

**By James Warren**

## SESSION FOUR

In your fourth session you're going to learn some "close-up" routines. These are routines that require kids to gather around you in order to see what's happening. If you are working on Zoom, it will require pointing your webcam towards the surface of your desk. It is not important that they see your face, only your hands and the objects on the table. They should have as close a view as possible.

Knowing some close-up routines is important for those times when you really want to involve students. When people can move in close, they feel like they're part of an intimate "happening." This creates rapport between you and the kids, and helps the kids feel like a team – everyone is experiencing the magic together. And because people are watching at close range, it also makes the magic seem even more amazing.

**PLEASE REMEMBER!** Tricks can be complicated to explain in writing, and that's why I've also provided you with a VIDEO component for these lessons – so please watch the videos. At the same time, however, I communicate many subtleties and ideas on paper that I skip over in the videos. So please use both approaches to learning. The video and the written instructions are meant to be complimentary.

I do, however, especially recommend using the written text to learn the second routine in this session, "The Penny Paradox," because the diagrams I've given you will speed your learning.

## **THE ONLY CARD TRICK**

This is the only card trick I am going to teach you in this series. There are plenty of card tricks available online or in bookstores if you care to learn more. The reason I am including this one is because you're likely to encounter kids playing cards in the cafeteria or at recess, and knowing at least one really great card trick will give you a powerful means of spontaneously connecting with them. With a good card trick up your sleeve you can easily "infiltrate" a group even of teenagers. I've done it many times. Armed with only a deck of cards, I've approached strangers in restaurants and elsewhere, people of all ages, and made new friends – all because of the power of magic inherent to a common deck of playing cards.

The trick, however, is knowing a *good* trick. There are literally hundreds of boring card tricks out there. Please allow me to share with you a stunning trick that will set you above the average card trick shower, and earn the respect and wonderment of any student.

You *can* do this trick online, but it can be "tricky" to pull it off. I recommend waiting until you can do it live, but I will give you suggestions on how to pull it off virtually.

### **THE EFFECT**

You predict the card that a student will randomly generate. What makes it really amazing is that you barely touch the cards – the magic happens in the student's own hands!

### **PRESENTATION**

Before I give you the method, let me walk you step-by-step through the procedure and presentation, so you'll know how the trick looks to the audience.

You hand a deck of cards to a student and ask them to shuffle. "Who's a good shuffler? You are, Meghan? Great, I want you to shuffle the cards as well as you can. Really mix them up well! Jake says he's a good shuffler, too, so when you're done hand the deck to Jake and let him shuffle."

Taking back the cards, you quickly look through the deck and remove one card which you call your *Prediction Card*. Place that card face down on the table so only you know its identity.

"Okay, great job shuffling! I'm going to take out *one* card that I have an intuition about – let's call it the *Prediction Card*. Here it is . . . I'm going to place it face down on the table because I don't want anybody to see what that card is yet."

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You hand the deck back to Meghan, and say, "Here, Meghan, hold the deck. I want everybody to take note: *I will not touch the cards from now on.* You're holding a deck of cards that you shuffled yourself, right Meghan? And you're going to do this whole thing yourself – remember, I won't touch the cards. Now I want you to name a number between, say, 20 to 40, although you could go a higher or lower if you wish."

[Meghan says 28.] "Was that a free choice, Meghan? Are you sure about it? Would you like to make the number a little lower or a little higher? No? You're sure? Okay, everybody remember that Meghan shuffled the cards, and Meghan chose the number 28. So, Meghan, I want you to deal 28 cards into a pile on the table." [She does so.]

"Set the remainder of the deck aside, pick up the pile you just dealt, and deal them again, this time into two separate piles."

Indicate how you want Meghan to deal the cards, which is *alternating* into two piles. In other words, she deals the first (top) card to the table, and for explanatory purposes I'll call this pile A. The next card would be dealt to the table *alongside* the first card – call this pile B. The dealing continues back-and-forth between the piles, one card to pile A, the next card to pile B, the next card to pile A, the next card to pile B . . . . I think you get the idea.]

