESSAGE

Unexpected news, an invitation, an apology, a dream, or a small emotional opening.

ADVICE

Stay receptive. Respond with curiosity before deciding whether the feeling is practical or lasting.



Context changes the emphasis: in "obstacle," openness may become naivety; in "next step," curiosity may be exactly what is needed.



OPTIONAL, NOT MANDATORY

Four clear ways to read a reversal

If reversals overload your first weeks, read upright only. A complete reading does not require reversed cards.

1

BLOCKED

What prevents the upright quality from moving?

2

INTERNAL

Is the energy private or inward rather than visible?

3

TOO MUCH / TOO LITTLE

Is the quality excessive, depleted, or distorted?

4

REVIEW

What needs repair, reconsideration, or integration?

HOW REVERSALS ENTER THE DECK

Turn part of the deck 180 degrees before recombining, or rotate small packets while shuffling. Decide before drawing; do not reverse a card after seeing it.

Consistency matters more than complexity.



OPEN USUALLY GIVES MORE ROOM

Ask for insight you can use

Closed questions are not forbidden, but open questions usually produce more context, agency, and practical value.

WHAT DO I NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT [SITUATION] SO I CAN [RESPOND OR DECIDE]?

TOO CLOSED

Will I get the job?

MORE USEFUL

What can help me present my strengths in this process?

THIRD-PARTY MIND READING

Does Alex love me?

OWN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

What should I understand about this dynamic, and how can I respond constructively?

TOO BROAD

What will happen this year?

FOCUSED IN TIME

What deserves my attention during the next three months?

**Question check: Is it specific? Is it about the querent's own choices? Is the time frame useful?
Can the answer support a real next step?**



A SIMPLE REPEATABLE SEQUENCE

Prepare, draw, read, close

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|--|
| 01 | WRITE THE QUESTION | Put the exact question on paper. Choose the spread positions before shuffling. |
| 02 | SHUFFLE | Use any comfortable method. Stop when you choose to stop; no special sensation is required. |
| 03 | DRAW | Take cards from the top or fan them face down. Use the same method for the full reading. |
| 04 | PLACE | Lay cards into the named positions. Keep them visible as one spread. |
| 05 | READ | Observe first, interpret second. Read each position, then the movement across the spread. |
| 06 | STOP | Do not redraw because you dislike the answer. Use one clarifier only for a precise new question. |
| 07 | CLOSE | Record the reading, choose one grounded next step, and put the deck away. |

If a card seems unclear, write two plausible readings and continue. The next card or later reflection may clarify it without another draw.



POSITIONS CREATE THE STRUCTURE

Start with one. Move to three.

A position is the specific job assigned to a card. Name positions before shuffling.



FOCUS

ONE-CARD FOCUS

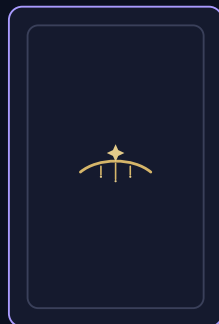
What am I overlooking?
What quality would support me?
What is one useful next step?

DECISION SUPPORT

Read left to right as a sentence.



SITUATION



TENSION



NEXT STEP

ALTERNATIVE

What I know / What I overlook / What to explore

Stop after the chosen spread. A clarifier must answer a precise new question, not soothe discomfort.



EIGHT STEPS

From image to grounded action

01

GROUND

Restate the question and positions.

05

RELATE

Notice repeats, absent suits, Majors, gaze, and movement.

02

OBSERVE

Describe what you literally see.

06

SYNTHESIZE

State the reading in two or three plain sentences.

03

REACT

Name your emotional or bodily response separately.

07

CHECK

Does it answer the question? What alternative also fits?

04

CONNECT

Add suit, number, rank, tradition, and orientation.

08

ACT / DIALOGUE

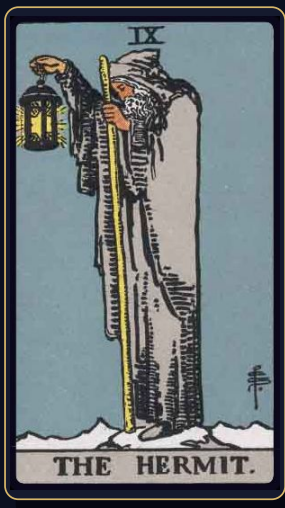
Choose a next step; with another person, invite their response.

Traditional meaning should inform the image and question - not silence them.

QUESTION AND EVIDENCE

Show your work: observe before meaning

Question: What would help me make a difficult work decision? Positions: Situation - Tension -
Next step.



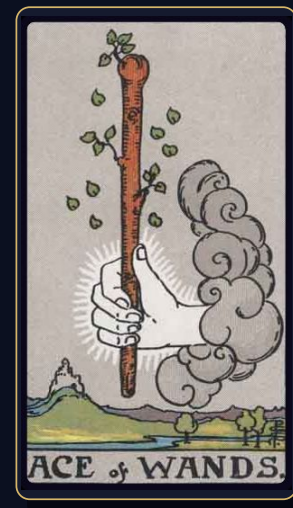
SITUATION

Lantern held forward; figure stands alone; limited light; gaze downward.



