

# GRANDPA MAGIC



HOW TO: HYPNOTIZE A NAPKIN • BOUNCE A DINNER ROLL  
REMOVE YOUR THUMB • MAKE A SPOON CRY • EVEN READ MINDS!

**116**

EASY TRICKS,  
AMAZING BRAINTEASERS,  
*and* SIMPLE STUNTS  
TO WOW THE  
GRANDKIDS

ALLAN ZOLA KRONZEK

**GRANDPA**

*Magic*





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**ALLAN ZOLA KRONZEK**

Workman Publishing • New York

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# INTRODUCTION

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**S**O THERE YOU ARE, sitting around the table with the family. The grandkids are glued to their devices. So are their parents. Everyone appears to be enchanted—and not in a good way. How do you break the spell? Easy. Use counter-magic! Change a fork into a knife, pull coins from thin air, shove a drinking straw up your nose, turn your napkin into a chicken. That will do the trick, trust me. In fact, it could even lead to some genuine human-to-human interaction.

The premise of this book is that kids love magic and mysteries. They also love thinking, laughing, pretending, and discovering. And so, following through on that premise, every section of this book is jam-packed with material designed to amaze, amuse, and challenge kids of all ages. None of this stuff requires special equipment, and most of it can be done on the spur of the moment. You can trot something out when babysitting, at the dinner table, celebrating the holidays, or any other time that calls for the intriguing and unexpected. And if that's all you do with this material, it will serve you well. But why stop there?

It's my hope that you and the grandkid will be so smitten by the material—the secrets, the mysteries, and the cool thinking—that the very subject matter will forge a bond between just the two of you. No grandma, no parents, just you and the kid. Back to this in a moment.

The audience for magic falls into two groups: Believers and Skeptics. The Believers are the six-and-under set. Make a quarter disappear, and they will believe that Grandpa has the power to do this *for real*.

Why not? And if, at dinner, you transform a napkin into a snuggly bunny with wiggly ears, it will be as if that bunny is alive.

The Skeptics, on the other hand, have seen it all. Somewhere around the age of seven or eight they realize that they've been hoodwinked. Santa isn't real, the Tooth Fairy isn't real, and neither is magic. Try vanishing a quarter for this crowd and you'll get a very different reaction. They may be amazed and bewildered, but they *know* it's a trick and they want in on the secret. "Grandpa, how did you do that? Tell me! Please, please, please!"

Do you tell? Depends. The problem with telling is that it diminishes your powers. To the degree that you were a magical person, you are now less so. Spilling the beans robs the audience of their pleasure. What was mysterious and amazing turns out to be ordinary and pedestrian. And who needs that? So I say, hold on to your powers. Never reveal a secret simply because someone thinks he or she *deserves* to know. But then, when the desire to know turns into the desire to *do*, that's when you begin to share. And what you share is whatever your student is capable of mastering—and nothing more.

Mentoring a kid in magic is different from sharing any other pursuit. For starters, what's being shared are *secrets*—and that alone is enough to forge a bond between the sharers. But magic is more than a collection of secrets. It's a rich, creative art with affinities to acting, writing, psychology, science, and math—all areas where the generations might connect.

Performing magic is also good for the soul. It builds confidence and self-esteem and is a proven way to coax the shy ones out of the shadows and into the limelight. Naturally, not all kids will be interested in learning the art, and that's okay, too. It is often enough just to be amazed.

### **A FEW NOTES TO THE READER**

**F**or ease of writing (and reading), all grandchildren will henceforth be referred to as “the kid,” regardless of how many or how old they might be. Likewise, Grandma may fill in for Grandpa any time she chooses.

Apologies to lefties. I'm right-handed and so the instructions are written from a right-hander's point of view. Lefties can try the material as written or switch hands. This should present no problems.

Originally, I was going to hang a banner on each entry telling you what age bracket it was appropriate

for. But now that I've finished writing the book, it's clear that you can figure this out for yourself. You know your grandkids better than I do. You know not to pull a quarter from an adolescent's ear or to ask a toddler to shuffle the deck. There's material here for all ages, and you'll easily work out what's what.

Back in paragraph one (you remember that, don't you?), I noted the challenge of connecting with the grandkids when up against the lure of digital devices. But despair not. Almost as a result of so much screen-time addiction, genuine human interaction has become a prized commodity. Deep down, kids crave real-world, in-person experiences. They want something live, something real, something special. If you can provide that kind of experience, this is a battle you can win. So, Grandpa, what are you waiting for?

*—Allan Zola Kronzek*



**GRANDPA**

*Magic*



*Part 1*

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**PRESTO! IT'S MAGIC!**



# GETTING STARTED

## *Easy Tricks for the Younger Set*

**S**o you want to knock their socks off? Do the impossible? Well, how's this for a plan? We'll start with a few simple mysteries that are easy to do, easy to understand, and appeal to kids of all ages. This will give you confidence that you can actually do this stuff and get away with it. From there, we'll move on to magic with coins (page 35) and cards (page 53), mental mysteries (page 151), and even a complete act that you and the kid can perform for friends and family (pages 72 to 81). Some tricks will have immediate appeal; others perhaps not so much. That's just the way it is. But I urge you to run through all the tricks, props in hand, before you decide which ones you actually want to perform. It's often tough to see how well a trick "plays" simply by reading the description. My advice: Learn it, practice it, show it, and see what happens. If the kid lights up, you know you've got a keeper.

# A Big SURPRISE!

HOW TO PRODUCE  
ANY SMALL OBJECT  
FROM THIN AIR

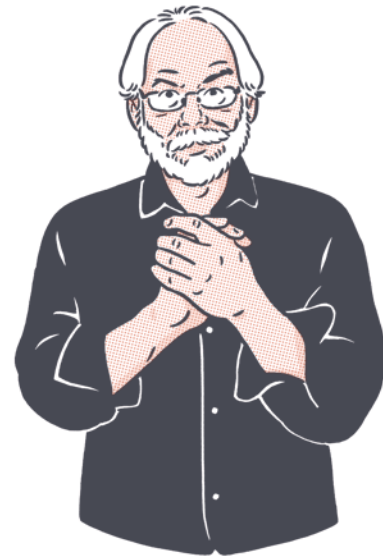
Grandpa shows both hands empty and then cups them together. When he uncups his hands, a little gift has magically appeared between them.

 **YOU WILL NEED:** LOOSE-FITTING LONG SLEEVES  
AND A SMALL HARD CANDY

**1** In a moment of privacy, extend your left arm and nestle the candy (wrapped, of course) in the hollow of your elbow, an anatomical spot known as the *chelidon*.



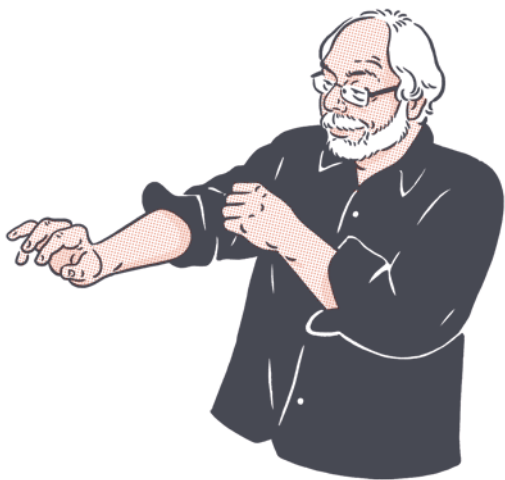
**2** Bend both arms inward and clasp your hands together. This is a natural pose, and you can walk into a room like this and no one will think, *Hey, Grandpa's got a gumball in his chelidon.*



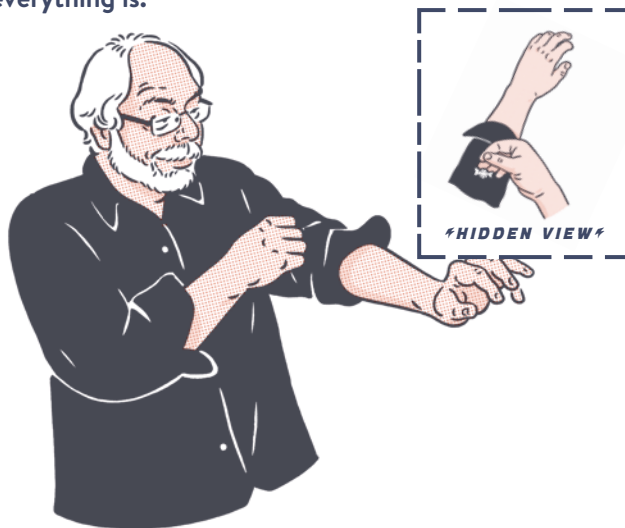
**3** Give some hints that you are about to do something. Separate your hands, keeping your elbows bent, and show your hands to your audience, front and back. *Nothing here, nothing there* is the attitude. You will now tug up your sleeves a bit and in the process “steal” the candy into your right hand, as follows.



**4** With your left hand, grasp your right sleeve at the elbow, and give it a tug, exposing more of your right arm. This indicates that there’s nothing up your right sleeve. (You are, in effect, “rolling up your sleeves,” without literally rolling them up.)



**5** Now reverse the action and use your right hand to pull up your left sleeve—at the same time secretly taking the candy into your right hand. This is easy to do with practice and no one will notice. All you’re doing is hiking up your sleeve to emphasize how fair everything is.



**6** Now point to an imaginary something dangling in space to your left, around eye level. Reach up with your left hand, empty palm toward the audience, and make a fist around the imaginary something. Keep your right hand where it is, immobile, at chest level.



**7** Lower your left hand and bring both hands together in front of you, cupping the candy between them. Recite the secret words of power (just kidding—there are no secret words of power, though you can make something up) and peek inside your hands to see if anything has happened. By golly, it has! Open your hands and reveal the surprise.



## MAGIC WORDS

### EFFECT, METHOD, PRESENTATION

**M**agic has its own unique vocabulary. Three terms to learn right away are *effect*, *method*, and *presentation*. An effect is what seems to happen from the perspective of the audience. “A woman floats in the air” is a classic effect of stage magic. The method is how the effect is achieved. “She’s held up by thin wires” is a method. The presentation is the manner in which the magician frames and demonstrates the effect. Presentations can be elaborate, minimal, comic, serious, and everything in between. The identical effect and method can be presented in many different ways.

### BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- Practice this trick many times in front of a mirror before you actually do it. When you “steal” the item from your chelidon, look at the audience, not at your elbow or sleeve. And most important of all, don’t act guilty. Your expression should convey anticipation—something special is about to happen.
- What else can you produce? A ring, a chocolate kiss, a rubber ball, finger puppets, crumpled C-notes—in short, anything that fits.

# DORIS

## the DANCING DOT

OR HOW TO  
AMUSE A LITTLE  
PERSON WITH A  
SCRAP OF PAPER

A paper dot jumps merrily from one finger to another, as Grandpa recites poetry. This is a favorite with the six-and-under set.

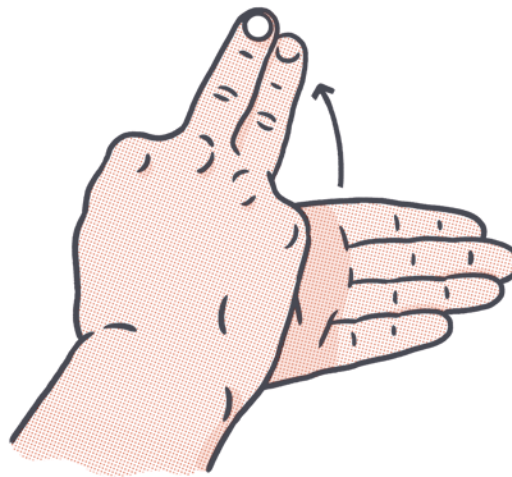
 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A SMALL PIECE OF PAPER

**1** Get yourself a scrap of paper small enough to fit on the back of a fingernail. Wet both sides and stick it onto the nail of your right middle finger. This will be Doris.

Turn your left hand palm up, and place your right middle and ring fingers across the palm. The other fingers should be curled into a fist.

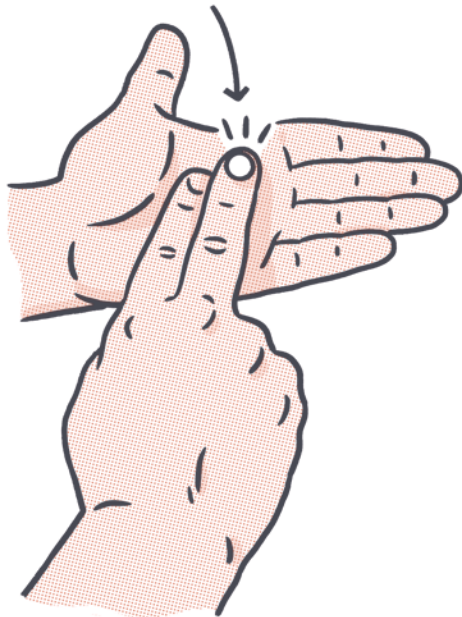


**2** You will now make the paper—henceforth known as Doris—seem to jump from finger to finger. Do this on a silent count of three. On one and two, lift your hand a few inches and bring it back down, tapping your palm each time: Tap, tap.





**3** On three, do it again, but switch fingers on the downswing; that is, curl your fourth finger into your fist and extend your index finger: Tap. It will seem as if Doris has jumped from left to right.



**4** To make her jump back, reverse the moves: Tap, tap, switch fingers, tap. As for the presentation, you might try reciting this ditty as you go.

*Here's Doris the Dancing Dot.*

*She jumps from spot to spot.*

*She never gets tired,*

*is greatly admired,*

*and jumps back and forth quite a lot.*

I leave it to you to compose additional verses and suit the actions to the words.

### BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- You can make Doris jump back and forth many times and young kids will not see the switch or notice the change in finger length. The switches are invisible because they take place while the hand is in motion. This is a core principle of magic: Larger motions obscure smaller ones.
- Rhythm is important to making this trick look magical. You can tap, tap, switch, tap, or you can switch on every tap. The crucial thing is to do it smoothly and rhythmically.
- This effect was originally done with a paper cigar band slid onto a fingertip. You can also use a colored glue dot, a drop of nail polish, or a small ring that fits snugly on the first joint of the middle finger.



# The ADVENTURES of RONNIE THE RUBBER BAND

IN WHICH  
RONNIE TRAINS  
FOR THE  
OLYMPICS

This is a charming four-part routine centered on Ronnie the Rubber Band. In part 1, Ronnie jumps from one set of fingers to another. In part 2, he vaults over a fence. In part 3, he climbs a mountain. Naturally, all this exercise tires him out, and so, in part 4, he takes a nap.

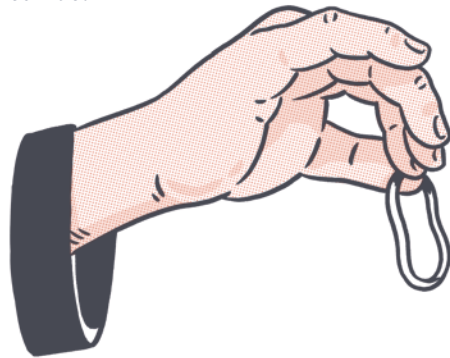
 **YOU WILL NEED:** TWO RUBBER BANDS, PREFERABLY ONE SMALLER AND ONE LARGER; DIFFERENT COLORS ARE A PLUS

## Part 1

### RONNIE LEAPS

**1** Choose one rubber band to play the role of Ronnie; if you have different size bands, this would be the smaller one. Dangling him between your thumb and forefinger, introduce him to the audience.

“This is Ronnie the Rubber Band, and he’s very excited to be here. The Rubber Band Olympics are coming up next Tuesday and he’s in the jumping contest. Let me show you what he can do.”



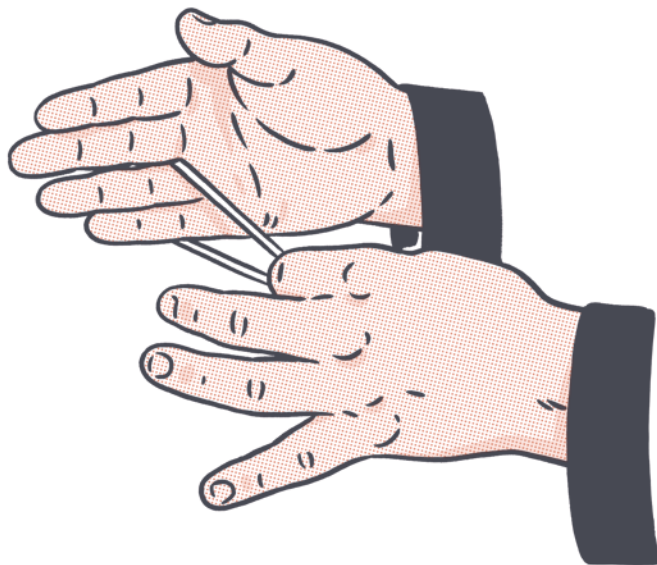
**2** Slip Ronnie onto the ring and pinkie fingers of your right hand. Extend all four fingers, with the back of your hand facing the kid. The band should lie at the base of your fingers.



**3** “Before he jumps, he likes to warm up by doing some stretches.” Pinch the band between your left thumb and fingers and pull it toward the audience a couple of times. Ronnie is limbering up.



**4** Repeat the same action from the other side, stretching the band toward yourself.



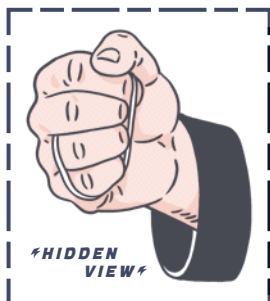
**5** After a couple of stretches, briefly hold the band in position as in figure 4. Keeping all four fingers of your right hand together as a unit—this is the secret move—bend them inward and insert them between the two strands of the stretched band.



**6** Bring your left hand inward and gently release the band so that it lies across the base of the fingernails of your right hand. The fingertips of your right hand rest against the palm.



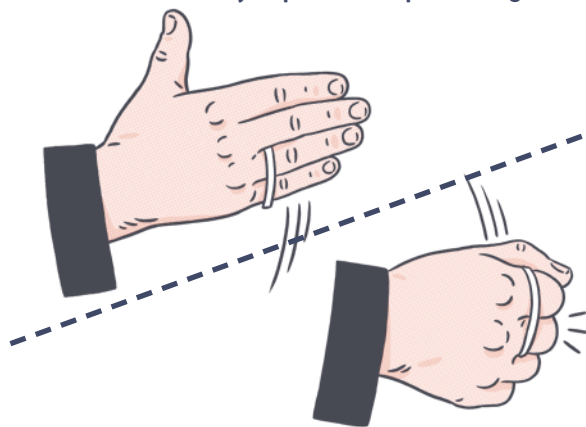
**7** None of this is seen by the audience because you have cleverly positioned yourself so that no one is behind you or directly to your left. All the audience sees is the back of your hand.



**8** Once you're hooked up, rotate your fist slightly so the knuckles are more head-on to the viewer. "Ronnie's going to jump from here to here on the count of three." As you speak, point to the lower two fingers, then the upper two. Then count down—"One, two, three, jump!"—accompanied by the following moves, whereupon Ronnie will jump to the top fingers.



**9** On the "one," "two," and "three" of your count-down, move your fist slightly up and down on each count. On "jump," make a larger up-and-down movement, and at the same time extend all four fingers as a unit and then immediately close them back into a fist. Ronnie will jump to the top two fingers.



This is a terrific effect. The larger up-and-down movement of the hand blurs the opening and closing of the fist, and it does not register with the audience. It seems like all you do is give your hand an up-and-down shake, and Ronnie jumps. Make sure you open and close your fingers as a unit. If you unfurl your fingers one by one, the trick won't work.

**10** Hold the fist pose for a moment, then extend your fingers and show your hand to your audience, front and back, as you admire Ronnie's accomplishment. Announce that Ronnie will jump back and have him do so. The method is exactly the same: Give Ronnie a forward stretch and a backward stretch (secretly inserting your fingers), count to three, open and close your fist, and Ronnie will be back where he started.

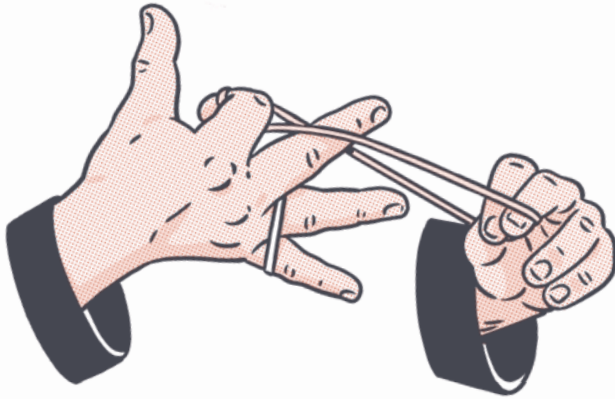


## Part 2

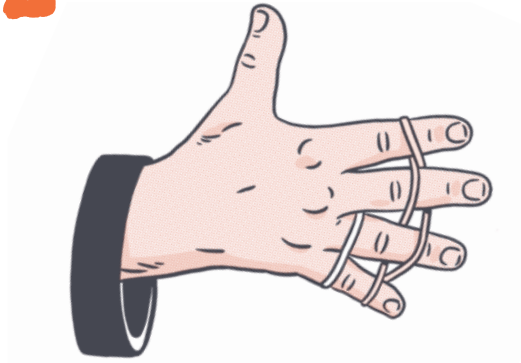
### RONNIE JUMPS A FENCE

Now comes the hard part. Ronnie's got to jump one last time—but this time he has to leap over a fence.

**1** With Ronnie safely back at the base of your ring finger and pinkie, announce, “That was the easy part. Now Ronnie has to jump over a fence. This is very, very difficult.” Pick up the second rubber band and create the fence by interlacing it over the first joints of the fingers on your right hand, twisting it back and forth as you go from finger to finger.



**2** Show your right hand, front and back. Ronnie seems trapped below the fence.

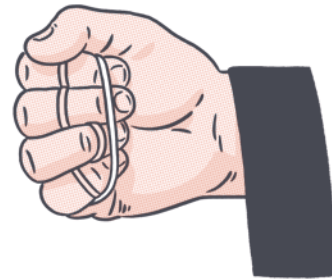


## MAGIC WORDS

### ROUTINE

**A** routine is a series of effects performed in a given order. The effects can be thematically related, as in Ronnie the Rubber Band, or entirely unrelated. For example, “He does a ten-minute routine, consisting of a coin trick, a card trick, and a mind-reading effect.” The term is sometimes used as a synonym for *presentation*: “This is my routine for Doris the Dancing Dot.” The process of arranging effects into a given sequence is known as *routing*.

**3** “This is very difficult. But he’s been practicing all week. Let’s see if he can do it.” Not to worry, he can. Repeat steps 3 through 6 of part 1 exactly as described, ending up with all four fingers of your right hand inserted into the band.

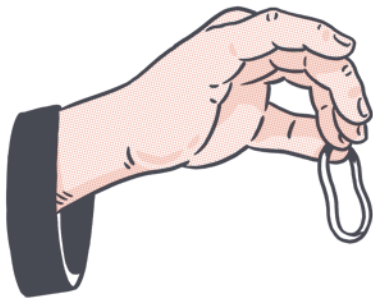




**4** Count down as before—“One, two, three, jump!”—and open and close your fist. Amazingly, Ronnie will leap to the top two fingers. This is very perplexing, as it seems like the fence should make it impossible for Ronnie to jump. Open your hand and show it, front and back.



**5** Congratulate Ronnie, remove the barrier, and hold Ronnie aloft so that he can soak in the adulation of his fans. Thus ends part 2 of Ronnie’s adventures.

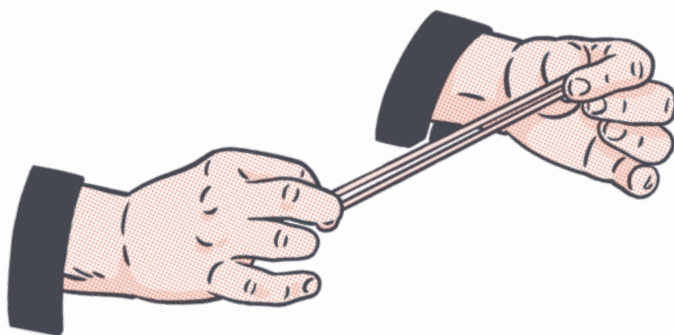


### Part 3

## RONNIE CLIMBS A MOUNTAIN

*Exhilarated by his success, Ronnie shows off his mountaineering skills by shimmying up a slope.*

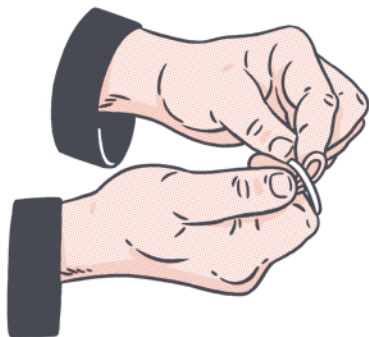
**1** Say, “Did I tell you that Ronnie’s also good at mountain climbing? He is. Let’s pretend this is a mountain.” Stretch the “non-Ronnie” band between your hands at a forty-five-degree angle. If you have different size bands, this would be the larger one. You want to stretch it a little bit, but nowhere near as far as it can go.



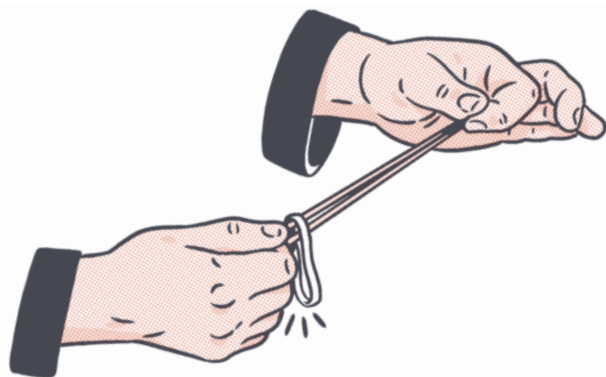
**2** The display completed, let go of the lower end of the band. Wrap your right fist loosely around the band so that about three-quarters of an inch sticks out from the top. Most of the band is concealed in your fist.



- 3** Pay no attention to your hands as you do this. Instead, shift your attention to Ronnie. Pick him up and hook him over the protruding bit of band.



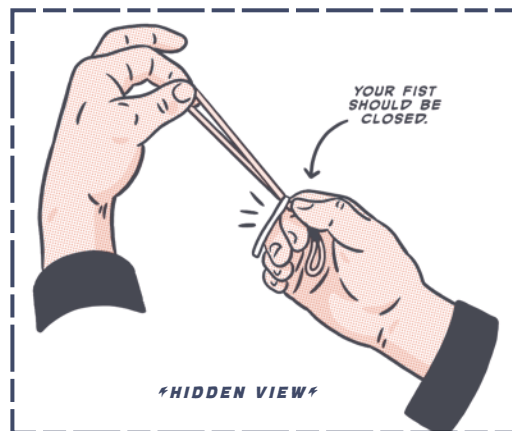
- 4** “Ronnie is going to try to pull himself up the mountain.” Press your right thumb against your index finger, holding the protruding part of the band firmly in place between your fingertips. With your left hand, stretch this little bit of band as far as it will go.



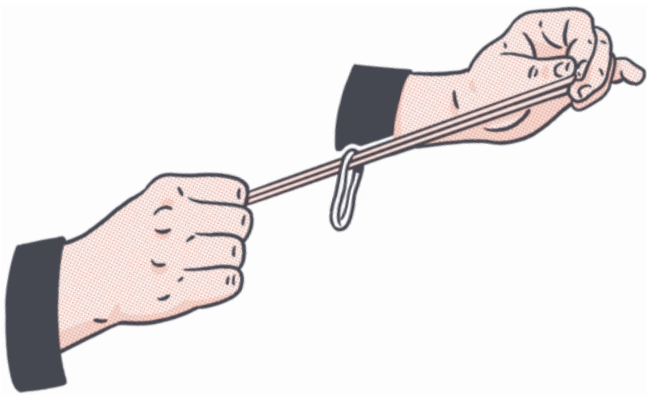
## KUDOS AND CREDITS

**P**art 1, the Jumping Rubber Band, was invented by the English magician and writer Stanley Collins and published in 1911. The idea of using a second rubber band as a barrier was suggested by Harlan Tarbell in *The Tarbell Course in Magic*, an eight-volume series covering virtually every aspect of magic. The mountain-climbing sequence was devised by Scottish magician Tom Sellers and was published in 1958. It was originally done with a rubber band and a finger ring. The napping sequence is credited to Jay Marshall.

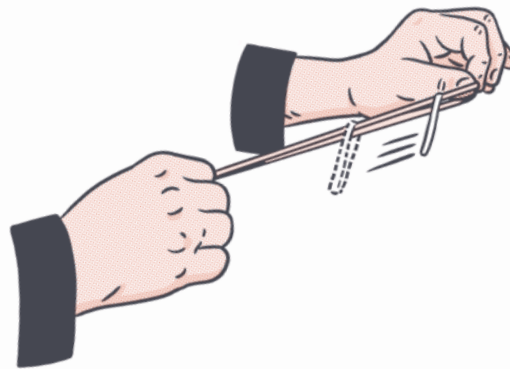
- 5** To the audience, it will seem as if you are stretching the band in the same manner that you did a moment ago. In reality, however, most of the band is hidden in your right fist.



**6** Now say, “Okay, Ronnie, go for it!” Focus your attention on Ronnie and do nothing. Just wait. After several seconds during which nothing happens, try calling out a few words of encouragement: “Come on, Ronnie! I know you can do it. You just have to try. Don’t disappoint your fans. Oh, look, here he goes! He’s moving. Go, Ronnie, go!” As you shout your exhortations, slowly ease the pressure between your right thumb and forefinger, allowing the hidden band to slip out a tiny bit at a time. Keep both hands still and the same distance apart. As the band contracts, it will pull Ronnie up with it, which will appear exactly as if Ronnie is climbing up the band. This usually elicits gasps of astonishment. Take your time. The slower the better.



**7** Let Ronnie climb as far as he can (he usually gets about three-quarters of the way up, at which point the hidden end of the band will be nearly exhausted). Then call for a round of applause and reverse the position of your hands.



**8** Let go of the lower end of the band and allow Ronnie to fall onto the palm of your left hand. Hold him up aloft once again and lead the applause.



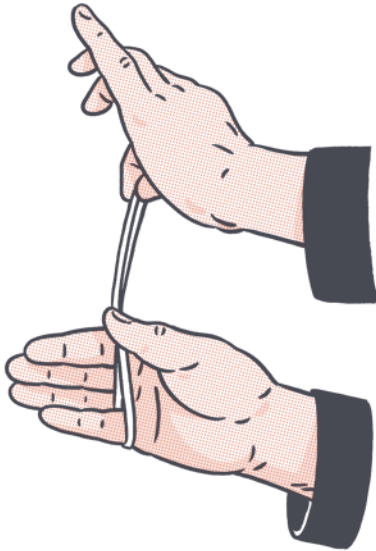


Part 4

**RONNIE TAKES A NAP**

After having stretched himself to the limit, Ronnie needs some downtime.

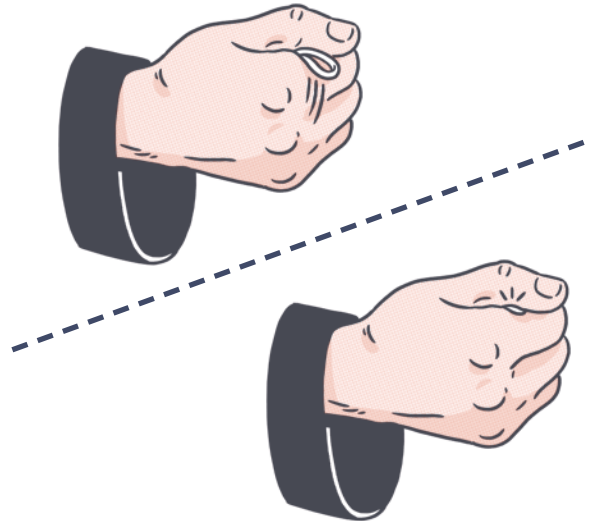
- 1** As everyone is applauding Ronnie's mountain climb, secretly hook him around your right pinkie. Stretch the band straight up and pin it in place between your thumb and the base of your first finger.



- 2** Drape the rest of the band over the front of your fist and let go. If you do this casually and without paying attention to it, no one will notice. No one is expecting another trick.



- 3** "After a workout like that, Ronnie is really tired. It's time for his nap. Everyone, say good night to Ronnie." Extend your fist in front of you and slowly release the thumb pressure on Ronnie. He will gently slide upward and crawl into your warm, cozy fist. This is very sweet. Good night, Ronnie.



## BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- Personifying Ronnie (the rubber band) is what makes the routine entertaining. It's not a dumb trick about a loop of elastic, it's about Ronnie, who we like and admire and wish well in his Olympic career. Even the simplest story can bring a trick to life and make the audience care about what's going on.
- The Ronnie routine is an excellent set of tricks to teach any aspiring magician. Eight and up is the right age. There's work involved in making each phase look good, but once the kid masters it, he or she will experience a sense of genuine accomplishment.
- Most office supply stores carry colored rubber bands in assorted sizes, and that's what I recommend you get. I use a small blue band for Ronnie, and a larger red or yellow band for the fence and the slope. For kids with very small hands, #14 rubber bands are just the right size.

## TRICKS OF THE TRADE

### PRACTICE TIPS

**W**hen learning a new routine, I find it useful to scatter the props around the house and then pick them up at whim and run through whatever it is I'm working on. This pays dividends for all kinds of magic. You pick up the prop and perform the trick. The next time you see the prop, you pick it up and do it again. This is an excellent way to learn. It doesn't feel like work, and lots of short run-throughs add up quickly. In the case of Ronnie, you want to learn the routine so thoroughly that you can do all of the secret hook-ups without looking at your hands and *without thinking*. This is the goal of all magic practice. When it's time to perform, you want your attention on the audience, not the mechanics of the effect or trying to remember what comes next.

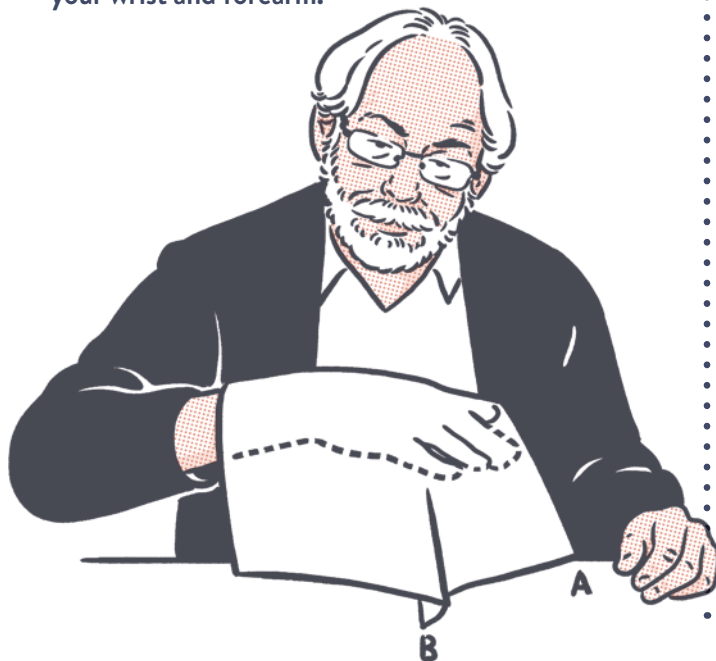
# BONNIE the BUNNY

HOW TO  
TURN A DINNER  
NAPKIN INTO A  
HAND PUPPET

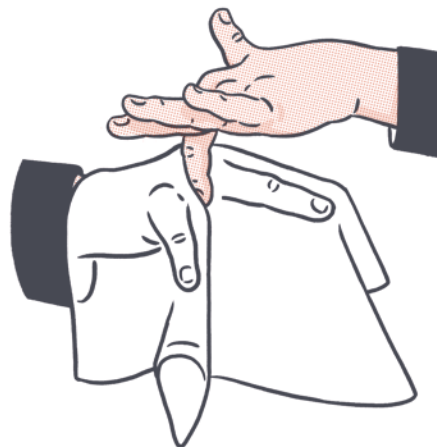
Trying to entertain a toddler? Then grab your napkin, leave your troubles on the doorstep, and meet me under the table. We're going to make Bonnie the Bunny, the world's easiest hand puppet. (You can, of course, make Bonnie above the table. But once you get the hang of it, it's more fun to do it sub rosa and bring her up fully formed, ready to meet her fans.)

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A LARGE, SQUARE CLOTH NAPKIN

**1** Drape the napkin over your right hand. The front edge should overhang your fingertips by three to four inches. The back edge should lie across your wrist and forearm.



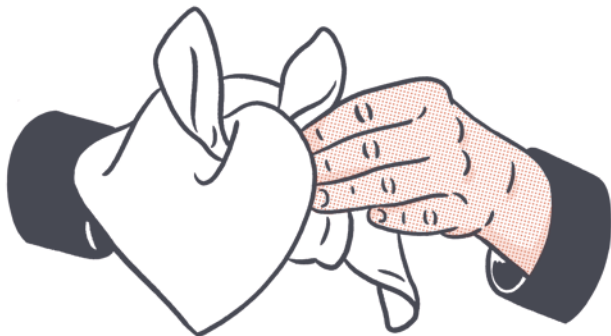
**2** Using your left index finger, form a channel between your right ring finger and pinkie.



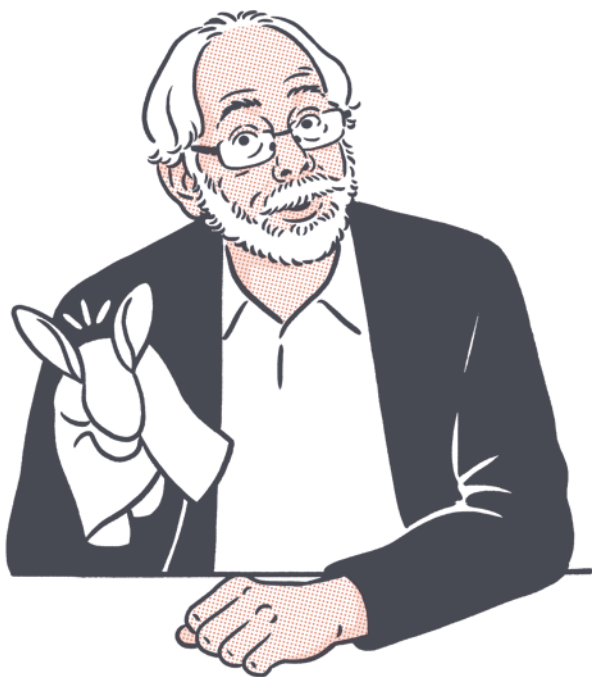
**3** With your left hand, take corner A (the one closest to your body) and insert it between your right ring finger and pinkie at the base, so that about three inches of cloth sticks up above the back of your hand. This is bunny's right ear.



**4** In similar fashion, form a channel between your right first and second fingers. Pick up corner B and slide it between these two fingers, forming Bonnie's left ear.



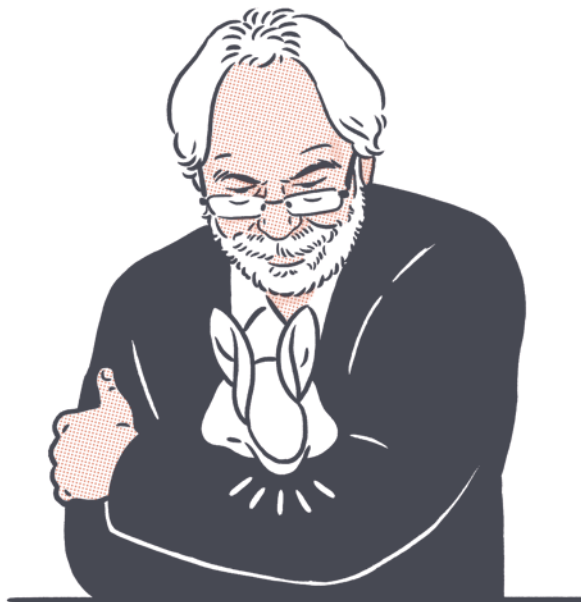
**5** That's it. Bunny's done. What she lacks in verisimilitude she will make up in personality. Glance down, and with an "Oh, look who's here!" bring her out of the warren.



## BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- Bonnie looks best when made with a large napkin. One that is 16 or 18 square inches is ideal. The same size handkerchief also works.
- The psychotherapist D. W. Winnicott observed, "Only in playing are people their true selves." This routine gives you a huge opportunity to test that theory and meet the kid on her own turf.

**6** Now what? Well, remember all those puppeteers and ventriloquists you've seen over the years? It's time to channel them and bring Bonnie to life. Is she excited to be here? Yes, yes, she nods vigorously. Sleepy? *Not at all*, she shakes her head. Now she's looking around, sizing up the crowd and whispering in your ear (rapid, skittish movements are the most bunny-like). What's that? She says she's hungry. Feed her a treat. Or let the kid feed her and stroke her ears. She likes that. Cradle her in the nook of your arm. Say something silly and have her do a double take. You get the idea. And remember, this isn't a stand-up act. It's a trio—you, bunny, and the kid.



# E-Z THOUGHT STEALER

THE KID'S  
FIRST MENTAL  
MATH TRICK

This quickie requires third-grade math skills. The kid thinks of a secret number, follows some instructions, and arrives at a different secret number. You tell the kid what it is. To a third-grader, this is amazing.

## YOU WILL NEED: BRAINPOWER!

First off, try it yourself:

1. Think of a number.
2. Double it.
3. Add ten.
4. Divide by two.
5. Subtract the first number you thought of.

The answer is five!

How did I know? I know the secret, that's how! The answer will always be half of whatever number you add in step 3. If you add ten (always add an even number, to avoid fractions) you end up with five. If you were to add six, you'd end up with three. All of the other steps cancel each other out—something not obvious to most eight-year-olds.

## BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- This is fun to do with two or three kids at once. Give them each different numbers to add in step 3 and, naturally, the outcomes will be different.
- Emphasize that the kid is to think of a “secret number” and arrive at another “secret number.” I find this to be a lot more appealing than simply thinking of “a number.”

# May the FORCE BE WITH YOU

A SIMPLE  
NUMBER  
PREDICTION

To prove that you can see the future, you write down a prediction. The kid makes up a three-digit number—you honestly have no idea what it is—and then does some simple math and comes up with a total. Strangely, it's exactly the number you predicted.

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A PENCIL AND PAPER

**1** In big, bold strokes, write down the number 1089, circle it for emphasis, fold the paper, and keep it in full view. Naturally, you don't let the kid see what you've written. You will now "force" the number 1089 using a simple three-step procedure known as, not surprisingly, "the 1089 force."



**2** Have the kid jot down any three-digit number. The only restriction is that all the digits must be different.



**3** Have the kid reverse the digits and subtract the smaller number from the larger.





# MAGIC WORDS

## FORCE, FORCED, FORCING

**F**orcing is a verbal technique for creating the illusion of choice, while actually determining the outcome of events in advance. Numerous techniques have been devised for forcing cards, numbers, colors, items on a menu, virtually anything at all. The best forces are those that leave the participant feeling as if many options were available—she could have cut the deck anywhere, or thought of any number—and she freely chose the one she wanted. Forcing is one of the most useful techniques in magic.