Meghan completes the dealing, and her 28 cards have now been dealt alternately into two piles.

"Meghan, let's review. You and Jake both shuffled the cards, right? The deck was well mixed! I took out a Prediction Card and handed you the deck, and I did that *before* I asked you to name a number. *You were holding the deck* when you named the number 28, and I haven't touched the deck since, right? And you could have named a different number, right? And I had no way of knowing you would choose the number 28. And you dealt the cards yourself, right? I didn't touch them. And I won't touch them now.

"But I will tell you this . . . . every card has a number, right? Aces are one; then you have 2 through 10, Jacks are 11, Queens are 12, and Kings are 13. And every card has a suit: clubs, hearts, spades, or diamonds."

"Meghan, turn over the top card of one of the piles." Meghan turns over the top card and it is (for example) the Ten of Clubs. "Do you know what that means, Meghan? The number of this card is *Ten*. That means my Prediction Card will also be a *Ten*."

"Now turn over the top card of your other pile, Meghan." She does so, and it turns out to be (for example) the Queen of Spades. "This suit of this card is a *Spade*. That means my Prediction Card will also be a *Spade*. . . . This card is a *ten* and this card is a *spade*, so my Prediction Card is – the TEN OF SPADES!"

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Meghan turns over the Prediction Card, which has been face down on the table in full view the entire time . . . . and it is indeed the Ten of Spades!

### THE METHOD

The method is deceptively simple. The cards are indeed fairly shuffled, and can be mixed all day long – it doesn't matter. Once the students are satisfied that the cards are thoroughly mixed, you take back the deck, but only long enough to quickly remove a Prediction Card. Then you hand the deck back to the student; yet all the "dirty work" happens in those few moments when you are searching through the cards to find a Prediction Card. What happens?



Just this. Hold the deck in your right hand, faces of cards towards you (no one but you should see the faces of the cards). Your right thumb stabilizes the deck while your right fingers push the cards they contact at the rear of the deck into your left hand, as you see beginning to happen in the photograph.

***What you want to note is the first two cards that appear as you begin spreading*** (which, if you were to set the deck face-down on the table, would be the top two cards of the deck). Using our example from above – and as I've arranged in the photograph – let's say the top card is the Ten of Clubs, and the second card from top is the Queen of Spades. You don't need to remember these cards; all you need to do is mentally grab the *number* of the top card, and the *suit* of the following card. That's it. Mentally combining the Ten of Clubs and Queen of Spades in this way will give you the TEN of SPADES – and that's the card you will now look for in the deck.

***Look for the TEN of SPADES, remove it, and place it face-down on the table. Announce it as your "Prediction Card."***

Another example: Let's say the top two cards turn out to be the Two of Diamonds, followed by the Five of Hearts. Mentally combine the number 2 with suit Hearts, and look through the deck to find and remove the TWO of HEARTS. See how easy this is. That's literally all you have to do. No sleight-of-hand. If you remember the procedure that follows, the trick works itself!

Now hand the deck back to the student and have them follow your instructions (given in the EFFECT section above). As a quick summary: (1) The student freely chooses a number and deals that many cards into a pile face-down on the table; (2) student picks up the dealt pile and deals its cards again, dealing them back-and-forth into two alternating face-down piles; (3) when the top card of each pile is turned face up, the value of one combined with the suit of the other will indicate the Prediction Card you removed at the very beginning, before the student even

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named a number (a point you should remember to drive home, along with the fact that the student did all the dealing and counting, and you didn't touch the cards).

### One Caveat

There is one possible minor complication that I need to warn you about. It may be that when you are handed the shuffled deck, and you spread the cards and glimpse the top two cards, they turn out to be something like this: 7 of *Diamonds* and 4 of *Diamonds*. When you combine the number of the first card (7) with the suit of the second card (*Diamonds*), you get . . . well, *Seven of Diamonds* – which turns out to be already one of the top two cards. That means you can't use it as a Prediction Card.

The same problem would occur if, instead of both cards having the same suit, they have the same number. For example, the top card is the 8 of Spades, and the next card is the 8 of Hearts. The Prediction Card would have to be the 8 of Hearts – but that's already one of the indicator cards that has to appear on top of the alternating piles, and so cannot function at the same time as a separate *prediction* card.

