

**by James Warren**

## SESSION FIVE

Most of the material I've been sharing with you in this series has been handpicked with a view toward magic effects that can be easily incorporated into a wide variety of topics or messages. However, I think you might appreciate learning a few quick tricks that you can use for spontaneous situations – no message, just fun. That's why in the first part of this session I'm going to teach you a few coin tricks.

Playing cards are great, but for those moments when you want to do magic spontaneously, you'll probably not have a deck of cards handy. But coins are another story. It's easy to carry a coin around in your pocket, and you can usually borrow a coin if you don't have one.

Armed with a few simple coin tricks, you can command attention from kids anytime, anywhere. You can have fun with them, bond with them, settle them down and get them focused, initiate interaction and conversation, and so on. Your only problem may be that they bug you to show them more. But that's a good problem to have!

Unlike playing cards, which lend themselves to tons of tricks that require no skill, coin magic does usually require some level of sleight-of-hand, unless you're using fake coins. Since you probably do not own the required fakes, you're going to have to learn a bit of sleight-of-hand in order to perform the tricks I'm about to teach you. But don't worry, the moves are very simple, and if you are willing to put in just a few minutes of practice I'm sure you'll be able to perform these tricks! If you take the time to learn just one of them, you'll have something fun you can do spontaneously for the rest of your career!

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In the second part of this session, I have a special treat for you – a routine that has been used by magicians and mentalists around the world for decades. I thought long and hard

before deciding to share this secret with you, but you paid for this course and deserve the most value possible. I just ask that you honor the magician's code and don't share the secret with those who haven't purchased the course. The routine I will teach you involves numbers, so it's ideal for math teachers; but it can be used in many contexts, and I'll give you suggestions for customization. I'm excited to share it with you in part two.

But first, let's have some magical fun with coins!

## MY TWO FAVORITE COIN VANISHES

In case you didn't read the introductory material above, let me repeat that we are going to learn some sleight-of-hand, but it's very minimal, and if you're willing to invest a small bit of time practicing the moves (I'm talking minutes, not weeks or months), I'm sure you'll get the knack quickly.

I am giving you written descriptions with photographs, but ***definitely watch the session five video***. Some people like to learn directly from the video, then use the written description and photographs as a handy reference and memory-jog; but if you do that, please do read through the pdf anyway because I mention things here that are not on the video.

For all these coin tricks, use whatever size coin feels easiest. I would experiment with a silver dollar, a fifty-cent piece, and a quarter. For the coin-through-handkerchief, I suggest using the largest coin you can obtain, because the penetration is more visible and dramatic. If the handkerchief trick appeals to you, you might want to buy a silver dollar and keep it in your pocket or desk drawer. However, a fifty-cent piece will also work well.

Having said that, I do suggest that you also practice with a quarter, simply because you may want to do the trick but don't have a coin, and a quarter is the largest coin you're likely to be able to borrow in the moment.

The vanishes I'm going to teach you are quick . . . over almost before they begin. But they are powerful attention-getters! In fact, before I teach them to you, I must tell you a quick story because I want you to appreciate just how powerful a simple coin trick can be as an attention-getter.

I've been using these vanishes since I was in high school. (I won't tell you how long that's been, but, trust me . . . long enough!) These vanishes got me out of a real tough spot when I was a high school senior. One night in early September, I went bowling. It was cold and rainy outside, and I was wearing the new back-to-school clothing my mother had just bought me. As I was exiting the bowling alley and walking through the parking lot to my car, I was jumped by a gang of about a dozen hooligans out for some dirty fun. They were grabbing unsuspecting victims,

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carrying them to a big ditch filled with several days' worth of muddy rain water, and throwing them in. They grabbed me just as I reached my car and hoisted me into the air.

"Hey guys," I yelled, "I'm a magician! If you put me down, I'll show you an amazing trick!"

They put me down! Now I quickly had to come up with something to show them. A coin trick was the obvious choice, but I didn't have any coins. "Does anyone have a quarter?" I yelled. One of the guys handed me a quarter (someone almost always has a quarter!), and I proceeded to commandeer the attention of the entire gang, shifting their intention from throwing me into a muddy ditch, to becoming an audience for a magic trick! Plus, I had bought myself time – which is what ultimately enabled me to escape.

I did the first vanish, and they wanted to see it again. So I showed them a variation, and just as I finished, they spotted someone walking through the lot – a guy they recognized and couldn't resist grabbing. They abandoned me and charged towards him! Unfortunately for him, that poor guy had no coin trick to misdirect a gang of crazy hooligans. As he was meeting his fate, I jumped into my car and drove away!

Ah, the power of magic. Do not underestimate how effectively you can control attention *even with a simple coin trick.*

## VANISH NUMBER ONE



Okay, here's the first vanish I did for that gang. Hold your left-hand palm up and place the coin into the center of your palm.



Now curl your fingers around the coin as if to hide it inside your fist – *except that your left fingers cover only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the coin or less.* The result is that two-thirds or more of the coin projects out from under your fingers.