**4** Now reverse those digits (198) and add it to the previous number. Ta da! It's 1089. Now you can reveal your prediction as a perfect match.



## BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- There's an exception to the rule that all numbers lead to 1089. If the end digits of the original number are one digit apart (as in 473 or 374), the subtraction will yield 99. To prevent this outcome, after the subtraction step, ask if the remainder is a three-digit number. If so, proceed. If not, have your helper place a zero in the hundreds place (turning 99 into 099). Now reverse (to 990) and add to get to 1089.
- Here's another very cool way to present the effect. You claim to have had a dream in which the kid was doing her math homework and showed you the answer. The dream was so vivid that when you awoke, you wrote that answer on a slip of paper, which you now remove from your wallet, folded, and place on the table. You now talk the kid through the steps of her "math homework." Amazingly, her answer is exactly the same as what you dreamed.



# GRANDPA FEELS the VIBES

A PERFECT TRICK  
WHENEVER  
CRAYONS ARE  
HANDY

In this effect, Grandpa demonstrates an amazing psychic ability. Put a crayon in his hand and he'll tell you what color it is—no peeking.

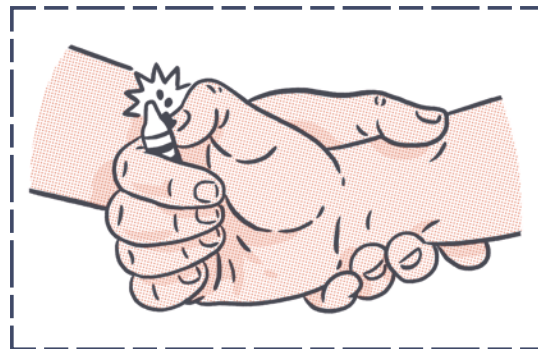
 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
FIVE BRIGHTLY COLORED CRAYONS

**1** Say, “When I was your age, I loved to draw and color. My favorite thing to draw with was crayons. I played with them so much that, after a while, I could tell one color from another without looking. That was a long time ago, but I think I can still do it. Want to see?”

**2** Select five crayons and give them to the kid. “I’ll turn around and I want you to put one crayon in my hand. Then hide the rest, so I can’t see what color is missing.” Hold both hands behind your back, the right hand cradled in the left. Have the kid place a crayon on your right palm.



**3** When the other crayons are out of sight, turn back and face the kid. Act thoughtful. “Every color feels a little different. The bright colors tickle, and this is definitely a bright color. But don’t give me any hints.” As you recite these lines, obtain a small color sample by scraping your right thumbnail down the point of the crayon. A sliver of wax will adhere to the underside of the nail.



**4** Transfer the crayon to your left hand, bring your empty right hand forward, and use it to gesture as you talk. Don't try to see the color just yet. Then pause, grasp your chin between your thumb and forefinger, and lower your head, assuming "The Thinker" pose.



**5** Now lower your hand a couple of inches, at which point you will be staring at your thumbnail (I lied about the no peeking part). A second is all you need to recognize the color, and then you become animated again. This "peek" is very deceptive because with your head lowered, no one can see where you're looking—which would be a giveaway.



**6** You can now reveal the color as you choose. Say, "I know you had red, yellow, and green, but this doesn't feel like any of those. Wait, I've got it! It's blue!" Bring your concealed hand forward and show the crayon.



# PERSONALIZING MAGIC

**W**hen performing for the grandkids, you have a unique opportunity to share something personal about yourself. Use an opening line like, *“This is the trick I showed Grandma when we met in seventh grade,”* and then fill in the details. Or, *“I learned this trick many, many years ago, when I was in (choose the one that fits): the Cub Scouts, summer camp, prison, the Navy Seals, kindergarten.”* Many kids know very little about their grandparents. Try sharing and you may be surprised at what happens.

## BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- This crayon trick is another that you can teach, or not. When I teach it at summer camp, half the kids like it, and the other half hate getting wax under their nails. If you do teach it, the hardest part for the kid to learn is how to do the secret glance deceptively.
- For those who wear glasses, here's another way to sneak a peek: Remove your spectacles and hold them at chin level, between your thumb and first finger, assuming “The Thinker” pose. Lower your head and take your look.
- Find things to say about the colors as you sense their qualities. Orange vibrates at a different frequency than red. Yellow tingles; blue is chilly. When given a green crayon, I like to say, *“It feels yellow, but it's not yellow. It feels blue, but it's not blue. Wait, it's both—it's green.”*

# **FUN** *with* **DRINKING** **STRAWS**

**H**ats off to Marvin Chester Stone, inventor of the modern drinking straw! When he patented his device in 1888, I suspect he had no inkling of what people like me would end up doing with the thing—in addition to sipping, pea-shooting, and launching wrapper rockets. However, after reading about Stone and what a personable and charitable fellow he was (he took after his dad, himself the inventor of the cheese press and washing machines), I like to think he would approve.

# The TELEKINETIC STRAW

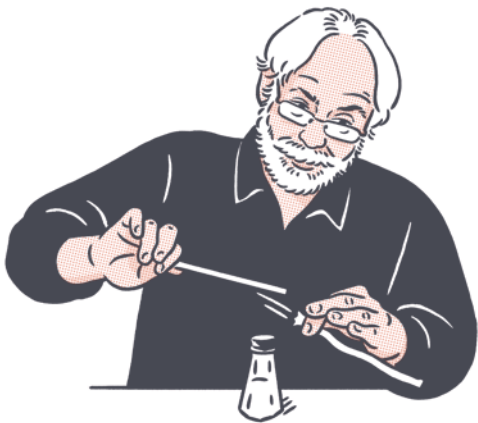
A  
DEMONSTRATION  
OF MIND OVER  
MATTER

A drinking straw is balanced across the top of a saltshaker. Grandpa and the kid use their mind power to cause it to rotate in a very spooky fashion.

**YOU WILL NEED:** AN INDIVIDUALLY WRAPPED PLASTIC STRAW AND A SALTSHAKER

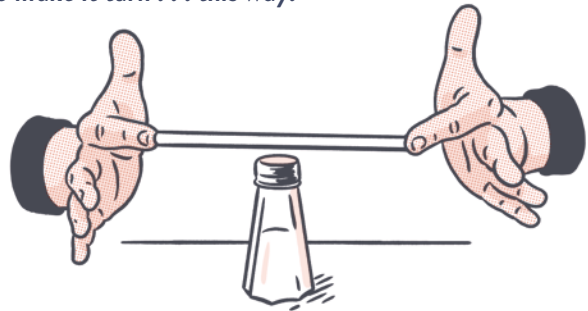
**1** Begin the trick by saying, “Who believes that people can move stuff with their minds? I think we can do it, too. Let’s try an experiment.”

Hold the wrapped straw about an inch from the top between your left thumb and first finger. Tear off the end of the wrapper and discard it. Pinch the wrapped portion of the straw tightly between your left thumb and finger, and with your right thumb and index finger, rapidly pull the straw from the wrapper. Because of the friction between the straw and the wrapper, the straw will become charged with static electricity. That’s the secret of the trick.

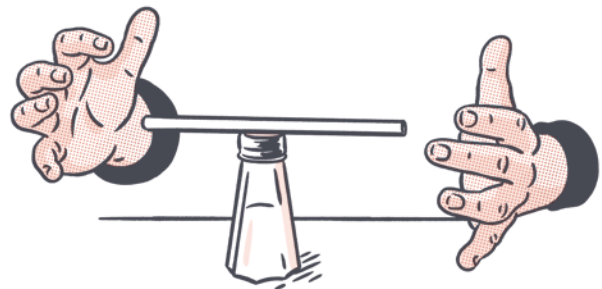


**2** Gingerly hold the straw between your fingertips and balance it across the saltshaker. Avoid touching the surface of the straw, as that will weaken the charge. Let go of the ends.

“Stare at the straw. Don’t think of anything else. Let’s try to make it turn . . . this way.”



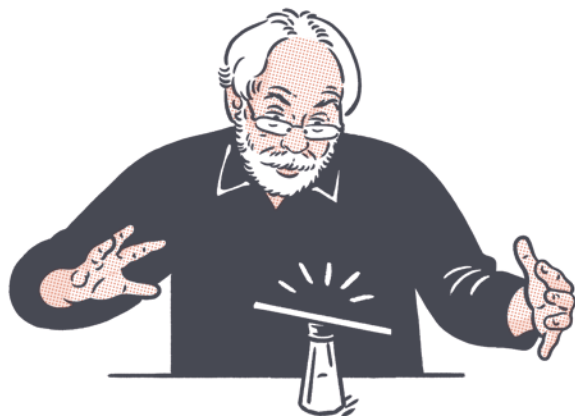
**3** Position your hands on either side of the straw, about four to five inches away, and demonstrate how you want the straw to turn by moving your hands as a unit, in a clockwise direction, as if turning an invisible disc. Nothing will happen yet because your hands (which will be the attractors) are too far away. Encourage everyone to focus and concentrate—you need their collective mental powers to make the straw move.



**4** To animate the straw, bring your fingers closer to its ends, the right fingers toward the inner side of the straw, the left fingers toward the outer. The attraction of the straw will be toward your fingers, and the straw will spin in a clockwise direction.



**5** As soon as it starts to move, pull your hands outward, away from the straw, and allow the straw to spin freely. It will spin for a surprisingly long time.



**6** When it stops spinning, or even before, you can cause it to spin in the other direction by orienting your hands on the opposite sides of the straw. There's usually enough charge left for another healthy spin. This is amazing and feels like magic.

Congratulate everyone on their astonishing powers. To end, pick up the straw at its center and give it a little flex. This will cancel any remaining charge, and anyone wishing to check for static electricity will find that there is none.

### **BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!**

- The best type of saltshaker to use is one with a flat metal top. A plastic water bottle also works as a pedestal. To use an unwrapped straw—of the kind that come out of a dispenser one by one—pull it through a paper napkin a couple of times to impart the charge. Don't forget to squeeze tightly.
- Caution your audience not to blow on the straw to move it. You want to do this by mind power alone. For those who prefer not to claim supernatural powers, you can perform the effect for what it is: a demonstration of static electricity.
- Note: This trick doesn't work reliably in humid conditions. Save it for a dry day or an air-conditioned space.



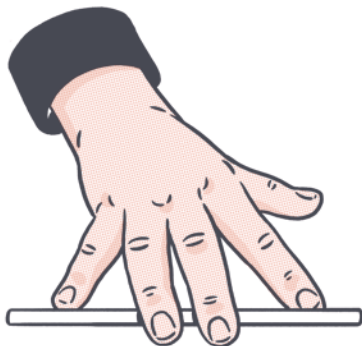
# The **MAGNETIC STRAW**

IN WHICH YOUR  
FINGERS ARE AS  
ATTRACTIVE AS  
YOU ARE

This makes for an excellent follow-up to the Telekinetic Straw (page 26). You simply touch a straw with your fingertips and it clings, as if magnetized.

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
AN UNWRAPPED PLASTIC STRAW

**1** Place the straw on the table in front of you. Stare at it curiously, as if you now suspect it has some unusual properties. Spread your fingers wide, and place the tips of your fingers on the straw. The index finger and pinkie rest on the inner side of the straw, while the ring and middle fingers rest on top of the straw.



**2** Very gently press inward with your middle two fingers, pressing the straw against the tips of the first finger and pinkie. Slowly lift your hand from the table and you will discover that the straw will come with it, as if magnetized. There is a knack to this, but once you get the feel for it, it's easy.





**3** You can now rotate your hand in all directions and the straw will continue to cling. This looks very strange.



**4** To end, reach over with the other hand and grasp the straw between your index finger and thumb. Then pull it away sharply, making it seem as if a lot of force was needed to unglue the straw.



## **NOW TRY THIS**

### **STICKY FINGERS**

Once you get the hang of it, you can make other objects cling to your fingers, such as pens, pencils, chopsticks, even lightweight tableware. For a grand finale, you can have objects cling to the fingertips of both hands. Then say “*Release!*” and let the stuff clatter to the table.



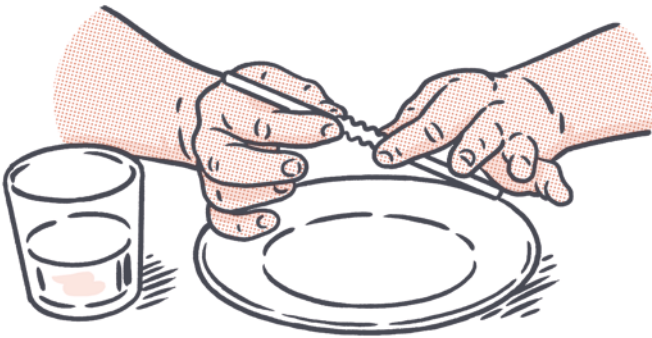
# Creepy **CRAWLY**

HOW TO CHANGE  
A STRAW WRAPPER  
INTO A WIGGLY  
CATERPILLAR

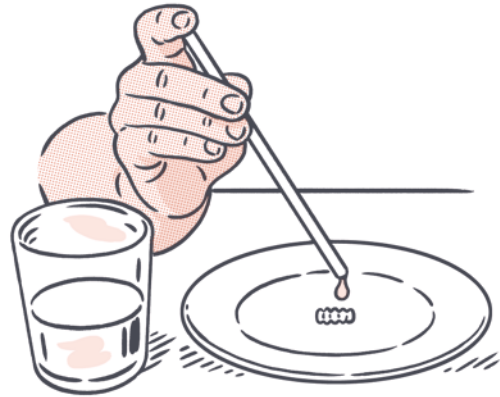
A crumpled-up straw wrapper becomes amusingly animated.

**YOU WILL NEED:**  
A PLASTIC STRAW WITH A PAPER WRAPPER

**1** Tear off both ends of the paper straw wrapper. Telescope the paper by pushing both ends toward the center, pleating it in the process.



**2** Pull the pleated tube off the straw and place it on the table or on a plate. It should be about an inch and a half long. Dip your fingertip (or the straw) into a glass of water and capture a single drop of water. Drip the drop onto the center of the scrunched-up wrapper and it will come to life, writhing and wriggling for your entertainment pleasure.



**3** The amount of animation depends on the amount of water. Sometimes, with just a tiny dab of water (or saliva), the effect will unfold very slowly, and the tube may even sit up, as if doing a crunch. Little kids love this. Experiment and see what happens.

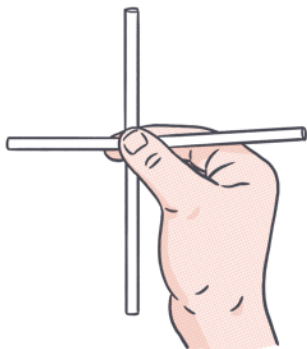


# The GREAT STRAW ESCAPE

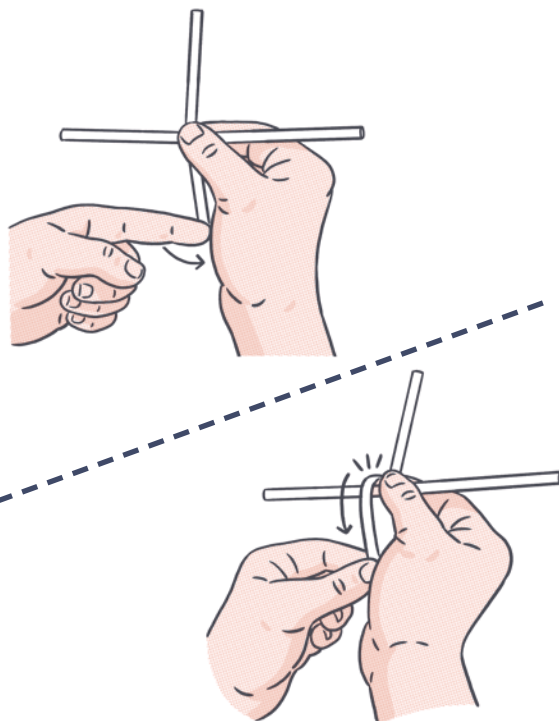
IN WHICH  
ONE STRAW  
MELTS THROUGH  
ANOTHER

Two drinking straws are knotted together. The kid blows on them, and they magically pass through each other.

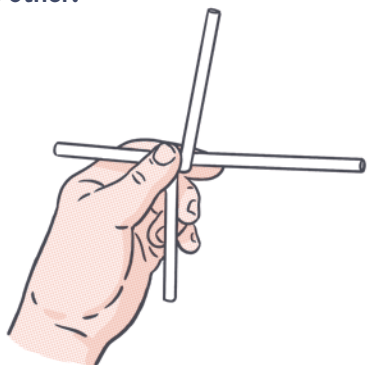
**1** Hold the straws in your right hand in a “plus sign” formation. Note that the vertical straw is on the inside of the horizontal straw, and the right arm of the straw is slightly longer than the left arm. Pinch the straws together tightly between your thumb and forefinger.



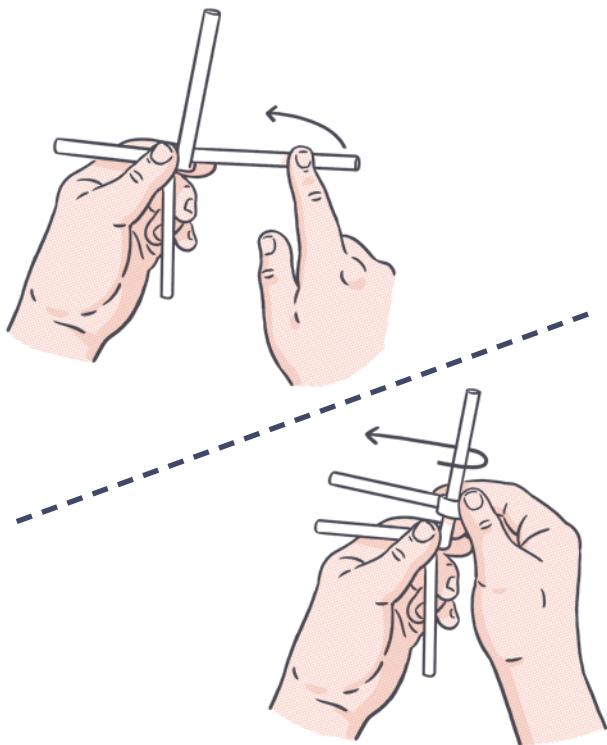
**2** With your left hand, push the lower end of the vertical straw away from you and wrap it around the horizontal straw.



**3** Change your grip so that your left thumb and fingers now hold the junction point; let go with your right hand. Point out that one straw is wrapped around the other.



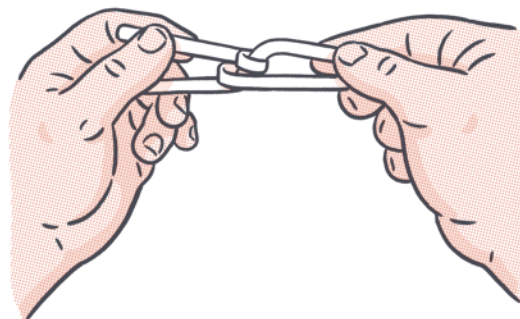
**4** With your right hand, push the right arm of the straw forward (away from you) and wrap it around the vertical straw one and a half times, so that both ends of the straw end up on your left.



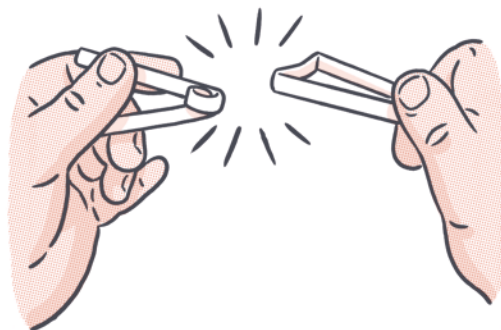
## KUDOS AND CREDITS

**T**his trick was invented by magician Edwin Tabor. It was originally done with colored handkerchiefs and appeared in the *Tarbell Course in Magic*.

**5** With your left hand, grab on to both ends of the straw to your left, and take the other ends into your right hand. Point out that the straws are “knotted together.” You can even tug lightly on the ends and the straws will remain “linked.”



**6** Have the kid blow on the knot, or say the magic words. Push the straws toward each other and then pull them apart. They will separate easily—one solid passing through another.





# That's DISGUSTING!

HOW TO  
SHOVE A STRAW  
UP YOUR NOSE  
AND PULL IT FROM  
YOUR MOUTH

Of all the stunts you can teach the kid, this is the one most likely to result in a restraining order from his parents. You don't really shove a straw up your nose—but it sure looks that way.

**YOU WILL NEED:**  
A PLASTIC STRAW

**1** Unwrap a fresh straw or, for shock appeal, remove one from your beverage. Hold it in your right hand with the base of the straw resting behind your middle finger.



**2** Grasp the top end of the straw between your left thumb and fingers and bring it up to the tip of one of your nostrils.



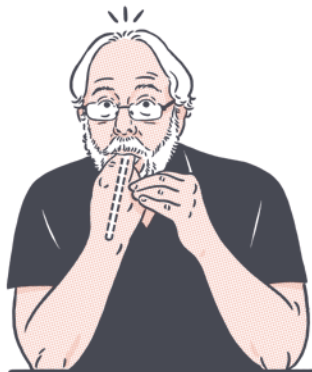
**3** Make a snorting sound and rapidly slide your right hand straight up to meet your left fingers. As the length of the straw disappears behind your right hand and forearm, it will seem as if the straw goes straight up your nose. As you will discover when you practice this in front of a mirror—which you must—the illusion is perfect.



**4** Lower both hands a few inches. This adds to the illusion enormously. The straw is nowhere to be seen!



**5** To produce the straw from your mouth, bring your right hand up to your lips and insert your first two fingers into your mouth. Bite down on the tip of the straw, and rapidly slide your hand down the length of the straw.



**6** When you get to the bottom, grasp the straw as in figure 1 and lower your hand. This, too, looks great. If you doubt the appeal of this effect to school-age kids, Google the search term “straw up the nose” for a mountain of confirmation.

### **HOW TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO DRINK THROUGH A STRAW**

**1** Have the kid close his lips tightly around two straws at once. One straw is submerged into whatever swill he happens to be drinking, while the other one hangs in space.

**2** Ask him to sip his drink, while keeping his lips tightly together. He won't be able to do it. This will come as a surprise—the surprise being the point of this experiment.





## **FUN** *with* **COINS**

**C**oin tricks are perfect for kids of all ages. They use familiar objects—pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters—and the effects are visual and easy to understand. So grab a handful of change and meet me in the chamber of secrets, where we explore the pleasures of easy-to-do sleight of hand.

# The HUMAN ATM

HOW TO EXTRACT  
A QUARTER FROM  
THE KID'S EAR, VANISH  
IT, AND BRING IT BACK  
IN COMIC FASHION

Let's start with a classic. With empty hands and sleeves rolled up, you reach behind the kid's ear and—violà! A quarter. You close your hand around it, have the kid say some magic words, and the coin disappears. You squeeze your nose, and out drops the quarter.

In magic this is known as a three-phase routine, consisting of a production, a vanish, and a production. It's short, snappy, and full of surprises. We'll tackle the phases one by one.

## Phase 1

### PRODUCING THE COIN

**1** The quarter didn't *really* come out of the kid's ear. (You knew that, right?) It was tucked away in your hand from the start, in a clever concealment known as a finger palm. So before you go any further, turn to page 40 and learn to finger-palm a quarter. I'll wait.

**2** Back to the trick at hand. Secretly finger-palm the quarter in your right hand. Do this several minutes before you're ready to produce the coin.

You want it to feel spontaneous. Then pretend to see something odd near the kid's ear.



Say, "What do you have there?" Look quizzically and point toward the ear in question. Thanks to the subtlety of the concealment, your hand will appear empty.



**3** Wait a beat. This is show business and you want to create suspense. Then reach past and behind the kid's ear and use your thumb to push the coin into "display position" between your thumb and fingers. It may take some finger fiddling to get it there, but don't worry about it—no one will notice. Bring your hand back into view and display the coin.



Act amazed by your discovery. Turn your wrist back and forth, examining both sides of the coin. *How did THAT get there?* is the attitude. But then something occurs to you and the plot thickens. Say, "You know what I think? I think this could be magic. Let's find out."

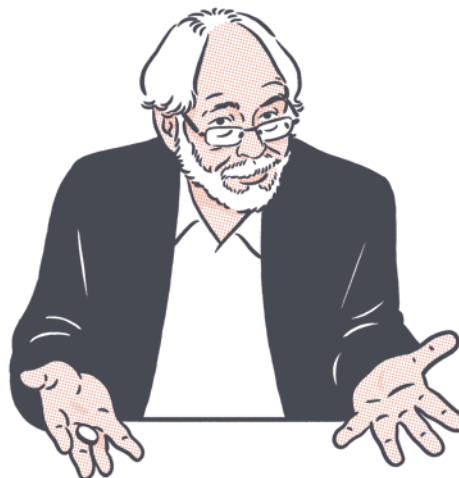


## Phase 2

### VANISHING THE COIN

Drop the quarter into your left hand, close your fingers, and have the kid blow on your hand or say the magic words, "Quarter go!" Open your hand and show the coin is gone. It really is! That's because it was never there in the first place. This is absolutely one of the best ways to vanish any small object: Pretend to put it somewhere, then show that it is gone. The technique is known as a false transfer. Here's how.

**1** You've just shown the coin in display position. Let it drop back to the base of the fingers, in readiness for the finger palm (see page 40). Pay no attention to the coin as you do this. Instead, wonder aloud if magic might be afoot.



**2** Bring your right hand above your left, as shown in the illustration, and pretend to dump the coin into the left hand. As you do, curl the right fingers enough to secure the coin in a finger palm.

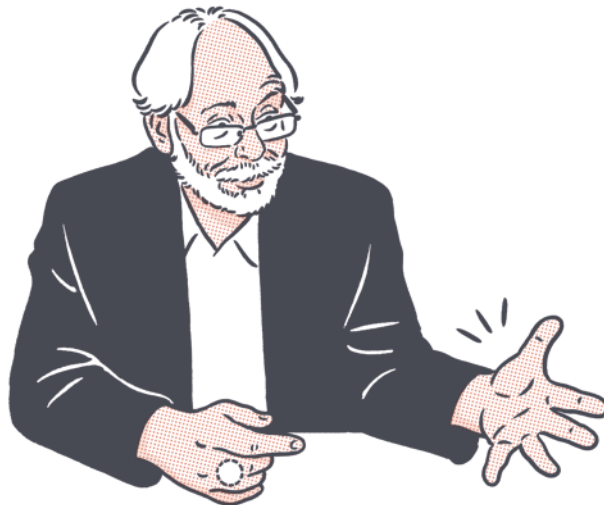


**3** Close your fingers around the imaginary coin and move your hand to the left and look at it and point to it. These are “convincers” that assure the onlooker—kid or adult—that the coin is where you say it is.



THE COIN IS  
IN THIS HAND!

**4** Have the kid say the secret words of power. Slowly grind the coin into nothingness and open your hand, one finger at a time. It will come as a huge surprise that the coin is gone.



### BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

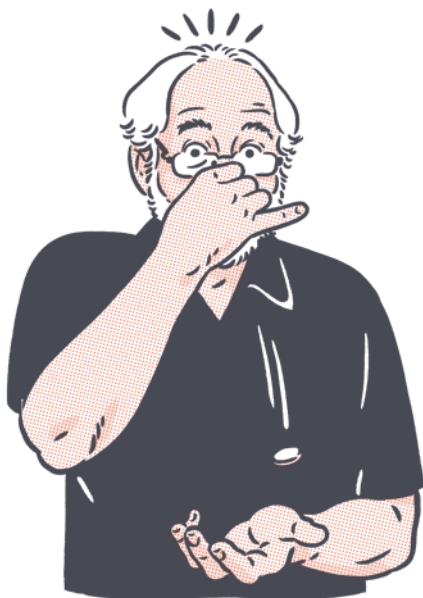
- An excellent way to practice the false transfer is by *really* dropping the coin from right hand to left. Then move the closed left hand to the left and look at it. Do this dozens of times until you know what the actions look and feel like when done for *real*. Then do exactly the same thing—same tempo, same motions, same attitude—only don't let go of the quarter. When the two versions are identical, you've got it.
- Don't neglect the acting part of the performance. Theatrical touches like mystical gestures, dramatic pauses, and facial expressions are just as important as the mechanics of a trick. They're what create interest, focus attention, and help turn tricks into magical moments. Be sure to follow all of the actions with your eyes. This helps tell the story of what's happening in a nonverbal way.

### Phase 3

## THE COIN RETURNS

**1** There are many ways to bring back the coin, but right now, we're going with comedy. Look around, as if puzzled as to where the coin might have gone. Wiggle your nose. Sniff. Feel a sneeze coming on.

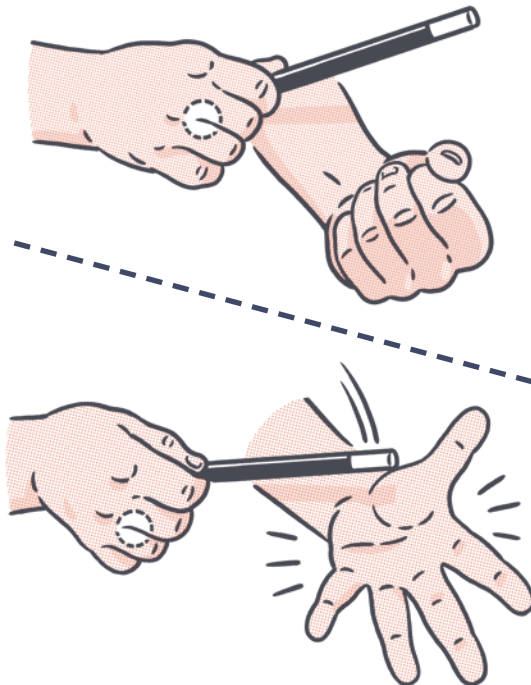
**2** Grasp the tip of your nose between your right thumb and fingers. Hold your left hand several inches below, in readiness. Squeeze your nose, drop the quarter, and catch it. This is a real crowd-pleaser with the six-and-under set and a great way to end the routine.



## NOW TRY THIS

### THE WAND VANISH

**H**ere's another method for vanishing the quarter. Immediately after the false transfer into your left hand, pick up a makeshift magic wand—a pen, pencil, straw, or chopstick—and wave it over your closed fist. Do this with a flourish. Tap thrice, and on the third tap, let your left hand spring open into a starfish pose and tap your empty palm with the wand. This is a startling vanish. Using the hand that conceals the coin is very crafty and sells the notion that your right hand is empty.



## THE FINGER PALM

**0** f all sneaky ways to secretly hide a coin in your hand, the Finger Palm is the easiest to learn. It's also superbly deceptive.

**1** The illustration below shows the starting position. The coin rests at the base of the two middle fingers. If you were simply to show the quarter, this would be a natural way to do it.



**2** Now curl your fingers until the coin is held securely between the base of the fingers and the joints above. The coin is now finger palmed.



**3** Turn your hand palm down and relax as you read the next paragraphs. The coin will remain in place with very little pressure.



The wonderful thing about the finger palm is how freely you can use the palming hand while maintaining a natural appearance. You can scratch your head, fiddle with your glasses, write a note, or simply rest your hand on the table, and nothing will seem out of the ordinary. Even better, if you raise your hand to point or gesture, the hand will appear empty, as long as you keep it palm down. Try this in front of a mirror to see how good it looks.



All you need to do now is get accustomed to palming until it no longer feels weird and becomes second nature. Keep a quarter palmed while watching TV, talking on the phone, or out for a walk. Learn to palm with both hands. Palm when there are other people around to overcome guilt and convince yourself that—despite what you may think—the only person who knows you're hiding a coin is you. When you can finger-palm and not think about it, you're ready to put it to use.





# More Ways to **MAKE MONEY DISAPPEAR**



It pays to have more than one vanish at your disposal. This is what allows you to satisfy the oft-heard request, “Grandpa, do it again!” Rather than repeat exactly what you just did—which will be under more scrutiny—you apparently do “do it again,” but using a different method. Here are three terrific vanishes. Each can work as a stand-alone item, but together they allow you to improvise a flurry of effects tailored to the situation at hand.

## *The* **PINCH VANISH**

The effect is that you place a coin in the center of your palm, close your fingers around it, and the coin vanishes.

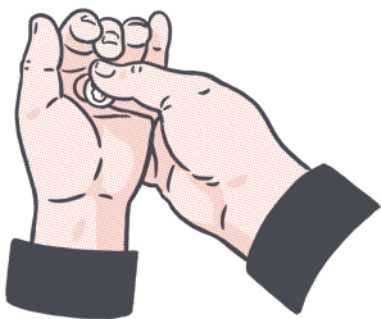
**1** Hold the coin by its edges between your thumb and forefinger, the face of the coin toward the kid. This is the starting position. All you’re doing is briefly displaying the coin before placing it onto your left palm. Your hand should be around waist level.



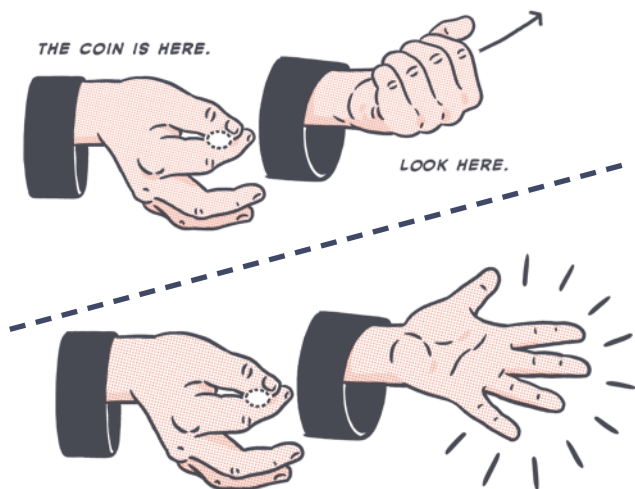
**2** Bring your right hand over your left palm. Now slowly begin to close your left hand.



**3** As soon as your left fingers obscure the coin from view, do the “pinch move” as follows: Squeeze the coin lightly, as if trying to push your thumb and finger together. Now move your thumb slightly upward and the coin will flip to a horizontal position; your thumb and finger will come together, pinching the coin between them. In a moment, when your left hand is removed, the right hand will appear empty.



**4** Move your left hand to the left as the fingers continue to close. Look at your left hand as if it contains the coin. The right hand stays where it is. Make a kneading motion with your fingers as if you were crumbling the coin into nothingness, and then slowly open your hand to show that the coin is gone. Worry not; the right hand looks empty and no one will suspect the coin is there.

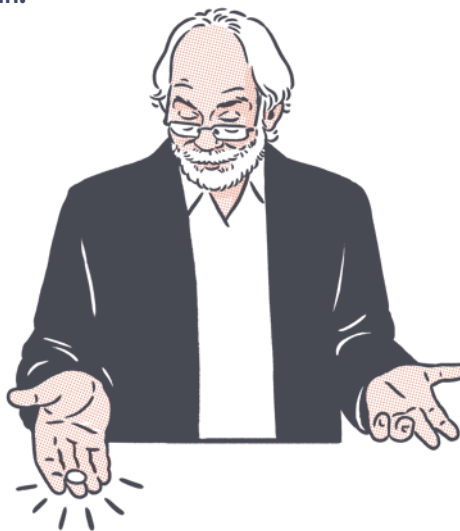


## NOW TRY THIS IN A FLASH

If you do the pinch move a fraction of a second before your left fingers close, the coin will glisten as it rotates and create an afterimage on the retina of the viewer, making it seem as if the fingers close around a visible coin. In magic this is known as a “retention of vision” vanish, and it is very convincing. Consult your mirror to discover the timing and see how good this looks. It should seem as if you clearly see the coin resting on the palm of your left hand as the fingers close around it.

**5** To bring the coin back, bring your left hand over to your right elbow, as if expecting to discover the coin is there. This is a feint. It takes all the attention off of the right hand.

**6** Now—realizing that the coin is not under your left elbow—reverse the moves and bring your right hand under your left elbow. Slide the coin onto your fingertips, bring your hand out, and display the coin.



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## The SNAP VANISH

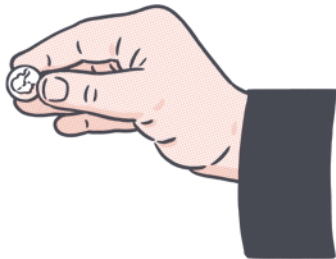
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This vanish requires that you wear a jacket with loose cuffs, as the coin goes up your sleeve. Try it first with a penny. (That's how it was first shown to me by Crazy Jerry, a friend of the family, who would torture me with it week after week. It was the only trick he knew, but he did it well and refused to part with the secret.)

**1** Hold the penny between your thumb and middle finger, with your palm facing up and your forearm parallel to the floor. This is the initial display position.



**2** Now turn your hand palm down, so that the penny lines up with the opening of your sleeve.



**3** Snap your fingers in the time-honored way—sharply striking the base of the thumb with your middle finger—and the coin will shoot directly into the opening of the sleeve. There's a knack to this sleight, so you may have to experiment with the precise placement of the coin between your thumb and fingers until you discover the correct trajectory up the sleeve. Don't become discouraged if you miss the first few times. It takes practice, but once you get it, you'll have it.



**4** Without pause, continue to rub your thumb and fingers together, as if still dematerializing the coin. Then turn your hand palm up and spread your fingers, showing that the coin is clearly gone.

When Crazy Jerry vanished the penny, he never brought it back. There's something to be said for this approach. After all, if you bring the coin back it must have been somewhere. But if you don't, then it's gone. There is no closure. The viewer is left amazed, frustrated, perplexed, annoyed, adrenalized, and happy. At least that's the effect it had on me.

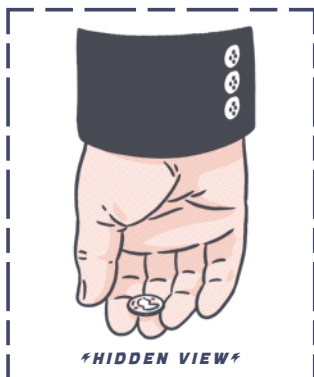


# MAGIC WORDS

## SLEEVING

**S**leevling is the art of ditching and retrieving small objects from your sleeves. The technique was a favorite of card cheats who used it to switch individual cards (or entire hands) in and out of play. Magicians applied it to balls, coins, and other small items, as well as cards. Despite the widespread belief that when something disappears, “it’s up the magician’s sleeve,” most of the time it isn’t.

**5** Whether you bring back the coin or not, you need to get it out of your sleeve and get on with your life. So after the display of innocence, act as if the effect is over, relax, and drop your hands to your sides. Keep your fingers curled and the penny will drop onto your fingertips in a position known as fingertip rest. From here you can find the coin behind your left elbow, behind the kid’s ear, or you can simply slip it into your pocket when no one is looking.



## The SHOE VANISH

This is a great vanish to use any time you accidentally drop a coin.

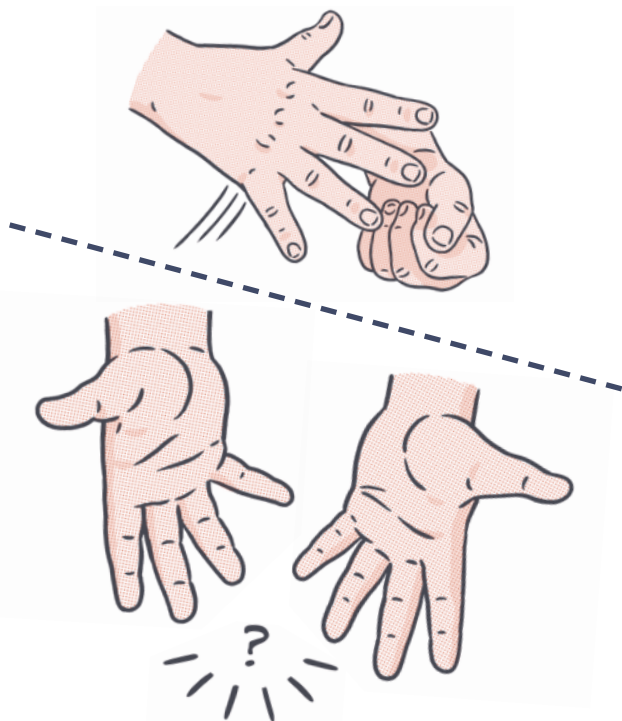
**1** Bend over and pretend to pick it up, but don’t really pick the coin up. Instead, use your right fingertips to flick it under your right shoe.



**2** Return to a standing position and say, “Let me try that again.” Look at the imaginary coin as you say this. Really believe it’s there—pinched between your thumb and fingers—and everyone else will believe it as well.



**3** Pretend to put the imaginary coin into your left hand and close your fingers over it. Wave your clearly empty right hand over your left, snap your fingers, and show both hands empty. You can even peek up your sleeves as if searching for the coin. Nope, it's really gone. Open your empty hands to prove it.



## TRICKS OF THE TRADE

**T**he fake pickup of the coin works like a charm and is never suspected. This is because the dropped coin triggers a “time-out” moment in the performance. Everyone relaxes attention—you’re no longer doing a trick, you’re tending to a chore—and attention does not resume until you announce, “Let me try that again.” This kind of ploy can be adapted to many types of effects in which you need to have the audience relax their attention.

## MAGIC WORDS

### TIME MISDIRECTION

**T**ime misdirection is the principle that the deceptiveness of a magic trick is strengthened by inserting a block of time between the execution of the method and the revealing of the effect. Time misdirection can be as brief as ten to fifteen seconds or up to several minutes. What matters is that you give the audience something else to focus their attention on before revealing the magical outcome. When the audience looks back in search of a method, what they’ll remember is what happened most recently—not what actually might have caused the effect. The term *time misdirection* was coined by magician Al Leech in his booklet *Don’t Look Now: The Smart Slant on Misdirection* (1948).

**4** You now have a choice. You can stand in place until the kid goes to bed. Or you can produce the coin, making it appear, say, oh, I don’t know, how about under your shoe? This is an excellent idea, but you can’t do it right away. If you do, everyone will remember the dropped coin and put two and two together. So, instead, you add a little time misdirection (see box) and stage a little playlet designed to make everyone forget that you dropped the coin in the first place.



**5** Here's one version of what you might do. Pretend to see the just-vanished coin hanging in space. Pluck it out of the air and display it at your fingertips. You're claiming to have the coin—it just happens to be invisible. Blow on it and claim it's now under your left shoe. Snap your fingers and claim it just turned visible and jumped into your pocket. Clap your hands and claim it's now under your right shoe. Does the kid want to see it? Are you kidding? Move your foot and reveal the coin.

Naturally, you can drop the coin accidentally on purpose. In fact, on some occasions, that's exactly what you should do.



## MAGIC WORDS

### JAZZING

In magic, the term *jazzing* means improvising as you perform, rather than following a set sequence. With four terrific vanishes at your fingertips, you can now do just that. You might begin by finding a coin behind the kid's ear. Vanish it using the finger palm, then discover it behind your elbow. Vanish it again, this time using the pinch vanish, and rediscover it behind the kid's ear. False transfer it and use the wand vanish. Bring it out of your nose. Accidentally drop it on the floor and use the shoe vanish. Find it under your foot and vanish it for good using the snap vanish. The more techniques at your disposal, the more freedom you have and the more spontaneous your performance.