If you encounter this situation where the top two cards of the shuffled deck both have the same number or the same suit, the solution is simple: use the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cards as your combination, and ditch the top card. How do you ditch the top card? Just remove it and announce it as your Prediction Card, then suddenly change your mind and say, "No, actually, I think I can find a better one." Stick it anywhere back in the deck (except back on top!) and proceed to combine the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cards to form a new Prediction Card.

But, James, what happens if the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cards *also* have either the same number or the same suit? Well, I don't think I've ever had that happen, but if it does happen, no problem: just keep spreading until you come to the first pair that you *can* use. Remove the unusable top cards and say, "I'm looking for a Prediction Card. Could be one of these . . . or maybe not." Place them back on the *bottom* of the deck rather than on the top to get them out of the way, and use the new top cards to formulate your Prediction Card.

Because no one knows what's coming, no one knows what to look for – so they will not care, nor will they remember later, that you slightly disturbed the order of the cards by transferring a couple of cards from top to bottom. Remember, in their minds the trick hasn't started yet – taking out a Prediction Card just seems like preliminary stage-setting. The trick doesn't start for them until the deck is back in the student's hands and you ask the student to name a number. Before that, they're not looking for dirty work because they don't realize how far ahead of them you are!

NOTE: I ask for a number more or less between 20 and 40 because if they choose a number higher than 40, everyone will have to sit through a lot of dealing, and that can get boring. On the other hand, if the number is too small – 10, for example – the alternate piles would only

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contain five cards each. The trick will still work, but I think it's more deceptive if the two piles are bigger.

### MATTERS OF EMPHASIS

What I want to highlight now are the things you need to **EMPHASIZE** in order to make this trick really mind-blowing.

**Important!** Magic is magical because it seems to do the impossible. But in order for people to experience this, they have to be convinced of the impossibility. *Never take it for granted that your audience appreciates the impossibility of what you are about to do.* In a trick like this you must use your "patter" or word-presentation to drive home the impossible conditions which make what you're doing magical.

In this case, the conditions that make this trick so impossible are: (1) the fact that the deck has been fairly shuffled by one or more students; (2) that you never alter that shuffled order – all you do is quickly take out a Prediction Card and hand the deck back to the shuffler; (3) the shuffled deck is in the student's hands when she chooses a number, and at all times thereafter; (4) the number is obviously a completely free choice; (5) the student does all the dealing and card handling, including turning over the top cards of the two piles, *and* turning over the Prediction Card, so there is no possibility of your switching cards.

You should strive to emphasize at least some of these conditions, because they are what makes the effect seem so impossible to the audience. If you do not stress these conditions, then later, if they try to figure it out, they may conveniently forget the conditions and reconstruct a strawman version of the trick in order to "explain" it. They might say, for example, "Oh, I know how you did that: you switched the prediction card!" By emphasizing the conditions as you present the trick, you both increase the impact of the moment of magic itself, *and* cut the ground from under false explanations that might occur to them later. You want them to leave with a sense of having been overwhelmed by the experience of amazement. *Emphasize the conditions that make the trick seem so impossible!*

**IMPORTANT: Remember NOT to repeat this trick immediately for the same group.** When you don't know what's coming, you don't know what to look for. But the second time around, you know the punch line and can now focus your attention on trying to figure it out how it works. Remember that the whole secret of this trick is that the two top cards of the deck (which you combined to create the Prediction Card) become the *bottom* cards of the first pile dealt. When that pile is dealt again into alternating piles A and B, those cards will now become the *top* cards of each pile. Nobody can track that the first time around because they don't know the climax; but don't push your luck by repeating the trick for the same crowd.

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You are now armed with a very powerful card trick that far transcends the typical trick a student is likely to show you – making you the cool magic teacher or counselor!