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Of course, you don't want the audience to see this. You want them to think that the coin is completely inside your fist. To create that illusion, *simultaneously close your fingers while turning your palm towards your body; at the moment your fingers actually touch the coin, the audience can see only the back of your fist.* (Compare the first photo above, where the hand is flat and palm-up, to the photo below, where the hand is now a fist and is turned inward towards your body – the audience now sees only the back of your fist. You have clipped the coin with your fingers *during* the inward turn of the hand.)

At the completion of this move, the audience should be seeing only the back of your fist; only you can see the coin sticking out from under your closed fingers.

This is a timing thing, a knack you'll get when you try it a few times. Just curl your left fingers over the coin while turning your hand inward towards your body. If you close your fingers too slowly the coin will fall out of your hand. If you close your fingers too quickly, before the palm of the hand is turned away from the audience, they will see that your fingers did not close around the entire coin. So, again, it's a timing thing. If you don't get it from the text and photos, the video will make this movement clear.



Now the right hand comes into play. Point to your left hand with your right index finger (forefinger). The right middle, third, and pinky fingers are curled in towards your palm. You are just pointing in a relaxed, natural way. (The photo shows the audience's view.)

Tap your left fist with your right index finger while saying something like, "Funny thing about coins . . . if you hold them long enough and generate enough heat in your hand, they vaporize." Tap three or four times while talking.

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On your final tap, *secretly clip the coin between your right second and third fingers.*



The right second and third fingers secretly pull the coin free from the left fist, and curl behind the right hand to hide the coin.

As you do this, it helps to swing your arms and hands slightly towards the left, so the audience is seeing the back of your right hand – this ensures that the stolen coin will remain hidden from view.



The photo here shows your view of the situation, with the coin is held clipped in the right hand, hidden from the audience.

Direct all attention to the left hand while you drop the right hand innocently to your side. Quickly ditch the coin in your pocket or lay it behind some object on your desk. *The best way to do this is to stand next to someone on your right, and use their body as cover when you ditch the coin into your pocket.*



Slowly open each finger to reveal that the coin has disappeared.

Of course, the audience's first suspicion will be that you have the coin in your right hand, and kids will start yelling for you to open that hand. You can have fun with this if you pretend that you don't want to open the hand. They will protest even louder! When you finally give in and open the right hand, they will be flummoxed. However, you do risk facing a demand to see inside your pockets, since that is the next place audiences suspect. That's no problem if you have creatively ditched the coin elsewhere. Otherwise, you can reach into your pocket and grab the coin in your fist while pulling out the material to show the pocket empty.

If you don't feel confident about trying that, a better way to go would be not to ditch the coin at all: just keep it in your right hand, and as soon as the vanish has registered, reach out and pluck the coin from someone's ear. Many will realize that you somehow stole the coin into your right hand, but they will be fooled as to how that happened, and the routine is still a lot of fun. I often do it that way.

## **VANISH NUMBER TWO**

Here's the second vanish I showed the bullies. You'll need to master one simple sleight-of-hand move. In the first vanish, you actually place the coin into your left hand, then secretly steal it out with the other hand. The vanish I want to teach you now only *pretends* to place the coin into your left hand; actually, you *retain* it in the right hand. Here's how you do that.



Hold your right hand flat and palm up. Rest the coin on the tips of your right index and second fingers. Hold your left-hand palm up alongside your right hand. The hands are about three or four inches apart.

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You will now appear to deposit the coin into the left hand. But before we get to exactly how to do that, practice this: with the coin resting on the tips of the right index and second fingers, curl your fingers in towards the palm to make a kind of loose fist. The coin goes along for the ride, and flips over in the process.

(Note: the coin is not sliding down the fingers; the fingertips are lifting and carrying it along as they form a fist, which is why the coin ends up flipping over.)



The coin should come to rest at the base of the right thumb. The thumb now *clips* the coin against your palm. You should be able to open your fingers, and even spread them apart, because the coin is securely pinched against the palm by pressure of the thumb. This is not hard to do. Try it a few times, moving the coin from the fingertips to thumb-clip position, and you'll soon get the hang of it.

Once you have that move down, you'll need to learn to do it *while the right hand is turning over as if to place the coin into the left hand*. It's all one coordinated movement. You do the move as the right hand turns palm-down to deposit the coin (ostensibly) into the left hand. *By the time right fingers touch the left palm as if placing the coin there, the coin should already be clipped.*



In the photo, the right hand looks like it is placing the coin into the left hand; but if this were an X-ray picture, you would see the coin is actually clipped by the thumb against the right palm. Nothing is actually placed into the left hand.



The right hand now pulls away while the left fingers close, ostensibly over the coin. The important thing here is to relax your right fingers as they pull away, so the hand appears empty. Notice in the photo that you can actually allow some space to appear between your right fingers without the coin being exposed. (Don't overdo it and spread your fingers so they look unnatural, otherwise you will create the very suspicion you seek to deflect. Just

allow your right fingers to relax in a natural way.)