# The MIDAS TOUCH

IN  
WHICH YOU  
IMITATE A FABLED  
MONARCH

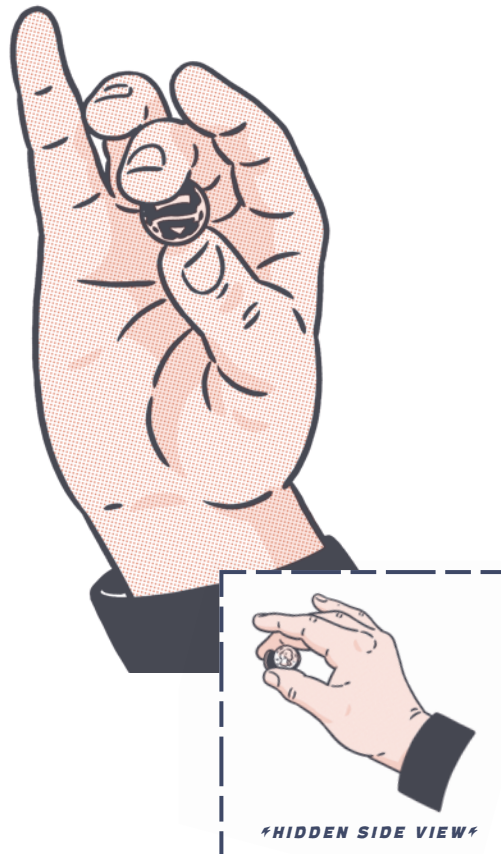
King Midas, you may remember, was granted one wish, and what he wished was that everything he touched would turn to gold (big mistake). In this budget-minded salute to the story, Grandpa's touch turns copper (a penny) into silver (a quarter) and he is no worse the wear for it.

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A PENNY AND A QUARTER

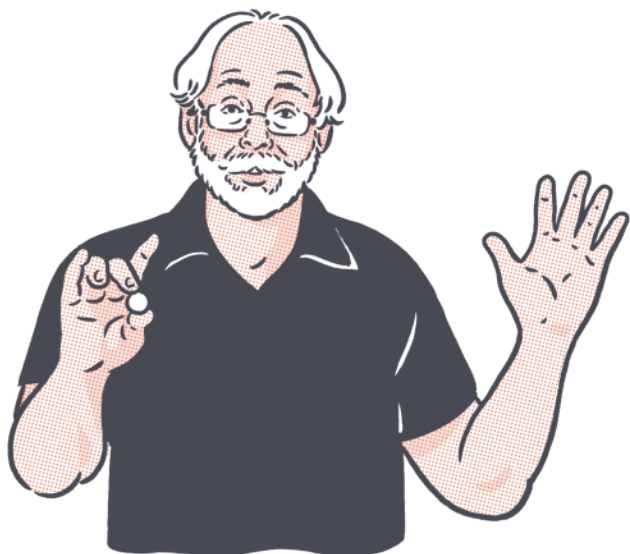
**1** A secret setup is required. Hold the quarter in your right hand between your thumb and second finger (a position known as edge grip).



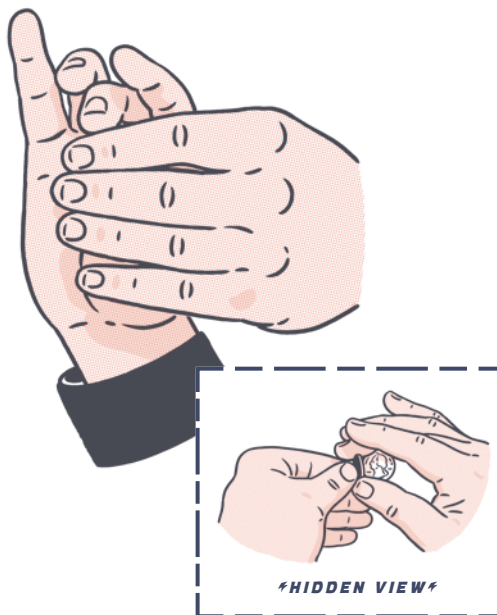
**2** Now put the penny in front of and perpendicular to the quarter. Go take a look in the mirror. If you show the penny head-on, the hand seems otherwise empty. This is a thing of beauty. The setup takes a second and can be done when no one is looking.



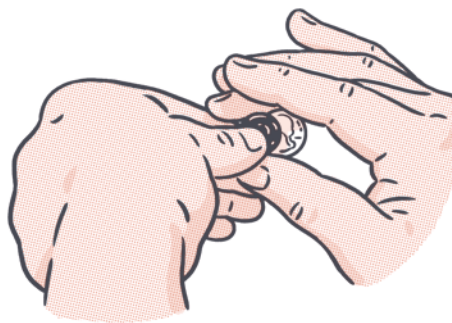
**3** When you're ready to perform, approach your audience (my arm is usually dangling by my side at this point) and say something like, "Want to see something strange?" This is a reliable attention-getter. Show the penny head-on, at chest level. The quarter, of course, cannot be seen. Show your left hand empty, fingers spread. Show both sides. You want to make it clear that, except for the penny, both hands are empty. Now for the transformation.



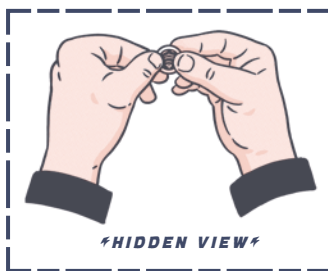
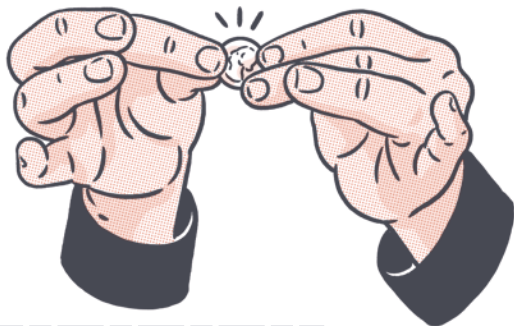
**4** Bring your left hand in front of the penny, fingers together. In a moment, it will seem as if all you do is rub the penny with your right fingers and it changes.



**5** As the left fingers cover the penny, press your left thumbnail against the left side of the penny. Now move your left thumb inward, causing the penny to rotate ninety degrees, so that it ends up flush with the quarter.



**6** Pinch both coins between your left thumb and finger, and in a continuous action rotate the coins as a unit, so that the quarter is head-on to the audience, with the penny hiding behind it. Your right fingers, meanwhile, slide over the face of the quarter and end up mirroring the left hand. The transformation is complete.



There are a couple of ways to end. Hold the display pose for a beat, then separate your hands and drop them to your sides, with a sort of *That's all, folks* attitude. You can pocket the coins, or you can dip into your pocket as if to leave the quarter behind, let go of the penny, and bring the quarter back out and say, "Oh, would you like to keep it?" Or, after the display pose, let go with your left hand and show it to your audience, front and back (no penny here); then place the quarter (and the penny behind it) onto your left hand in the finger-palm position as you show your right hand, front and back. Pocket the coins and you're done.

## BOOK NOOK

### COIN MAGIC

If you're interested in learning more, get hold of *Modern Coin Magic*, by J. B. Bobo (1966). It's the essential book for beginners and is packed with superb material, from the easiest routines to the most knuckle-busting sleight of hand. For video instruction, Michael Ammar's *Complete Introduction to Coin Magic* is an excellent resource. After you've mastered the basics, advanced students should check out *Coin Magic* and *David Roth's Expert Coin Magic*, both by Richard Kaufman; the latter is devoted to the work of one of magic's contemporary masters.

### BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- For an even more amazing transformation, change a penny into a half dollar. It's hard to believe that such a large coin can hide behind such a small one, but it can. And your audience will find the idea of it being hidden somewhere unfathomable.
- Practicing in front of a mirror will reveal how to make this effect look magical. Experiment with different gestures and rubs. Don't let the coins "talk" (make noise) as they contact each other. You might also want to dramatize the moment just before the transformation by blowing on your left fingertips or rubbing them against your shirt, safecracker style.

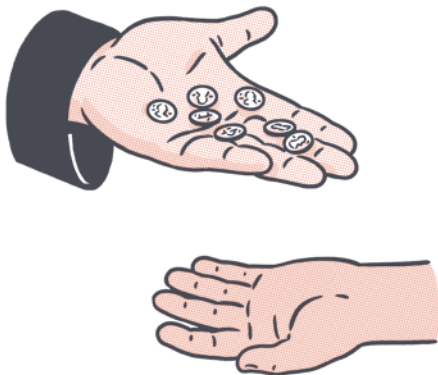
# The MELTING PENNIES

IN WHICH  
SEVERAL PENNIES  
PASS THROUGH  
THE KID'S HAND

The most memorable tricks are simple in plot, easy to describe, and take place in the hands of the participant. This routine scores on all three counts. The kid closes her hand around seven pennies. One by one, three of the coins melt through her hand and appear in yours.

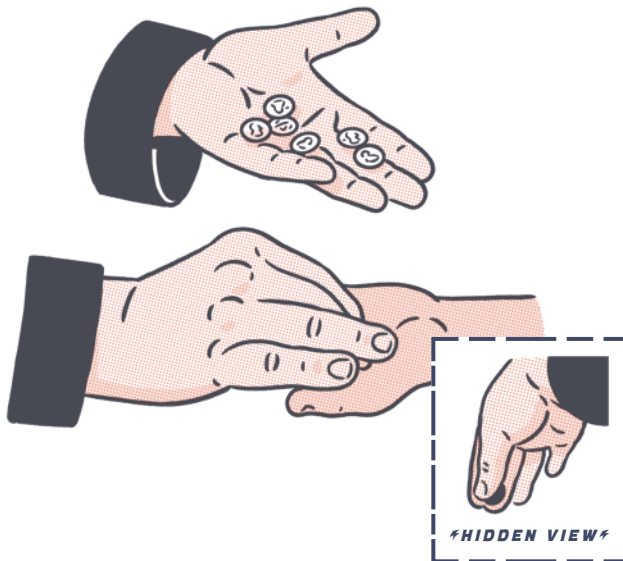
## YOU WILL NEED: SEVEN PENNIES

**1** Begin by counting seven pennies onto your outstretched left hand. “How many pennies do you see here? Seven. Now hold your hand out just like mine. I’m going to give you the pennies, one at a time. When you have all seven, close your hand really quickly, so I can’t take any away.”



**2** Have the kid hold her hand palm up. Pick up a penny between your right thumb and first and second fingers, and place it onto the kid’s palm, counting, “That’s one.” Note that until you let go of the penny, it’s hidden behind your fingertips. This is important.

Repeat with a second penny, placing it directly on top of the first so that the coins clink together as the second penny is added. “That’s two.” Repeat with pennies three, four, and five, each time counting aloud, and each time making the clinking sound as each coin is added. Be sure that each penny remains hidden behind your fingertips until you release it.





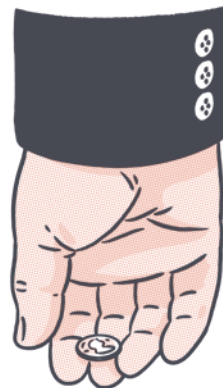
**3** Now for the sneaky part. Add the next penny on top of the others—counting “six”—but this time don’t let go of it. Simply clink it against the others and withdraw your hand to the right, the coin hidden behind your fingers.



**4** A fraction of a second later, bring your left hand over the kid’s palm as you say “and seven,” and drop the last coin on top of the others. “Close your hand.” Let your right hand fall to your side. There should be no doubt that the kid is holding seven pennies.



**5** Relax for a moment. Let your right hand dangle by your side, the penny on your fingers in fingertip rest.



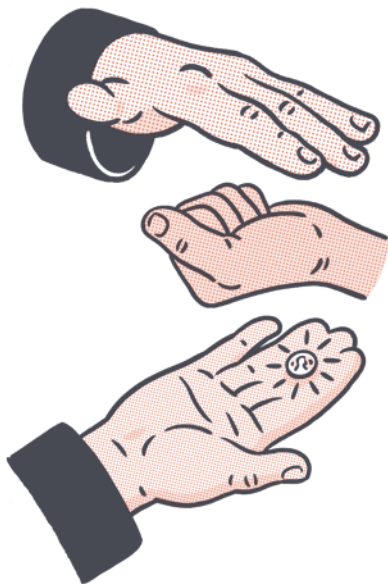
**6** Now say, “How many pennies do you have? Seven. Now keep your hand right there. We’re going to try something strange.” Hold your left hand above the kid’s fist. At the same time, bring up your right hand, palm down, the penny resting on the fingertips, and hold it under her fist. Just as you go under, rotate your hand palm up and extend your fingers so that the penny is right beneath her fist. As you’ll discover, it is easy to do this without “flashing” the penny.



## KUDOS AND CREDITS

Considering a late career in magic? Terry Lynn, the creator of the Penetrating Pennies effect, enjoyed careers as an engineer, inventor, pilot, and perfumer before he became smitten with magic at the age of fifty. He soon made up for lost time by creating a sophisticated nightclub act and touring swank hotel lounges in the United States, Canada, and South America (this was during the 1940s, when such acts were in demand). Penetrating Pennies was originally titled Lynn's Pennies and was first published in *Principles and Deceptions* by Arthur Buckley (1948).

**7** Say, “*Watch this.*” Move both of your hands in tiny circles, keeping them more or less in place. Raise your right hand and touch the back of the kid’s hand with your fingers. Then move your left hand to the left and your right hand to the right, revealing the penny on the tips of your fingers.



“Got one—right through your hand! How many do you have?” Have the kid open her hand and count the pennies back onto your left palm, confirming that there are only six. Pocket the penny in your right hand, or put it on the table. Now repeat the effect with six coins, and then with five. It becomes more baffling each time. Don’t push your luck; three times is the right amount.

### BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- The real secret to making this effect deceptive is rhythm and timing. Count the first six pennies using the same tempo and sound effects. Then, add some extra emphasis to your voice as you say “. . . and seven!” Your left hand should start moving to dump the last penny as the right hand is withdrawing with the concealed penny. This choreography pulls attention to the left hand and no further thought is given to the right as it drops to your side.
- Instead of counting the pennies yourself, you can have the kid do the counting. Each time you add a penny to her hand, say, “*And one more makes \_\_\_\_\_?*” Have her fill in the blank.
- This effect is tough to practice on your own, as you literally need a helping hand to nail down the timing. If no one is available, then practice by moving the coins from your hand to a table.



# FUN *with* CARDS

I love dogs, but they can't do card tricks and they aren't this man's best friend. That distinction belongs to the 52 rectangles of pasteboard that make up a deck of playing cards. Get to know them and you'll discover a family of flat little friends, eager to do their tricks and make people happy. Plus, they're easy to carry, versatile, loyal, long-lasting, inexpensive, and borrowable. It's no wonder there are more card tricks than any other type of magic. So start packin' a deck and get ready to amaze.

# The MAN WITH THE MAGIC FINGERS

HOW TO  
SEE CARDS  
WITHOUT  
LOOKING AT  
THEM

Fortunately for card magic, most kids still know what a deck of cards is. They know the suits and the values and they probably know a card trick or two. But they won't know this one. It's different, it's fooling, and it drives some kids nuts.

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A DECK OF CARDS

**1** You begin with a story: “A long time ago I met a man who could see cards with his fingers. He could tell what any card was without looking at it. But he did it in a special, secret way. Let me show you what he did.”

Put half the deck aside; it won't be used. Turn the remaining half faceup and spread the cards between your hands. Tell the kid, “I want you to take out any one of these cards. It's okay if I see it. We're going to use it to keep track of a Mystery Card, a card that nobody knows.”

**2** As the kid selects a card—let's say the Ten of Spades—secretly note the top card in the deck, which will be easily visible as you spread the cards. Let's say it's the Eight of Hearts. Remember this card.



**3** Turn the deck facedown and have a second card selected, but with the instructions that *nobody* is to know what it is. Not the kid, not the magician, nobody. This is the Mystery Card.

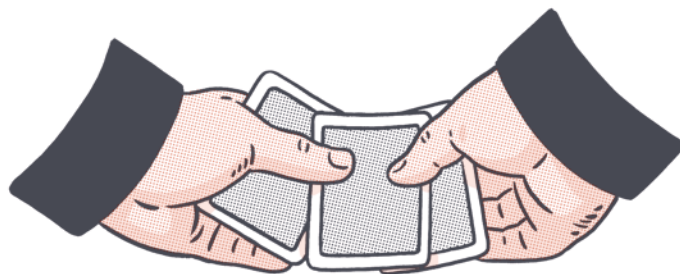
- 4** Place the deck on the table and place the tracker card (the Ten of Spades) faceup, on top. Have the kid place the Mystery Card on top of that card.



Give the deck a complete cut. That is, lift off about half the cards and place them on the table; then take the bottom half and place it on top. This buries the Mystery Card near the center of the deck. Make sure everyone understands that no one knows the identity of the card. Place the deck behind your back, holding it with both hands.

Say, “Now, *this is what the guy did. He put the deck behind his back—like this—and tried to figure out what the mystery card was by feeling around. Now, whatever he was doing back there, no one was allowed to look, because it was a secret. And he made me promise that if I ever figured it out, I wasn’t allowed to tell either. I think the card you took was a black card. I’m not saying I did figure it out. But if I did, I can’t tell. A promise is a promise. My mistake, it’s a red card. Actually, it could be red or black, but it’s definitely—an Eight! A red Eight. It’s the Eight of Hearts. I’m sure.*”

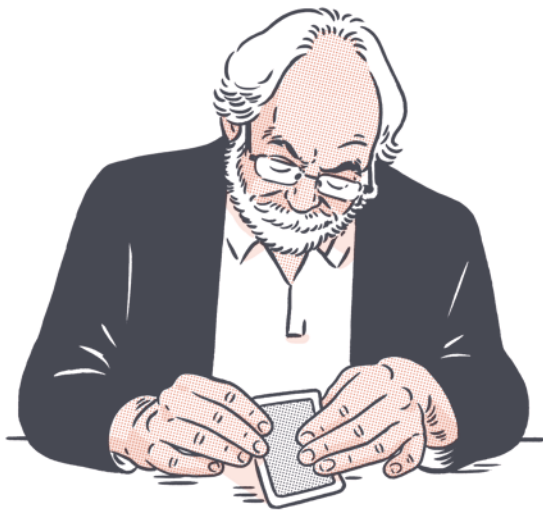
- 5** While you are reciting this speech—which ends with you naming the *original top card of the deck*—what you’re doing behind your back is secretly reversing the order of the (half) deck as follows: With the deck in your left hand, push over the top card and take it into your right hand. Then push over the next card and take it on top of the first. Keep doing this until you reverse the entire order of the deck. This will cause the Mystery Card and the memorized card to change places!



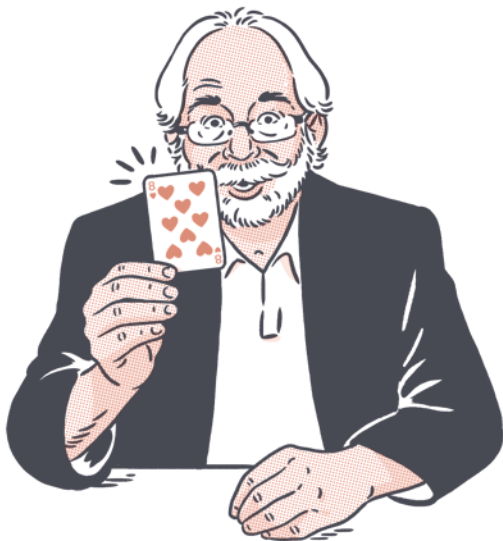
- 6** Bring the deck back into view, spread it between your hands, and locate the face-up tracker card. Above it is the card that everyone assumes is the Mystery Card. Have the kid remove it and place it face-down on the table without showing it to anyone.



**7** Slide the card toward yourself and have a peek at it. Act like you made a mistake. But maybe you can save the day: *“I said it was a black card, right? A Three.”* Rest assured, you will be corrected. You just said the Eight of Hearts, and everyone knows it.



**8** Pick up the card so only you can see it. *“Well, I was close.”* Then slowly rotate it so everyone can have a look. It is the Eight of Hearts. Curtain.



## BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- The “hook” on this presentation is that you have a secret you refuse to tell. This is, admittedly, a tease and one that can drive some kids nuts. But it’s what makes the trick entertaining. So I say keep your promise to the mystery man and don’t reveal the secret. There are many pleasures that come from *not* knowing, and there will be plenty of other things to share later on. Simple as this trick is in construction, it is surprisingly difficult to figure out.
- Notice how you create a moment of tension and suspense when you pretend to have messed up the trick. This makes for a much stronger ending than simply revealing that you got it right. Try it both ways and you’ll see the difference. It’s better theater.
- Here’s a different staging you might want to try. Instead of spreading the deck between your hands, spread it facedown on a table. Have the kid slide out any two cards. One goes faceup on top of the deck, the other facedown on top of it. Close the spread and allow the volunteer to cut around the center. Place the deck behind your back and you’re off to the races.

## KUDOS AND CREDITS

**F**reedom of the Seize is the title this trick’s inventor, Stewart James, assigned to it when he thought it up in 1937. James, a Canadian, was one of the most original, eccentric, and prolific talents in all of magic. He figured out his first trick at the age of ten, and went on to create more than 1,000 original effects and methods. His work is available in two huge volumes.

# Just SAY NO

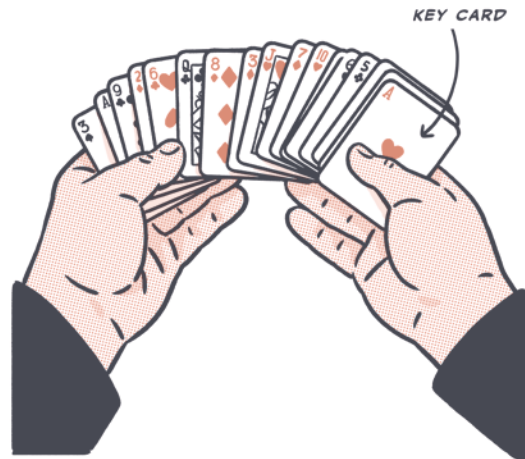
IN WHICH YOU  
BECOME A HUMAN  
LIE DETECTOR

One of the venerable plots of card magic is the “pick a card” trick. A volunteer selects a card, returns it to the deck, and the magician finds it. There are thousands of takes on this structure, some wonderful and some not so good. This is one of the wonderful versions. It’s entertaining, easy to do, and teaches one of the most useful secrets of card magic: the key card principle.

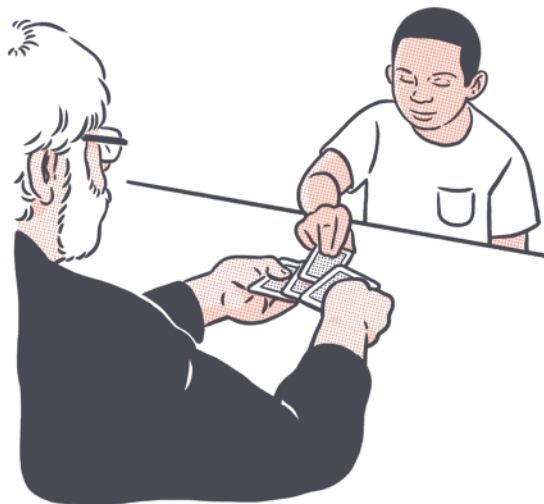
 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A DECK OF CARDS

**1** Begin by announcing the premise: “Did you know that a person’s voice changes when they tell a fib? It’s true. Sometimes it gets higher, or lower, or it squeaks. Most people can’t hear the changes, but I’ve been practicing with Grandma and I’ve gotten good at it. Can I try it with you? We’ll use cards to give you something to fib about.”

**2** Shuffle the deck, or let the kid shuffle. Then take back the deck and briefly spread it faceup as you comment, “All mixed up, right?” Take this opportunity to remember the bottom card. This will be your key card and will enable you to identify whatever card the kid selects. Let’s say it’s the Ace of Hearts.

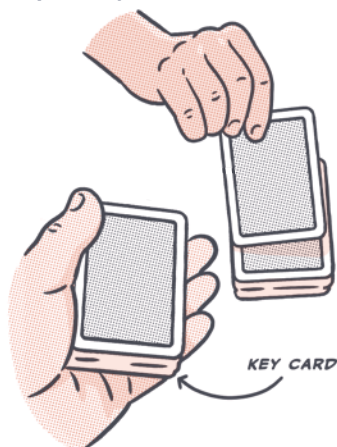


**3** Turn the deck facedown, spread it between your hands, and have the kid remove a card. “This is the card you’re going to lie about, but I don’t want to see it. Have a look, remember it, and then put it back in the middle.”





**4** Close the fan of cards. Cut off the upper half (more or less) of the deck and place it on the table. Have the kid place his card on top, and drop the rest of the deck on top of that. The key card is now directly on top of the selection.



Resume with, *“Let’s mix things up so no one knows exactly where your card is.”*

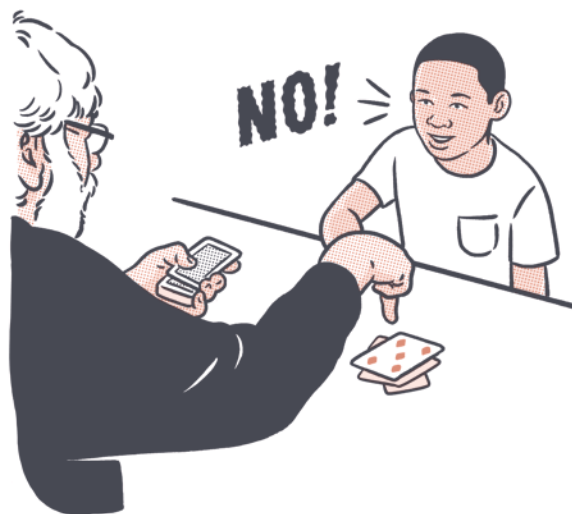
**5** As you say this, give the deck several complete cuts. That is, lift off a packet of cards from the top of the deck and place it next to the bottom portion. Then place the bottom portion on top. Do this several times. This creates the impression of “mixing” the deck when, in fact, all of the cards remain in the same order. The only thing that changes is the starting point of the order. In the end, the key card will still be above the selection. Pick up the deck and hold it in your left hand in preparation for dealing.

*“Now here’s what we’re going to do. I’m going to turn the cards over one at a time and put them on the table. And every time I do, I want you to say the word ‘no.’ That means it’s not your card. But here’s the tricky part. When I turn over your card, I also want you to say ‘no’—even though it is your card. Try not to change your voice or give it away. I’m going to try to catch you. You see if you can fool me.”*

## KUDOS AND CREDITS

It was magician and magic dealer U. F. Grant who came up with the lie-detector premise back in 1927. In Grant’s routine, the performer wore a set of supposedly high-tech earphones (which actually did nothing) to detect the lie. Countless other performers have tweaked the routine since then. As for the key card, the principle was first explained in 1550, in *De Subtilitate (On Subtlety)*, by the Renaissance mathematician and ardent magic fan Gerolamo Cardano.

**6** With the deck facedown in your left hand, begin dealing the cards one by one into a face-up pile. Maintain an even tempo but make sure to leave space for the kid to say “no” as each card hits the table. As you deal, watch for the key card. But before it shows up, stop dealing, as if you just heard something in the kid’s voice. Point to the card just dealt: *“Say ‘no’ to this card.”*





## BOOK NOOK

### *THE SECRETS OF ALKAZAR: A BOOK OF MAGIC FOR YOUNG MAGICIANS*

**F**ull disclosure: I wrote the book I'm recommending. It has three terrific chapters on key card magic and will make you a master of this highly useful tool. As for the rest of the book, it's a general introduction to magic for readers age ten and up. And unlike many beginner's books, it features chapters on scripting, routining, handling, practice, and other essential matters. I hope you'll check it out, as the author needs the money.

Pause, as if analyzing every nuance of his voice, then reach your conclusion: "*Sounds like the truth to me. This is not your card. Let's keep going.*"

**7** Resume dealing. Eventually, the key card will show up, alerting you that the very next card will be the selection. But don't reveal it immediately. Instead, allow the kid to say "no" to the selection, then deal another card. Have him say "no" to that card—then stop. Act unsure. Did the kid just lie? Point to the last card you just dealt and have the kid repeat his "no." Listen carefully, then push that card aside. Pick up the selection, and ask the kid to say "no" to that one. Act enormously pleased with yourself and toss the card to the table. "*I know it's rude to call someone a liar—but that's what you are. That's your card!*"

### BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- Kids love this trick for lots of reasons. They like the idea they are supposed to lie. They like the challenge of tricking you. They enjoy the mounting excitement of going through the deck and the repetitive "no, no, no!" And when you successfully identify the card, they like that, too.
- Really get into acting the role of "human lie detector." Listen carefully to the kid, analyze what you hear, act uncertain. There's a playful cat-and-mouse dynamic here—exploit it to the fullest.
- Kids unaccustomed to the art of fibbing will often say "yes" or giggle madly when their card turns up. Naturally, you give them a second chance to fool you and start all over again.
- On rare occasions, after the cutting sequence, the key card will end up on the bottom of the deck and the chosen card on top. That means you would go through the entire deck before realizing that the selection was the very first card dealt. To avoid this, take a casual glance at the bottom card before you start dealing. If it's the key card, give the deck one final cut and you're set to go.



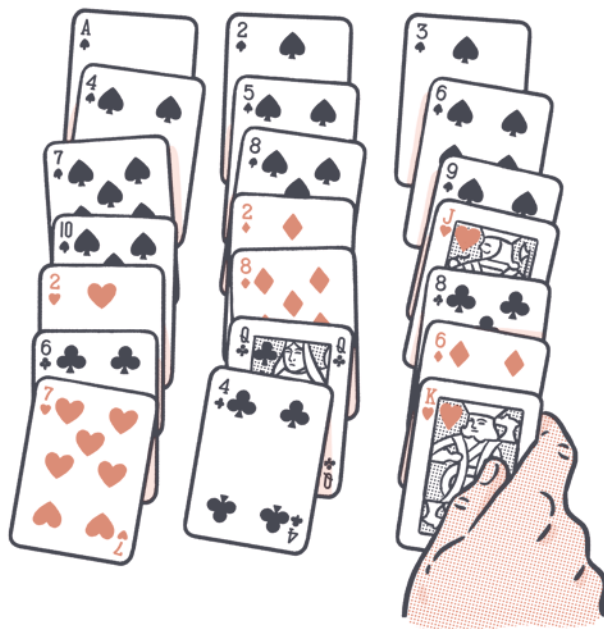
# The 21-CARD TRICK

SOMEONE  
THINKS OF A  
CARD AND YOU  
KNOW WHAT  
IT IS.

Part of me doesn't like this trick. The procedures are too repetitive and it lacks opportunities for showmanship, or at least the first half does. So why do I include it? Because kids love to perform it. It nearly works itself and can be utterly bewildering. Try it on yourself, perform it for the kid, and then teach it. You have three endings to choose from.

**YOU WILL NEED:**  
A DECK OF CARDS

**1** With the deck faceup, deal out three columns of seven cards each. These are the twenty-one cards that give the trick its name. It's important to deal these cards left to right, and overlap them so that all of the cards are visible. For clarity, the illustration shows the first ten cards in the order in which they were dealt. In a performance, these will be random cards.



**2** Say, “Some magicians ask you to pick a card. Not me. Just think of any card you see. Got one?” Ask which column contains the thought-of card. Telescope the columns into three neat packets, being careful not to change their order.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3

## KUDOS AND CREDITS

This is literally the oldest trick in the book. It first saw print in 1593 in what's considered to be the first ever collection of card magic, Horatio Galasso's *Giochi di carte bellissimi di regola e di memoria* (Most beautiful card games based on rules and memory techniques). Published in Venice, Italy, the book contains many tricks and principles of card magic still in use today. Galasso notes that the effect is mathematical and works with any number of cards, as long as it's an odd number. It was originally done with fifteen cards.

**3** Now combine them into a single packet so that the packet containing the thought-of card ends up sandwiched between the other two packets. For example, if the selection is in the left packet, place it onto the center packet and drop the right packet on top. Pick up the combined packets and hold them faceup in dealing position.

**4** Now repeat everything you just did two more times. Start with the packet faceup, deal left to right, ask which column has their card, telescope, centralize, and do it again. At the end of this process—three times through—the kid's card will be exactly eleventh from the top or bottom of the packet. You now have three endings to choose from, or you can make up your own.

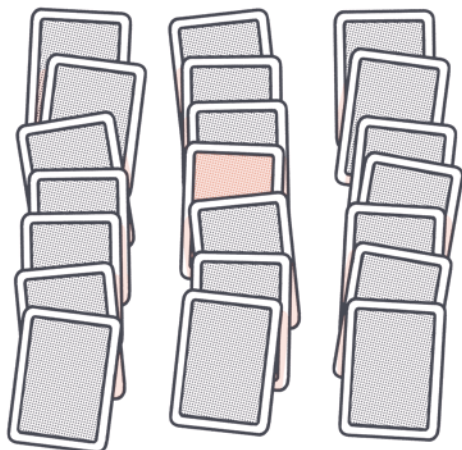
# BOOK NOOK

## MAGICAL MATHEMATICS

**M**athematics and magic have been intertwined for a very long time and can reach dizzying levels of complexity, far beyond the scope of this book. Should you wish to swim in these rarefied waters, get hold of *Magical Mathematics: The Mathematical Ideas That Animate Great Magic Tricks* by Persi Diaconis and Ron Graham (2012). The authors are both professors of mathematics and performers, their performing arts being magic and juggling, respectively.

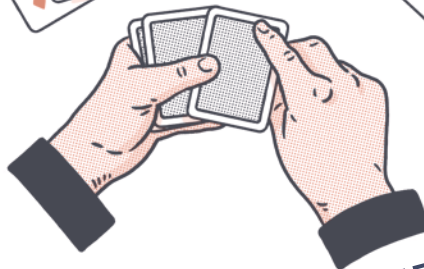
### THE STANDARD ENDING

Deal the cards yet one more time, exactly as before, but facedown. The selection will be the fourth card from the top in the center column. Ask the kid which column contains her card. (“Not so easy now, is it?”) Have her think of her card, gather your psychic forces, and turn the selection faceup to end.



### THE CIRCUS CARD TRICK ENDING

Announce that you will now find the thought-of card. Begin dealing the cards into a face-up overlapping row. When you get to the eleventh card, remember what it is but keep dealing cards, as if still searching for the selection. The kid will think you messed up and went right by his card. Now stop. Thumb over the next card, as if you’re about to turn it faceup. Look at the kid and say, “Would you be surprised if the next card I turn over is your card?” When the kid says yes, slide out the selection, turn it facedown, and say “Surprise!”





### THE PSYCHIC POWERS ENDING

Deal the twenty-one cards facedown in a helter-skelter fashion, scattering them around the table. Silently count as you go and keep track of where you put the eleventh card.

Have the kid hold on to your wrist as you pass your hand back and forth over the cards.



Urge the kid to think of her card. Slowly descend on the selection. “What card were you thinking of?” The kid names her card and you turn it over.



### BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- It helps to have something to say when you deal out the columns. I like to emphasize how random all this dealing makes the outcome (the opposite is true). “*You never know where your card is going to end up. It could stay in the same column, or jump across, or move from a high spot to a low one—it’s impossible to know because everyone thinks of a different card.*” This makes some sort of sense while keeping things lively.
- Practice combining the three packets so that there are no signs of you thinking about which packet goes where. It’s easy enough, but requires practice to do smoothly.
- The Circus Card Trick gets its name from a swindle that was run on circus fairgrounds of yesteryear. The hustler would offer to show his victim a card trick. A card would be selected, returned to the deck, and the hustler would deal through the deck, stopping long after he’d passed over the chosen card. With great confidence he’d announce, “*I’ll bet you ten bucks the next card I turn over will be your card.*” Naturally, the mark would take the bet and lose.

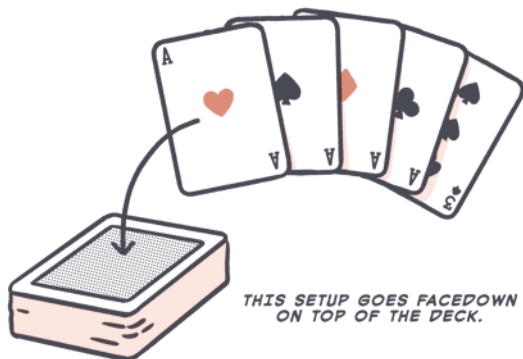
# The LAWS of MAGIC

IN WHICH THE KID BECOMES A CARD SHARK

This is often the first trick I teach beginners. I do this with confidence that when they go home, they will fool their parents, siblings, spouses, and anyone else they can lasso into watching. But that's only part of the reason. The trick is also packed with valuable lessons, cool principles, and presentational challenges that can be worked on during the weeks to come.

 **YOU WILL NEED:** A DECK OF CARDS (IDEALLY WITH A CASE)

**1** This trick requires a simple setup that must be done in advance. Place the four Aces on top of the deck, covered by any three-value card; we'll use the Three of Spades. Place the deck in the card case, and you're set to go.

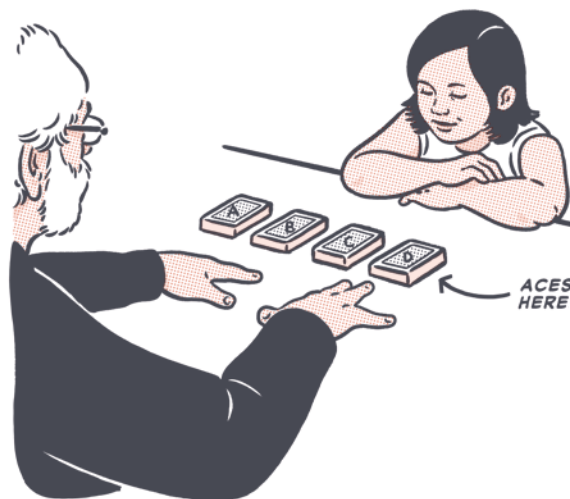


**2** Begin, "As you know, I've been studying magic, and last week I learned about THE LAWS OF MAGIC. These are rules that—if you follow them exactly—make strange things happen. Want to try?"

Bring out the deck and place it facedown in front of the kid.

Say, "Rub your hands together to warm up. That's the first law of magic. Now cut the deck in half—take off about half the cards and place them next to the other half. Good. Now cut each of those packets in half."

The result of the cutting should be four packets of roughly equal size, with the Ace packet on one of the ends. I usually engineer things by pointing to spots on the table where the cut-off portions are to go, so that the Ace packet ends up on my right.



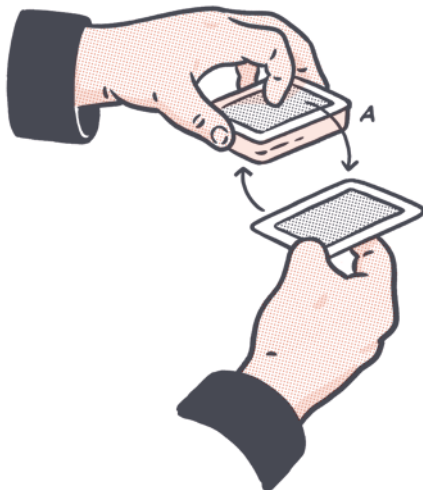


**3** “Let’s see what cards you cut to.” Turn over the top card of each packet and place it faceup, directly behind (from your point of view) the packet it came from. These will be three random cards and the Three of Spades. Name each card aloud as you turn it over: “Six, Jack, Nine, Three.” You will now demonstrate what the laws of magic require.



**4** Pick up packet A. Say, “According to the laws of magic, because you cut to a Six, we have to move six cards from the top of this packet to the bottom. I’ll do the first one, then you do the others.”

Slowly and clearly transfer six cards from the top of packet A to the bottom. (If you’re working through the trick now, use whatever values are in front of you. Except for the Three on top of the Aces packet, it makes no difference what these cards are.)



## KUDOS AND CREDITS

**W**hen I began studying card magic as a teenager, my favorite book was *The Royal Road to Card Magic* by Jean Hugard and Frederick Braue (1948). That’s where I learned a trick called Poker Player’s Picnic. The effect is identical to the Laws of Magic, but minus the random cards. The participant simply cut four packets, picked up the first, transferred three cards to the bottom, and dealt single cards onto the remaining packets. The process was repeated with the other packets and the Aces revealed. No random cards. No capping the Aces with a three. Is one version better than the other? The original is more direct and easier for the novice card handler. The second has deeper layers of deception and may seem more mysterious. So it’s the performer’s choice. After considerable research, I have been unable to discover who to credit for the version taught here.

“Next you must deal one card on top of the other three piles. Why? It’s the laws of magic.” Suiting your actions to your words, deal one card facedown from the top of packet A onto packets B, C, and D, and then return packet A to its original location.

Have the kid do the same thing with packets B, C, and D, in that order, each time moving the indicated number of cards from the top of the packet to the bottom, dealing a single card onto each of the other packets, and then returning the packet to its original location. For ease of counting, you can announce that, according to the laws of magic, all picture cards equal ten.

Thanks to strategic planning and the subtle use of the Three of Spades, each packet is now capped with an

## NOW TRY THIS

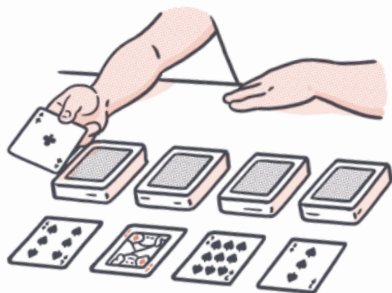
### BEGINNER'S LUCK

**H**ere's a different approach to the Laws of Magic. Stage the effect as a test of beginner's luck, the well-known phenomenon in which someone new to an activity (such as fishing) does exceptionally well (by landing a colossal catch). In this case, what's being tested might be the kid's luck at card games, or magic, or luck in general. As each Ace is turned over, you become increasingly astonished by how very lucky the participant is. A great tag line is "Boy, I wouldn't want to play cards against you!"

Ace! But don't reveal this yet. Instead, call attention to the four face-up cards.

"Now here's what's so amazing about the laws of magic. If you had cut the deck at different places—just one card higher, or one card lower—all of these cards would be different." (Indicate the face-up cards.) "And if they were different, all of these cards would be different as well." (Indicate the top cards of each packet.) "But you didn't cut differently. You cut exactly where you did. Let's see how you did." Gather the face-up cards and put them aside, facedown.

**5** Direct the kid: "Turn over the top card on any pile and put it right back on that pile."



Continue, "Wow, an Ace. I'm impressed. An Ace is the highest card in the deck. Now turn over another one. Wow, another Ace. That's unusual. Turn over another one. What? Three Aces? That's never happened before. I'm afraid to look at the last one. But go ahead, turn it over. Oh my goodness! Call 911—the kid's on fire!" Start the applause, and everyone will follow.



