

The Wandering Hermit

Learning the Tarot

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The Tarot Deck: The Minor Arcana

The Minor Arcana

The biggest part of the deck is actually the Minor Arcana. While the Major Arcana deals with the major parts of the journey of life, the Minor Arcana is four smaller cycles, each numbered Ace through Ten, and followed by four Court Cards (Page, Knight, Queen, King). While many readers feel Majors indicate strong areas of concern or strength in a reading, the Minors are still important to show the full picture. There are four Suits in the Minor Arcana, and each suit represents one of the four elements (Fire, Air, Earth, and Water). When people say everything is made of these four elements, we do not mean literally. We are talking spiritually and metaphorically (Yes, I use that word a lot. I like it. Everything in life is a metaphor.)

I will explain the four elements and four suits, then move on to tell about the cards. I will cover each number, then give brief comments on the cards. Again, these are **my** comments. Please allow yourself to find your own meanings. If you're looking at a card and the picture says something to you other than what I say, remember General Answer #1 and go with your sense.

Although few decks portray the numbered cards in the Minor Arcana as an actual story, like The Fool's Journey, they do form cycles. In the Minor Arcana two of these cycles end on positively (the Cups and Pentacles) and two end more darkly (Wands and Swords).

The Four Elements and Suits

The four elements are Fire, Air, Water, and Earth. Fire represents creativity. (I also feel Fire represents spirituality and, though I've found a few readers that agree with me and none that disagree, I have yet to see it written anywhere.) Fire is the beginning energy that allows us to conceive projects and develop ideas. In tarot, Fire is represented by the suit of Wands. Sometimes decks use different names for suits and Wands may be called Rods, Staffs, or Staves. Most of the cards in this suit are positive, although it does end on a downbeat note. Fire is associated with the Fire signs of the zodiac, which are Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius.

The element Air represents intelligence and is represented by Swords. A sword and mind can be easily compared. Both need to be sharp and there are two edges to each thought and to the sword. Many of the cards representing pain or troubles or worries are in this suit. I feel that's because intelligence is a wonderful tool, but when we live our life through our brain, by thinking everything out, instead of going by our heart or intuition, we keep digging ourselves into holes. Sometimes depression comes from overanalyzing situations instead of just accepting them and moving on. When I read many of the Swords cards, I find there is an analogy between the swords on the card and thoughts, with each sword representing a thought. Air is associated with the Air signs of the zodiac, which are Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius.

Water is emotions and is shown in tarot with cups. Some decks use Cauldrons or Vessels or other names. Like emotions, Water has no shape, other than the shape of the container that holds it. Our emotions can be allowed to scatter everywhere, but ultimately we are responsible for them. We are the cup and our emotions are the water. A large number of the cards that represent celebration or joy are in the Cups. Water is associated with the Water signs of the zodiac, which are Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces.

Pentacles represent the element Earth. Other names for this suit are Coins, Disks, Crystals, or even Stars. This suit seems to pick up alternative names more than other suits. Perhaps it is because the pentacle has received a bad name, mainly due to the efforts of the Church. Remember what you learned about the Church in the Middle Ages? Poverty was encouraged. Since Pentacles represented Earth, which is material goods (including the body), money, and the ability to manage it, naturally a church that was against keeping material goods turned the symbol that represented such goods into a negative sign. (By the way, notice in this suit any pentacle is drawn with one point up. Two points up represents the devil and his horns see the Devil in the Major Arcana on your deck.) Pentacles are associated with the Earth signs of the Zodiac, which are Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn.

The Numbered Cards

Aces

Aces are beginnings. Aces carry a lot of positive energy in the start of a cycle.

Wands: The start of a new creative project or creative energy being brought into another project.

Swords: Not just a beginning, but one that comes out of victory out of rising above something.

Cups: An emotional start that is a beginning. Note it is a ONE, not a Two. This is more likely tied to just the seeker than to a relationship.

Pentacles: New income or new job. Something new with money or material goods. This shows a fantastic time to go job hunting.

Twos

Twos are balance or creating balance or finding balance.

Wands: Energy for creativity just waiting to be released to bring back good results.

Swords: A decision to make. Emotions may cloud situation and seeker may be blinded.

Cups: Relationships, usually romance. Other cards around will tell what is going on with the relationship. If by itself, it is a good sign for relationships.

Pentacles: Balancing act. It will be necessary to balance different situations, jobs, or sources of income. Gain will likely be final outcome of this.

Threes

Threes are usually positive and can be celebration or restructuring after the balance in the Twos.

Wands: Good results from energy you have sent out will be coming back in a positive way.

Swords: A difficult and painful time. A broken heart. (To me this says every silver lining has a cloud.)

Cups: Time for celebration and joy, but there will be more work to come.

Pentacles: Time of education and learning. Apprenticeship. (Some readers say this is the master craftsman, but I am uncomfortable with the idea of mastery this early in a cycle.)

Fours

Fours are a good solid foundation. That can be a base to build on, or it could be a base that creates unneeded rigidity.

Wands: Harvest home. Time to celebrate the rewards that have come in. There is still more work in the future.

Swords: Although many people think of this in connection with death, it focuses on a time of rest and renewal or a distancing from the action.

Cups: Something is being offered but the focus is so strongly on what is already present that the new gift or offering will not be accepted or appreciated for a while (if at all).

Pentacles: This is the miser who is holding on to his money so tightly he no longer controls it, but it controls him.

Fives

Fives are change and are unstable in all suits. I think of Fives as a time when the established patterns are upset or changed.

Wands: Chaos. A lot of energy flowing in different directions. Lack of organization. Unfocused energy.