**One Final Note:** I mentioned earlier that you could do this trick virtually, but it would be tricky to do so. If you wish to try, here's how. One of the students online must have a deck of cards. They use their own cards, and you have them shuffle. Then have the student hold the cards facing their webcam and spread them so you can see the faces of the cards. Once you are able to spot the top two cards, combine the number and suit to form your Prediction Card and tell the student to remove that card from the deck. Say that you're getting a special feeling or vibration from that particular card, and the student should place it face down on the table.

Now proceed as per the instructions above. The only difference is that the student(s) will already know the identity of the Prediction Card; but that only spoils the surprise, not the magic. And, in fact, the chances are that many of the kids will not remember what the Prediction Card was anyway – that's why you instruct them to place the card face down even though they've seen its face.

The only tricky part of doing this virtually is catching a glimpse of the top two cards. You'll need a clear view from the student's webcam.

## **THE PENNY PARADOX**

You'll fool yourself with this one. Even if you never show it to anyone else, this is the kind of trick you'll enjoy doing just to entertain yourself. You'll watch a mystery unfold over and over again and have no idea how you're doing it. Whenever I do this, I end up saying to myself, "How is this happening?!"

**Important:** Go right now and get 30 pennies so you can follow along as you read; otherwise the instructions will sound complex and abstract, and you will not see the magic unfolding for yourself.

When you read this you might think, "I'll never remember this procedure." But it's actually quite simple if you are willing to run through it a few times to understand it. Why bother?

**Because with this routine you will have a powerful attention-magnet for students of all ages.** Third-graders will be as fascinated as high school students, and you'll find yourself with a group of fascinated kids gathered around you. (Although you can certainly do this for one student as well.)

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**And because if you learn this you'll have a routine you can do almost anywhere.** All you need is a surface to work on, and 30 pennies. (If necessary, you can use a mixture of pennies, nickels, and dimes, and if you have a large group you might be able to borrow them.) If you really want to do this but you can't find coins, you can cut up a sheet of paper and make little paper squares. You could even do this on a cafeteria table using 30 forks or spoons or salt packets! That's why you can almost always do this routine, and the very act of gathering the props and getting set up can build curiosity and become an event in itself.

So please follow along with 30 pennies or paperclips (or whatever), and although this may seem complicated at first, once you've played with it a few times it will be easy.

### THE EFFECT

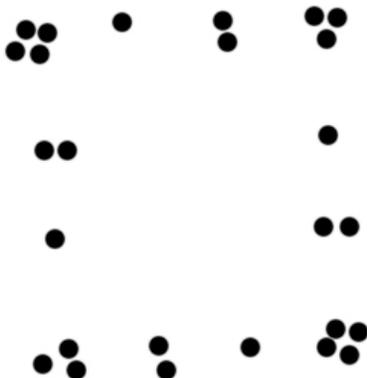
Four pennies (or other small objects like paperclips, poker chips, popcorn kernels, sugar cubes, buttons, postage stamps – you name it) seem to vanish, one after another, as you move them around very fairly.

### METHOD & PROCEDURE

You'll need 30 pennies, or whatever small objects you intend to use. Just make sure all the objects look pretty much the same; you don't want a variety of shapes and colors interfering with the visual simplicity and clarity that makes this so deceptively mysterious.

**IMPORTANT:** In these instructions I'll be telling you to move the pennies around in a certain order – but don't worry, ***you don't have to memorize this particular order.*** I'm just using this order as an example. The only thing you'll need to remember is a couple of principles, which I'll summarize at the end.

Okay, let's go. Lay the pennies out on the table in a square formation exactly as shown below.



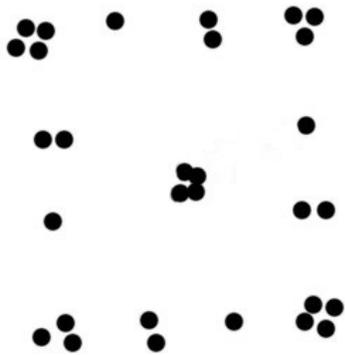
This layout is easy to remember. All you have to remember is the location of the single penny in the top row, then move clockwise laying down piles in the following order:

1, 2, 3 . . . 1, 2, 4 . . . 1, 2, 3 . . . 1, 2, 4.