# TRICKS OF THE TRADE

## CARD HANDLING

For anyone new to card magic, it's important to master basic skills, such as shuffling, dealing, spreading cards from hand to hand, transferring cards neatly from the top of a packet to the bottom, and so forth. If you already possess these skills, as seasoned card players do, you'll want to pass them along to the kid. If you're a beginner with a serious interest in card magic, I suggest you get ahold of *Card College Volume 1* (1995) by the master teacher Roberto Giobbi. All of the basic skills are clearly taught and accompanied by helpful illustrations. The more effortless your card handling appears, the more magical your magic.

## BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- One of the things I love about this effect is the built-in misdirection. All of the cut-to cards seem important to the outcome when, in fact, it makes no difference what they are, except for the Three. Nor does it matter where the kid cuts the cards, or how many cards are shifted top to bottom. It's all smoke and mirrors.
- One of the strong points of this effect is that the spotlight is always on the kid. Not only does this make him feel important, it's also good theater for anyone watching. The kid does everything and gets all the credit.
- Make sure to emphasize that had the kid cut differently, *everything* would have been different. While completely untrue, it seems reasonable. It also inserts some time misdirection before the final reveal. In the end the audience is left with the impression that the kid cut four aces from random spots in the deck.
- When coaching a kid on how to perform the trick, there are four areas that usually need work: learning to give clear instructions, handling the cards neatly during the demonstration, selling the idea that other outcomes are possible, and acting surprised and pleased by the outcome. These are all aspects of showmanship and are usually the last things to fall into place.

# The **ACES KNOW**

WHY THE ACES  
ARE THE  
SMARTEST CARDS  
IN THE DECK

Having cut to the four Aces (see pages 64 to 66), the kid uses them to reveal how many cards have been placed in the card case—an amount that no one could possibly know. The trick is mathematical and works itself.

**YOU WILL NEED:** A COMPLETE DECK (INCLUDING THE CASE); IF ANY CARDS ARE MISSING, THE TRICK WON'T WORK

**1** As applause for the Laws of Magic subsides, slide the Aces off their packets and give them to the kid. Say, “Hang on to these. We’re going to be making some important decisions together.”

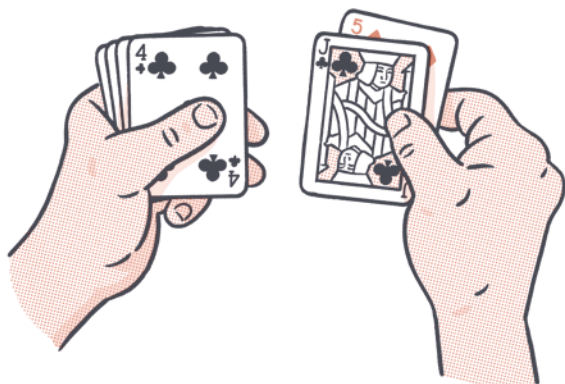


**2** Assemble the deck, give it a brief shuffle, and hold it faceup in dealing position. You will now seem to peel off random numbers of cards and place them, facedown, at various locations on the table. In reality, though, the amount of cards in each packet is not random but is based on a counting system, as follows:

With the deck faceup in your left hand, note the value of the top card (Jacks, Queens, and Kings count as ten). With your left thumb, push the card off the deck and take it into your right hand as you begin a silent count, starting with the value of the peeled-off card. For example, if the top card is a five, take it into your right hand as you silently count “five.”



Thumb over the next card and take it on top of the first, counting “six.”



Continue taking one card on top of the next until your silent count reaches eleven. Place these cards facedown on the table. (Situation check: If you started your count on “five,” this packet should consist of seven cards.)

**3** Now repeat the procedure, beginning a new count with whatever is the value of the card now on top of the face-up deck. (For example, if it’s a Nine, you would silently count “nine, ten, eleven,” and place those three cards facedown on the table.) Be sure to place each new card on top of the previous one—a procedure known as reverse counting—and stop counting when you reach eleven (always eleven). Place those cards facedown somewhere else on the table.

Go through the entire deck in this fashion until you no longer have enough cards to count to eleven. Place these remaining few cards in the card case. (It’s also possible that you’ll have no cards left over.) There should now be seven to ten packets of cards on the table.

**4** “Now it gets interesting. Pick out any four piles, and place an Ace, faceup, on top of each one. You can choose any piles you like.”



When the Aces are in place, invite the kid to change his mind. Point out, for example, that some of the packets contain only two or three cards, while others have nine or ten. When he’s satisfied with the placement of the Aces, gather the packets not covered by an Ace and add them to those already in the card case.



**5** Close the top and shake the case so the cards rattle around. Hold them to your ear and listen, as if trying to sense something. Say, *“Nobody knows what these cards are. Nobody knows the order they’re in. But most important, nobody knows how many cards are in the case. You don’t know. I don’t know. But guess what? The Aces know. That’s why you put them exactly where you did.”*



Put down the card case, remove the Aces from their respective packets, and put them aside.

## KUDOS AND CREDITS

**T**he Aces Know was devised by the card expert and teacher Roberto Giobbi. Like the vast majority of card effects, it is based on the work of previous innovators, in this case Dai Vernon and Richard Vollmer. The effect appears in *Card College Lighter* (2008), a collection of sleight-free card magic. The original title is “The Cards Knew.”

**6** “We’re going to do some simple addition.” Turn over the top card on each of the four packets, adding the values together as you go. “*Eight plus six is fourteen. Plus five is nineteen. Plus ten for a Jack, that makes twenty-nine. Exactly twenty-nine!*”

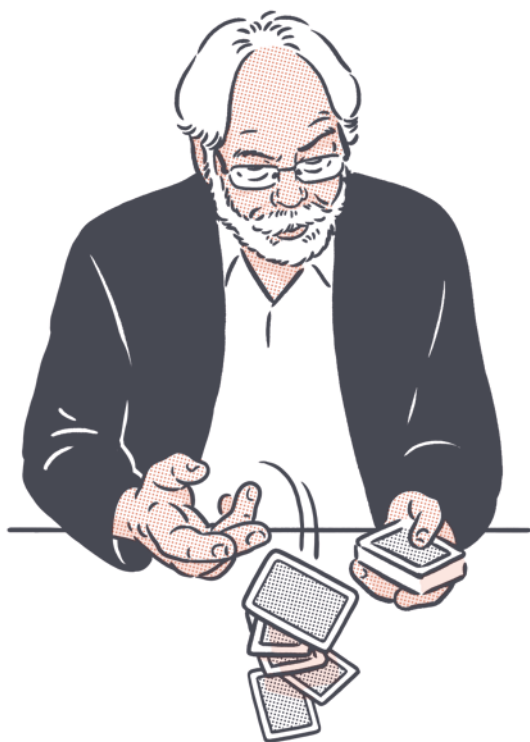




Stare at the card case, then at the kid, then back at the case. There's a good chance the audience still doesn't know where the effect is headed. Finally, pick up the case and remove the cards.

*"Exactly twenty-nine. Let's find out."*

Drop (don't deal) the cards one by one onto the table, counting aloud as you go. Use your voice and the tempo of the count to create suspense and drama. Thanks to the mathematical principle involved, whatever total is predicted by the Aces will be exactly how many cards are in the case. As you will discover, this seems absolutely amazing.



## BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- You'll want to form the packets quickly, without seeming to count. I find it difficult to talk and count at the same time, so I break my sentences into short pieces as I'm peeling off cards and putting them on the table: *"I'm going to make a bunch of piles . . . it doesn't matter where they go . . . some will have a lot of cards . . . others, just a few . . ."* Try not to look at your hands as you count; just note the value of the first card, then shift your gaze to the audience, or the table, as if trying to figure out where to put the packet.
- Instead of reverse counting from hand to hand, you can form the packets by dealing cards singly into a face-up pile on the table; then turn the pile facedown. This achieves the same ends and may be easier for some, especially if you're not used to handling cards. The drawback is that it takes longer and can have the appearance of counting.
- Be sure to offer the kid many opportunities to change the location of the Aces. The more often he changes, the more baffling the end result.
- This effect will easily puzzle intelligent adults. The deck is shuffled, nothing is prearranged, and the choices of packets is clearly a free one. As long as there is no indication of counting, there's no clue as to the method.

# *The* **GREAT ZUCCHINI** *and Other Mental Mysteries*

**M**ake a quarter disappear and most people know it's a trick. But tell someone what they're thinking and suddenly they're not so sure. "Mind reading" is the most convincing of all magic effects—everyone has heard of so-called psychics, and all of us know someone who claims to have had a psychic experience. So why not Grandpa and the kid? In this chapter, you'll learn several pieces of mentalism in which the kid knows all, plus a reverse mind-reading mystery that feels eerily close to the real thing.

# The GREAT ZUCCHINI

IN WHICH  
GRANDPA AND THE  
KID COLLABORATE TO  
AMAZE FRIENDS  
AND FAMILY

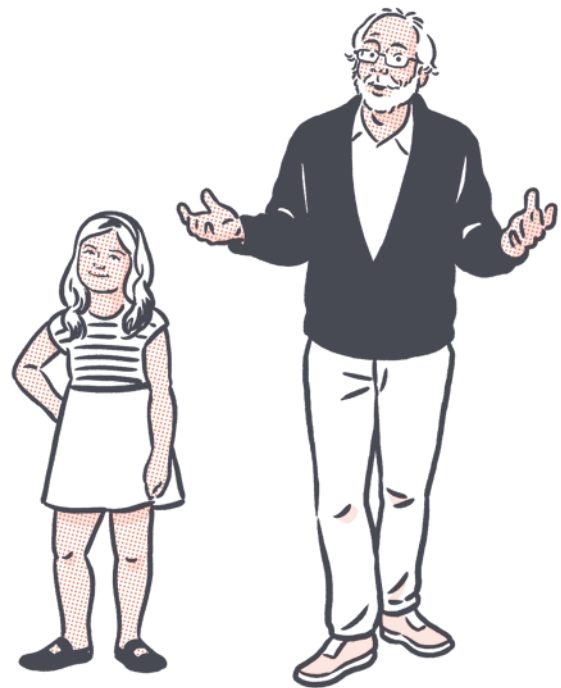
It's showtime! This isn't a trick, it's a complete act, perfect for holiday get-togethers or family talent shows. The star of the show is the incomparable psychic the Great Zucchini (played by you-know-who), with Grandpa in the role of sidekick, manager, and emcee. Not only is it fun to perform, but in rehearsing it, you and the kid will forge a secret bond that can last a lifetime. And for those grandkids who are reluctant to get up in front of a crowd, this routine is an easy way in. Grandpa does the heavy lifting—setting up the premises and keeping things moving—but the kid gets all the credit.

## Act 1

### ZUCCHINI DIVINES AN OBJECT

"Folks, you don't know how lucky you are," you say. "Just back from her world tour, where she amazed audiences in London, Paris, and Rome, ladies and gentlemen, it's the Great Zucchini."

Zucchini smiles and acknowledges the applause.



"As you know, Zucchini has baffled scientists with her uncanny ability to detect unspoken thoughts. And now, it is your turn to be baffled. Zucchini, are you ready?"

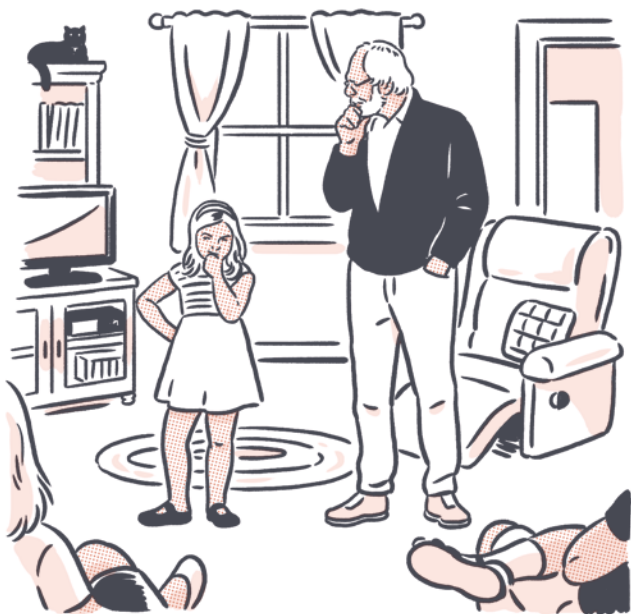
Zucchini is ready.

"Zucchini will leave the room. To make certain that she does not eavesdrop on what we do, I need someone to go with her." Zucchini and her monitor exit the room.

*“We need an object for Zucchini to identify using her psychic powers. It can be anything in this room. What’s important is that we all agree on it. And we also agree to allow Zucchini to enter our minds and see what we are thinking. Agreed?”*

Open the floor to suggestions and eventually narrow it down to one object—for example, cousin Ashley’s neon-orange sneakers. While someone fetches Zucchini, caution the audience not to give it away by staring at the sneakers, or whispering about them, or anything of the sort.

When Zucchini returns, you explain that everyone is thinking of something in the room. Is she ready to identify it? She is.

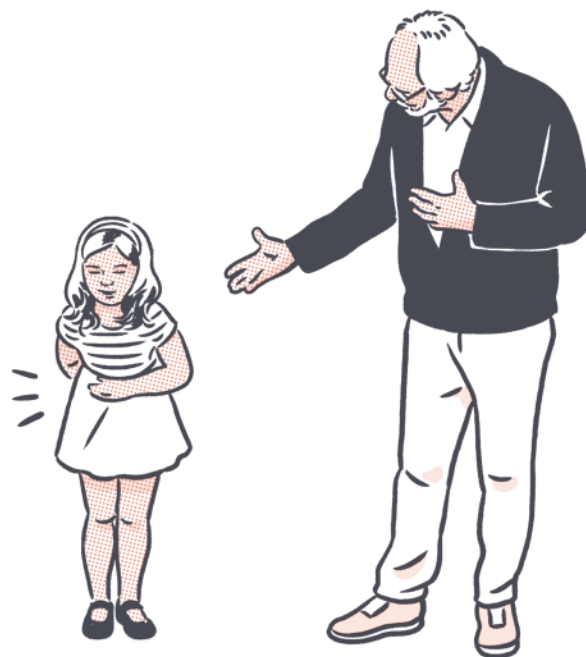


One by one, you point to random objects around the room, inquiring about each one. *“Oh Great Zucchini, are we thinking of the cat?”* Zucchini looks at the cat. Looks at the audience. Mulls it over. No, it’s not the cat.

*“What about the TV? The phone? Mary’s bracelet? The curtains? Is it my beard? The carpet? Those gummy bears? The coffee mug? Ashley’s sneakers?”*

One by one Zucchini considers and rejects the candidates. Until you get to the sneakers. Zucchini ponders. She looks at the audience, looks back at the sneakers. Clearly, the psychic vibrations are coming through. *“Yes,”* Zucchini declares—*“it’s the sneakers for sure!”*

The great psychic accepts the applause and bows.



So how does Zucchini know? You tell her, that’s how, using a secret code commonly known as “black magic.” When Zucchini returns from isolation, you begin by asking her a series of *“Is it \_\_\_\_\_?”* questions as you point to objects around the room. Eventually, you ask about an object that is black in color (a coffee mug in our example). That signals Zucchini that the *next* object you name will be the chosen one. What’s great about this code is that it’s easy to learn but difficult for the audience to discern.

You can now repeat the effect by varying the method slightly. On the second try, for example, use a different black object, and name it earlier or later in the routine. (Mention it, say, fifth the first time and tenth the second time.) Or better still, work out a system in which the target object follows a black item the first time, a red item the second time, and a blue item the third time. This will puzzle anyone familiar with the black magic code.

### **BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!**

- Most Zucchini's will have no problem picking up the cue and revealing the object. Where they need help is with the acting. The goal is to make the divination seem difficult. This means pausing before answering, seeming momentarily stumped, or looking at someone in the audience as if searching for a clue. The kid might even touch a named object, as if searching for "vibes," and then declare that it is not the target object—although perhaps someone was thinking of it in an effort to throw Zucchini off the track! In short, the kid should give the audience something to watch that's more compelling than simple yes or no answers.
- Naturally, you'll want to personalize the introduction with details about your Zucchini, and perhaps share the story of how she acquired her powers. Was it a scientific experiment gone awry? Genetic mutation? Struck by lightning? Most kids know the backstory of their favorite superheroes. What's hers?
- Much of the audience's enjoyment of this routine comes from the cuteness factor. But it's essential that you fool the audience as well. This routine will do it, especially if you repeat it and then follow up with Act 2.

## *Act 2*

### **ZUCCHINI DIVINES A FAMOUS PERSON**

**YOU WILL NEED:**  
A PEN AND A SMALL NOTEPAD

Once again Zucchini leaves the room. This time, upon her return, the great psychic will attempt to identify any well-known personality chosen by the audience. Ask for suggestions and jot them down on a sheet of paper. It can be anyone at all, living or dead, real or fictional, human or cartoon. When you have nine or ten candidates, take a vote and choose one. Let's say it's Spider-Man. Now have the kid brought back.





*“Oh Great Zucchini, we are all thinking of one famous person. Is it Beyoncé? Albert Einstein? Mickey Mouse? What about Marilyn Monroe? Helen Keller? Moses? Jesus? Ryan Gosling? Cleopatra? Abraham Lincoln? Spider-Man?”*

Once again the kid nails it, to thunderous applause. How?

It’s another easy code. This time the trigger is the name of a US president. When you mention the president, the kid knows that the next name is “it.” Most elementary-age kids know the names of at least a handful of presidents, so you can repeat the effect several times and use a different president each time.



## **BUT WAIT . . . THERE’S MORE!**

- While the method just explained works fine, it can be made even more deceptive. Instead of naming the target immediately after the president, name two more famous folks, and then name the target. This will allow you to repeat the effect many times, and no one will crack the code—especially if you use a different president each time. Practice first with the target immediately after the president, then one away, then two away.
- Jotting down the names as they are suggested is very helpful. Not only do you get a list to vote on, but when calling off suggestions you can refer to the list, which is easier than trying to think of celebrities on the spot. And, of course, you can throw in new names as they occur to you.
- A savvy crowd will understand that you and the kid must be using a code. How else? But this is not a problem. In fact, it can heighten the audience’s attention and appreciation as they try to crack the code on repeat performances. They won’t. Every time someone suggests a theory (and they will), you can almost always refute it during the next performance.

## Act 3

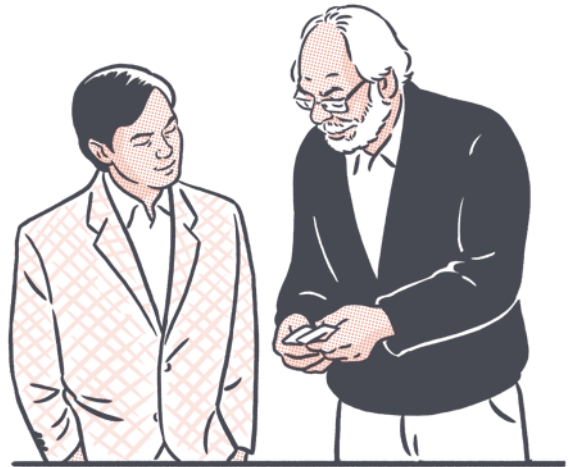
# ZUCCHINI DOES A CARD TRICK

### YOU WILL NEED: A DECK OF CARDS

Unlike the previous effects, this one requires some advance preparation and a deck of cards. Prior to the show, take any card that the kid finds easy to remember—say the Ace of Hearts—and place it on top of the deck, and then place the deck in the card case. Later this card will be “forced” on two people from the audience and identified by the kid (who already knows what it is).

After performing the two previous effects, bring out the cards for the grand finale. *“For the final demonstration, the Great Zucchini will attempt a mystery unlike any you have seen. While her Magnificence is out of the room, one of you will select a card from this deck. Zucchini will never see that card. I will never see that card. Even the person who chooses the card will never see it. But someone else in this room will see it and will know what it is. And Zucchini will pluck that information from that person’s mind.”*

**1** With Zucchini out of the room, have a volunteer join you “on stage,” to your right. Let’s say it’s Andy. Unbox the cards and spread them between your hands so that Andy can verify aloud that they are different and well mixed. Don’t show the top card, which in our example is the Ace of Hearts.



**2** Place the deck facedown on the table. Have Andy cut the deck in half and set the top half next to the remaining portion.



**3** Say, “We’ll mark this spot for a moment. And now I need another volunteer. How about you, Tracy?”

When you say, “We’ll mark this spot . . .,” pick up the original bottom half of the deck and place it crossways across the cut-off portion. Pay little attention to this

as you do it. Your focus is on bringing up another volunteer. Have this volunteer, Tracy, stand to your left.



**4** Continue, “Tracy, you and I have not worked out anything ahead of time, correct? Please take the card Andy cut to. Don’t let either of us see it.” As you deliver these lines, lift the top half of the pack and indicate that Tracy is to take the top card of the lower pack, which you identify as “the card Andy cut to.” In fact, this is not the card Andy cut to but the original top card of the deck—the Ace of Hearts!



This procedure is known as the Cross-Cut Force. It may seem obvious when you know how it works, but it won’t be obvious to the onlookers. By the time you bring up Tracy, give her a round of applause, and verify that she’s not “in on it,” the audience will have completely forgotten how Andy cut the deck and which portion was the original top. You now continue with another fiction.

“Tracy, only you know the identity of that card. Hide it away somewhere on your person and return to your seat.”

Have Andy sit down as well, and send for Zucchini. You can now end in one of two ways, depending on the kid’s showmanship skills.

#### PLAN A

In this scenario you continue to steer the ship. Ask Tracy to stand. “Zucchini, only Tracy knows what card she is thinking of. Look into her mind and tell us, is it a red card or a black card?”

Zucchini ponders and declares that the card is red. (Remember, the kid knows what the card is.) “Is that correct?” “Yes,” Tracy says, “that is correct.” Continue narrowing down the possibilities by asking: “Is it a Heart or a Diamond? A picture card or a number card?” With each answer, have Tracy confirm aloud that Zucchini is indeed correct. The audience, of course, has no idea what the card is, so each correct answer is a kind of mini-effect in itself, a verification of the kid’s powers, building to the final revelation.

“Zucchini, you said Tracy was thinking of a red card, and you were correct. You said it was a Heart, and you were correct. You said it was a picture card, and you were correct. Can you now peer into Tracy’s mind and tell us the exact card she’s thinking of?”



Zucchini can and does, naming the Ace of Hearts. “Tracy—is that right? Show the card to everyone.” Thunderous applause. Dancing in the streets. Curtain.

### PLAN B

In this scenario, the kid takes center stage while Grandpa rests on the sidelines. “Whoever is thinking of the card,” says Zucchini, “please stand up.” Tracy stands. “I’m going to ask you some questions and I want you to answer them—but not out loud. Just tell me in your mind. Is your card red or black? [pause] It is red! Am I right? Now tell me, but in your mind only, is it a Heart

## BUT WAIT . . . THERE’S MORE!

- Revealing the card bit by bit is standard practice in mentalism. If you blurt it out at once, there’s no suspense, no drama, no buildup. Instead of seeming like mind reading, it seems like a card trick. That’s not what you’re aiming for.
- Notice how you get the card out of sight once it’s been selected. This sells the idea that it’s the *thought* Zucchini is trying to zero in on, not a physical card.
- I like the idea of using two people to select the card. Not only is there more audience participation, but the use of two volunteers provides the time misdirection necessary for the cross-cut force to be deceptive (see page 45 for more on Time Misdirection). It also adds novelty to the routine, in that Andy never gets to see which card he apparently selected.

or a Diamond? [pause again] Perfect! It’s a Heart. Now don’t say anything. Just say the name of the card to yourself, again and again. Wow—I can hear it! It’s the Ace of Hearts! Show everyone.” This, too, will unleash an avalanche of applause, and may even start a new religion. Thus ends the formal show.

# The TEN-CARD MYSTERY

IN WHICH  
THE KID STUMPS  
HIS AUDIENCE

This is another code-based mystery. Unlike the Great Zucchini routine (pages 73 to 79), this effect is meant to be performed close-up, with the audience gathered around. A volunteer chooses one of ten cards while the kid has his back turned. Grandpa asks a few questions—or none at all—and the kid identifies the card. The trick can be repeated and the audience will remain clueless as to how it's done.

**1** Remove ten cards from the deck, one of which must be a Ten, and arrange them as in the illustration. It makes no difference which cards go where, as long as you end up with two columns of four cards, with two cards in between.

Why a Ten? Study the illustration and you'll notice that the layout of the ten cards is the same as the arrangement of the ten pips on the Ten of Hearts. This makes the Ten an ideal coding device. To signal the chosen card, all you do is touch the corresponding pip on the Ten.

In performance it looks like this: Have the kid look away and invite a volunteer—let's say his name's John—to touch any card on the table. You want him to touch the card, rather than point to it, because in a moment you will be touching the cards, so you want to establish this as standard procedure. Let's say John touches the Nine of Clubs. Have the kid turn back around.

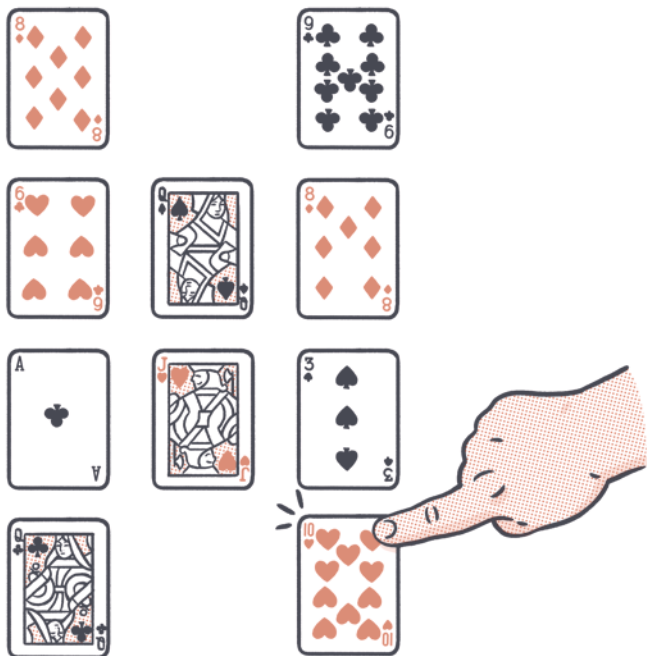
Say, "John is thinking of one of these cards. Is it this one? This one? How about this one?" As you ask these questions, touch any cards in the layout except the Ten of Hearts and the selection. The kid, of course, says no to each, since you haven't given the signal.





**2** Then touch the pip on the Ten that corresponds to the Nine of Clubs and ask, “How about this one?”

Again the kid says no. But now he knows the selection is the Nine of Clubs and is ready to identify it. When he does so is up to you. You can touch the selection as the very next card, or the very last, or anywhere in between. This is what makes the trick so deceptive on repeated viewings. You can touch any cards in any order and the kid will always nail it.



## NOW TRY THIS

### THE SILENT TREATMENT

Once you've established the premise, you can add some variety to the revelations. For example, simply touch each card and the kid replies yea or nay—no questions asked. Or signal the selection within the first three cards and then invite an audience member to take over and do the questioning. And finally, signal the selection early on, then stop and ask, “Well, what is it?” And the kid names the card.

### BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- What if somebody chooses the Ten? The same rules apply. The only difference is that the kid must remain alert to this situation so he can give an immediate yes when the card is touched. Go over this in rehearsals, as it will happen from time to time.
- Unlike some effects in which the performer makes a show of divining information bit by bit, this one works best when the kid can identify the card instantly. All that's needed is practice.
- When selecting the ten cards, go for a mix of high and low, red and black, and picture and number. You can also have the audience shuffle the cards after each demonstration, and lay them out in a new order. The Ten, of course, can occupy any spot within the layout.
- After you and the kid have learned the trick as described, switch roles. You be the psychic and let the kid do the signaling. It's good to have both skills.

# MAGIC SHOPS, MAGIC KITS, MAGIC TOYS

**N**othing in this book requires magical apparatus. You can be totally amazing without it. But let's face it, there are tons of stunning effects that can't be done without apparatus: sawing a lady in two, linking solid steel rings, changing a fistful of singles into hundreds, and other classics. Many apparatus tricks work automatically, making them real confidence builders for beginner magicians. If you've been bitten by the magic bug, this is stuff you may want to get your hands on. It won't stop the itch, but the scratching sure feels good. Here are three ways to start.

**THE BRICKS-AND-MORTAR MAGIC SHOP:** There aren't many left, but the ones that remain are still strange and wondrous places, with toys you never dreamed of. Go on a Saturday and you're sure to meet friendly, like-minded people, both kids and adults. The folks behind the counter know their stuff and can recommend tricks for any age, purpose, or skill level. If you've got one near you, go there. They need your support.

**INTERNET MAGIC:** Search "magic shop" and up pop legions of dealers offering truckloads of tricks and

- gimmicks, books and downloads, lectures and DVDs.
- Free stuff, too. It's easy to spend hours trekking through this jungle, watching video trailers, and listening to hype about the greatest new trick in decades. The hard part is distinguishing the good stuff from the dreadful. There's plenty of both.

- **THE MAGIC KIT:** A magic kit is the best way to start any kid on his or her way to world leadership. (I was given an A. C. Gilbert Mysto Magic set at the age of ten and look what happened to me.) As a shopper, what you want is a combination of great self-working tricks mixed with skill tricks, all taught in a way that is accessible to an eight-year-old. (I know people give magic kits to five-year-olds, but trust me, developmentally they don't get it.) My current favorite is the Penn & Teller Fool Everyone Magic Kit. I don't know P&T and have no financial interest in the matter; I just like the set. The tricks are well chosen (actually, they're the same tricks I grew up performing, as did P&T), the apparatus is well made, and a booklet and DVD make everything clear. There are other sets out there, often with the same tricks, and they may be just dandy. Shop around. Avoid cheap sets; the stuff is junk.

# The PSYCHIC KID

IN WHICH  
THE KID READS  
GRANDPA'S  
MIND

You give the kid an enchanted object to hold. Astonishingly, it allows him to read your mind in a way that seems entirely real. The effect can be presented one-on-one or for an audience. Either way, it's baffling and the kid has no idea how he did it.

**YOU WILL NEED:** A CUP, THREE SMALL SLIPS OF PAPER, A PEN OR PENCIL, AND AN ENCHANTED OBJECT (I USE A SMALL STONE)

**1** Bring out the props and call attention to the stone. Say, "Imagine that this stone has powers. Imagine that when you hold it, you can read my mind and know what I'm thinking. Want to try it?" The kid is intrigued and takes the stone.



**2** "I'm going to think of a color. And I'll write it down so we have proof later on." Shielding the paper from view, write the word roses.



**3** Fold the paper into quarters and drop it into the cup. The kid, of course, thinks you've written the name of the color you're supposedly thinking of. Say, "Use the power of the stone and see if you can tell what color I'm thinking of. I'm picturing that color right now. What is it?"

Let's say the kid says it's green.

“Wow, you’re pretty good at this. Let’s try something else. This time I’ll think of . . . an animal.”

**4** Make a show of mentally rummaging through the animal kingdom and settling on a particular beast. Pretend to jot down the type of animal, but actually write the kid’s previous guess—the color green. Fold the paper into quarters and drop it into the cup.



**5** As before, ask the kid to use the power of the stone to tell you what animal you were thinking of. Because you apparently committed yourself in writing, he will tell you. Let’s say it’s a giraffe.

“I’m not going to tell you if you’re right or wrong, but I’m impressed. Let’s see if you can do one more. This time I’ll think of a flower, like a tulip or a daisy.”

## TRICKS OF THE TRADE

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FORCE

Influencing the kid to think of a particular image or object from a larger group (roses among flowers) is known as a psychological force. It’s not surefire, but it works most of the time. One way to tilt the odds in your favor is to eliminate likely choices by citing them as examples. “Think of a flower, like a tulip or a daisy,” pretty much guarantees that the participant won’t think of those flowers, simply because you mentioned them. The most likely choice is now a rose. Similarly, if you ask, “Think of an everyday item of furniture, like a bed, or a dresser, or a couch,” the likely outcome is a table or chair.

**6** On the last slip of paper, write *giraffe*, fold it into quarters, and add it to the cup.

“Actually, I’m going to picture a big bouquet of these flowers. I can smell them, too. What are they?”

If fortune favors, the kid will answer, “Roses!”

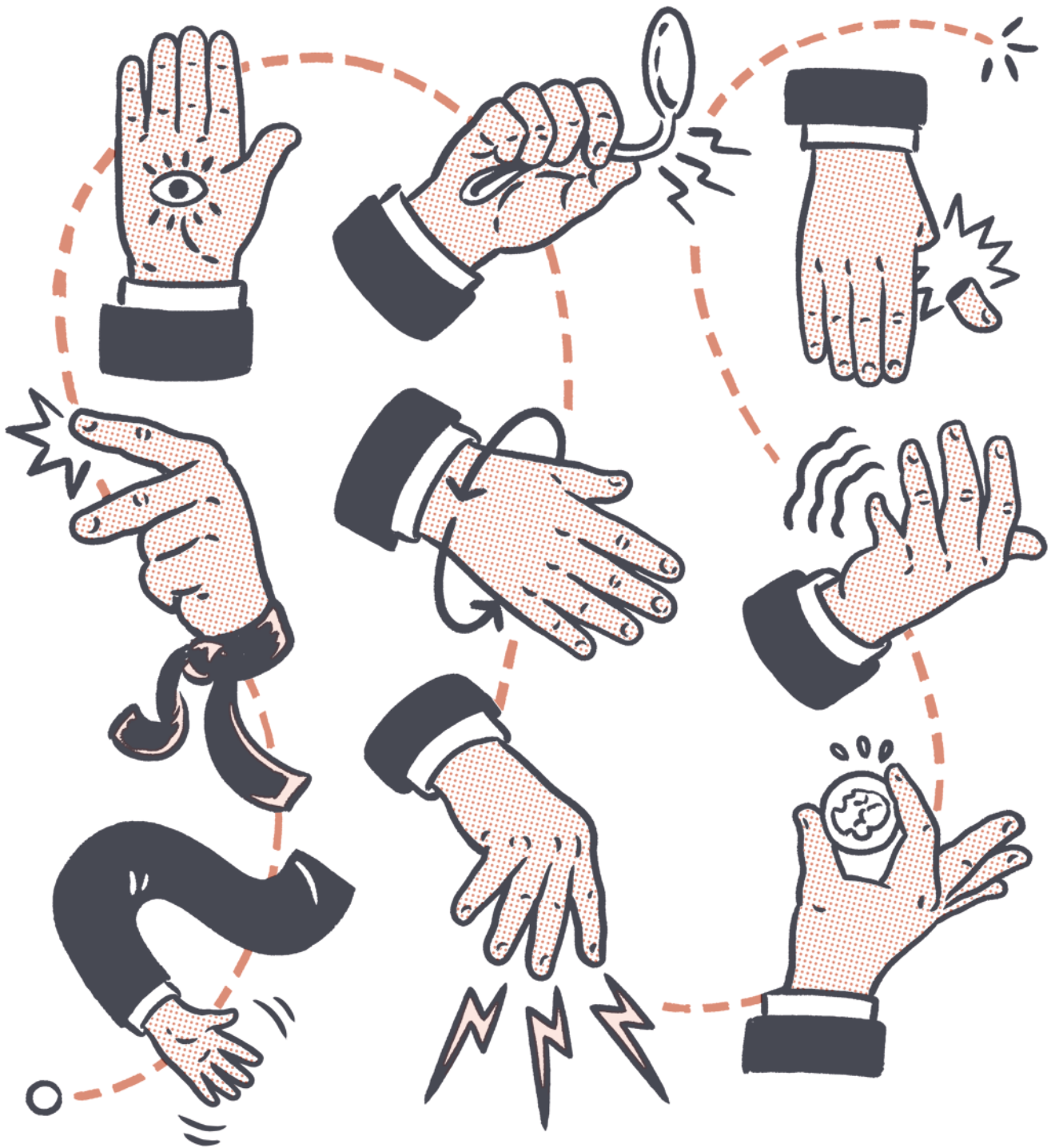
**7** “Let’s see how you did.” Dump the slips of paper from the cup, and without revealing the contents, line them up, facedown, in order: color, animal, flower. Build suspense by recapping the events. Turn over the slips one by one, revealing three exact hits. Congratulate the kid, take back the stone, and you’re done.



## BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!

- You can perform this trick one-on-one or in front of friends and family. Either way, everyone will be amazed—especially the kid! The method is incredibly deceptive.
- The twin engines that drive this machine are called the “one ahead” and “one behind” principles. You’re ahead when you write *roses*, long before you ask the kid to think of a flower. And you’re behind when you write down the kid’s guess after he tells you what it is. Both principles are important to many types of mind-reading effects.
- You don’t need an enchanted object, but it enriches the presentation and explains why the kid doesn’t have telepathic powers later on. Exactly what the stone does or how it works is left ambiguous. You may want to invent a backstory of its origins and how you came to possess it.
- What if the kid doesn’t pick roses? It doesn’t matter. In mind-reading effects, getting two out of three is still amazing. In fact, being wrong can be taken as proof that this *isn’t* a trick (because tricks *work*) but a genuine instance of mind-to-mind communication.
- The categories of color, animal, and flower are arbitrary, and you can make up your own, such as foods, superheroes, toys, sports teams, et cetera. Pick categories that the kid can relate to, avoiding, say, favorite mezzo sopranos or swing-era drummers.





*Part 2*

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# STRANGE AMUSEMENTS

# MORE FUN *with* MONEY

**Where do fish keep their money?**

*In a riverbank.*

**Where do penguins keep their money?**

*In a snowbank.*

**Where does Dracula keep his money?**

*In a blood bank.*

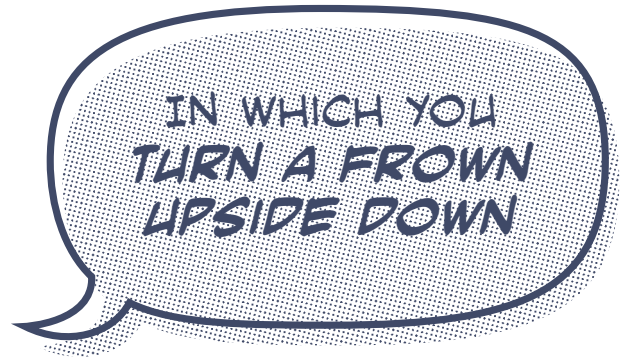
**Where does Grandpa keep his money?**

*In a trust fund.*

**Last riddle: What is it that you almost always have with you, takes up little space, will eventually go to the grandkids, and can provide hours of time-killing fun?**

*You guessed it. There are an extraordinary number of games, puzzles, riddles, obscure facts, and even conspiracy theories that have to do with money—especially the green kind. Here are some of the best.*

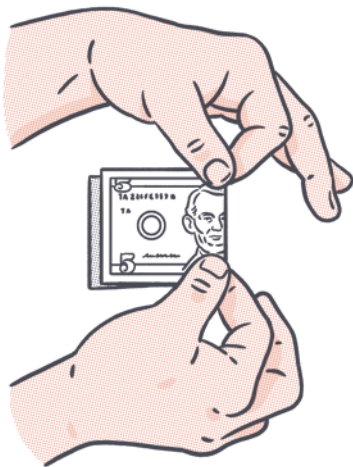
# How to **MAKE A PRESIDENT HAPPY OR SAD**



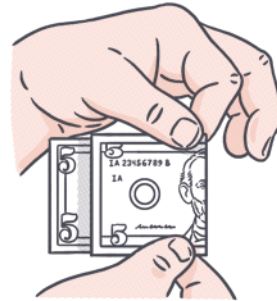
This fun animation illusion works with any currency portrait, but it is especially amusing with Abe Lincoln. Grab a crisp bill and follow along.

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A \$5 BILL

**1** With the portrait side of the bill facing up, place a mountain fold in the bill so that it runs vertically through the center of the president's right eye. *Mountain fold* is an origami term for any fold in which the paper is folded behind itself, creating an inverted V. Make sure the crease is nice and sharp.



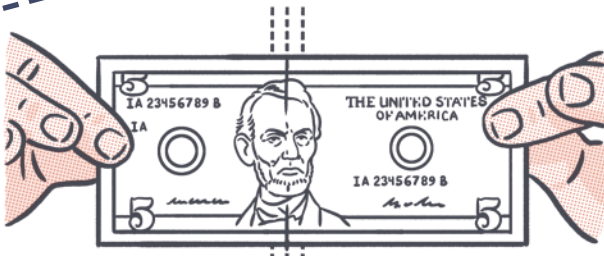
**2** Now unfold the bill and put a similar fold through the center of the left eye.



**3** Unfold the bill again. Place your thumbs and fingers on either side of these folds—the peaks of the mountains—and push them together, creating a valley fold between them. Run your thumb and fingernails down the two mountain folds, creasing them sharply.



**4** Unfold the bill and hold it by the ends, thumbs on top, fingers on the bottom. Tilt the bill back and forth and watch the president go from grin to scowl. With the bill parallel to the floor, he's a happy camper; perpendicular to the floor, not so much. But who said being president was easy?



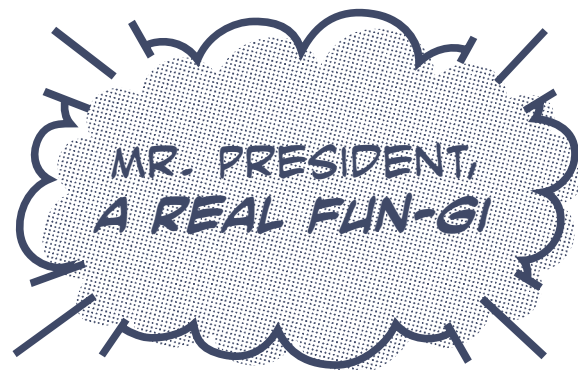
## SEARCH-A-BILL CHALLENGE

**THE CHALLENGE:** Not including the serial number, the word *one* or numeral 1 appears eighteen times on a dollar bill. Sixteen are easy to find. Find all eighteen.

**SOLUTION:** Twelve are nested in the corners of the bill, front and back, in a combination of words and numerals. Thirteen and fourteen are on the front of the bill, above the green seal and beneath the portrait. Fifteen and sixteen are on the back, in the center and along the bottom. But where are seventeen and eighteen? (Try to find them. Seriously, don't read the rest of this answer yet.) Seventeen is the Roman numeral I, found in the teeny-tiny engraving running along the base of the pyramid. And eighteen is found on a scroll held in the eagle's beak, which reads *E pluribus unum*, "Out of many, one"—the important word being *one*.



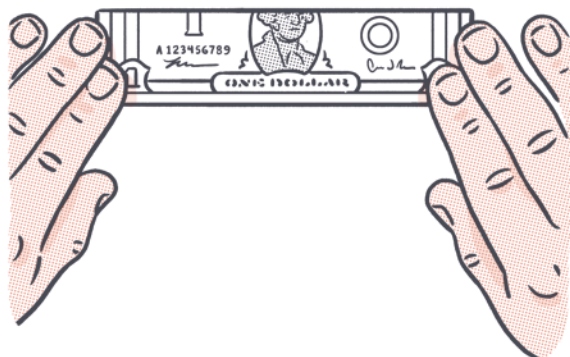
# How to Turn WASHINGTON'S HEAD into a MUSHROOM



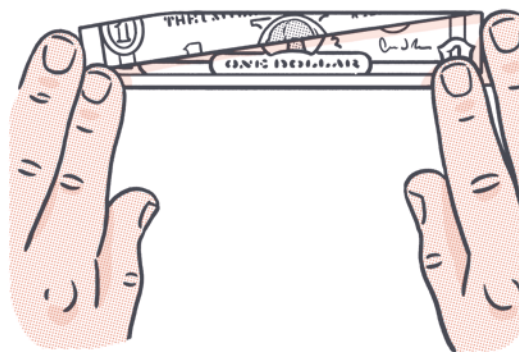
No disrespect intended. The only reason to do this ancient and amusing quickie is that you can. To get more out of it, I often present it as a challenge: Can you turn George's head into a mushroom? Some kids figure it out. If not, you show them. All it takes is two folds.