TENSION

Upright sword; scales; centered posture; direct gaze; strong symmetry.



NEXT STEP

A hand offers a sprouting wand; open landscape; growth is present but not yet developed.

OBSERVATION IS NOT INTERPRETATION

"Lantern" is observation. "I should quit my job" is already a conclusion.

First reaction: the spread feels serious and restrained, then opens toward possibility.



CONNECT, RELATE, CHECK

Turn evidence into a reading

THE HERMIT / SITUATION

Traditional theme: reflection and inner guidance. Position adds: the decision needs distance from outside noise.

JUSTICE / TENSION

Traditional theme: criteria and consequence. Position adds: "fair" must become concrete, not merely ideal.

ACE OF WANDS / NEXT STEP

Traditional theme: emerging initiative. Position adds: begin something that produces information; the card does not itself promise low risk.

RELATIONSHIP

The movement goes from solitude, through explicit judgment, toward a new action. Reflection is useful only if it produces criteria and a testable next move.

SYNTHESIS

Step back, define what a fair decision requires, then test the most promising direction at a scale appropriate to the real-world risk.

Alternative: the Ace could indicate renewed motivation inside the current role. The questioner must test which version fits the facts.



AGENCY BEFORE AUTHORITY

The querent remains the authority on their life

Ask consent, especially for sensitive topics. A person may decline a question or stop the reading at any time.

PRACTICE

- Use tentative language and invite the person's interpretation.
- Keep notes, photos, names, and personal details private.
- For minors, use age-appropriate reflection with guardian consent where required.
- Encourage qualified medical, legal, financial, or mental-health support when needed.

DO NOT

- Do not guarantee outcomes or use fear to create dependence.
- Do not claim cards prove pregnancy, diagnosis, infidelity, death, abuse, or crime.
- Do not read a third party's private thoughts as established fact.
- Do not pressure someone into a decision because "the cards said so."

IMMEDIATE RISK

If someone may harm themselves or another person, stop the reading and contact local emergency or crisis support. Tarot is not crisis assessment.

This guide supports reflection. It does not replace professional advice or factual investigation.



DAYS 1 THROUGH 7

Learn to observe before you interpret

1**Meet the deck**

Browse all 78 cards. Write five immediate reactions without judging them.

2**Sort the system**

Separate Major, Minor, four suits, numbered cards, and courts. Reassemble the deck.

3**Describe one card**

Write ten visible details without using a guidebook or naming a meaning.

4**One-card reading**

Ask "What quality would support me today?" Follow Ground - Observe - React - Connect.

5**Compare the four Fives**

Note what disruption looks like in action, feeling, thought, and material life.

6**Compare Ace and Ten**

Choose one suit. Describe what begins at the Ace and what completes or peaks at the Ten.

7**Review your notes**

Underline observations once and assumptions twice. Where did you mix them?

Checkpoint: you can describe a card separately from what you think it means.



DAYS 8 THROUGH 14

Connect cards to questions

8

One Major

Connect one Major to a real life theme, then write a second plausible interpretation.

9

One court card

Read it as a person, inner quality, message, and advice. Which lens fits best?

10

Try a reversal

Use blocked, internal, too much/too little, and review. Keep the strongest version.

11

Improve a question

Rewrite one closed, third-party, and overly broad question.

12

Read three cards

Read each position, then turn all three into one sentence.

13

Show your work

Record observation, reaction, tradition, position, relationship, and synthesis.

14

Review without fitting

Compare three earlier readings with what happened. Note usefulness and misses without forcing accuracy.

Course outcome: you can conduct, explain, record, and ethically close a basic three-card reading.



KEEP THIS PAGE NEARBY

Quick reference

QUESTION / POSITIONS / SHUFFLE / DRAW / OBSERVE / CONNECT / RELATE / CHECK / ACT / RECORD

GLOSSARY

Querent

the person whose question is being read

Reversal

a card appearing upside down

Spread

the full layout of cards and positions

Clarifier

an extra card answering one precise new question

Position

the job assigned to one place in a spread

Significator

a card deliberately chosen to represent a subject or quality

Orientation

upright or reversed placement

ATTRIBUTION AND FURTHER STUDY

Deck: Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot, first published 1909; conceived by Arthur Edward Waite, illustrated by Pamela Colman Smith, published by William Rider & Son. Card reproductions are drawn from the Nireye project asset set. The original 1909 designs are public domain in the United States; later recolorings, editions, and trademarks may have separate rights. Verify the law in the intended distribution territory.

Recommended: A. E. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (1911); Joan Bunning, *Learning the Tarot*; Rachel Pollack, *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom*; Mary K. Greer, *Tarot for Your Self*. Historical context: Victoria and Albert Museum, "A History of Tarot Cards"; Morgan Library & Museum, *Tarot! Renaissance Symbols, Modern Visions*.

This course presents one RWS-based learning method. Card meanings depend on image, deck, school, position, question, and reader judgment.