That's easy to remember, no? Whenever you want to do this trick, just remember that clockwise sequence to create the square.

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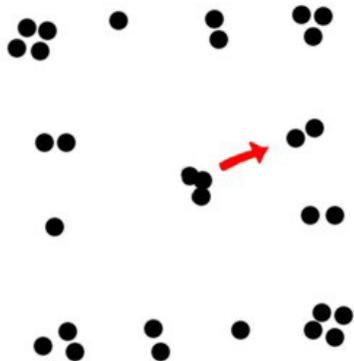
Clarify for the students that each row and column contain ten pennies. Carefully count the number of pennies in each row and column to prove that statement. To create involvement you can have the kids do the counting. Point to each penny as you count so there is no doubt that you are fairly counting the coins.



Now place four additional pennies into the center of the square. (You can use more or less than four, but I think four is ideal. It's enough to allow the mystery to keep building, without dragging things out to where the impact diminishes.)

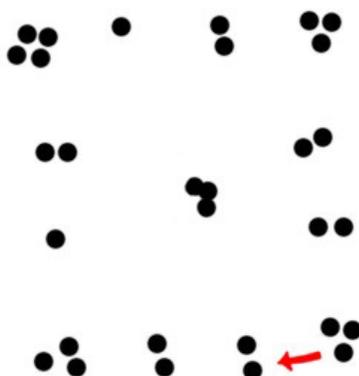
After the rows and columns have been counted, and the four additional pennies put into the center, you are ready to demonstrate the mystery.

## The Mystery Begins!



Move one penny from the center to join the single penny in the right column, so you are left with three pennies in the center and two groups of two in the right column.

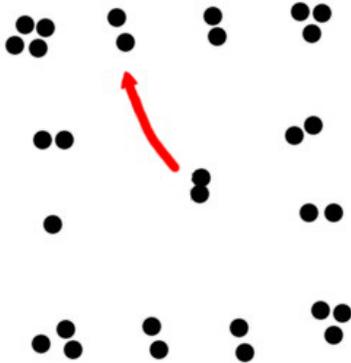
(Note: You can actually move the penny into either of the two middle piles of the column; in fact, you could move it into one of the middle piles of *any* column or row. But for now, just follow the example.)



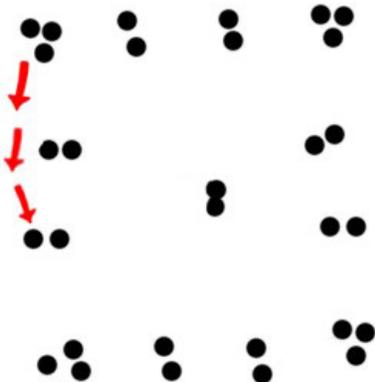
Now move one penny from the lower right corner to join the single penny in the adjacent row, as shown in the picture.

You would think that since you've added an extra penny, one of the rows or columns must have eleven pennies, right? But, in fact, *no*. Very fairly count each row and column – they all still have only TEN pennies! One seems to have vanished. Where did it go?

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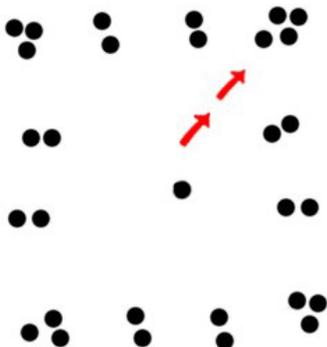
Can you do that again, Magic Teacher? Yes indeed. Now you repeat the mystery. Take another penny from the center and move it to join the single penny in the top row.



Then move one penny from the upper left corner to join the single penny on the left vertical row.

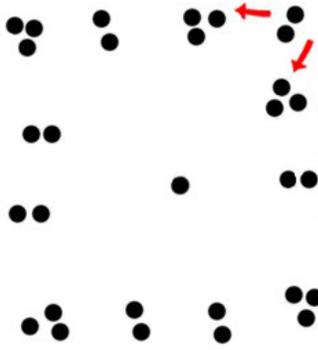
When you or the students count the rows and columns again, they all still contain only TEN pennies! Where the heck are the pennies going? Into a Penny Bermuda Triangle?