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A \$1 BILL

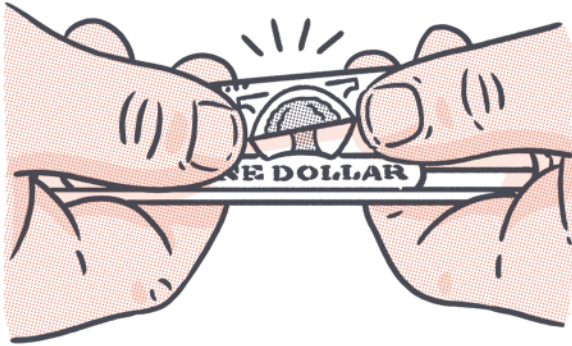
**1** With the bill faceup, put a horizontal mountain fold along the length of the bill just above Washington's eyes. Then lay the bill flat on the table so most of the portrait shows. In a moment, George's forehead—which is not currently visible—will become the cap of the mushroom.



**2** Now fold the top of the bill diagonally downward so that you line up the cap with George's frilly shirt—which becomes the stem of the mushroom.



**3** For the most verisimilitude, position your thumbs on either side of the mushroom to block out the visual noise and frame the mushroom.



## **MONEY LAUNDERING**

**U**S currency is made of cotton (75 percent) and linen (25 percent), not paper, which is why it's not destroyed when accidentally run through the wash. To restore crispness in an old bill, you can sprinkle it with water and iron it like a shirt.



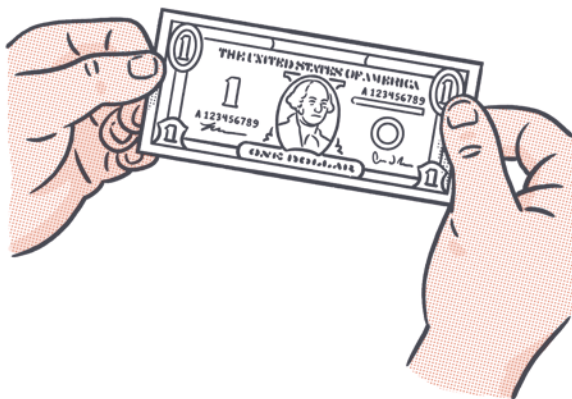
# How to Make a PRESIDENT STAND ON HIS HEAD

IN WHICH  
POTUS  
JOINS THE  
CIRCLIS

I don't remember where I learned this trick, only that it was a staple of my fourth-grade repertoire. You repeatedly fold and unfold a bill, causing the presidential portrait to turn upside down. This is perplexing because you seem never to turn the bill 180 degrees.

 **YOU WILL NEED:** A BILL OF ANY DENOMINATION (WE'LL USE A \$1 BILL.)

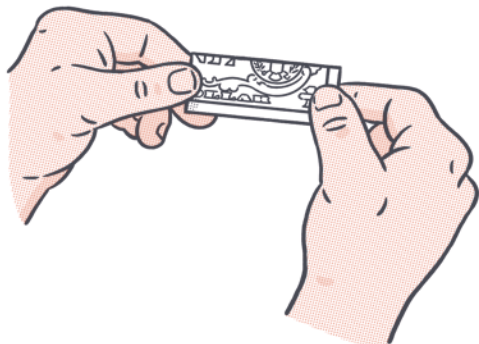
**1** Display the bill between your hands. George is right side up.



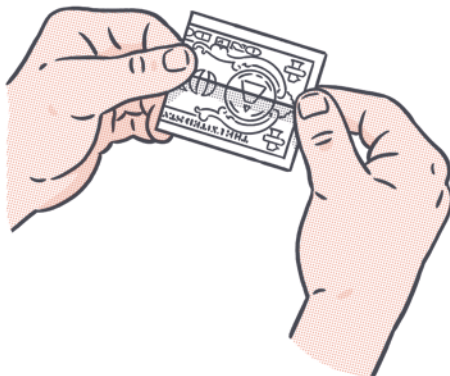
**2** Fold the bill in half by bringing the left edge flush to the right edge and creasing down the center.



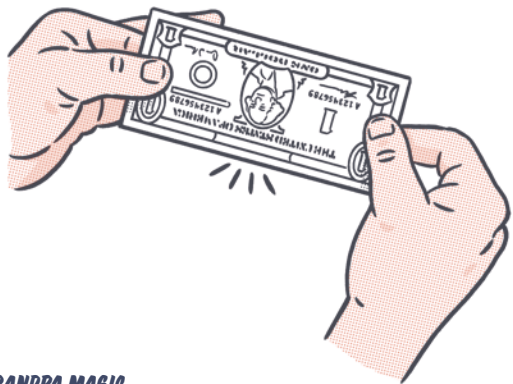
**3** Fold the top half of the bill behind the front half and crease the fold.



**4** Unfold the bill by sliding your left thumb between the sections and flipping the front half of the bill upward.



**5** Perform the final unfold by opening the top half of the bill to the left. George is now upside down.



## SEARCH-A-BILL CHALLENGE

**THE CHALLENGE:** There are twenty-six state names on a five-dollar bill. Find them.

**SOLUTION:** You may need a microscope for this one! The names are engraved along the top of the Lincoln Memorial. The upper level reads: Arkansas, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Iowa, Wisconsin, California, Minnesota, Oregon, Kansas, West Virginia, Nevada, Nebraska, Colorado, and North Dakota. The lower level reads: Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, Carolina, Hampshire, Virginia, and New York.

Repeat the same folds and George will right himself. A story may be told about how, when locked in his room (fold/fold), George gets angry, throws a tantrum, and stands on his head (unfold/unfold). Another approach: After the first two folds, pause and flick the bill with your forefinger, as if that's what causes the inversion to happen, then do the unfold. I find it amusing to do this trick many times in a row. It's a lot more deceptive than you think it would be.

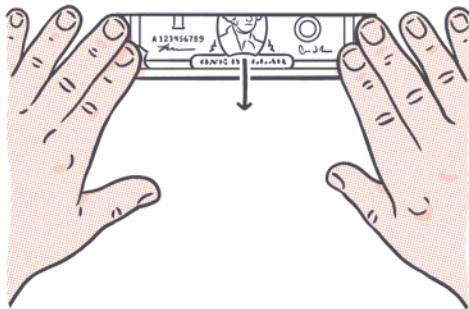
# How to **BALANCE** A QUARTER ON THE EDGE OF A DOLLAR

A FEAT OF  
FINANCIAL  
EQUILIBRIUM

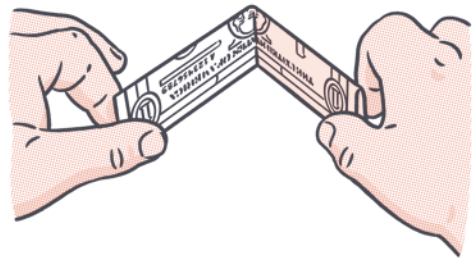
Give the kid a quarter and a dollar bill, and issue this challenge: “If you can balance the quarter on the edge of the bill, you get to keep them both.” When he gives up (which he will), demonstrate the following solution.

**YOU WILL NEED:**  
A QUARTER AND A \$1 BILL

**1** Fold a crisp, new bill in half lengthwise and crease the fold sharply.

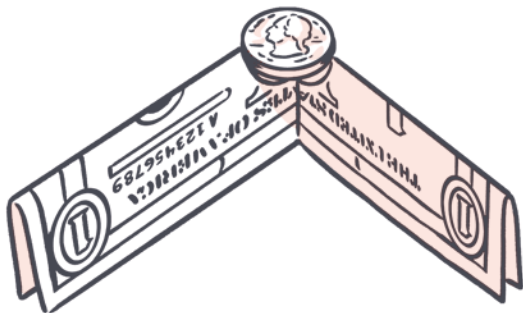


**2** Fold the left edge to the right and crease sharply. Use the quarter to iron the crease. Then stand the bill on the table in a V formation, the crease side uppermost.

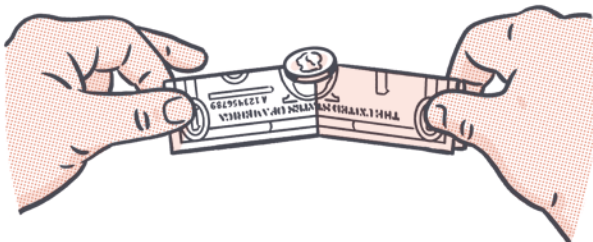




- 3** Carefully balance the quarter on the corner of the V.



- 4** Pinch each end of the bill between thumb and fingers and slowly straighten the bill. Amazingly, you can pull the bill perfectly straight and the quarter will remain in place.

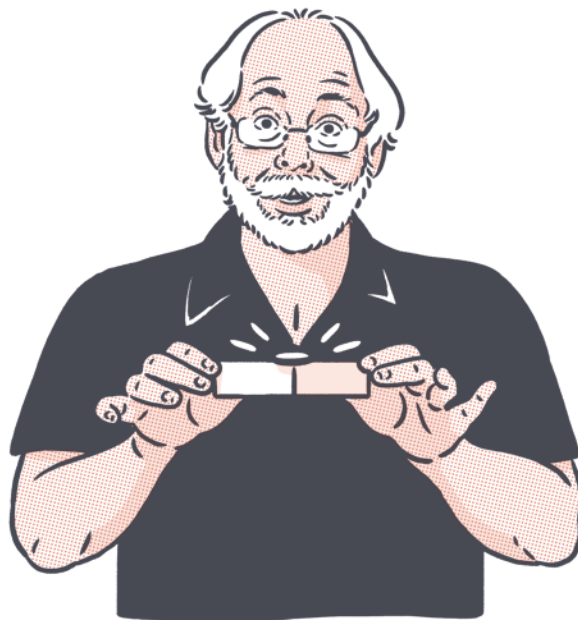


## SEARCH-A-BILL CHALLENGE

**THE CHALLENGE:** The Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. The date is commemorated on a dollar bill. Where? You may need a magnifying glass for this one.

**SOLUTION:** In Roman numerals at the base of the pyramid: M is 1,000, D is 500, CC is 200, L is 50, XX is 20, and VI is 6.

- 5** Even more amazing, you can now lift the bill without dropping the quarter. If you're feeling generous at this point, deposit the dough in the kid's college fund.



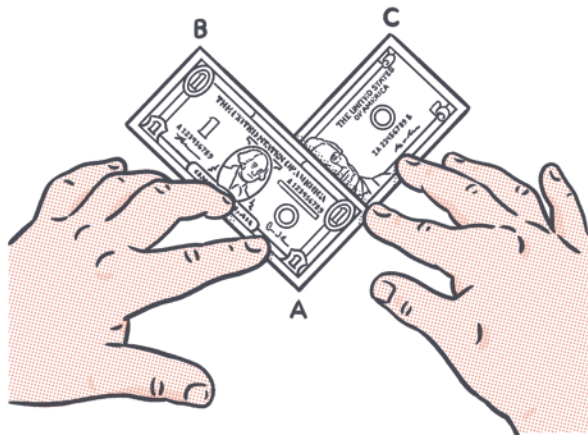
# How to Make GEORGE AND ABE CHANGE PLACES

A BIT OF  
REVISIONIST  
HISTORY

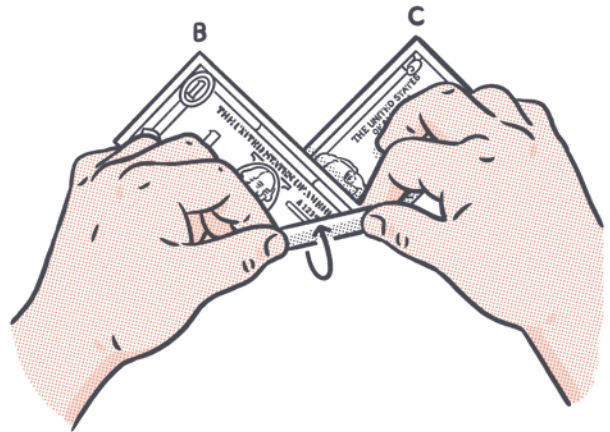
You will fool yourself the first time you try this. A one-dollar bill is placed on top of a five and they change places. What makes it amazing is that the bills are pinned in place. Yet change places they do.

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A \$5 BILL AND A \$1 BILL

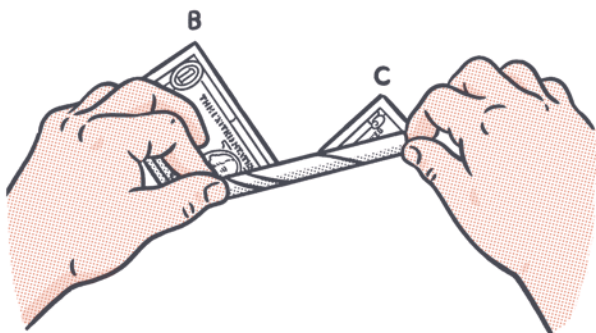
**1** Arrange the bills in a V formation, portrait side up, so that George overlaps Abe. George should be angled to your left, Abe to your right. Point out that Washington is on top, Lincoln on the bottom. Say, “Watch, they’re going to try to change places.” Pinch the overlapping corners (point A) between your thumbs and first fingers and begin to roll the bills into a cylinder.



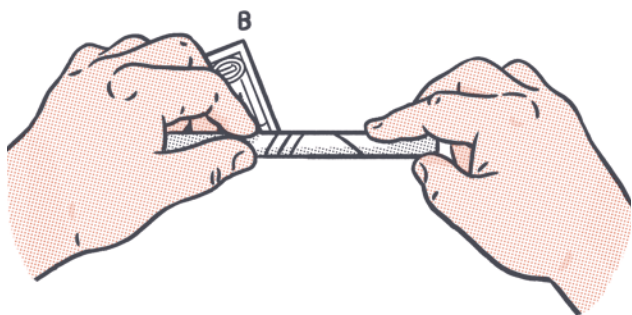
**2** Rather than rolling straight ahead, roll on a leftward diagonal, aiming the corners toward George’s head. If a drinking straw or pencil is handy, rolling the bills around it makes things easier.



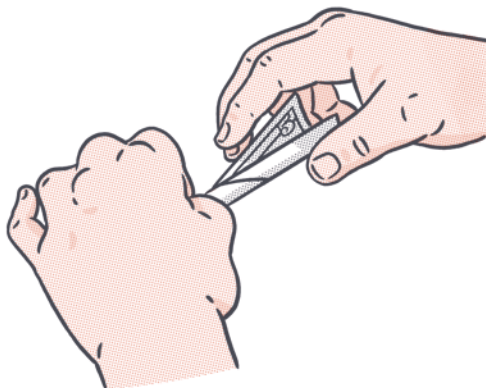
**3** Because of the angle of the roll, point C will eventually disappear under the cylinder and emerge from the other side. The illustration shows this about to happen.



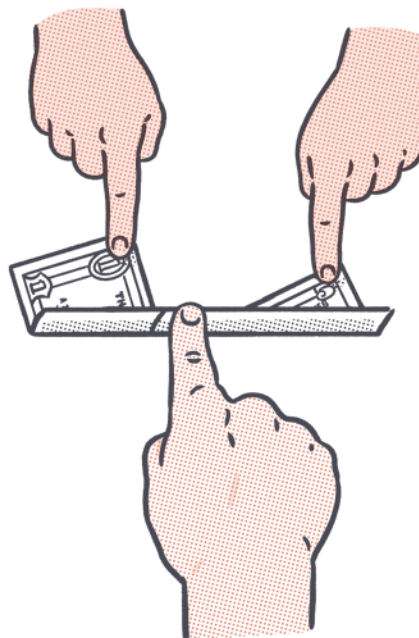
**4** This is the moment when the bills change places, and is not something you want the audience to notice. Therefore, as you continue to roll, position your right hand so as to hide the action from the front. Notice that point B never goes out of view.



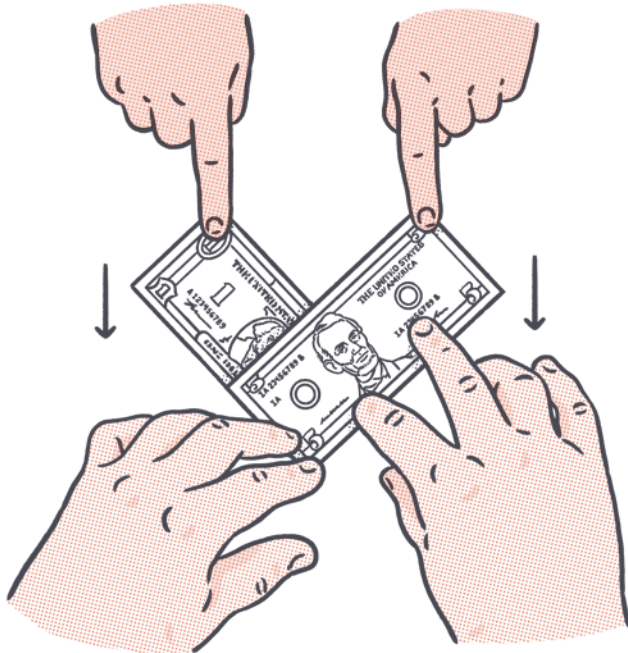
**5** From your point of view, you will be able to see point C go under the cylinder and reemerge. The moment this happens, stop rolling (if you roll another 360 degrees, the bills will become tangled and the trick won't work). The bills have just transposed, but as far as the audience is concerned, nothing has happened so far.



**6** Hold the cylinder in place with your right index finger. Invite your helper to pin both corners to the table to prevent any kind of chicanery. Remind everyone that Lincoln is on the bottom.



**7** Now comes the moment when the magic seems to happen. If you used a straw or pencil, pull it from the tube and wave it over the bills like a magic wand. If you are without a rolling aid, simply snap your fingers. With the bills still pinned to the table, unroll the cylinder to reveal that Lincoln has mysteriously risen to the top and kicked Washington out of his spot.



## SEARCH-A-BILL CHALLENGE

**THE CHALLENGE:** Every dollar bill depicts seven sets of thirteen items, representing the thirteen original colonies. Find all seven sets.

**SOLUTION:** They're all on the back of the bill. There are thirteen steps in the pyramid, thirteen stars above the eagle, thirteen arrows in the eagle's left talon, thirteen leaves in the olive branch in the eagle's right talon, thirteen berries adjacent to the olive leaves (super vision needed here), thirteen horizontal stripes on the eagle's shield, and thirteen vertical stripes on the same shield.



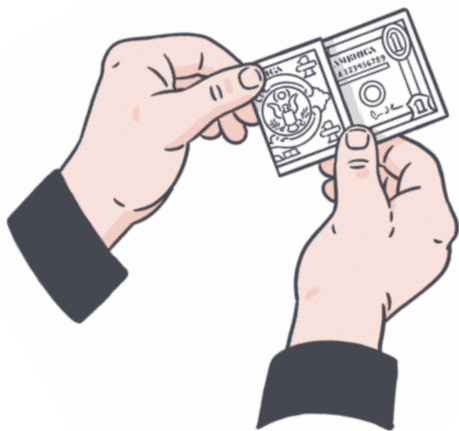
# How to LINK TWO PAPER CLIPS TOGETHER

IN  
WHICH OFFICE  
SUPPLIES STRUT  
THEIR STUFF

Here you use a crisp bill to launch twin paper clips into the air so that they can turn somersaults and link themselves together. Stories may be told about trapeze artists, acrobats, or a pair of lovesick paper clips. A neat thing about this effect is that you never see exactly how the clips link, even in slow motion.

 **YOU WILL NEED: A CRISP BILL AND TWO PAPER CLIPS**

**1** Prepare the launch pad by putting a Z fold into a crisp bill, as follows: Bring the left edge of the bill to the center and crease the fold.



**2** Fold the right edge of the bill behind the bill, so that it lines up with the left edge, and crease the fold.



**3** Tilt the bill toward yourself and you'll see the Z. The launch pad is primed and ready to go.

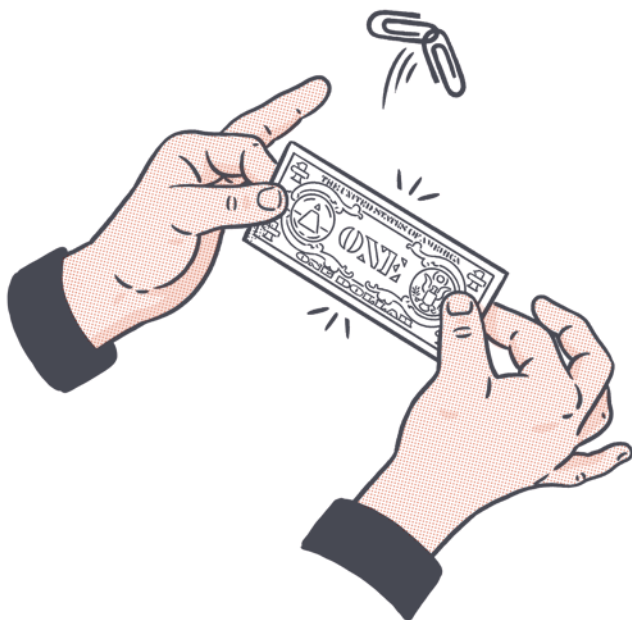




**4** Clip one performer (paper clip) onto the back two layers of the bill on the left side. Attach the other clip to the front two layers on the right side. Push the clips down so that the tops are flush with the top of the bill. It's showtime.



**5** Using both hands, pinch each end of the bill between your thumb and fingers. Pull sharply to the sides. The clips will fly into the air and come down linked. Ta-da!

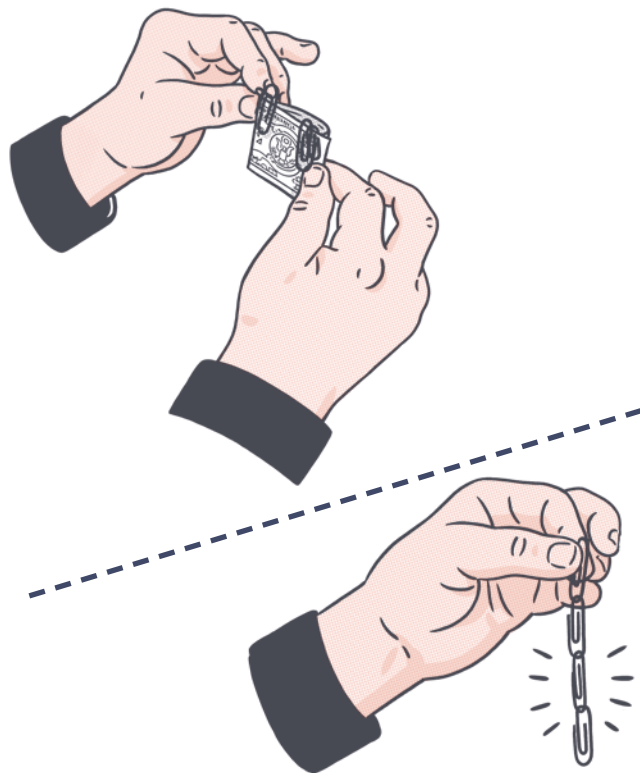


## SEARCH-A-BILL CHALLENGE

**THE CHALLENGE:** There are four eyes on a dollar bill. Find them.

**SOLUTION:** George Washington has two eyes; a third is the eye above the pyramid, and the fourth belongs to the eagle.

**6** You can end here, or repeat the trick with two different paper clips. You now have two sets of two. Repeat one last time, using the linked pairs, and you end up with a chain of four.



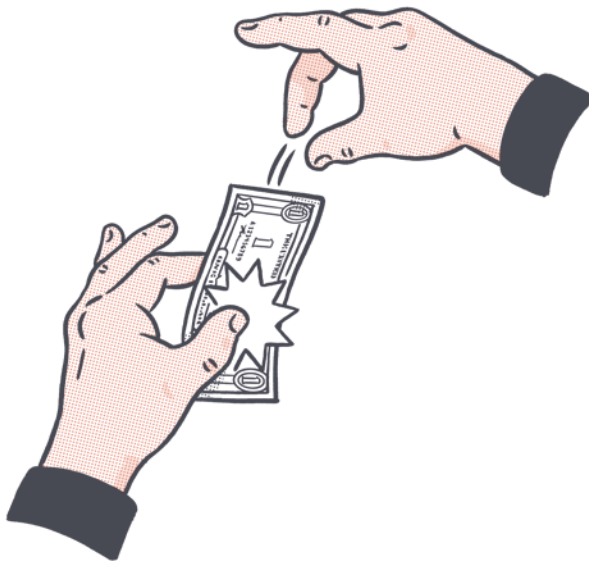
# The DOLLAR DROP CHALLENGE



This is an exercise in reaction time, yours being superior to the kid's.

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
PAPER MONEY

**1** Hold the bill by one end in your right hand, and lower it so it's dangling between your left thumb and forefinger. Keep those fingers an inch apart and ready to catch the bill. Let go and catch it. Easy.



**2** Now challenge the kid to do the same as you dangle the bill between her thumb and forefinger. If she catches it, she keeps it. No worries; she won't catch it. By the time the visual system informs the brain that the bill has been released, and the brain signals the fingers to close, it's way too late. (The reason you can do it is that you know when you're going to drop the bill.) This is one exercise in which practice does not make perfect. If you don't know when the bill is going to drop, you can't catch it.



**MONEY-SAVING TIP:** Make sure the kid's thumb and first finger are an inch apart, and that your fingers are dry. If you release the bill and it clings to your fingers for a fraction of a second, that's all the kid needs to catch it.

# DINING TABLE DIVERSIONS

**W**hat follows are my absolute favorite mealtime amusements and boredom disrupters. No special props are needed, as you're just doing cool stuff with whatever's handy—silverware, napkins, dinner rolls, et cetera. Fair warning, though: While some (such as myself) find these stunts to be charming, ingenious, and occasionally hilarious, others may see them as infantile, inappropriate, and without redeeming social value (“*Grandpa! What ARE you doing?!*”). I leave it to the reader to decide what to try where.

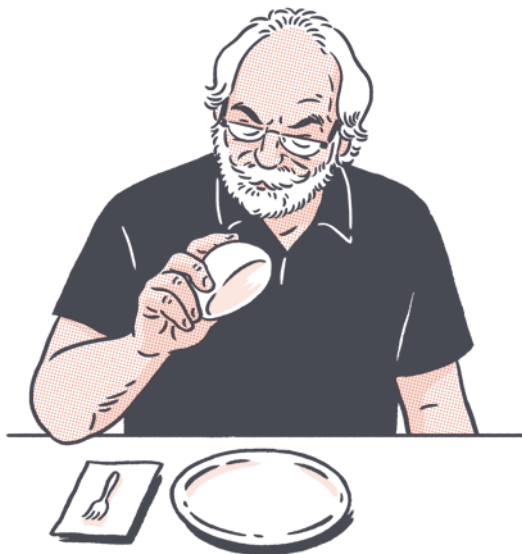
# How to Bounce a DINNER ROLL OFF THE FLOOR

GRANDPA  
PLAYS WITH  
HIS FOOD

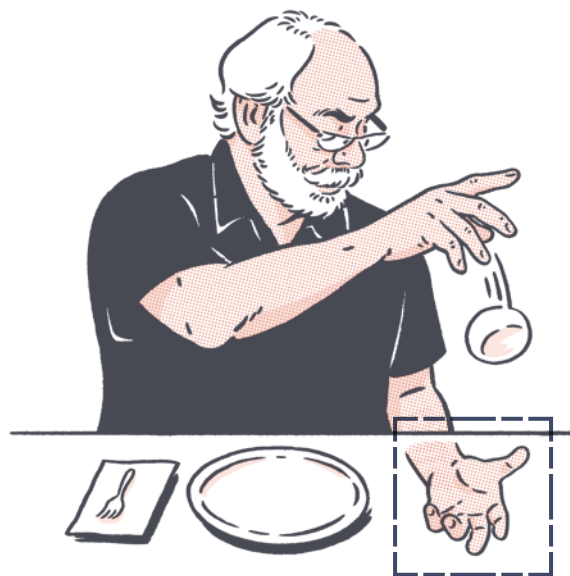
This is seriously silly, especially when no one's expecting it. You must be seated at the table, with no one to your left.

**YOU WILL NEED:**  
A SMALL DINNER ROLL

**1** Pick up a dinner roll in your right hand and look at it quizzically. Remark that it feels rubbery.



**2** Turn to your left, bring your right arm across your body past your left shoulder, and toss the roll to the floor, as if you were bouncing a ball.

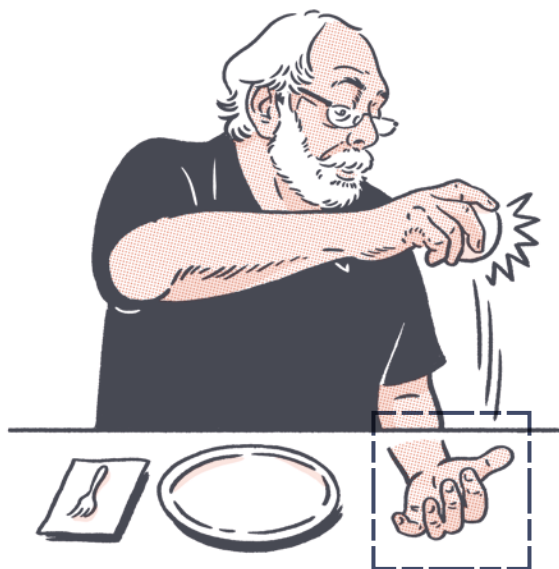


**3** Secretly catch the roll in your left hand, which has been dangling by your side from the beginning.

Simultaneous to the catch, tap your foot on the floor. It will sound exactly as if the roll has just hit the floor.



**4** Immediately flick the roll straight back up—propelling it to shoulder height—and catch it in your right hand (let your wrist and fingers do the propelling, rather than bending your arm at the elbow). Look at the roll one more time and repeat.



## NOW TRY THIS

### *SINGLE-HANDED SURPRISE*

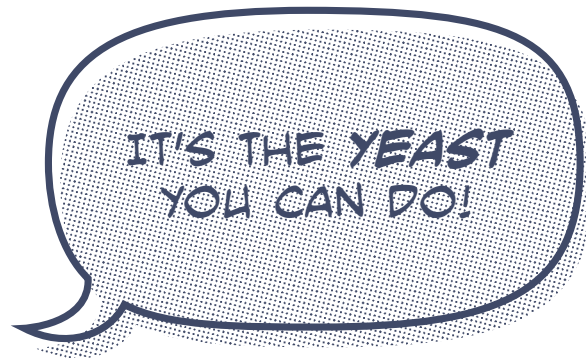
**T**he bouncing roll can be done with one hand. In this case, the tossing hand momentarily swings down out of sight as you apparently hurl the roll to the floor. Immediately after the downswing, turn your hand palm up and flip the roll back up, using minimum arm motion. Don't forget to tap with your foot to emphasize the illusion.

### **BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!**

- A bit of practice is necessary to get the timing and sound effects right. But when you nail it, the illusion is perfect.
- Apples, oranges, lemons, kiwis, and other spherical fruits may also be bounced to amusing effect. The “rubbery roll” idea comes from the late, great Jay Marshall, who was a walking encyclopedia of dinner table amusements.



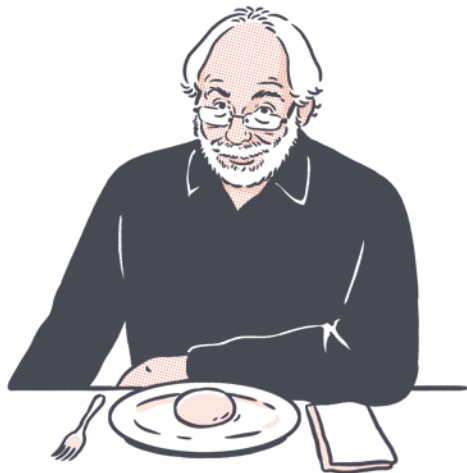
# How to Make a **DINNER ROLL FLOAT**



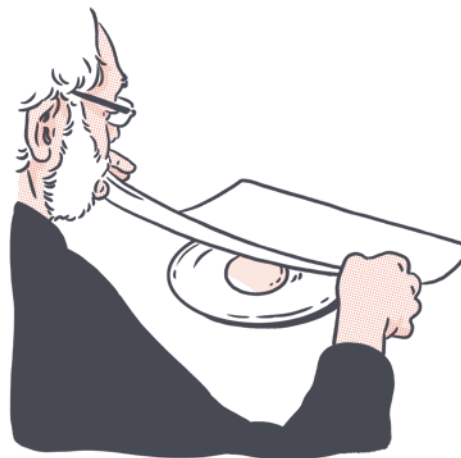
Raid the bread basket for this classic levitation—no helium required.

**YOU WILL NEED:**  
A SMALL DINNER ROLL

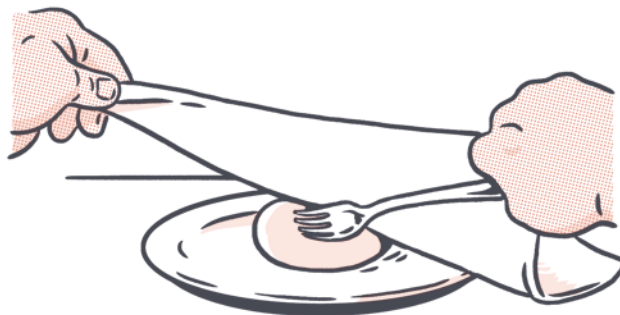
**1** While other diners are chatting, place a roll on the center of your plate and situate your fork to the right of the plate.



**2** When the moment is right, alert everyone that you are about to do something. Unfold your dinner napkin (it must be a cloth napkin) and drape it over the plate, covering the fork at the same time.



**3** Grasp the corners of the napkin near you, at the same time secretly grasping the end of the fork between your thumb (under the napkin) and fingers (on top of it). Lift the inner ends of the napkin slightly, as if adjusting it, and bring the prongs of the fork next to the roll.



## KUDOS AND CREDITS

The floating dinner roll is an impromptu version of a classic magic effect known as *Zombie*, invented by Joe Karson. This version, which substitutes a roll for a shiny silver sphere, was first published by comedy magician Karrell Fox in *Kornfidentially Yours* (1954).

- 4** Lower both hands. Let go of the left corner of the napkin and momentarily grasp the roll through the napkin to steady it, as you secretly stab the fork into the roll.

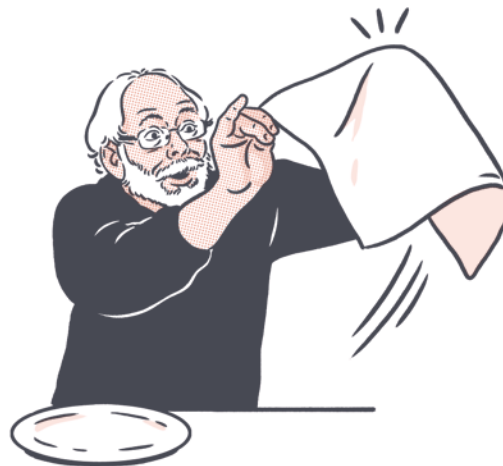


- 5** With both hands grasping the near corners of the napkin, tilt both hands upward. The roll will seem to mysteriously rise off the plate.



- 6** Continue the upward movement by raising both hands. Make it seem as if the roll is barely under your control as it moves higher or pulls your hands to one side or the other. If you want to get really carried away, you can stand up and let the roll lead you around.

Eventually, reverse the moves and allow the roll to settle back onto your plate. Steady the roll as you unplug the fork and return it to the spot next to your plate. Remove the napkin to end. Be sure to practice at home before trying it out in a restaurant.



# How TO CHANGE A FORK INTO A KNIFE

A SENSATIONAL SILVERWARE SWITCHEROO

Whoever set the table made a mistake. You have two forks but no knife. No problem. You roll one fork into your napkin and when you unroll it, it's turned into a knife.

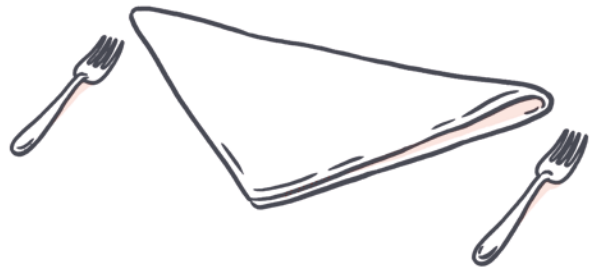
 **YOU WILL NEED:** A KNIFE, A FORK, AND A CLOTH NAPKIN

**1** A secret setup is required, so wait until your companion goes off to wash her hands. Then arrange things up as follows. Spread the napkin on the table so that one of the corners points toward you. Place the knife lengthwise in the center.



**2** Fold the uppermost corner inward, to meet the innermost corner. This is what the kid will see when she comes back to the table. Adjust your

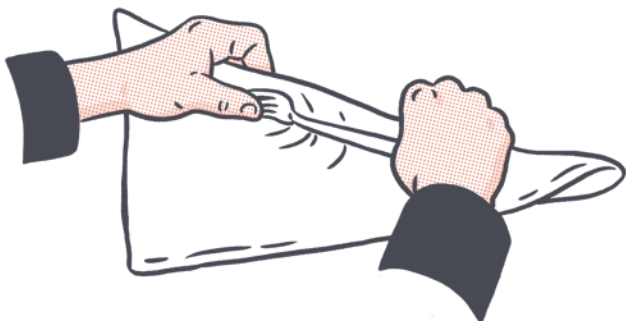
place setting so that you have two forks but no knife (steal the extra fork from a neighboring table). This gives you a reason to do the trick.



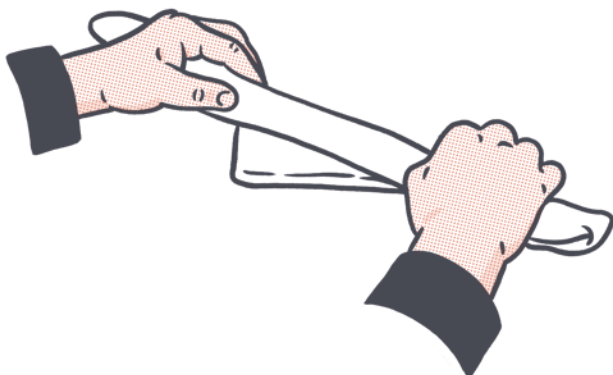
**3** When your companion returns, point out that whoever set the table messed up, because you have two forks but no knife. "But no problem. I'll fix it." Place the fork along the folded edge of the napkin, next to the hidden knife.



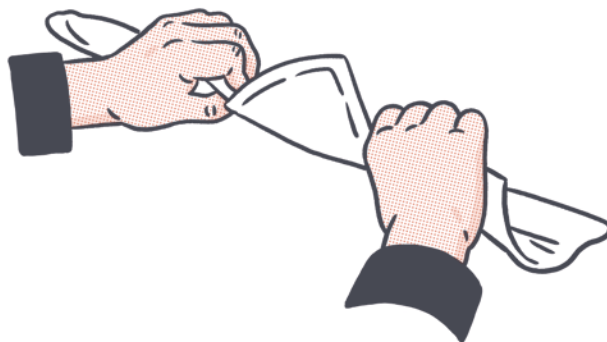
**4** Take hold of the knife and fork together and begin rolling the napkin inward.



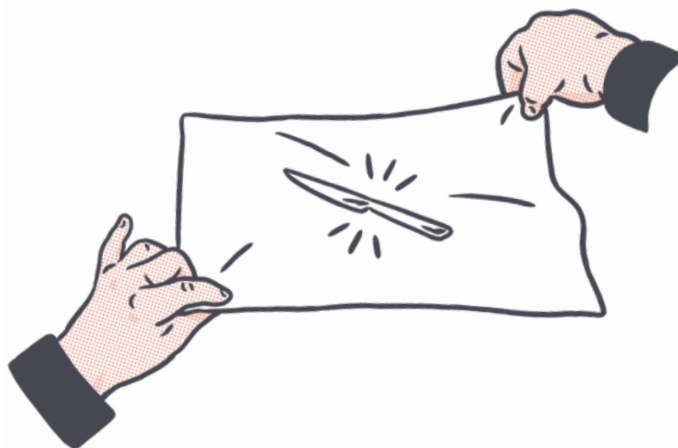
**5** Keep rolling until you roll completely over the ends of the napkin.



**6** Roll a bit more, until the ends pop out from the far side of the napkin and land back on your side of the table.



**7** Take the uppermost corner of the rolled-up napkin in your right hand and the lowermost corner in your left. Extend your right arm to unroll the napkin. Voilà! The fork has changed into a knife.



**8** Let the effect register, then place the knife off to the side. Pick up the napkin (and the fork beneath it) and place it on your lap. Get rid of the fork whenever you can, or just leave it on your chair till dinner's done.

---

**WARNING:** Don't try changing a knife into a fork. When it's time to put your napkin on your lap, you have to secretly pick up the knife as you pick up the napkin. This turns out to be a lot harder to do without fumbling than picking up a fork. Try it and you'll see why.

## NOW TRY THIS

### *SWITCH IT UP*

**T**he same setup can be used for other tricky transformations. Having some trouble using chopsticks? Roll them up in your napkin and turn them into a fork. Zap a pen into a pencil. Or try this bit of strange with two forks (one of them a secret): When you roll up the fork, the prongs point to the left. But when you unroll it, they point to the right. How do they do it?



# How to DESTROY AND RESTORE A SPOON

HIDE THE  
SILVER, HERE  
COMES  
GRANDPA!

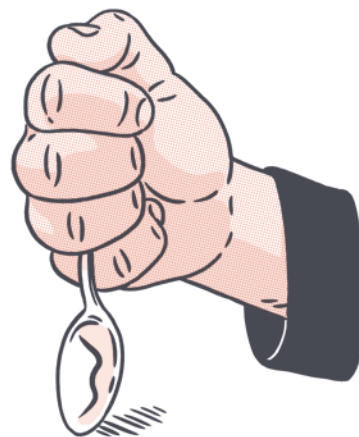
Talk about bad table manners. Without warning you grab a spoon and bend it into a U shape. Thinking better of it, you instantly straighten it out.

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A TEASPOON

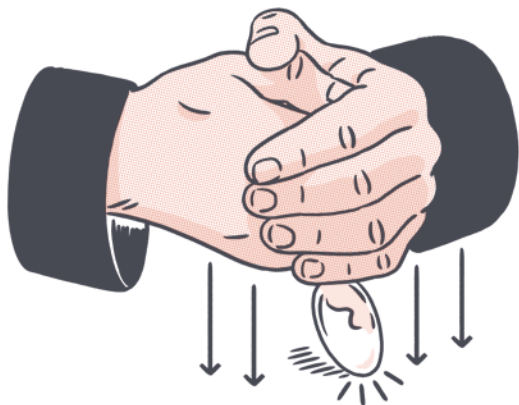
**1** Tap the spoon on the table, as if testing it for solidity. This will draw attention to what you're about to do. "Have you heard of psychics who can bend spoons with their mind? I can bend spoons, too . . . just not with my mind."