Swords: Surrender. To fight is to lose. Victory will only come giving up control.

Cups: At this point it is easier to see the negatives and the loss instead of the good fortune that is still there.

Pentacles: Problem in dealing with a loss of faith or other loss. Depression or sorrow.

Sixes

After the change or chaos of a five, the result is positive in the Sixes. Sixes are all positive.

Wands: Victory over something. Good outlook. Often victory in one's job.

Swords: Moving on from a difficult time to a better one.

Cups: Good rewards and joy connected with an influence from the past.

Pentacles: Money will be coming in probably from unlikely source.

Sevens

Wisdom or choice or perseverance. As we near the end of the cycle, we can get bored with continuing, or be unsure where to go. These and the Eights together are the changes toward the end of the cycle.

Wands: Position of strength to deal with opposition. The seeker is in a stronger position than originally thought.

Swords: This is the thief. You may need to find a more discreet way to face a challenge, rather than head on, or this can be a warning that someone is taking from the seeker or the seeker is unwittingly taking from another.

Cups: Choices are presented. Some are false or illusions or dangerous. At this time it will be hard to see which way to go and it might be better to wait until the fog clears.

Pentacles: Hard work does not seem to have paid off. It is hard to see the fruits of one's labor.

Eights

Eights are usually associated with movement. Perhaps it is time to move forward, or to move in a different direction, or to release one's Self and allow movement.

Wands: Obstacles are falling out of the way. Rapid progress. There is movement.

Swords: The seeker has created a trap out of worries and fears. The swords blocking the way are all thoughts or worries of what cannot work out.

Cups: It is time to move in another direction. The seeker has structures that have almost been finished that are no longer serving a useful purpose and it is time to change the cycle.

Pentacles: A hobby or enjoyable pastime turning to profitable employment. It will likely start without much income, but the potential for more is there.

Nines

Nines are penultimate. They are the almost there of tarot. They can be part of moving toward something positive, or the worry or dread of what is to come.

Wands: The struggle is closer to the end than one thinks, but there is still the energy and will to continue the struggle if necessary. It may appear to the seeker that the struggle looks endless.

Swords: Worries and anxiety but needless, since things will work out. The worries are causing a problem worse than the problem being worried about. It is the worry, now, that could bring failure.

Cups: Wish card. Wishes are coming true. Make a wish.

Pentacles: Comfort and affluence. Possibly a time of solitary enjoyment. A person enjoying what they have worked for and built not enjoying what has been won or given to them.

Tens

Tens are the end of the cycle. Two are negative (Wands, Swords) and two are positive (Cups, Pentacles).

Wands: The struggle has become a burden the seeker can lay down, but may be unwilling to let go of this burden. This is like the artist who feels a drive to continue perfecting his work rather than find a way to finish or resolve it.

Swords: Death and ending. Dark ending, but light will follow.

Cups: Happiness and joy. Possibly connected with family. Joyous outcome.

Pentacles: Good time to purchase or sell property. Possible move.

The Court Cards

The Court Cards are still part of the Minor Arcana, but I created a special section for them because they are the sixteen cards in the deck that often cause the most confusion for students. All can be seen as people or as aspects of the seeker's personality. Pages may also be seen as messages or new beginnings, or a part of the seeker which is emerging. Knights can represent motion. Pages and Knights are often used to represent children or teens. All the Court Cards have developed specific meanings for me after much practice and many readings. I'm not going to go into their meanings for me, since that gets too specific and, in line with General Answer #1, I don't want anyone getting caught up in my interpretations instead of their own.

Pages

In addition to a person or an aspect of the seeker, Pages can also indicate a youth, a message, a new beginning, a new part of the seeker emerging, or a new opportunity.

Wands: An energetic person. Could also be good news coming soon.

Swords: An intelligent person, but often more concerned with facts than people's feelings. Possibly a gossip, since this person is more interested in information than emotions and may hurt people without realizing it.

Cups: Sensitive youth or new beginning or birth within the seeker's personality.

Pentacles: Business opportunity at ground floor or a hardworking and diligent youth.

Knights

Knights can be people, but also action or motion. The Knight of Cups can be a romantic interest or a romantic rival! Knights can stand for so many things it requires looking at related cards in a spread or relying on your intuition to know what they mean.

Wands: Swift movement, but easily distracted. Possible move. A good friend. In terms of movement, this Knight is easily distractable by other interests.

Swords: Swift movement and progress, often done without awareness of how it can hurt others. Usually this movement is too swift and, if not guarded or checked, will leave behind chaos.

Cups: This Knight is the seeker of arts and Truth. He is also the Knight that follows his own heart. He could represent a romantic interest who is remote or in the future or a romantic rival.

Pentacles: Slow but steady progress this progress is assured. Good financial or business opportunity approaching.

Queens

Queens and Kings are easier to read than Pages and Knights. They are usually people, but can be an aspect of the seeker.

Wands: Loves life. Has lots of energy for her own interests as well as her family.

Swords: Strong woman, likely to have recently suffered a loss, but wise enough to know the loss is not the end and love will come again.

Cups: Woman in tune with herself, possibly so in tune she is not always aware of her surroundings.

Pentacles: Hard worker who has earned her affluence, but she is also generous.

Kings

Kings are like Queens. They are usually people, but could be an aspect of the seeker.

Wands: Charming and kind. Able to see the big picture, but not good with details.

Swords: Intelligent man judges based on facts and deeds, not on emotions.

Cups: Man who helps others, but is likely not in touch with himself.

Pentacles: Good business man. Hard worker who has earned his affluence, but also generous.

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