Okay, let's do it yet again. This time, instead of placing a penny into one of the middle piles, we'll place it in one of the *corner* piles.



Move another penny from the center and place it (for this example) into the upper right corner pile, which will now contain four pennies.

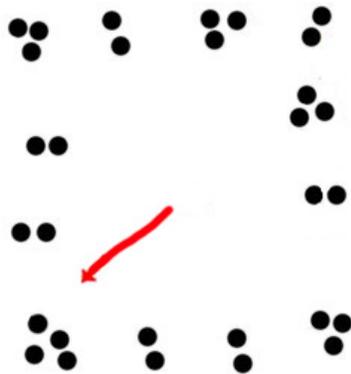
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Now move two pennies out of that pile, as shown. The rule is simple. A corner pile forms part of both a row and a column, so you move one penny to a middle pile of the row (of which the corner forms a part), and move the other penny into one of the middle piles of the column (of which the corner is also a part).

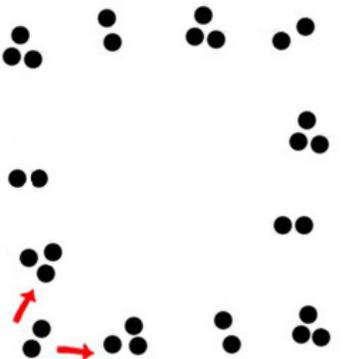
I find it easiest to move the pennies into the piles immediately adjacent to the corner pile.

Incredible as it may seem, all rows and columns still only have TEN pennies! Where are the pennies from the center pile going?!



Can you do it again? Yes! (In fact, you could keep doing this all day . . . but don't. Eventually the mystery will wear off.)

Move the last center penny into the bottom left corner (for this example; in reality, you could move it into any corner pile).



As in the previous step, move *two* pennies out of that corner, one into the row and one into column of which the corner forms a part. (Moving them into the immediately adjacent piles is easiest, but you could actually move them into either of the two *middle* piles.)

Voila! Still TEN pennies in each row and column!

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### HOW TO DO THIS WITHOUT MEMORIZING THE ABOVE SEQUENCE

The good news is that you can do the procedure in any order you wish. You just have to remember these two rules:

- (1) When a penny is added to a *middle* pile of any row or column, take one penny from a corner pile of that same row or column, and move it into a *middle* pile of the adjoining row or column.
- (2) When a penny is added to a *corner* pile of any row or column, move two pennies out of that corner pile, adding one to either middle pile in that row, and one to either middle pile of the adjoining column.

Trust me, this reads much more complex than it really is, and if you try it a few times (it's fun to play with!) you'll get it – and you'll always have a way to intrigue one, two, or a thousand students. (Yes, a thousand, because you could also do this routine using PowerPoint on a projected screen!)

### PRESENTATION

To me, this trick comes across not so much as a magic trick as a kind of puzzle or mystery, the kind of thing that makes people scratch their heads in wonder (including you, probably, if you've followed along with actual objects).

This is a great routine when you want to evoke curiosity, mystery, and lots of interaction. As I've said, you'll have kids gathered round and leaning in to see, talking, exclaiming, questioning, and otherwise interacting. Some will be trying to figure it out, blurting out theories. Some will just be mystified. You'll get the same reactions from a single student in your office.

If you want to integrate this routine into a message, first think about the effect. What is happening magically? Coins seem to be disappearing. So the theme is *disappearance*. And in this effect, it's a kind of eerie, Bermuda Triangle sort of disappearance. That ties it in perfectly, of course, to any topic having to do with mysterious disappearances.

But this routine is a natural lead-in for the topic of disappearing into the crowd, blending in, getting lost in crowd mentality. If you're teaching history or sociology or psychology or political science, you can use this routine to stimulate interest around the topic of crowd psychology.

For counselors and teachers alike, it's a great way to open up a discussion of peer-pressure. The pennies are peers. When an individual joins a group of peers and has too much desire to please the group in order to be liked, the individual can disappear, lost in the crowd. Individual choices and responsibility go out the window.