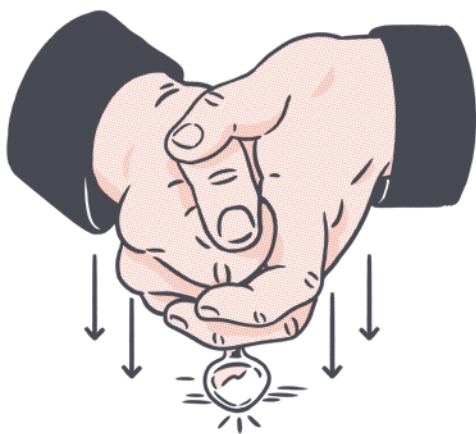
**2** Wrap your right hand around the spoon handle and hold the spoon in a nearly vertical position, with the tip of the bowl on the table. Note that the stem of the spoon goes between your ring finger and pinkie, and your thumb rests on the end of the handle, hiding it from the view of the audience.



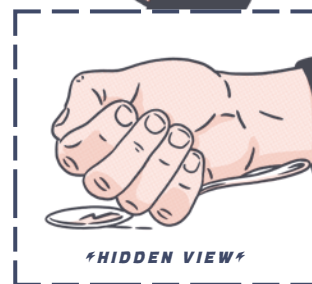
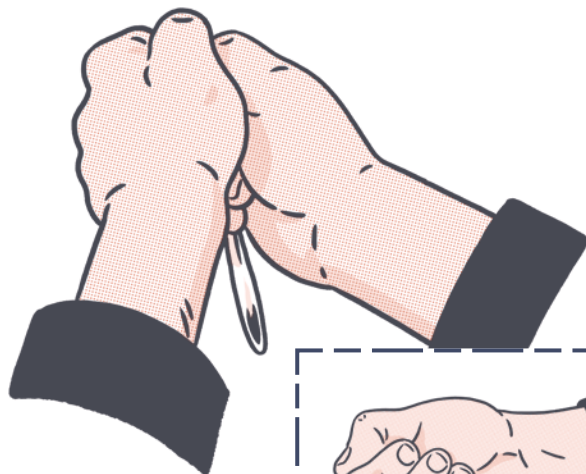
**3** Wrap your left hand around your right. What you're about to do apparently requires the strength of two hands. Take a deep breath and tense your arms as if gathering your forces. Now for the bend.



**4** Lean forward, as if putting your body weight behind the bend. Rotate your fists forward, toward the tabletop.



**5** At the same time, allow the handle of the spoon to secretly slide downward between the heels of your hands until it's almost parallel to the tabletop, letting your right ring finger serve as the fulcrum or pivot point. This movement will be hidden from the audience from all sides. (The hidden view shows what's really happening. The left hand has been removed for clarity.) The end result is that the bowl of the spoon is nearly flat on the table, and it seems as if the spoon is curved like a horseshoe.



**6** Look up, as if feeling guilty. "Maybe I shouldn't have done that. No problem." Sit up straight and release the spoon, giving it a little forward toss. It will take viewers a few seconds to process what just happened, if they can.

## NOW TRY THIS

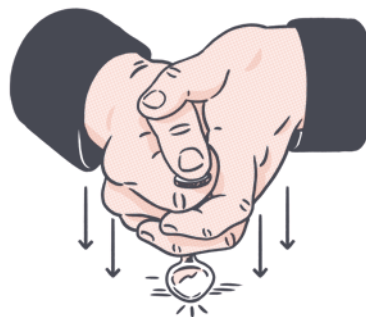
### A CRAFTY CONVINCER

**H**ere's a little convincer that will make the illusion even better.

Before you begin, conceal a nickel between the first and second crease of your right index finger.



As you rotate your fists forward, apparently bending the spoon (steps 4 and 5), use your right thumb to push the nickel upward so that just a bit of it sticks out between your thumb and forefinger. This will be mistaken for the end of the handle, leaving no doubt that the spoon is truly bent. When you toss the spoon forward to end, you can drop the nickel into your lap.



# How to SWALLOW A KNIFE



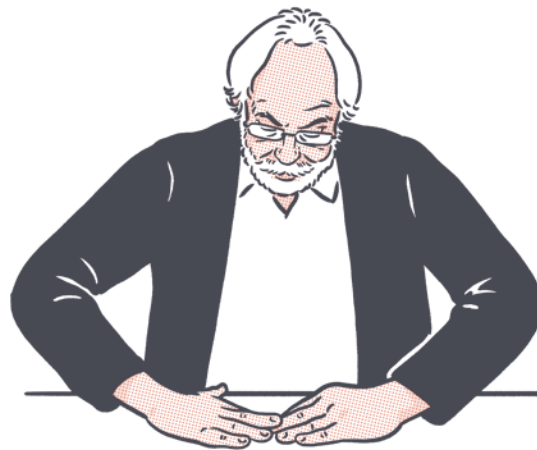
My wife told me to cut this entry. What if a toddler mistook it for the real thing and decided to swallow his knife? And yet, include it I do. My only reason is that as a kid I loved to do this when company was at the table. (I also enjoyed animating very-full soup plates from across the table, using a mischief maker known as a “plate lifter.”)

 **YOU WILL NEED:**  
A DULL KNIFE

**1** You might begin, as I did eons ago, with these words: “I’m hungry.” Pick up your dinner knife, check it out for eatability, and set it on the table about three inches from the edge. Use standard flatware, nothing sharp or pointed.



**2** Cover the knife with both hands, the fingertips overlapping. The knife should be completely hidden.



**3** Drag the knife to the edge of the table and catch it with your thumbs so it doesn't fall into your lap. Lift both hands, rotate them counterclockwise ninety degrees, and bring them up to mouth level, as if you are about to swallow the knife. Keep your hands separated a bit so that the handle of the knife shows.



**4** Pause, as if you are having second thoughts. Put the knife back on the table and sprinkle it with salt. Cover the knife exactly as you did in step 2 and slide it to the edge of the table as before, only this time let it fall into your lap.



**5** Lift both hands, as in step 3, and bring them to mouth level. To the audience this is exactly where you were a moment ago, but this time keep the fingers of both hands together.



**6** Tilt your head back and pretend to feed the knife into your mouth by lowering both hands as a unit. For a truly tasteless display, pinch your right thumb and forefinger together and lower them into your mouth as you lower your left hand to waist level. It will seem as if you are holding on to the very end of the knife handle.

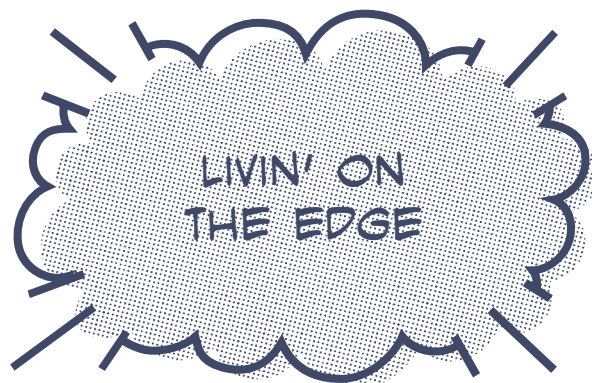




**7** Extend both arms to your sides, sword-swallower style, and hold the pose for a beat or two. Then gulp, relax, and act pleased. A belch may add to the festivities. You can end right there or, if believers are in the room, bring up the knife for all to see.



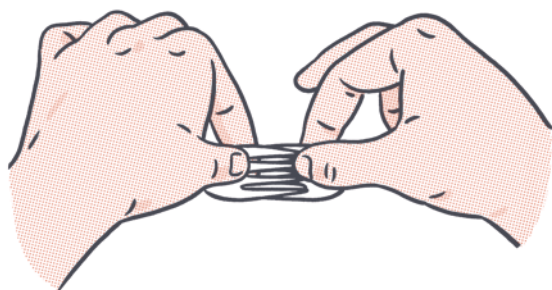
# How to **BALANCE** TWO FORKS ON THE RIM OF A GLASS



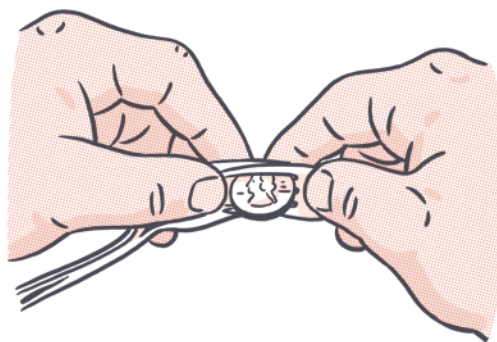
This eye-popping stunt seems to defy the laws of gravity. Actually, it's the laws of gravity that make it work.

 **YOU WILL NEED:** TWO IDENTICAL FORKS AND A QUARTER

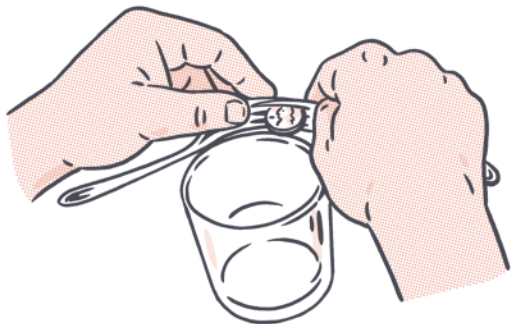
**1** Hold the two forks together in front of you, lining up their tines. You don't want the tines to interlace; they simply go on top of each other.



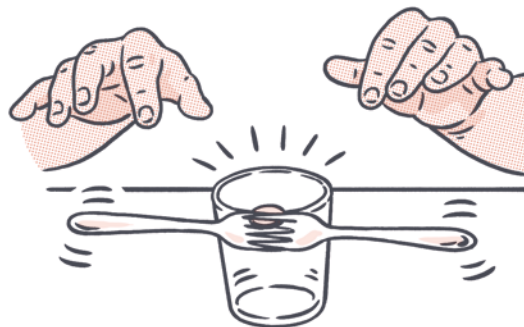
**2** While keeping the forks aligned, slip the quarter between the top set of tines of both forks. Most of the coin should protrude from the inside curvature of the forks.



**3** Carefully rest the inner edge of the coin on the rim of the glass.



**4** Gently release everything and the entire structure will remain balanced on the very edge of the glass, like an Alexander Calder mobile. This is due to the inward curvature of the fork handles, which shifts the center of gravity to the point where coin meets glass.



**FAIR WARNING:** This isn't difficult, but there is a knack to it. You'll have to fiddle with the positions of the forks, quarter, and glass until you find the sweet spot in which perfect equilibrium is achieved. When you're finished, be sure to wash the forks before putting them to use as food shovels.

# How to **MAKE A SPOON CRY**

HERE'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN A TEASPOON'S UPSET

There are many ways to get into this. You can pretend to hear the spoon talking to you; it's feeling sad because the knife and fork forgot that it was the spoon's birthday. Or you might ask the kid to tell the spoon something that will make it sad. Either way, the spoon is sad and cries.

**YOU WILL NEED:** A SPOON, A SMALL BIT OF PAPER TOWEL, AND A GLASS OF WATER

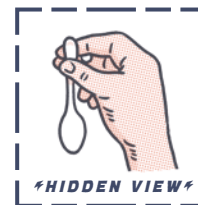
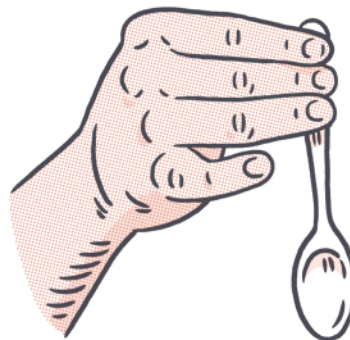
**1** You will need a small bit of paper towel or paper napkin. When no one is looking, scrunch the paper into a little ball and dip it into a glass of water. You can squeeze some of the water out, but you want it pretty saturated. Then place it on your lap or next to you on the chair until you're ready to perform.



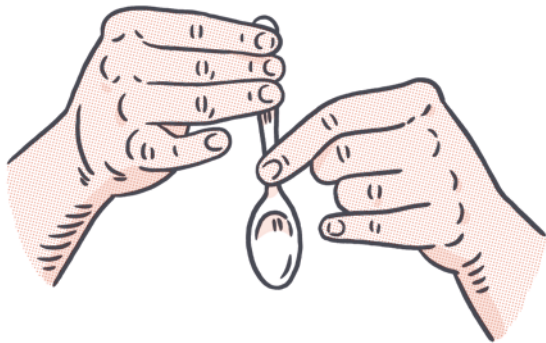
**2** When it's showtime, retrieve the paper ball and clip it between your first and second fingers. You'll find it easy to keep the ball in place with just a little pressure.



**3** Bring your hand up and let it relax on the table. Pick up the spoon with your left hand, then transfer it to your right hand, holding it between your thumb and first and second fingers. It should be just to the left of the little ball. From the front everything looks innocent.



**4** Engage the spoon in conversation and report that it's not feeling happy. As you talk with the spoon, briefly grasp the handle of the spoon between your left thumb and fingers just above the bowl.

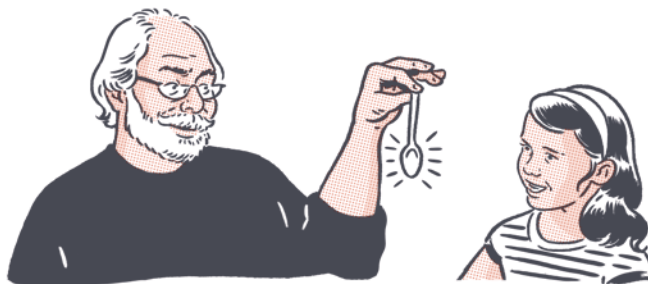


**5** With your left hand holding the spoon in place, use your right thumb to roll the ball directly behind the handle of the spoon, keeping it in place with a minimum of pressure. Then let go with your left hand.

**6** To make the spoon cry, squeeze the ball against the handle. The water will trickle down the back of the handle, then drip from the end of the bowl. Boo-hoo!



**7** To end, take the spoon with your left hand and give it to the kid to examine. At the same time, drop your right hand to the edge of the table and let the ball fall into your lap. It's now time to cheer up the spoon by telling it a joke or singing "Happy Birthday."





# How to BALANCE A SODA CAN ON ITS EDGE

A BEVERAGE  
ON THE BRINK

You take a can of soda, set it down on the table at a forty-five-degree angle, and let go. Amazingly, it just stays there. No spillage, no splashes, no cleanup.

**YOU WILL NEED:**  
A CAN OF YOUR FAVORITE BEVERAGE AND A GLASS

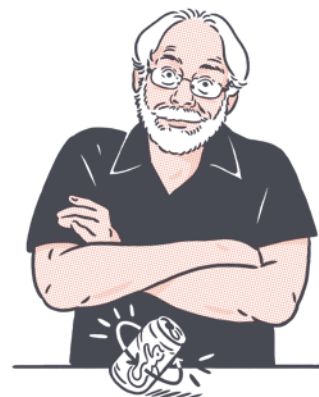
**1** When learning this, practice on the kitchen counter or in the sink. Open the beverage of your choice and pour off about a third to a half into a glass. Obviously, you'll be guessing, as you can't see through the can.



**2** Rest the can on its rim at a forty-five-degree angle. Now slowly, carefully, gingerly, let go. What you want is for the can to wobble a bit, threaten to tip over, but ultimately find its footing and just stay there. That means you've got the amount of liquid just right. If not, add or subtract liquid until you discover what works. You'll quickly learn to judge the right amount simply by the weight of the can.



**3** For the grand finale, gently nudge the can at the top, causing it to roll around on its bottom edge. Settle back and enjoy the show.



# How to **FLOAT A STYROFOAM CUP**

A PERFECT  
PICNIC TRICK

This effect will make you feel like a real wizard. You wiggle your fingers around a cup and it levitates. No strings, no wires, no kidding.

**YOU WILL NEED:**  
A STYROFOAM COFFEE CUP

**1** Secretly poke a hole big enough to fit your thumb in the center of the cup. Place the cup on the table with the hole facing you. The audience must be opposite you.



**2** Position your hands on opposite sides of the cup and wiggle your fingers, as if casting a spell on the cup.



**3** Briefly touch the cup with both hands to keep it steady and secretly insert your right thumb into the hole. Move your fingers out to the sides.



**4** Slowly lift both hands together. Act as if you are exerting some kind of antigravity force on the cup. From the front it will look as if the cup is floating. Move your hands higher and lower, and extend your arms forward and back, as if the cup is leading you.

Bring the cup back to the table and remove your thumb. You can now destroy the evidence by ripping the cup into pieces to prove how free of guile it is. Or you can spill the beans and teach the trick.



# NAPERY NONSENSE

**A**nd now, more ways to pass the time until the soup arrives. All you need is a cloth napkin or a pocket handkerchief. Sixteen inches by sixteen inches is a good size, but usually you won't have a choice.

# How to **STRETCH** **A NAPKIN**

EASIER THAN  
STRETCHING  
YOUR BUDGET

Grandpa's got a trick with a napkin. Too bad it's too small. But hang on! With a bit of Grandpa Magic the napkin visibly elongates until it's the perfect size.

**1** Announce that you are about to do something *muy interesante* with your *servilleta* (napkin).

**2** Display the napkin between your hands, holding it by diagonally opposite corners, while secretly concealing three to four inches of cloth in each hand. It is easy to get into this position without fussing, and no one will notice the secret setup.

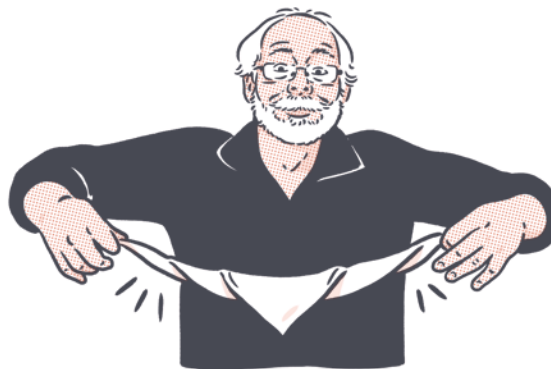


**3** Look at the napkin quizzically, as if you suddenly realized it's way too small for your needs. Say, "Hang on, I'll fix that."

**4** Begin twirling the napkin between your hands, jump-rope style. As you twirl, move your hands apart and allow the hidden parts of the napkin to slowly emerge. (The centrifugal force of the twirl will make this automatic.)



**5** It will seem as if the cloth is stretching like putty, growing longer and thinner. Keep twirling until you're holding the napkin by the very ends. This looks great. Stop and announce that the napkin is now the right size. Now do any of the stunts that follow.



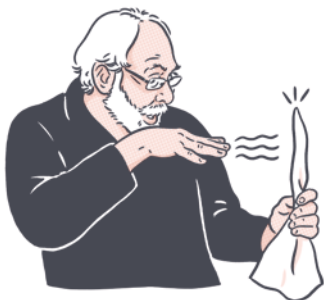


# How to HYPNOTIZE A NAPKIN

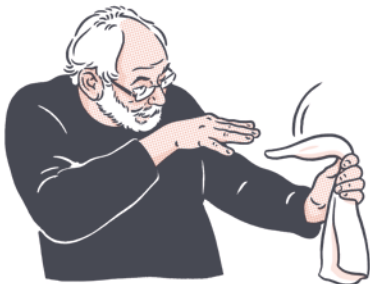
YOU ARE  
GETTING SLEEPY-  
VERY SLEEPY

It's always fun to cast a spell. Here you use your eyes and words to make a napkin do your bidding.

**1** Hold the stretched napkin with a pinch grip between the thumb and fingers of your left hand, about six inches down from the top. Turn so that you are in profile to the audience.



**2** Stare at the napkin and in your most mysterious voice, inform the napkin that it is getting very sleepy. “When I count to three, you will enter a deep, hypnotic sleep. Uno, dos, tres, sleep!” On “sleep,” use your thumb and index finger to lever the napkin into a horizontal position. Make it look like the napkin just keels over. This is very funny.



**3** You will now awaken the napkin. “The sleepy dust is falling from your eyes. You feel deeply rested and wide awake. Wake up already!” As you speak, slowly lever the subject into an upright position. The end.



## NOW TRY THIS BY A HAIR

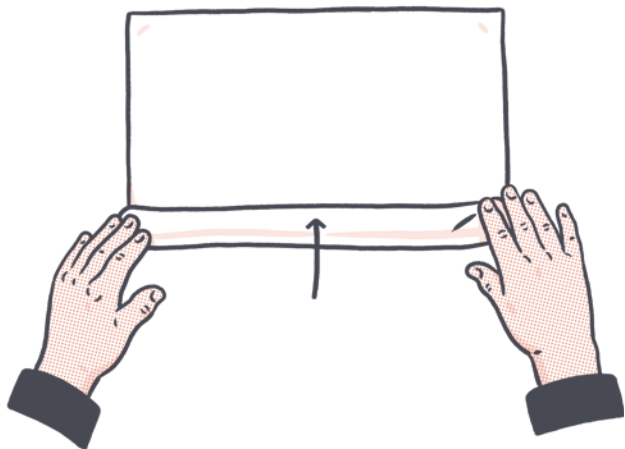
**T**his well-known bit of shtick is for when the napkin—whether hypnotized or not—is standing at attention. Pretend to pluck a hair from your head. Now mime looping it around the top end of the napkin. Pull the hair toward yourself and lever the napkin in the same direction. Then stand it back up by tugging on the hair. Repeat as desired.

# How to **TURN** **A NAPKIN** **INTO A CHICKEN**

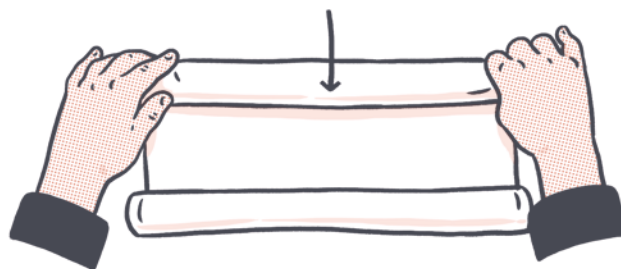


This chicken arrives plucked and ready for the soup pot. Cuddly she isn't. But like the rubber fowl of joke-shop fame, she's got charisma.

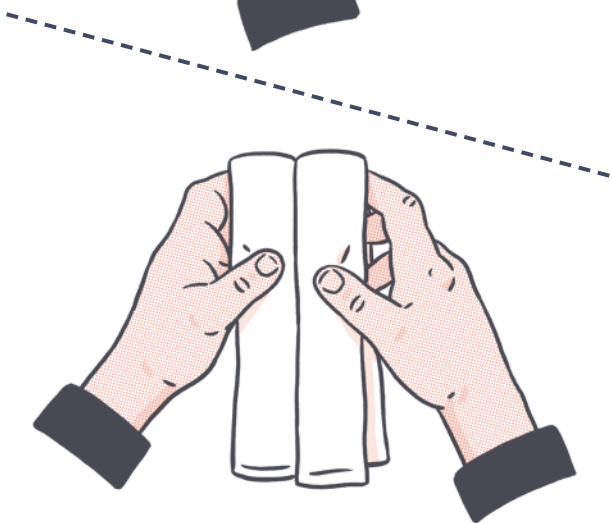
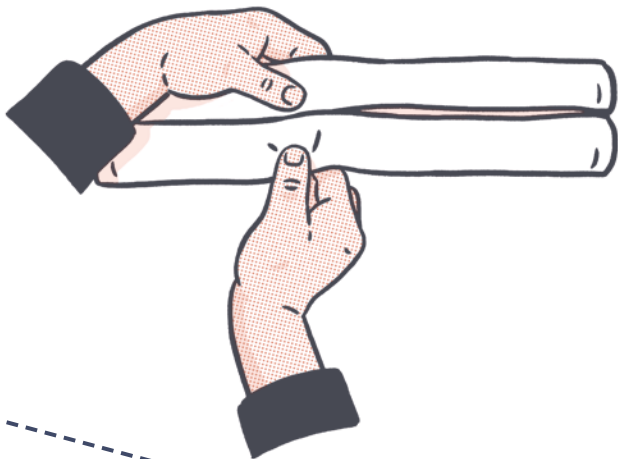
- 1** Spread the napkin flat on the table. Roll the bottom edge up to the center.



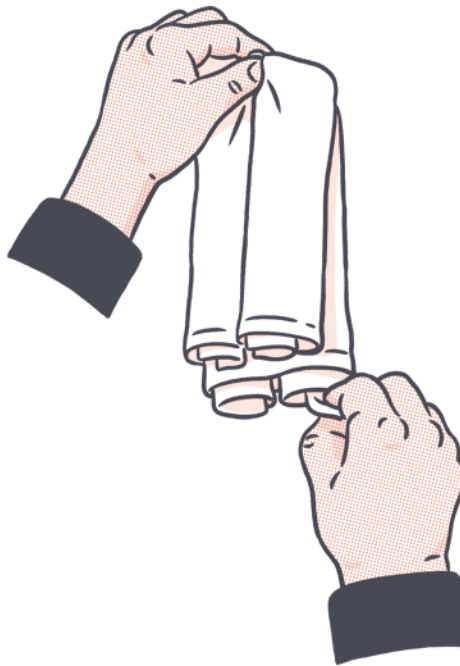
- 2** Roll the top edge down to the center.



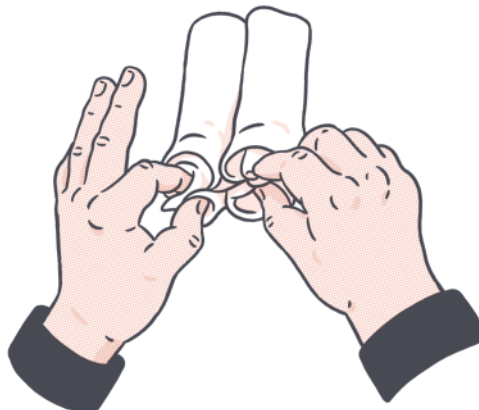
**3** Lift the napkin in the center and reposition it on the table so that the four ends are facing you.



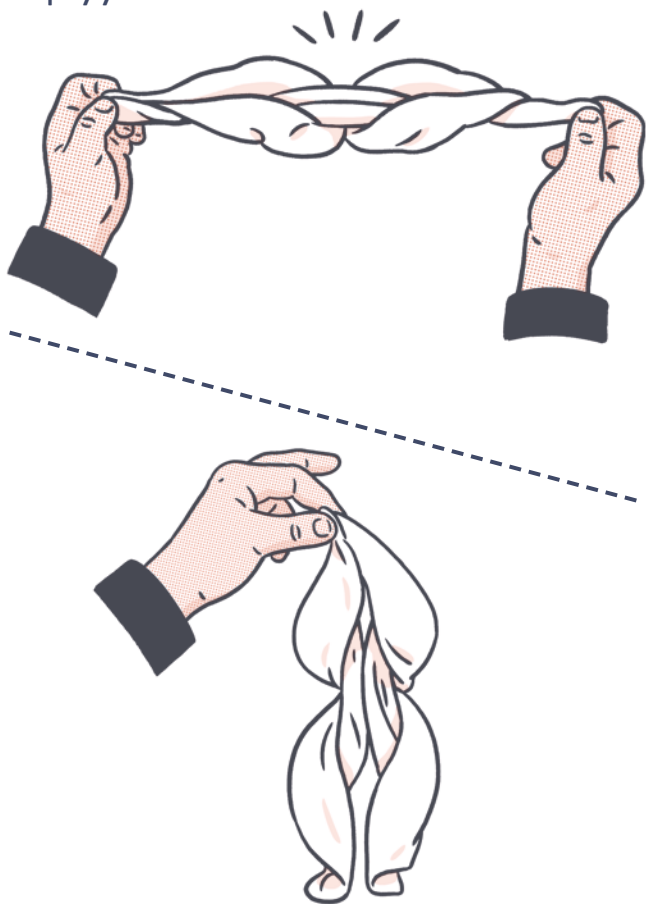
**4** If you peek into the ends of each of the four coils facing you, you will see the four corners of the napkin. One by one, fish out each corner. The illustration shows how the left hand steadies the napkin while the right fingers bring out the corner.



**5** Once you have all four corners accessible, pinch the two leftmost corners together between your left thumb and fingers. Pinch the right corners between your right thumb and fingers.



**6** Hold on tight and pull your hands apart. Continue pulling until you've stretched the napkin into chicken-hood. Let go with the lower hand and display your handiwork.



**7** You can now sashay the chicken across the table (using one or two hands), swinging her hips as you go. This is known as "poultry in motion." Experiment, and you'll discover that she also enjoys sitting on the edge of the table and dangling her legs, like a torch singer on a piano. She can also sit flat on her bottom, stand, and jump up and down.

When you are out for fine dining, be sure to accompany these antics with lively clucking sounds so as to alert neighboring tables to what they're missing. This not only is generous but will enhance your status as a valued customer.

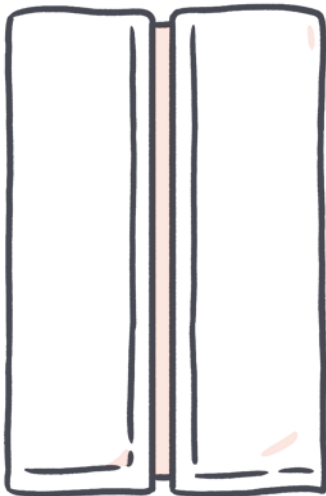


# How to MAKE NAPKIN CAT EARS

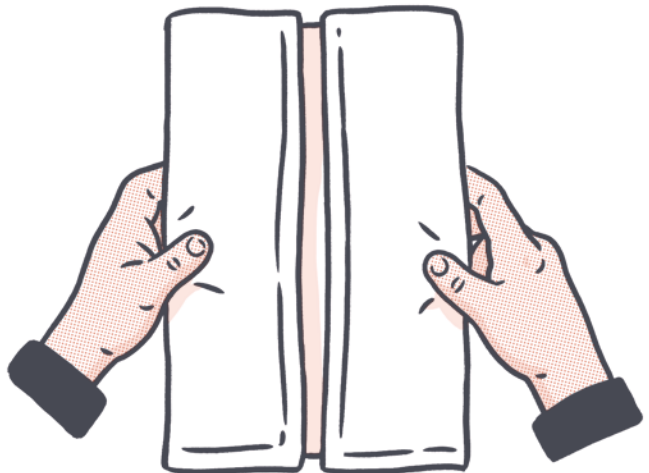
A PURR-FECT  
TRICK FOR THE  
LITTLE ONES

This won't get you to Broadway, but feel free to break into song à la the hit musical.

- 1 Place the napkin flat on the table and fold the side edges to the middle.

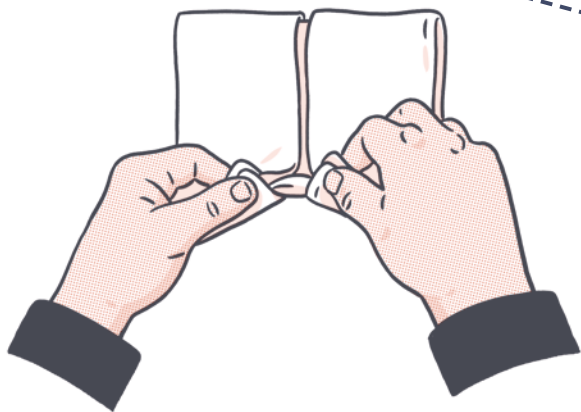
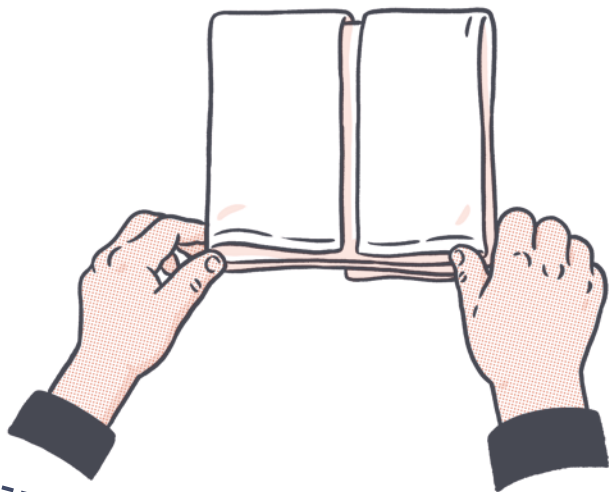


- 2 Lift the napkin from the center, causing it to fold in half, and replace it on the table with the edges facing you.

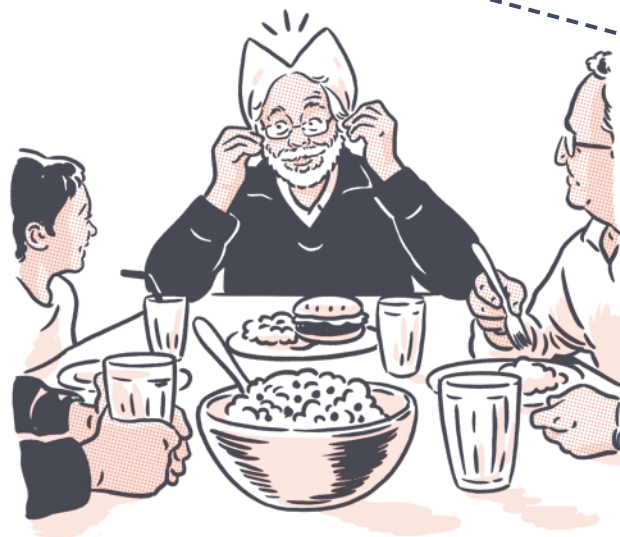
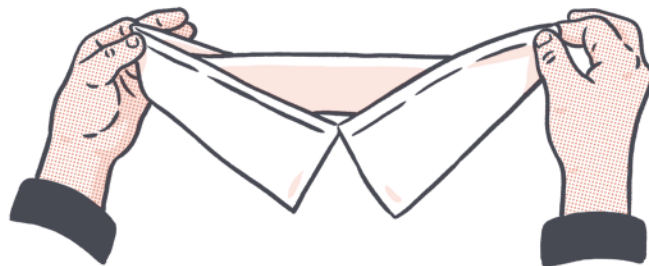




**3** Find the four corners and pinch them between your thumb and fingers, as in the illustration.



**4** Pull your hands apart. Swing the structure up and place it on your head. Meow a few times, which will clarify the image of a kitty cat and her perky ears.



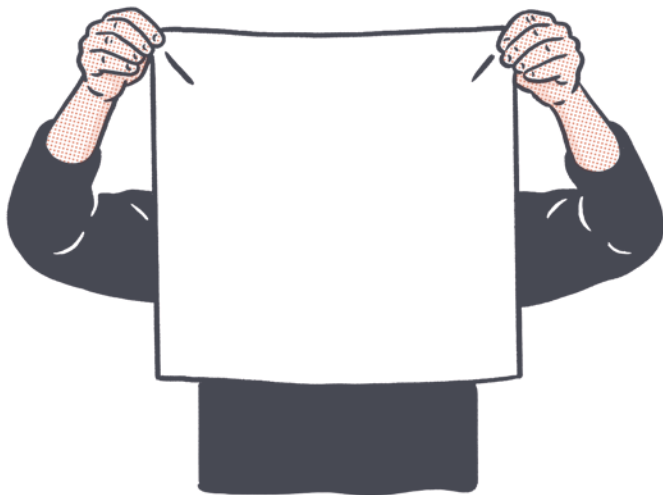
**FULL DISCLOSURE:** In my boyhood, the structure displayed in step 4 was usually held against one's chest in what was thought to be a display of riotous buffoonery. However, as a mature adult, I feel it is inappropriate for Grandpa to do this at the dinner table (or teach it to his heirs) and I trust that I need not mention the matter again.

# How to TAKE A NAPKIN CURTAIN CALL

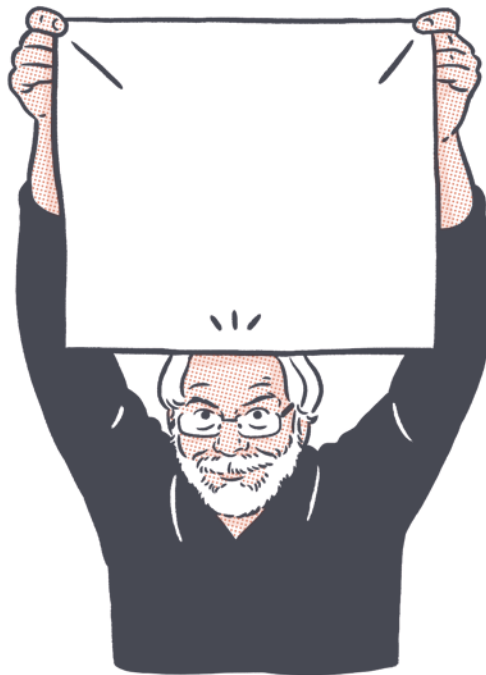
ENCORE!  
ENCORE!

This is a great way to end your napkin set, especially if you've gotten some laughs or applause.

**1** Hold the napkin by the top corners, completely covering your face.



**2** Slowly raise both hands, allowing your head to come into view. This is your curtain call. Smile and nod to the audience as you mime the words "Thank you very much. Thank you. It was nothing. Really, thank you." Lower the curtain, then raise it again and repeat. Thanks to Jay Marshall for this bit of hilarity.



# LOOK, MA— ALL HANDS!

**T**alk about no props needed. These impressive quickies require nothing more than your own two hands and a taste for the strange. Among other monkeyshines, you remove and replace body parts, stretch your arm like Plastic Man, teach the kid to clone a finger and see through a hole in her hand, and engage in a battle of two-finger karate.

# How to REMOVE YOUR THUMB

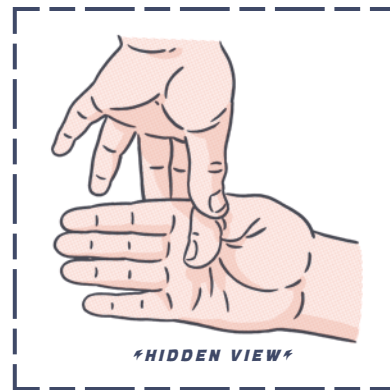
## THE HITCHHIKER'S DILEMMA

This golden oldie was said to be a favorite of King Tut. You appear to pinch off a piece of your thumb, slide it merrily back and forth, and stick it back on. Here's the right way to do it.

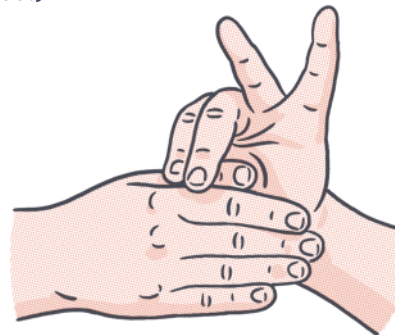
**1** Hold your right hand, with your palm facing you and your thumb along the top. With your left hand, grasp the outer joint of your right thumb between the thumb and first and second fingers. Keep the other fingers of your left hand raised, so as to provide a clear view of the proceedings.



**2** Bend the outer joint of your right thumb down ninety degrees. This movement is hidden from the audience.



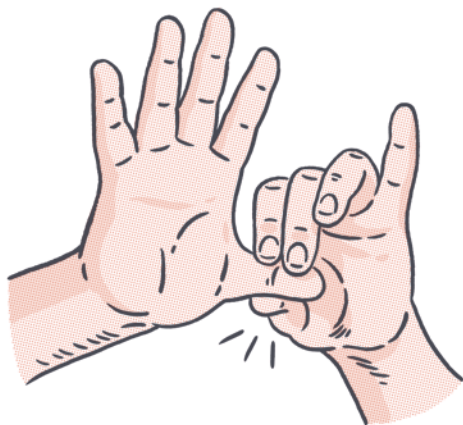
**3** Curl your left thumb and slide it under the first and second fingers so that it sticks out the other side of those fingers. It should look like the tip of your right thumb. (I suggest some mirror practice to discover the exact hand positions that make this look really good.)



**4** Make a loud “popping” sound (or not) and slide your left hand to the left, apparently removing half your thumb (the left first and second fingers glide across the right index finger). Pause, then slide the left hand back and forth just for the fun of it.



**5** When you have finished terrifying a child who has never seen this before, restore the thumb: Slide the thumb joints together, as in step 3. Rotate your right hand upward. At the same time, unbend your right thumb and grasp it between the thumb and first and second fingers of your left hand. Now the thumb is back together and all's right with the world.



## NOW TRY THIS

### GET TO THE POINT

**F**or variety you can remove half an index finger. The starting position is identical to that of thumb removal. Grasp the outermost joint of the right index finger between the left thumb and fingers. Under cover of your left fingers, secretly bend your right index finger inward at the middle joint. Slide your left thumb under the left first and second fingers and raise the left pinkie and ring finger. The thumb tip masquerades as the fingertip. Slide the hand back and forth, then reattach the finger.





# How to **SHRINK YOUR PINKIE**

GROSS OR  
GOOFY?

The squeamish should beware. For many viewers, this is a truly cringe-worthy event. You take hold of your pinkie and slide it into your palm.

**1** Hold up your right hand in “swearing in” position, with the palm toward the audience. Grasp the tip of your pinkie with your left hand, with your left thumb on the pad of the pinkie and the fingers behind.



**2** You will now appear to telescope the pinkie into your left hand. Holding on to the pinkie pad, push down gently with your left hand, and as you do, allow the middle joint of the pinkie to bend toward the back. This is an exposed side view; in performance, your left fingers would be curled around to cover the bend.)



**3** From the audience's point of view, it looks as if the pinkie has receded into the hand. To maximize the illusion, press down on the pinkie joint with your right forefinger, lowering your pinkie as much as possible. At the same time, use your right thumb to push the tip of your pinkie into alignment with the other fingers.



**4** Once the pinkie is telescoped, you can show the hand to your audience, front and back. To reverse the illusion, pull up and let go.



## A HANDY RIDDLE #1

**H**old both hands above your head as if being robbed. Bend and wiggle the fingers.

ASK: "What's this?"

ANSWER: A toddler playing the piano.

# How to **STRETCH** **YOUR ARM**



I consider this stunt a homage to one of my favorite and funniest comic book heroes, Plastic Man. True, I can't stretch my arm down the block and around the corner. But it's a start.

