

Tarot Decks for Beginners

Suggestions and Comments on Selected Decks

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The decks listed below are broken up into categories. Some work well for beginners, and some do not. Some will work well for beginners with a specific background. In general, the decks that work best for beginners are decks that are either a variation of the Rider Tarot or stay close to the imagery used in Rider. It is often best for a beginner to start with this type of deck and, after learning and understanding the symbolism in one deck, to then move out and find a deck that works best with him or her.

In general it is better to outgrow a deck and move on to one more complex or even more powerful than to try to start reading with a deck that is difficult to work with. For example, the Thoth Deck is complex and extremely powerful. It is better for a beginner to start with Rider or Connolly or Hanson-Roberts and feel like the current deck is no longer appropriate, *then* move on to a more powerful deck like Thoth than to just start with the Thoth deck.

Some decks have books that accompany them or are designed to work with the deck. Often this books can be extremely helpful in understanding that particular deck. It is up to each reader to decide if the tiny instruction books that often accompany a new deck are useful or frustrating.

Variations of the standard Deck of the Late 20th Century *(All of these are recommended for beginning tarot readers.)*

Rider Tarot Deck: The standard deck of our time.

Rider-Waite Tarot Deck: Basically the same as the Rider Tarot Deck (in other words the author could find no differences).

Universal Waite Tarot Deck: Softer colors and more soothing visually than the original Rider or Rider-Waite.

Albano-Waite Tarot Deck: Another variation on the Rider Tarot theme.

Decks Recommended for Beginners

Hanson-Roberts Tarot Deck: Very close to the Rider and Rider-Waite in traditional design. Size and shape is more like traditional playing cards, making it easier for them to handle. There is enough variation on the Rider-Waite designs to allow beginners more room for interpretation.

New Palladini Tarot: Designed to bring together the past, present, and future in images. The images do not have as much detailed symbolism as other decks, but the symbols are close to traditional and easy to recognize.

Connolly Tarot: Imagery differs from Rider, but is still easily recognizable. Two cards in this deck differ greatly from tradition: Death is Transition and The Devil is Materialism. Both changes are easy to understand and easy to follow. The colors are chosen to remind the reader of stained glass windows. Because of this effect, there are few in-depth details on this deck.

Suggested (But Not Recommended) for Beginners

Tarot of Cloisters: Cards are all circular. This makes preventing inverted readings difficult unless the reader refuses to accept inverted card messages. There is no notation in this deck of inverted meanings. Imagery is close to traditional, but the lines in designs that give the stained glass appearance could distract some readers from paying attention to the imagery and symbolism.

Tarot of a Moon Garden: Deck based on fantasy images. Many images are close to traditional, but there is enough variation to require extra attention when learning how to read.

Suggested for Beginners in Special Situations

Lord of the Rings Tarot and Card Game: The meanings in some cards differs from standard meanings and imagery, but to a fan or devotee of the trilogy, the background given in the books may help understand the cards. This is also a game, which some see as a plus and some see as a negative.

Tarot of the Old Path: Based on Wiccan concepts and ideas, this deck stays close to the Rider symbolism. A significant number of cards that have different names still have symbols that are close to the traditional symbols.

Russian Tarot of St. Petersburg: Some imagery comes directly from historical figures in this deck. The symbols are very close to the traditional symbols. There is a lot of intricate design work that adds to the beauty of this deck, but it may also make reading the symbolism in this deck difficult for beginners.

Decks Not Recommended for Beginners

Thoth Tarot Deck (Also called Aleister Crowley Tarot): Extremely unusual imagery and sometimes difficult for even experienced tarot readers to understand. This is a powerful deck, but it is not an easy one to use.

Aleister Crowley Tarot: See Thoth Tarot Deck

Old English Tarot: This deck is feels like Alice in Wonderland. There is a minimal use of symbolic details and often the symbolism varies greatly from traditional symbols.

Renaissance Tarot Deck: Some of the symbolism in the Major Arcana differs greatly from the traditional images and the Minor Arcana cards have no symbolic images, which make this deck extremely difficult for beginners.

Navigators Tarot of the Mystic Sea: An extremely colorful deck. One advantage of this deck is the one word meanings on each card. The symbolism on this card is often completely different from traditional symbolism and can be confusing to a beginning reader.

Inner Child Cards: Cards are extremely large. The symbolism is taken from fairy tales and children s stories. This is a wonderful deck for meditation and inner child work, but it does not work for many people for divination.

Aquarian Tarot: Simple imagery, but often it does not come close to traditional images.

Voyager Tarot Deck: A very complex deck. The symbolism in this deck can be difficult and can distract a reader and make giving readings difficult. Also a very unusual deck and good for meditation use.

Novelty Decks

Tarot of Baseball: Rods, Balls, Caps, and Gloves replace the four suits and both arcanas are referred to as Major League Arcana and Minor League Arcana. Very cleverly done. This deck would make the most sense to tarot readers who are baseball fans, but the different suits would make it difficult for a beginner to learn with this deck and still easily transfer knowledge of the suits to other decks.

The Halloween Tarot: Ghosts, Pumpkins, and other images replace the traditional suits. The imagery is well done and well thought out, but the difference in suits would make it difficult for a beginner to transfer learning and experience from this deck to other decks.