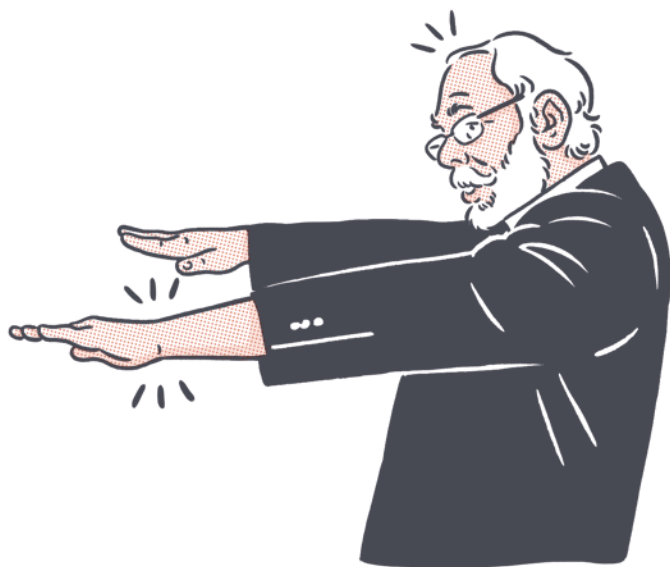
**1** For this trick, you need to be wearing a long-sleeved jacket and have your shirt sleeves rolled up. Stand and extend your left arm forward. Keep the opening of the jacket sleeve in contact with your wrist.



**2** Grasp your wrist with your other hand, with the fingers on top and thumb beneath. Tug your extended hand gently forward, allowing the bare arm to emerge from the sleeve bit by bit. This looks great. What you're really doing, of course, is extending the arm from your shoulder.



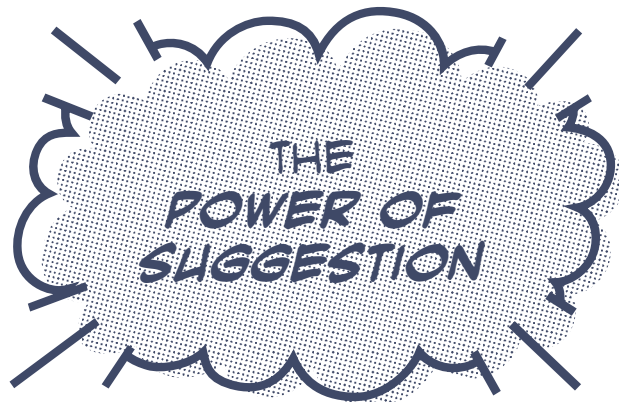
**3** Hold out both arms, showing that one is much longer than the other. (Again, the length of the arms is controlled from the shoulder.) You will now transfer the stretch to the right arm.



**4** Holding your right arm still, wave your left arm up and down a few times, ending in an up position with the sleeve opening back against your wrist. As you arrive in this position, extend your right arm forward from the shoulder, exposing bare forearm. I suggest that you focus on the swinging arm and then notice—as if by accident—that the other arm is now the longer of the two.

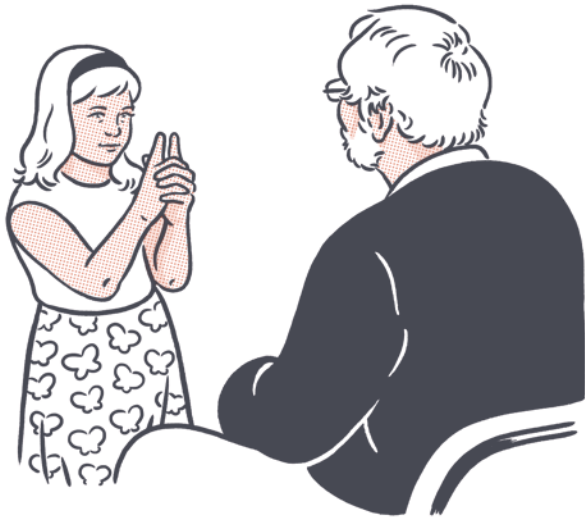


# How to **HYPNOTIZE** **SOMEONE'S** **FINGERS**

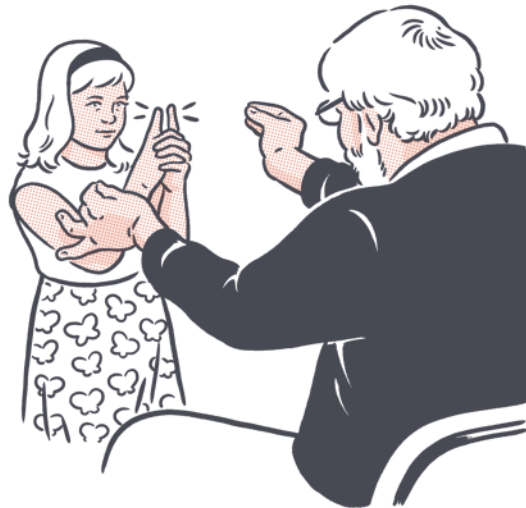


**Resistance is futile. You command the kid's fingers to come together, and they do.**

**1** Offer to hypnotize the kid's fingers, free of charge. Have her hold her hands at chest level, interlace her fingers, and extend her index fingers, holding them about an inch apart.

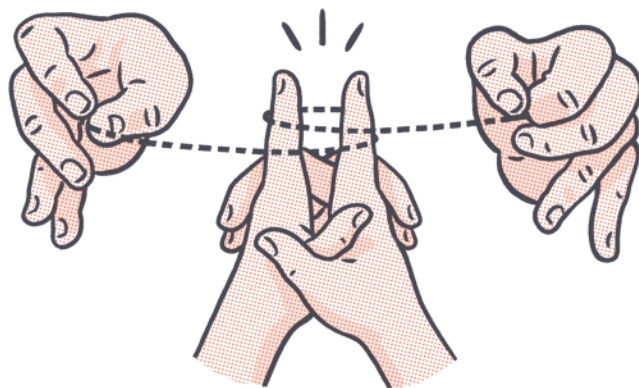


**2** "I'm not going to touch your fingers, I'm going to talk to them. And in a moment they will move together and touch each other. Don't move them on purpose; they will move all by themselves." Say this with conviction. "Watch your fingers. They're being drawn together like powerful magnets. Your fingers want to touch, they need to touch, they will touch."





**3** Keep making suggestions along these lines and eventually the fingers will touch. This is due in part to suggestion, but also because the pose is stressful and the fingers will tire and “want” to relax and touch. To speed things up, add some visual suggestions, such as pretending to wrap an invisible string around the extended fingers, pulling them together. Or position your hands on either side of the kid’s and mime tightening screws, rotating your fists in opposite directions. These types of suggestions are almost irresistible. The experience will feel very strange.

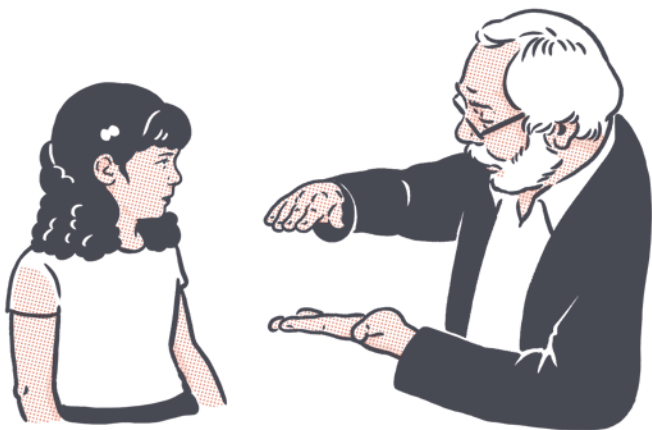


# How to **TURN OVER** **SOMEONE'S HAND** **WITHOUT TOUCHING IT**

A GUARANTEED  
GOTCHA!

This is as much a trick of words as it is of the hands. Once you show it to the kid, you can be sure she'll try it on everyone she knows.

**1** Issue the following challenge: "I'll bet I can make you turn your hand over without touching you." When the kid accepts, rub your hands together and flex your fingers, as if this is important (it is, but only psychologically). Now hold your hands in front of you about five inches apart, palm facing palm.



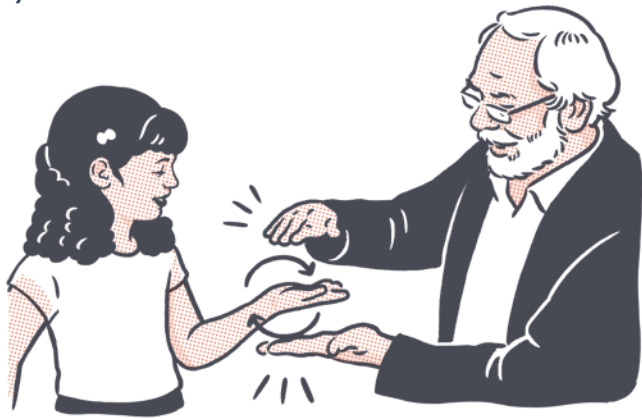
**2** Pause for a moment, then bring your hands closer together, then farther apart, as if trying to find the exact position required to make this thing work. Take your time. Ready at last, tell the kid to hold her hand flat between yours.



## FINGER QUIZ

If two hands have ten fingers, how many fingers are there on ten hands? One hundred, right? No, silly. Ten hands times five fingers each equals fifty fingers. If you got it right, give yourself a hand.

**3** The moment she does, say, “No, the other way around.” Almost invariably the kid will turn her hand over, to which you respond, “Ha ha! Told you so!”



## A HANDY RIDDLE #2

**P**lace the back of your hand against the back of your head, fingers pointing upward. Wiggle your fingers while rubbing your hand back and forth.

**ASK:** “What’s this?”

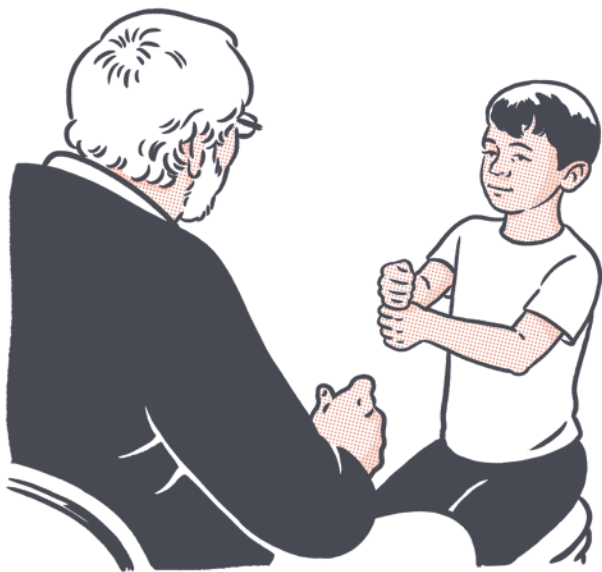
**ANSWER:** A really silly way to scratch your head.

# TWO-FINGER KARATE

IN WHICH GRANDPA CHEATS TO WIN

It's no fair beating a little kid in combat, especially when you cheat. That's why you teach him the method, so he can best his buddies.

**1** Explain that you have been studying a martial art that uses only two fingers, and you would like to practice on the kid. Ask him to hold his fists together, one on top of the other. State that no matter how hard he tries to keep his fists together, you will easily separate them using only two fingers.



**2** Display your fingers in "combat pose." Then lower your hands and position your index fingers on either side of the kid's fists, about six inches away. Your right finger is aligned with the top fist, the left finger with the bottom. Remind the kid to use all of his might to keep his fists together.



## A HANDY RIDDLE #3

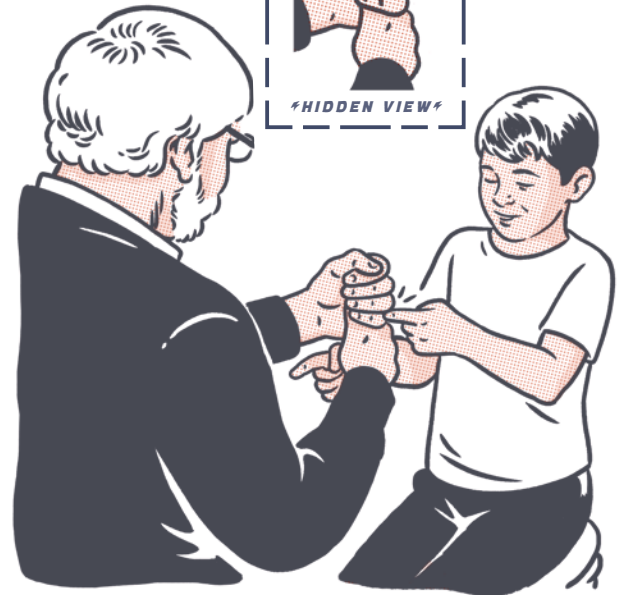
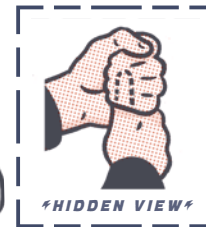
**P**lace one hand flat on top of the other, in a horizontal position, with palms and fingers touching. While keeping the tips of the fingers and thumbs in contact with each other, separate the palms by arching the upper hand and lowering the bottom hand. Bring the palms and fingers back together and repeat several times.

**ASK:** "What's this?"

**ANSWER:** A spider doing push-ups on a mirror.

**3** Count to three and move both of your hands inward, striking both fists simultaneously (your right index finger pushes the top fist to your left, and your left finger pushes the bottom fist to the right). The fists will separate easily. This is because the motive force comes from the sides, while the kid is pressing up and down.

**4** Claim that this is not as easy as it appears, and challenge the kid to try to knock your fists apart. He will be unable to do so. True, you've got a size advantage; but that's not the reason. You cheat. As you form your fists, secretly grab on to your right thumb as you close your hands. After the kid tries his best, admit the deception and reveal the secret, so that he can try it on his friends.



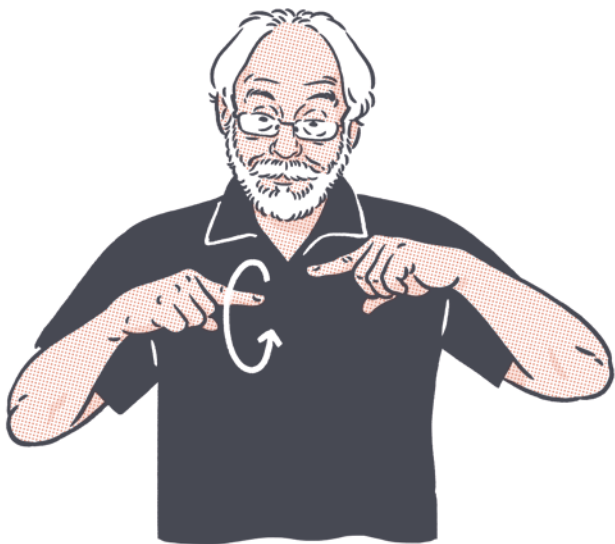


# The CONTRARY CIRCLES CHALLENGE

OR HOW TO  
DRIVE YOURSELF  
CRAZY

This madcap mitt muddler will fry most anyone's brain.

**1** Form two fists and point the index fingers toward each other. Keeping your right arm still, rotate your left arm clockwise, as if inscribing small circles in the air with your index finger.



Now hold your left arm still and do the same with your right arm, except rotate it counterclockwise. Both of these things are easy.

**2** Now try doing both rotations at once. Not so easy. In fact, if you're like most people, your brain will short-circuit and you will become altogether discombobulated, not to mention flummoxed and flustered. The task is not impossible because my wife can do it. I have no explanation for this.



# The FLOATING FINGER ILLUSION

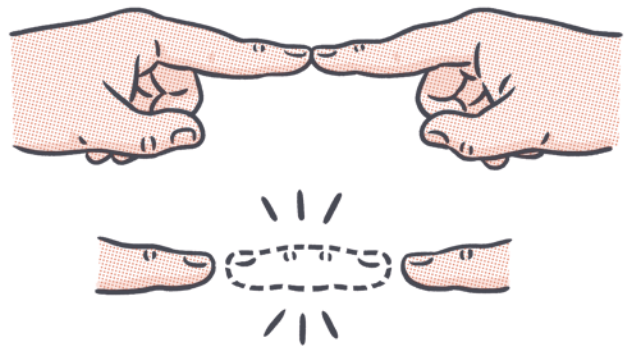
HOW TO  
SEE WHAT ISN'T  
THERE

This eerie eyeful takes place in your mind and nowhere else. Learn to see it yourself, then pass your elder wisdom along to the next generation.

**1** Hold your hands at eye level and touch your index fingers together. Your fingers should be about three inches in front of the bridge of your nose. Ignore your fingers and focus on something in the distance, such as a blank wall. Now separate your fingers slightly, keep looking at the wall, and behold! Floating between your fingers will be a surreal minifinger, featuring a fingernail on each end.



**2** What you're looking at is known as a cyclopean image, named after the one-eyed giant of Greek mythology. It happens when the visual field of each eye overlaps to form a single image. Once you get the hang of it, you can teach yourself to look at this weird finger directly. If you vary your finger position slightly, you will see other versions of the same thing.



# The **CLONED FINGER** ILLUSION

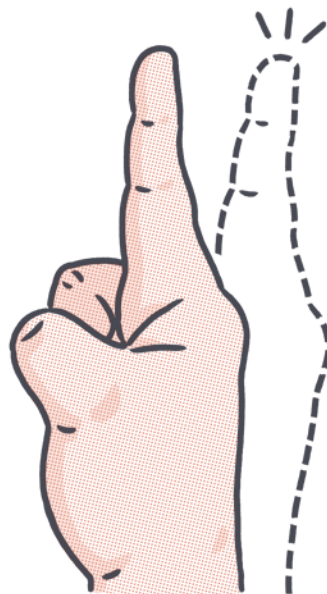
THIS ONE IS  
DOUBLE  
THE FUN

It may take a minute or so before this one kicks in. Stick with it. Your patience will be rewarded with a ghostly hallucination.

**1** Hold your right hand about twelve inches in front of your eyes, with your index finger pointed up and the other fingers curled into a fist.



**2** Focus on something in the distance and wait. In a moment, a second finger will appear next to the first. This happens because each eye sees a single finger, but because your focus is in the distance, the brain is unable to fuse the two images into one, as it usually does. Once you see the double finger you can make your brain hold on to the image as you look between these two fingers. Blink alternate eyes to see how this is put together.



# The **HOLE IN** the **HAND ILLUSION**

FOR A  
**WHOLESOME**  
GOOD TIME

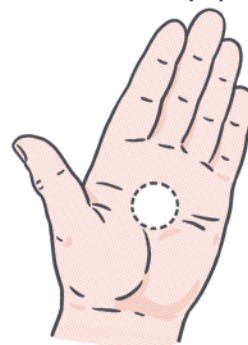
This bit of visual astonishment first saw print in 1871 in *Philosophical Magazine*, a science journal still going strong today. In addition to two eyes, you'll need a sheet of paper.

**1** Roll the paper into a tube and hold it in your right hand (or secure it with a rubber band). Bring the tube up to your right eye and peer through it as if looking through a telescope. Focus on something a few feet away. Now hold your left hand against the side of the tube at midpoint, palm facing inward.



**2** Keep both eyes open and look straight ahead. What you will see is a hole appear in the center of your palm. This is because each eye sees a unique image, and the brain, acting as usual, combines them into a single entity. To alter the size and location

of the hole, slide your left hand back and forth along the length of the tube. If you don't see the hole right away, look for it and it should pop into view.



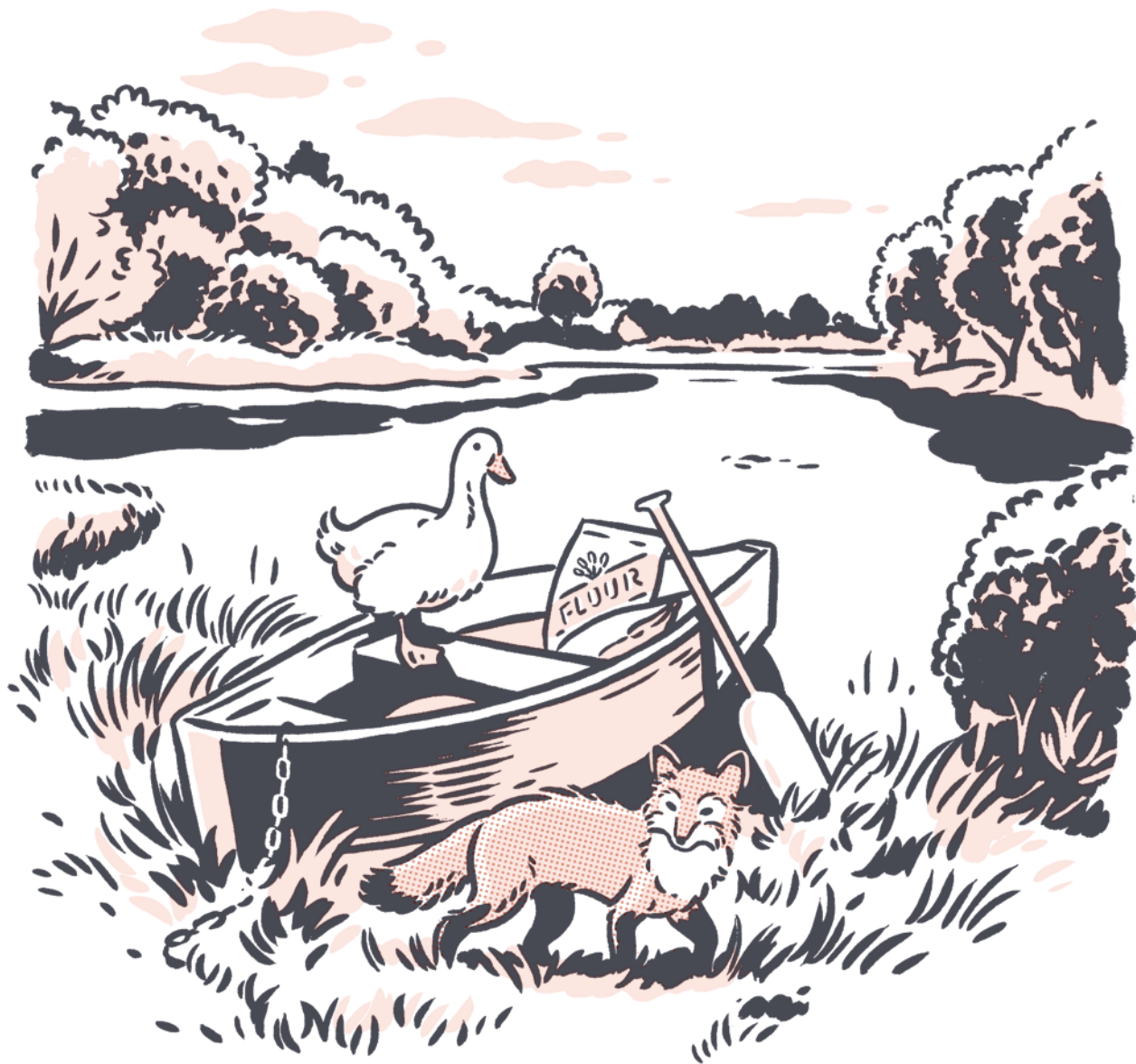
## **BUT WAIT . . . THERE'S MORE!**

Here's something I discovered by accident: If you crumple the far end of the tube slightly, the hole will be replaced by a random geometric shape with crisp, cookie-cutter edges.



Different crumples yield different shapes. These are fun to play with and look particularly good when the right eye is focused on a pure white background. It looks as if a flood of white light is pouring through your hand.







*Part 3*

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**BRAINTEASERS,  
PERPLEXING  
PUZZLES, AND OTHER  
CRANIAL  
CHALLENGES**

# BRAINTEASERS

## *Verbal Puzzles with Surprising Solutions*

**O**kay, people, it's time to think. Hand-picked for your head-scratching delectation are a bushelful of kid-friendly brainteasers, along with solutions anyone age eight and up can understand. But fair warning, just because the solutions are easy to understand doesn't mean they're easy to figure out, even for Grandpa. At least half will ask you to think in ways you may not be used to (such as visually or logically). Others have a catch to them, a trick of language or a bit of misdirection that will send you down the garden path. Like magic tricks, brainteasers can surprise and fool us in unexpected ways, which makes them terrific fodder for young minds.

Truth is, kids enjoy being challenged. They like figuring stuff out, playing detective, and getting to the bottom of things. They also delight in discovering how they were fooled, how their own minds work, and how each of us can think about the same thing in many different ways. Kids take to brainteasers for the same reasons they take to riddles: for the challenge of the questions and the cleverness of the answers. Be sure to exercise your own brain on these puzzlers before challenging the kid, then memorize your favorites and take them out for a spin. Good luck. I've already given you more hints than I should have.

### Level 1

## EASY PEASY

**THE DOG AND THE RIVER:** A man and his dog are standing on opposite sides of a wide river. The man calls the dog and the dog immediately crosses the river, but without getting wet and without using a bridge or a boat. How is this possible?

**SOLUTION:** The river was frozen.

**THE ELEVATOR ENIGMA:** Every day a man goes to his office on the fifteenth floor. He takes the elevator to the tenth floor and walks the remaining five floors. Going home, he gets on at the fifteenth floor and goes to the ground floor. Why does he do this?

**SOLUTION:** He's very short and can only reach the button for the tenth floor.



# BOOK NOOK

## ENCYCLOPEDIA BROWN

Kids who love solving mysteries will find a kindred spirit in Encyclopedia Brown, the sharp-eyed, agile-brained crime solver whose adventures are spread out through more than twenty-five terrific books by Donald J. Sobol. My daughter devoured these books as an eight-year-old, and she's still tracking down mysteries to this day as an antiquarian book dealer. Each book features ten or more minimysteries investigated by the titular fifth-grade detective and his pal, Sally. Readers are invited to solve the crimes, and solutions are provided. Written in the days before cell phones and such, the books hold up just fine and will captivate any kid with an inquiring mind.

**THE HOSPITAL VISIT:** Helen spent two days in the hospital. She wasn't sick or injured and she wasn't visiting anyone. Yet when she left she had to be carried out. Why?

**SOLUTION:** Helen was a newborn baby.

**JUMPING JANE:** Jane is a good jumper. She can jump higher than the Empire State Building. How is this possible?

**SOLUTION:** The Empire State Building cannot jump at all.

**ESCAPE FROM PRISON:** A man is imprisoned in a jail cell. The walls are made of steel and the door is securely locked. The only light comes from a skylight. The man has a small shovel and begins to dig a hole in the dirt floor. He knows that he cannot tunnel out of the cell, but he keeps on digging and eventually escapes. How?

**SOLUTION:** He builds a mountain out of the dirt, climbs to the top, and escapes through the skylight.

**ROBERT'S MOM:** Robert's mom has three children. The first is named April and the second is named May. What is the third child's name?

**SOLUTION:** Robert.

**A BOY ON A LADDER:** A boy was standing on a ladder that was 30 feet tall. He fell off but didn't get hurt. Why not?

**SOLUTION:** He was standing on the bottom step.

**THE COWBOY:** A cowboy rode into Dodge City on Friday. He stayed two days and rode out on Friday. How was this possible?

**SOLUTION:** Friday was the name of his horse.

**COAL, CARROT, AND SCARF:** Three black stones, a carrot, and a scarf are lying on a neighbor's front lawn. They weren't lying there yesterday, and no one put them on the ground. Yet there's a perfectly logical reason why they should be there. What is it?

**SOLUTION:** They were part of a snowman that melted.

**MARATHON MAN:** You are running a marathon and you pass the person in second place. What place are you in?

**SOLUTION:** Second place.



**THE ONE-WAY STREET:** A truck driver is going down a one-way street the wrong way. A traffic policeman sees this but doesn't write a ticket. Why?

**SOLUTION:** The truck driver is walking.

**A BALL TOSS:** How can you throw a ball 10 feet and have it come back to you without bouncing off anything?

**SOLUTION:** Throw it straight up in the air.

**THE FORBIDDEN PHOTO:** In Pittsburgh you cannot take a picture of a man with a dog. Why not?

**SOLUTION:** No one can take a picture with a dog. You need a camera.

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## Level 2

### WATCH YOUR STEP

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**THE ICE CREAM PARLOR:** Two mothers and two daughters went to an ice cream shop. Each of them had a single scoop of ice cream, yet they paid for only three scoops. Why?

**SOLUTION:** There were only three people: a grandmother, a mother, and a daughter.

**A LOST BROTHER:** For 20 years Paul has been searching for his long-lost brother whom he has never met. At last he learns his brother's address and goes to his house. When he arrives, he finds three people playing cards. One is a firefighter, one an auto mechanic, and the third a police sergeant. He throws his arms around the firefighter—his brother—and gives him a big hug. How did he know which one was his brother?



**SOLUTION:** Two of the three card players were women.

**TWO TREES, A LAKE, AND AN ISLAND:** You are standing in front of a lake that measures 400 feet in diameter. In the center of the lake is an island, and in the center of the island is a coconut tree ripe with coconuts. You are hungry and wish to get to the island, but you cannot swim and the lake is too



deep to wade across. Next to you is another coconut tree (but without coconuts), and next to that tree is a little more than 400 feet of rope.

How do you safely get to the island?

**SOLUTION:** Tie one end of the rope around the nearby tree. Holding the other end of the rope, walk around the lake. This will wrap the center of the rope around the tree on the island. When you return to your starting point, tie the free end of the rope around the tree. Now you can use the rope as a kind of bridge and make your way, hand over hand, from the shore to the island.

**THE DUCK, THE FOX, AND THE GRAIN:** You are on one side of a river with a boat and three things: a duck, a bag of grain, and a fox. You need to cross the river to get home with all three things, but you can take only one thing at a time. If you leave the duck alone with the grain, the duck will eat the grain. If you leave the fox alone with the duck, the fox will eat the duck. How do you get all three things across safely, and how many trips will it take?

**SOLUTION:** Cross with the duck and return with an empty boat. Cross with the fox and return with the duck. Leave the duck and return with the grain. Then go back and get the duck. It will take seven crossings to accomplish.

**APPLES AND ORANGES:** In front of you are three boxes, labeled APPLES, ORANGES, and APPLES & ORANGES.

While it is true that one box contains only apples, another only oranges, and a third a mix of apples and oranges, all of the boxes are mislabeled and none contains what the label says. You are allowed to open one box and, without looking inside, remove one piece of fruit. You can now correctly rearrange the labels so that all the boxes are correctly labeled. How do you do it?

**SOLUTION:** Remove a piece a fruit from the box labeled APPLES & ORANGES. Let's say it's an apple. You immediately know that that box must contain only apples (it cannot hold oranges as well, as the box is mislabeled). Place the correct label on this box. Now turn your attention to the box labeled ORANGES. It cannot contain oranges (as that's what the label says) and it cannot contain only apples as you have just identified that box. Therefore it must contain apples and oranges. Place the correct label on that box. Finally, the box originally labeled APPLES must contain only oranges.

**TWO ROPES:** You have a lighter and two lengths of rope exactly the same size. You know that it takes exactly one hour for each rope to burn from end to end. Using just the lighter and ropes, how do you measure 45 minutes?



**SOLUTION:** Light one rope from both ends and the other from one end. After 30 minutes the rope that you lit on both ends will be consumed and the other will have 30 minutes left. Light the other end of this rope, which will now take 15 minutes to burn up. That's 45 minutes.

**UPTOWN AND DOWNTOWN TRAINS:** A man has an uncle who lives uptown and an aunt who lives downtown. He



# BOOK NOOK

## WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS BOOK?

**R**eady for puzzlers that will twist your brain like a pretzel and have you slamming your head on the table? Sure you are. And sure to do the trick is Raymond Smullyan's *What Is the Name of This Book?* It's a collection of ingenious, funny, and original logic puzzles by a guy who was also a mathematics professor, magician, concert pianist, philosopher, and puzzle expert. Just sayin', you're in good hands.

likes them equally well and decides to visit one of them every day. Rather than choosing whom to visit on a particular day, he decides to let chance decide by taking whichever train arrives first—the uptown train or the downtown train. Each train arrives at the station every 10 minutes, and the man arrives at the platform at a random time. Yet nine out of ten times he ends up visiting his uncle who lives uptown. Why is this happening?

**SOLUTION:** The downtown train always arrives one minute after the uptown train. Therefore, he is far more likely to end up uptown.

**HENS AND EGGS:** If four hens lay four eggs in four minutes, how many eggs do eight hens lay in eight minutes?

**SOLUTION:** Sixteen. Four eggs in four minutes means it takes each hen four minutes to lay one egg. Therefore, in eight minutes each hen can lay two eggs. With eight hens, that's sixteen eggs.

**CATS AND MICE:** If five cats can catch five mice in five minutes, how many cats does it take to catch 100 mice in 100 minutes?

**SOLUTION:** Just five. Since it takes one cat five minutes to catch a mouse, each cat can catch 20 mice in 100 minutes. With five cats, that's 100 mice.



**THE INTERSECTION:** Four cars come to a four-way intersection at the same time, all coming from different directions. They can't decide who got there

first, so all cars proceed at the same time, all moving at the same speed. Yet they don't crash into one another. How is this possible?

**SOLUTION:** They all make a right turn.

**THREE BULBS AND THREE SWITCHES:** There are three switches in the attic that control three lightbulbs in the basement, but you don't know which switch controls which light. You can make only one trip to the basement to find out. How do you do it?

**SOLUTION:** Label the switches one, two, and three. Turn on switches one and two and wait five minutes. Turn off switch two and go to the basement. The bulb that is lit is controlled by switch one. Of the two remaining bulbs, the warm one is controlled by switch two. The cold bulb goes with switch three.

**THE LOCKED BOX AND THE CROOKED BELLHOPS:** Jason and his girlfriend, Tiffany, are staying in two different rooms of the same hotel. Jason has an expensive engagement ring he wants to give to Tiffany, but a group of madmen are roaming the hotel and it's not safe for either of them to leave their rooms. Nonetheless, Jason is determined to get the ring to Tiffany. The only way he can do this is with the help of

the bellhops who work in the hotel. Jason and Tiffany each have a small box that can be locked with two locks. They each have a padlock and the key that fits it. If the box is unlocked, the bellhops will steal what's inside. If the box is locked, the bellhops will deliver it. With the help of the bellhops, how does Jason get the ring safely to Tiffany?

**SOLUTION:** Jason puts the ring in the box, locks it, keeps the key, and sends the box to Tiffany. She adds her lock to the box, keeps the key, and sends it back to Jason. Jason removes his lock and sends the box back to Tiffany. She unlocks the box and removes the ring.

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### Level 3

## TOUGH PROBLEMS WITH EASY SOLUTIONS

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**THE MOUNTAIN CLIMBER PROBLEM:** At 6 a.m. a mountain climber begins his way up a narrow, winding path that will eventually take him to the top of the mountain. The climb is steep, and the climber makes several rest stops, eventually arriving at the top of the mountain at sunset. He camps out overnight and at 6 a.m. the next morning he begins his descent. The way down is much easier, and he reaches the bottom well before sunset. The problem: Prove that there is one spot somewhere on the path that the climber will occupy at exactly the same time on the two journeys.



**SOLUTION:** The easiest way to prove this is to imagine two mountain climbers making the journey on the

## NOW TRY THIS GAME ON!

**W**ant to liven up the next family get-together? Then tap your spoon on a glass and announce that it's time to play Brain Busters, the game that pits friends and family against each other in the spirit of competition and collaboration. How do you play? Easy. As the one with the questions and answers, you're in charge. Split the group into two teams, toss out the questions, and whichever side gets the most correct answers wins the glory. Or cash. This can be great fun. Try it.

same day, one beginning from the top of the mountain, the other from the bottom, both beginning at 6 a.m. Regardless of how fast or slowly they climb, they must obviously meet somewhere along the path. The same holds true for the single climber on two days—on his way down he must reach a spot at which he was ascending the day before. But will they occupy this spot at the same time of day? If they both begin their journeys at the same time, the answer must be yes.

**THE CASTLE AND THE MOAT:** A castle is surrounded by a moat that is 100 feet wide and 100 feet deep. You have a 50-foot ladder, a cow, and an unlimited amount of rope. You cannot swim and you do not have a boat. How do you reach the castle?

**SOLUTION:** You fill the moat with rope and walk across.

**NAME THAT TUNE:** Bob and Richard meet at a party. Bob makes a remarkable claim: "I have memorized every popular song that contains a woman's name. In fact, I'll bet you \$500 that whatever female name you give me, I can sing a well-known song that includes that name."

Robert doesn't believe it and accepts the bet. "Okay," he says, "sing a song that includes my daughter's name: Alexandra Felicia Henrietta McSmithers." Bob immediately sings a song and wins the bet. What song does he sing?

**SOLUTION:** "Happy Birthday."

**THE TENNIS MATCH PROBLEM:** Imagine that 129 players enter a tennis tournament. How many matches must there be to determine the winner?

**SOLUTION:** 128. The fact that there are two people in every match and an odd number of entrants suggests that some math may be required to come up with the answer. Not so. To have one winner, there must be 128 losers. And 128 losers requires 128 matches. It's as simple as that.

**A TRICKY TRAIN PROBLEM:** A train leaves Los Angeles headed for San Francisco at 125 miles an hour. Twenty-five minutes later a train leaves San Francisco headed for Los Angeles at 60 miles an hour. Assume that there are exactly 500 miles between the two cities. When the two trains pass each other, which will be closer to Los Angeles?



**SOLUTION:** When the trains pass each other they will be in the same location, and therefore at equal distance from Los Angeles. The speeds and times of departure are irrelevant.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

One of the perks of soaking up brainteasers is a heightened awareness of how conventional thinking patterns can trap us. We chase false leads, latch on to irrelevant details, ignore multiple meanings, and are blinded by unconscious assumptions (such as automatically picturing firefighters and mechanics as male). The good news is that the more alert we become to these traps and blinders, the less limiting their influence, and the better our problem-solving skills.

# RIDDLES FOR THE SMALL SET

✂ What's orange and sounds like a parrot?

*A carrot.*

✂ Why did the invisible man turn down a job?

*He just couldn't see himself doing it.*

✂ Why don't lions eat clowns?

*Because they taste funny.*

✂ What did the Tooth Fairy use to fix her wand?

*Toothpaste.*

✂ Why was the baby ant confused?

*Because all of his uncles were ants.*

✂ What has a thumb and four fingers but is not alive? *A glove.*

✂ Where do kings keep their armies?

*In their sleeves.*

✂ How can you keep someone in suspense?

*I'll tell you later.*

✂ What did one wall say to the other wall?

*I'll meet you at the corner.*

✂ How do you make a hot dog stand?

*Take away its chair.*

✂ What do you call a boomerang that doesn't come back? *A stick.*

✂ What invention lets you see through a wall?

*A window.*

✂ What do cows do for entertainment?

*They go to the moo-vies.*

✂ What are two things you can never eat for breakfast?

*Lunch and dinner.*

✂ What has to be broken before you can use it?

*An egg.*

✂ How do you get straight As in school?

*Use a ruler.*

✂ Why was the nose feeling sad?

*He was tired of being picked on.*

✂ What do you call an alligator who steals?

*A crookodile.*

✂ What building has the most stories?

*The library.*

✂ What is a whale's favorite sandwich?

*Peanut butter and jellyfish.*

✂ Why did the music teacher need a ladder?

*To reach the high notes.*

✂ Why didn't the skeleton go to the ball?

*He had no body to dance with.*

✂ What's the best time to go to the dentist?

*Tooth-hurty.*

✂ What do cats like to eat for breakfast?

*Mice Crispies.*

✂ Why was the king only a foot tall?

*Because he was a ruler.*

✂ What kind of room has no doors or windows?

*A mushroom.*

✂ What do fish take to stay healthy?

*Vitamin sea.*

✂ Who cleans the sea?

*Mermaids.*

✂ Name three kinds of keys that don't open doors.

*A monkey, a donkey, and a turkey.*

✂ What side of a cat has the most fur?

*The outside.*

✂ What is a baby's favorite reptile?

*A rattlesnake.*

✂ What is a reptile's favorite movie?

*The Lizard of Oz.*

✂ Why was six afraid of seven?

*Because seven eight nine.*

✂ What's that yucky stuff in between a shark's teeth? *Slow swimmers.*

✂ What goes ticktock, bowwow, ticktock, bowwow?

*A watch dog.*

✂ How do you take a sick pig to the hospital?

*In a hambulance.*

# COIN CONUNDRUMS

**T**he next time you're sitting in a restaurant and you hear that melancholy mantra "*I'm boooooored!*", try this. Go out and rent a bounce castle, or—and this is the cheaper alternative—bring out some loose change and challenge the little genius to tackle these head-scratchers. Like the riddles and brainteasers of the previous chapter, they range from the elementary to the elegant. As always, try them on yourself before seeking the solutions. And be prepared to smack yourself on the head for missing the obvious.



# KINETIC COINS

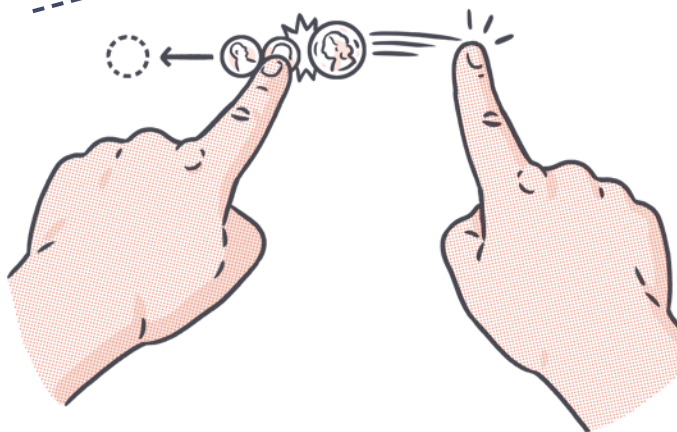
A FAVORITE OF  
THE GREAT STAGE  
MAGICIAN HARRY  
BLACKSTONE SR.

Line up a penny, dime, and quarter so that each coin touches the one next to it.



**THE PROBLEM:** Rearrange the coins so that the quarter ends up in between the others. But you must do it with these restrictions: You can move the penny, but you cannot touch it. You can touch the dime, but you cannot move it. And you can touch and move the quarter.

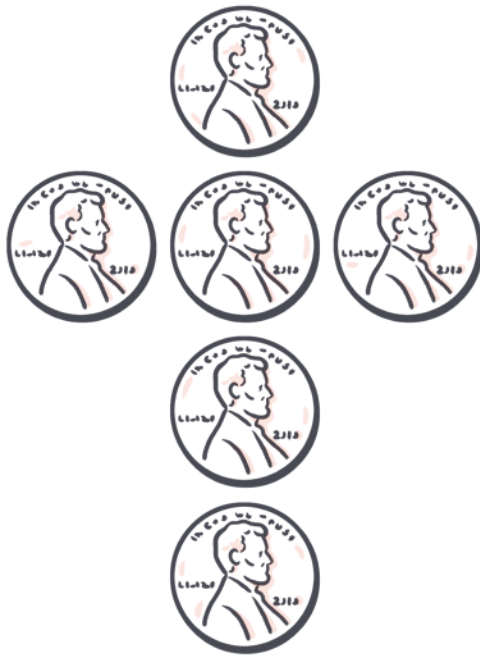
**SOLUTION:** Hold the dime in place with your left forefinger. Place your right forefinger on the quarter, and slide it to the right. Now propel the quarter to the left so it slams into the dime. The kinetic energy unleashed will cause the penny to scoot to the left, leaving room for you to slide the quarter into the center position.



# SIX-PENNY STUMPER



Arrange six pennies in the form of a cross.



**THE PROBLEM:** Move one penny to form two rows of four.

**SOLUTION:** Move the lowermost penny into the center position, forming a two-penny stack. There are now four pennies in each row.



## QUICK COIN QUIZ

**Question:** US coins are minted in four cities identified with the initials P, D, S, and W. What are they?

**Answer:** Philadelphia, Denver, San Francisco, and West Point.

# The TRIANGLE INVERSION TEST

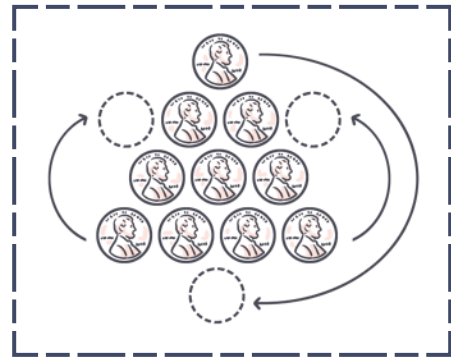
A POINTED  
PROBLEM

Arrange ten pennies to form a triangle.



**THE PROBLEM:** Move three pennies so that the triangle points in the opposite direction.

**SOLUTION:** Move two outside pennies from the bottom row to the outside positions of the second row. Move the top penny to the central position on the bottom.



# Jarrow's **PENNY/DIME DILEMMA**

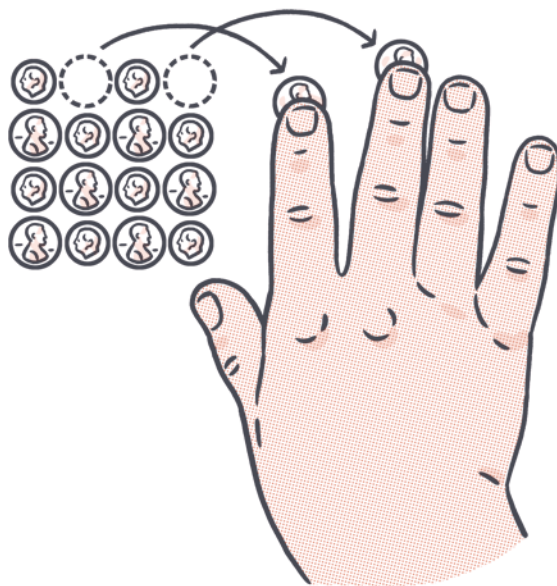


Arrange eight pennies and eight dimes in four horizontal rows, alternating pennies and dimes.

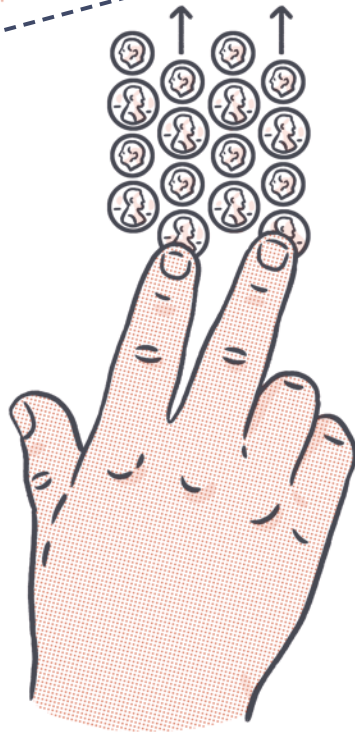
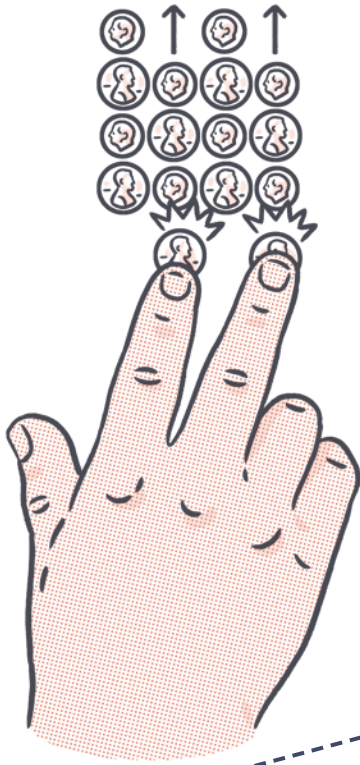


**THE PROBLEM:** Place the first and second fingers of one hand on two coins, and in one continuous motion, move them so as to end up with horizontal rows of all pennies and all dimes. There can be no empty spaces, and all rows must remain the same length.

**SOLUTION:** Place your fingers on the second and fourth coins in the top row. In a circular motion bring those coins around to the bottom and beneath the second and fourth coins. Push up to achieve the solution. This puzzle was created by magician and vaudeville star Emil Jarrow.







## QUICK COIN QUIZ

1. Which US president appears on each of these coins? (No peeking!)

- a. Penny
- b. Nickel
- c. Dime
- d. Quarter
- e. Half dollar
- f. Silver dollar

2. On five of these coins, the president is facing left. On which coin is he facing right?

Answers:

- 1. a. Abraham Lincoln
- b. Thomas Jefferson
- c. Franklin D. Roosevelt
- d. George Washington
- e. John F. Kennedy
- f. Dwight D. Eisenhower
- 2. The penny



# The FIVE-COIN TWISTER



Arrange three pennies and two dimes in a single row so that the coins alternate.



**THE PROBLEM:** Move two coins at a time to a new position in the row. The moved coins must be side by side, and eleven cents must be moved each time. In four moves, end up with a row of three pennies next to two dimes.



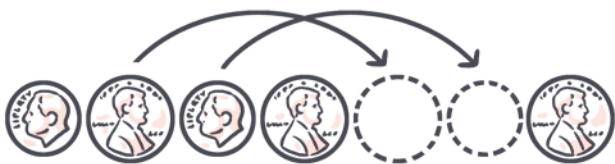
**SOLUTION:** Move the dime and penny on the right side of the row to the opposite end, but leave space wide enough to fit two coins.



Move the dime and penny on the right end of the row to the opposite end, next to the previously moved coins.



Only one dime has a penny to the left of it. Move that penny/dime pair into the empty space.



Move the dime/penny pair on the right end of the row into the empty space.



*Et voilà!*



This puzzle was a favorite of the beloved stage magician Harry Blackstone Sr. Once you know the solution, you can demonstrate it several times and chances are the person you're showing it to still won't be able to do it.

## GRANDPA AND THE KID STRIKE IT RICH (OR NOT)

**B**efore you pocket those pennies, check the dates. Hitting the jackpot—for a payout of \$60,000 or more—would be finding a copper cent dated 1943. All pennies from that year were supposed to be made of steel and coated with zinc to prevent rust, but a handful were struck on copper in error, and those are the babies that could send the kid through college (or at least pay for a year, depending).

Other coins to watch for: all “wheat pennies” dated 1901 to 1958. These won't make you wealthy, but some are worth 20 or 30 times their face value and are fun to find and collect.

# The EIGHT-PENNY JUMPER

TEST YOUR  
COMMON  
CENTS

Arrange eight pennies in a row.



**THE PROBLEM:** Unlike the previous puzzles, in this one you must “jump” a penny over two others (as in a game of checkers) to form a two-coin stack. The goal: In four jumps, end up with four stacks of two pennies each. If you jump over a stack that already has two pennies in it, that stack is treated as a single penny. At the end, the stacks do not have to be evenly spaced. It should look like this:



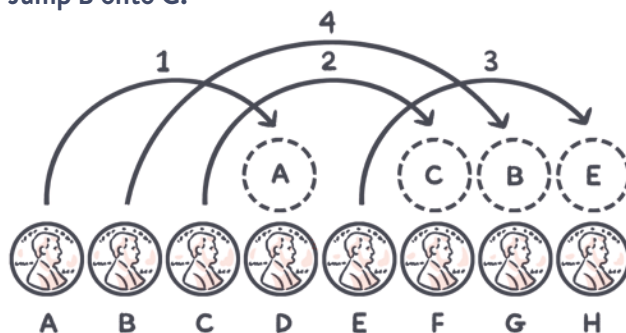
**SOLUTION:**

Jump A over B/C and land on D.

Jump C over D/E and land on F.

Jump E over F/G and land on H.

Jump B onto G.



Again, the final arrangement should look like this:



# NINE COINS, TEN ROWS

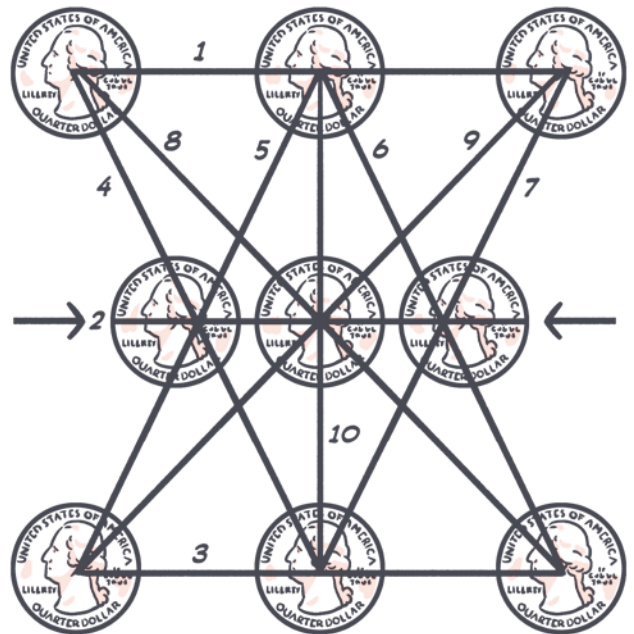
THIS ONE SEEMS  
IMPOSSIBLE.  
IT'S NOT.

Arrange nine coins in a three-by-three square. Note that the square consists of three horizontal rows of three, three vertical rows of three, and two diagonal rows of three, for a total of eight rows each containing three coins.



**THE PROBLEM:** Move two coins so as to form ten rows of three coins each.

**SOLUTION:** Move the two end coins of the center row slightly inward. There are now ten rows. If a drinking straw is handy, you can use it to show the rows. This puzzle was the creation of puzzle master Sam Loyd.



# Martin Gardner's HEADS OR TAILS DIVINATION

AN UNDERHANDED TRICK

Place a pocketful of change on the table in random formation, with some coins heads up and others tails up.



Explain that you will turn your back, and while you're not looking, the kid is to turn over coins one by one. Each time he turns a coin he is to call "turn." He can turn different coins or the same coin. He can do this as long as he likes to as many coins as he likes. When he's satisfied, he is to cover any coin with his hand. You now turn around and correctly announce whether the coin under his hand is heads or tails up.

**THE PROBLEM:** How do you know?

**SOLUTION:** Before you turn away, count the number of heads-up coins. In the illustration there are five. As the kid calls the turns, add one to this starting number for each turn. If the final number is even, the number of heads-up coins will be even. This may or may not include the coin under the hand. For example, if the kid calls seven turns, seven plus five equals twelve. This means that an even number of coins are heads up. When you turn around, count the heads-up coins. If it's an even amount, all heads-up coins are accounted for, so the coin under the hand must be tail-side up. If it's an odd amount, the remaining head-up coin must be under the kid's hand. Conversely, if the number of turns results in an odd number, the amount of heads-up coins must also be odd.



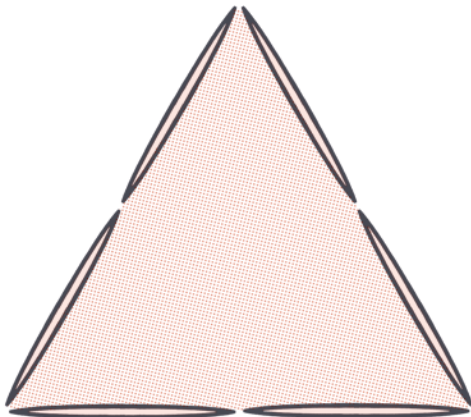


# TOOTHPICK TANTALIZERS

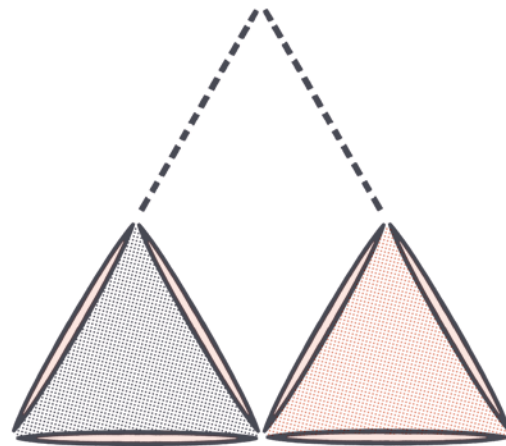
**L**ike the coin conundrums in the previous chapter, these are perfect time-fillers for those idle moments when you and the kid are hanging out at an eatery. For now, grab a box of toothpicks and try your hand at these head-scratchers. For each puzzle, arrange the toothpicks in the starting position and try to imagine the solution without moving a single toothpick. Unless you're a VVP (Very Visual Person), you may find it decidedly difficult. In fact, don't be surprised if the kid is better at this than you are. And be sure to read the instructions carefully—some puzzles require *adding* toothpicks, others *moving* or *removing* them. We'll start with an easy one, and then get serious.

# MOVE TWO to MAKE TWO


**THE PROBLEM:** Arrange six toothpicks to form a triangle. Now move two toothpicks to form two triangles.

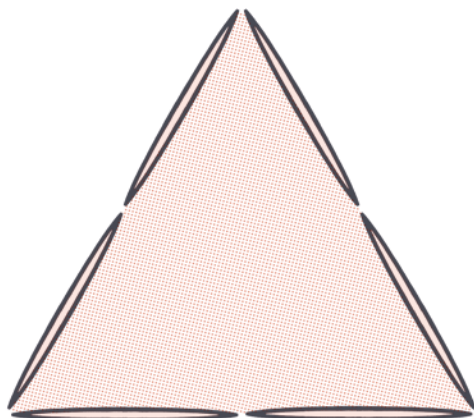


**SOLUTION:**

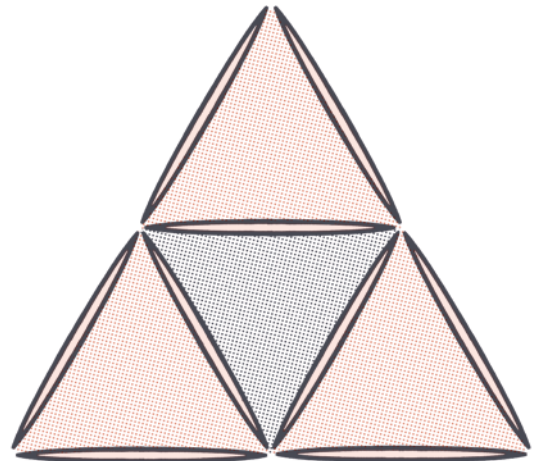


# ADD THREE *to* MAKE FIVE

 **THE PROBLEM:** Arrange six toothpicks to form one large triangle. Add three toothpicks to form five triangles.

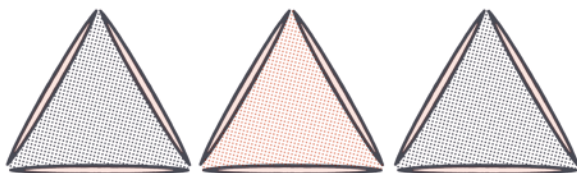


**SOLUTION:**

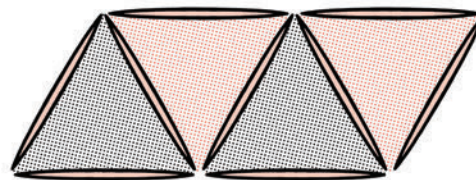
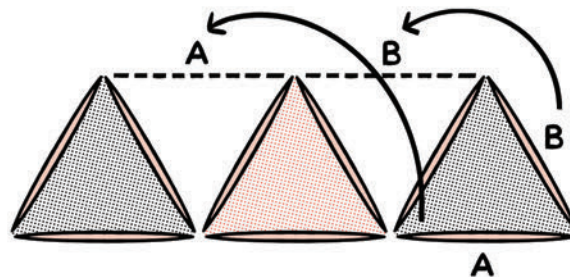


# MOVE TWO to MAKE FOUR

 **THE PROBLEM:** Move two toothpicks to form four triangles.



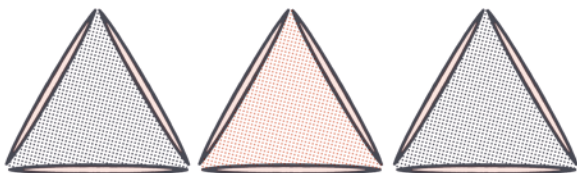
**SOLUTION:**



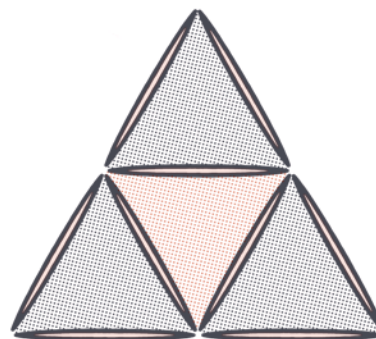
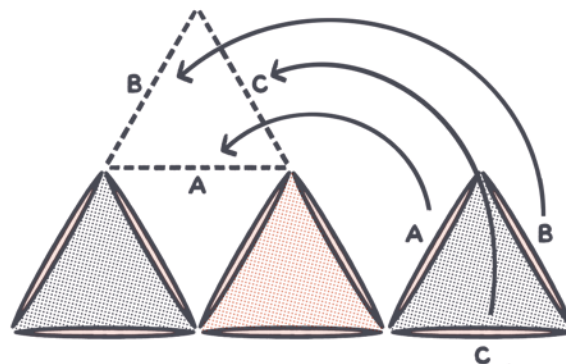


# MOVE THREE to MAKE FIVE

 **THE PROBLEM:** Move three toothpicks to form five triangles.



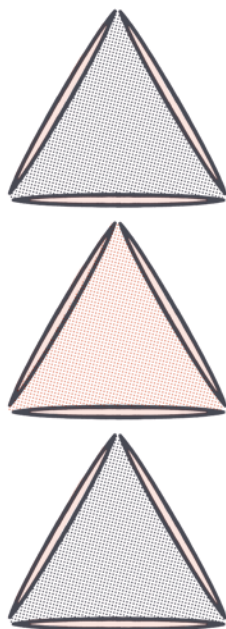
**SOLUTION:**



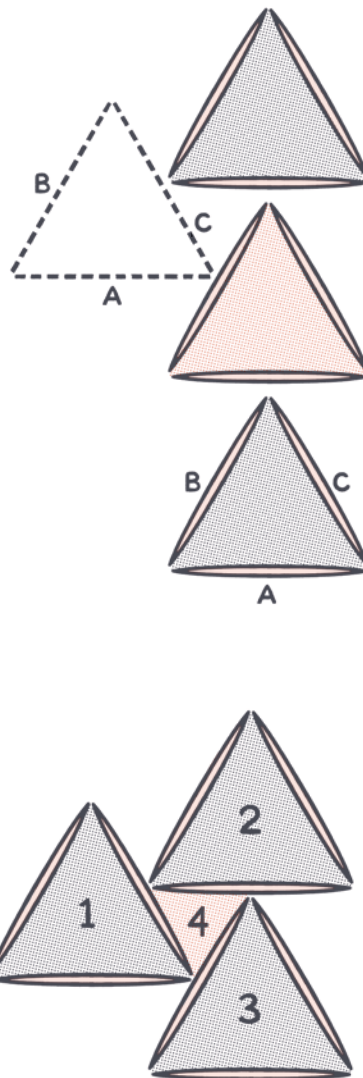


# MOVE THREE to MAKE FOUR

 **THE PROBLEM:** Move three toothpicks to make four triangles.

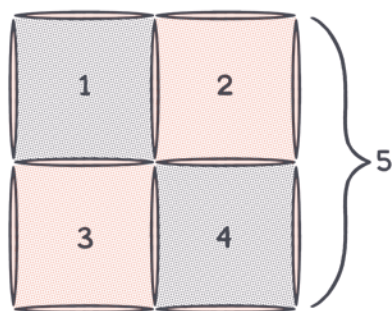


**SOLUTION:**



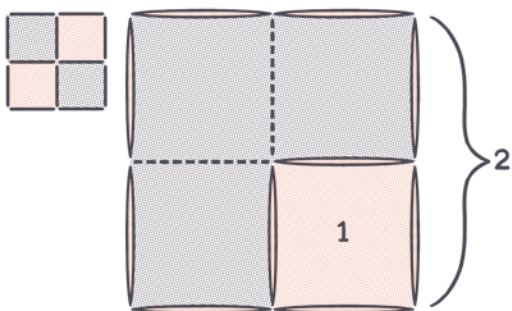
# FIVE SQUARE

**A**rrange twelve toothpicks to form five squares. This will be the starting arrangement for the next five puzzles (pages 177–178).



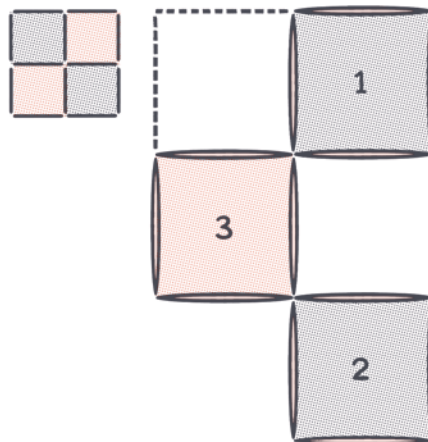
**THE PROBLEM:** From the starting position of five squares, remove two toothpicks to form two squares.

**SOLUTION:**



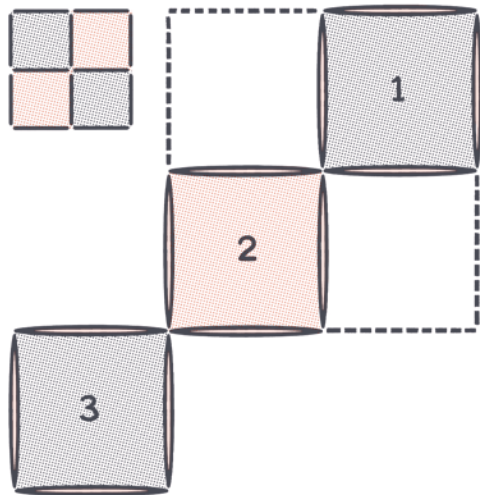
**THE PROBLEM:** From the starting position of five squares, move three toothpicks to form three equal-size squares.

**SOLUTION:**



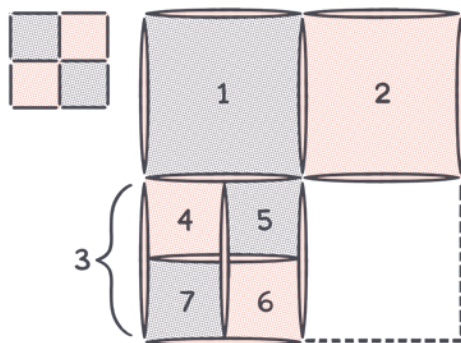
**THE PROBLEM:** From the starting position of five squares, move four toothpicks to form three equal-size squares.

**SOLUTION:**



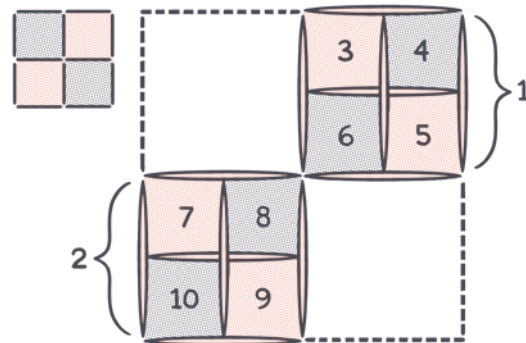
**THE PROBLEM:** From the starting position of five squares, move two toothpicks to form seven squares.

**SOLUTION:**



**THE PROBLEM:** From the starting position of five squares, move four toothpicks to form ten squares.

**SOLUTION:**



# THREE CLASSIC PUZZLERS

## *and Other Cranial Challenges*

**M**any of these stunts began as bar bets. You issue a challenge, and the loser buys the drinks. No need to go to a bar to try these on the kid.

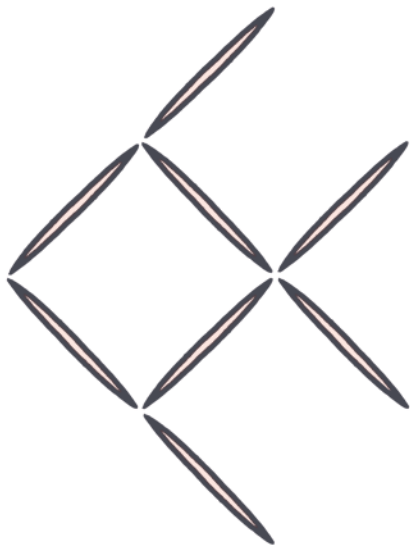


# East/West SWIMMING FISH

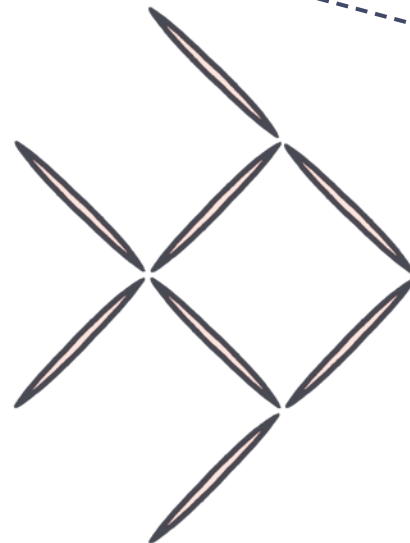
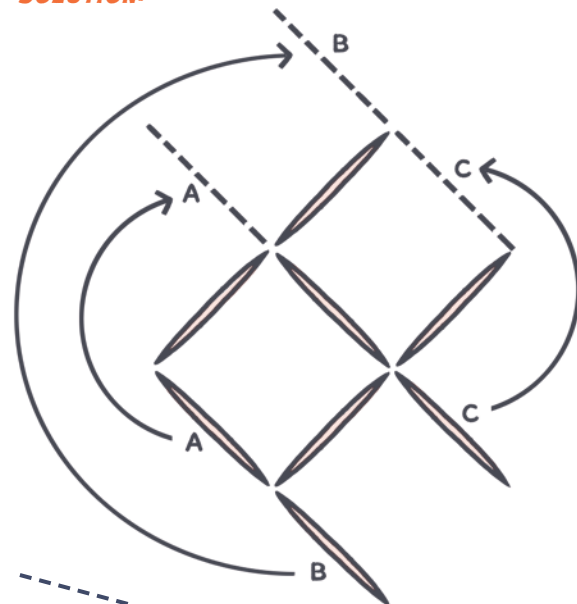
CREATED BY KOBON FUJIMURA

**A**rrange eight toothpicks in the form of a fish swimming west.

**⚡ THE PROBLEM:** Move three toothpicks so that the fish swims east.



**SOLUTION:**





# The GIRAFFE

CREATED BY MEL STOVER

**A**rrange five toothpicks in the form of a giraffe.

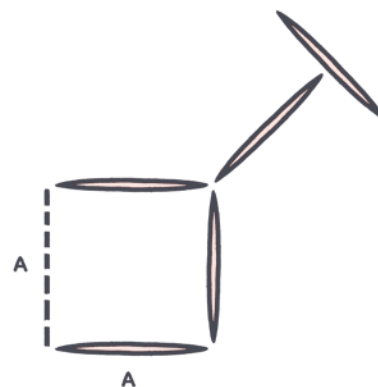
**THE PROBLEM:** Move one toothpick so that the shape of the giraffe remains intact, but the giraffe is oriented in another direction.



**SOLUTION:** Move the rear leg of the giraffe so that it's perpendicular to the front leg. Turn the book ninety degrees and the giraffe will be facing the opposite direction.

## From MATCHSTICKS to TOOTHPICKS

**T**oothpick puzzles are a kid-friendly adaptation of puzzles originally done with matchsticks. These became widely popular in the mid-nineteenth century, when matchmakers (not that kind) began including instructions for the puzzles on their matchboxes. The puzzles proved an entertaining way to test one's skills or challenge friends. Publishers soon capitalized on this interest by issuing collections of matchstick puzzles, an enterprise that continues to this day. The puzzles were also taken up as a mini-branch of recreational mathematics, where problem solvers could hone their reasoning and spatial-relationship skills. So hats off to the British chemist John Walker, who in 1827 discovered how to make fire by drawing a chemical-coated stick through a piece of sandpaper.

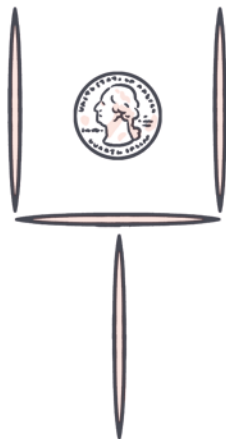


# The GOALPOSTS

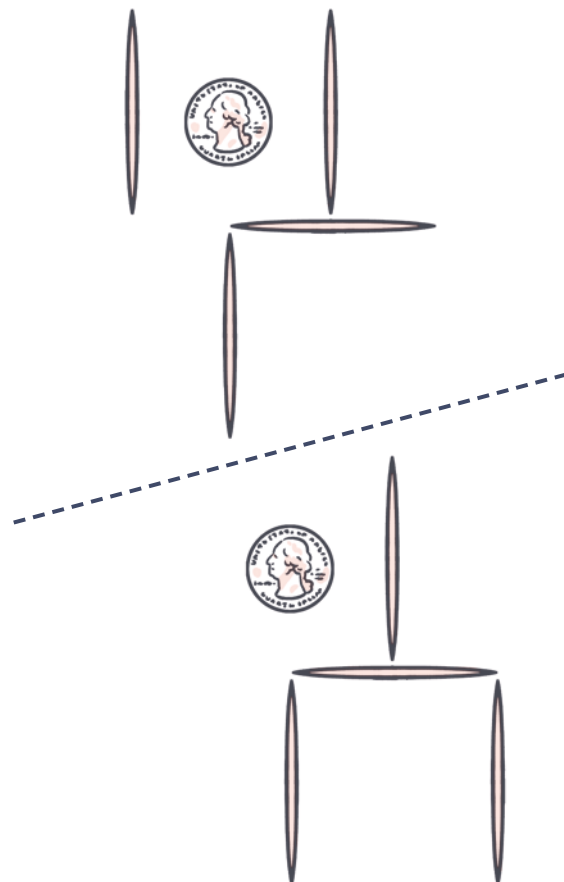
CREATED BY MARTIN GARDNER

**A**rrange four toothpicks in the shape of goalposts. Place a small coin or a piece of toothpick so that it's going through the uprights. This is your football. (In Gardner's original puzzle, it was a martini glass and an onion.)

**THE PROBLEM:** Move two toothpicks to get the football out of the uprights. You cannot move the football, and when the puzzle is completed, the goalposts must be intact.



**SOLUTION:** Move the horizontal toothpick right by half a toothpick, and then move the upper left-side toothpick to the bottom right. The goalposts are now upside down but intact, and the ball is out of the uprights.



# The STACK of PENNIES

**A**rrange twelve pennies in a stack. About a foot away, line up a quarter, a nickel, a penny, and a dime, in descending order by size.

**THE PROBLEM:** Which coin, when stood on edge, will equal the height of the penny stack?

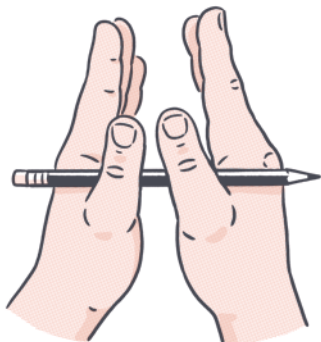


This is not as easy as it looks.

**SOLUTION:** I'm not telling. Try it and be surprised.

# The PENCIL PALM INVERSION

**H**old a pencil or a chopstick, as shown. Your palms face each other, an inch or two apart, thumbs on top.



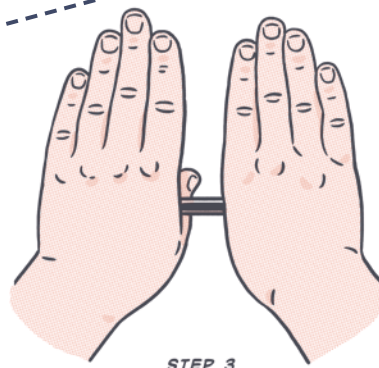
**THE PROBLEM:** Without letting go of the pencil, turn both hands palm down so that your thumbs end up beneath your palms.

**SOLUTION:** Step 1: Slide your hands together and cross your left thumb over your right.

Steps 2 to 3: Keeping your hands in contact, swivel your right fingers downward and your left fingers upward. Continue this motion, turning your right hand palm up and your left hand palm

down. Your right hand now swivels completely under the left and keeps turning until both hands are palm down.

To return to the original position, cross your left thumb under your right and reverse the moves.





# The MIGHTY TOOTHPICK

**H**ave the kid hold a toothpick between three fingers, as shown. The toothpick rests on the back of the middle finger, with the ring and index fingers on top.



**THE PROBLEM:** Keeping your fingers perfectly straight, break the toothpick.

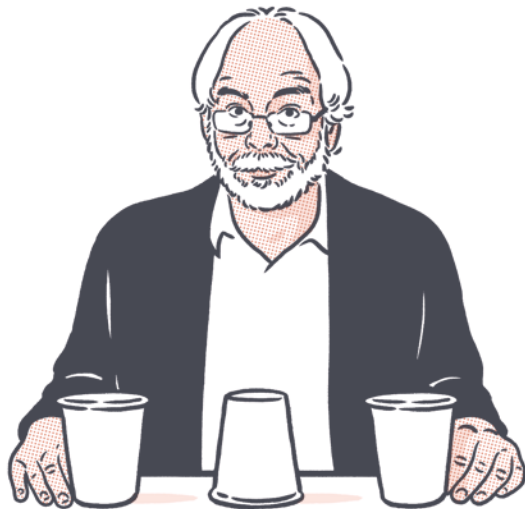
**SOLUTION:** Slap your hand on the table.





# The THREE-CUP CHALLENGE

**A**rrange the three cups in a row, as shown. The end cups are mouth up, and the center cup is mouth down.



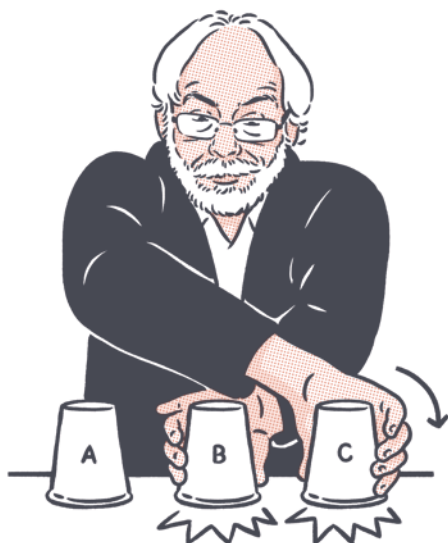
**THE PROBLEM:** Say, “Watch carefully, because you’re going to try to do this. I’m going to turn over two cups at a time. And I’ll do it three times. When I’m done, all the cups will be upside down. Watch . . .”

Using both hands, turn over cups B and C.



Now turn A and C, followed by B and C.





All the cups are now mouth down.

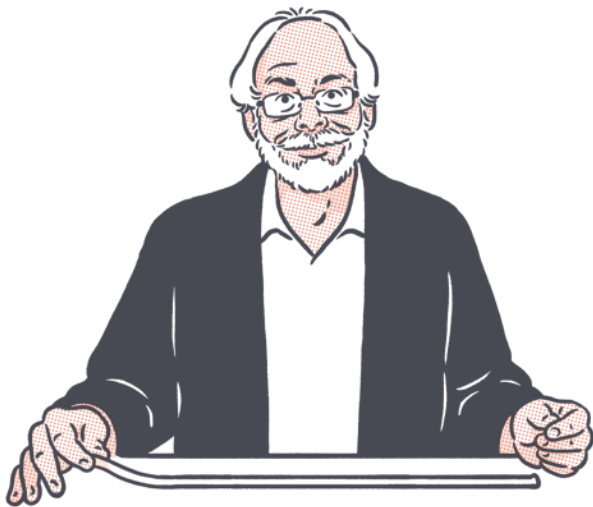
*“It looks easy, right? Three turns, two cups at the same time, and they end up just like this.” Turn over the center cup. “Give it a try.”*

Guess what? The kid won’t be able to do it. Why not?

**SOLUTION:** When you end the demonstration all of the cups will be mouth down. Turn the center cup mouth up and challenge the kid to duplicate what you just did. It will be impossible because this is not how the cups were arranged in the first place. They were up, down, up—not down, up, down. This is almost never noticed. The kid can end up with all cups mouth up, but that wasn’t the challenge. As a bit of misdirection, cross your arms when you turn the cups. This does nothing, but it adds another layer of complexity when she tries to duplicate your feat.

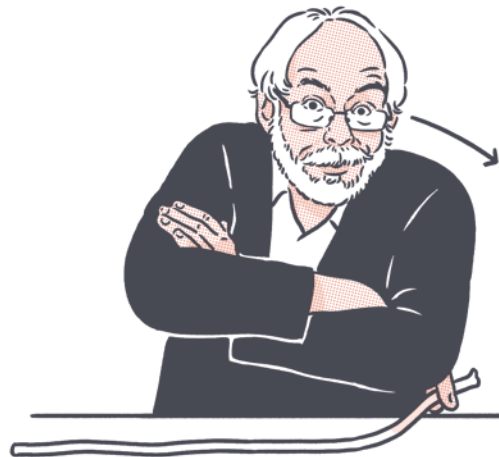
# The IMPOSSIBLE KNOT

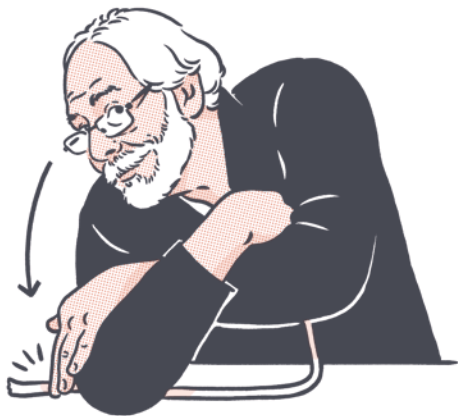
**Y**ou need a long shoelace or a piece of string about two feet long. Stretch it out on the table and issue the challenge.



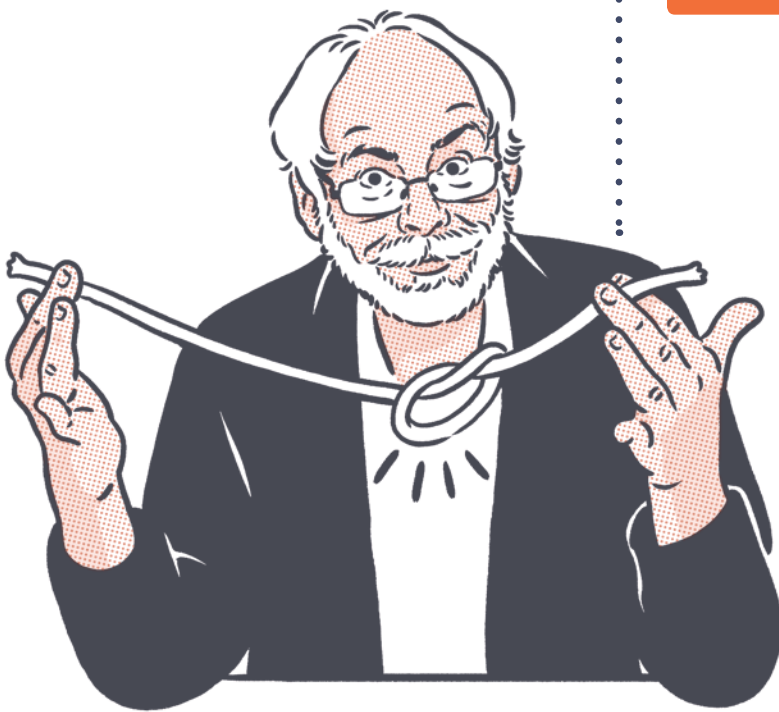
**THE PROBLEM:** While holding the string by the ends (one end in each hand), tie a knot in the center of the string without letting go of the ends.

**SOLUTION:** Fold your arms, then take one end of the string in one hand. Now grab the other end in your other hand.





Simply unfold your arms and there you have it—a knot.



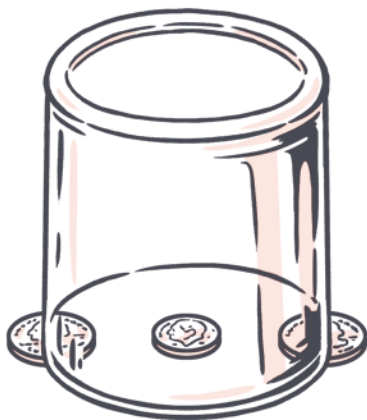
## *A Knotty* **TONGUE TWISTER**

**T**he toughest tongue twister of all time (says me) has only two words. Say them three times in a row, the duck comes down, and you win a hundred dollars (now there's a reference you don't hear every day—Google it). But don't get your hopes up. The words are a person's name. Say it three times fast: Peggy Babcock.



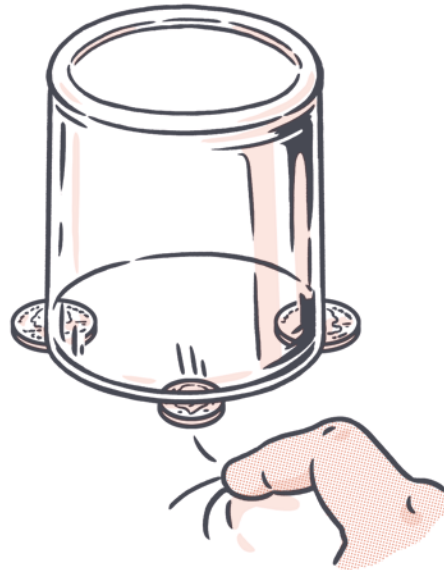
# The TEN-CENT PROBLEM

**F**or this caper you'll need two quarters, a dime, a drinking glass, and a table with a tablecloth on it. Place the dime on the table and cover it with the inverted glass, resting the rim of the glass on the quarters.



**THE PROBLEM:** Remove the dime without touching the glass or sliding anything under it.

**SOLUTION:** Place your index finger on the tablecloth directly in front of the glass. Now scratch the tablecloth with your nail, using rapid inward strokes. The dime will walk its way toward you and emerge from under the glass.





# Acknowledgments

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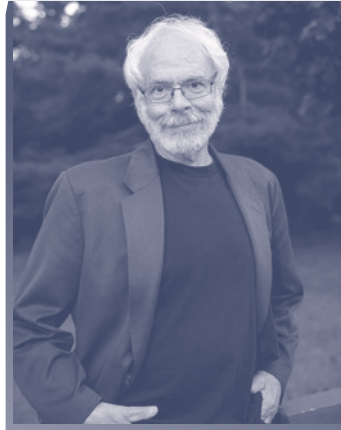


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Allan Zola Kronzek is a magician, educator, and the coauthor (with his daughter, Elizabeth) of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Sorcerer's Companion—A Guide to the Magical World of Harry Potter* (over 1 million copies sold worldwide in 14 languages). He is also the author of *The Secrets of Alkazar*, *52 Ways to Cheat at Poker*, *Artful Deceptions*, and the forthcoming *The Book of Powers*. He lives in Sag Harbor, NY.