The coin is clipped between the thumb and right palm, hidden from audience view because they can see only the back of your right hand.

Focus all your attention on the closed left hand. Mentally ignore your right hand completely. *Audience attention will follow your gaze.* Look at your left hand and make it the center of attention. Your right hand is completely irrelevant and without interest, so let it drop naturally to your side.

While all attention is on the left hand, quickly ditch the coin into your right pocket. Again, it is easiest to get away with this if there is someone standing right next to you and you can move right up against them shoulder-to-shoulder, as if offering them a closer view of your left hand. Their body then gives you cover for ditching the coin into your right pocket.

If you don't have a pocket, gently lay the coin behind some object on your desk (place a piece of felt there beforehand to blunt to sound), or into a slightly opened desk drawer.

Make the most of the magic moment by blowing on your left hand, then bring your right hand back into play to shower some "pixey dust" over your left hand or make some other playful gesture before opening your fingers to reveal the vanish. The reason for bringing your right hand back into play is that the first place the audience will want to look when the coin disappears is your right hand. When that happens, you don't want your right hand to be down by your pocket or desk where the coin is hidden; that would arouse the suspicion that you dumped the coin somewhere near where the right hand is hanging.

But if your right hand is up there near the left hand at the moment you reveal the vanish, there will be no immediate association with a pocket. You want the audience to be unaware that your right hand ever left the field of action. You accomplish this by focusing all attention on the *left* hand held out in front of you – which at this moment they are convinced contains the coin,

because the sleight-of-hand is so convincing – and dropping the right hand casually to your side to dump the coin.

As in the previous coin vanish, however, there is another way to play the ending if your circumstances make it challenging to ditch the coin: simply reach out with the right hand and “produce” the coin from behind someone’s ear. This is a classic of magic, and even though the kids will realize that you never put the coin into your left hand to begin with, they’ll still be amused and puzzled – and they’ll have fun!

## COIN THROUGH HANDKERCHIEF

For this cute effect you’ll need a coin plus a handkerchief or some kind of silk scarf, 12” square or larger. You could also do this with a paper napkin if it is high quality and soft enough drape relatively smoothly over your hand. The effect is that a coin penetrates through a handkerchief.

I find it best to use a silver dollar for this trick because the larger size makes the penetration more visible and impossible looking. If you like the trick, buy a silver dollar and keep it around for those moments when magical opportunities arise. Otherwise, use the biggest coin you can find.



Hold the coin at the fingertips of your left hand, as shown. Right hand covers the coin. Drape the coin from the back towards the front (from audience perspective) so the audience can see the coin until the last moment.

Notice how the right hand is not grasping the handkerchief by a diagonal end, but by the middle of one of the sides. This is important.

If you were to cover the coin as pictured above without any adjustments, the coin would end up inside the handkerchief at the very center.

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However . . . do **not** cover the coin that way. Instead, the right hand pulls the handkerchief another 30% or so down in front, so *more of the handkerchief drapes down over the front (audience side) of your hand than over the back.*

Photo here is side-view so you can see how far down in front the handkerchief hangs.



Here his is audience view. They are not aware of that more cloth hangs in front than in back. (Even if they were to notice it, it wouldn't really matter because at this point the audience doesn't know what you are intending to do.)

The right thumb and first two fingers now grasp the coin through the handkerchief to allow the left hand to let go of the coin and emerge from under the handkerchief. However, the left hand doesn't emerge empty-handed; instead, it continues to hold onto the coin! The right fingers relax a bit to allow the left hand to take the coin.



This photo shows the left hand coming out and bringing the coin with it. The left fingers never let go of the coin; they bring it *straight back towards your body and out from under the handkerchief.* This is why you draped the handkerchief so less hangs down in back: so you can easily slip the coin out from behind. The coin stays hidden from view behind the handkerchief.

The right hand continues to hold the handkerchief *as if it were holding the coin through the material.*

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The left hand immediately replaces the coin back under the right thumb, and the right fingers re-grasp it – but now it is *outside* the handkerchief rather than inside.

Immediately the left hand begins to smooth the sides of the handkerchief, stroking the folds as if to even them out.

The overall illusion is that the left hand comes out from under the handkerchief and strokes the hanging folds of the handkerchief. This is a subtle, subliminal way of communicating to the audience that the left hand is innocent and empty – because in fact it *is* empty at this point.



After a couple of smoothing strokes, the left hand encircles the entire handkerchief below the coin and squeezes all the material together, creating a clear separation between the coin and the hanging folds.



Accentuate the separation as clearly as possible, as in the photo, which is performer's view of the situation.



The audience should see something like this.



Now with your right thumb and index finger, magically pull the coin “through” the silk! (Slowly or quickly, your preference.)

If doing this live, hand everything out for examination. If you're performing online, hold the handkerchief close to the webcam so the audience can clearly see there are no holes or slits in the fabric.

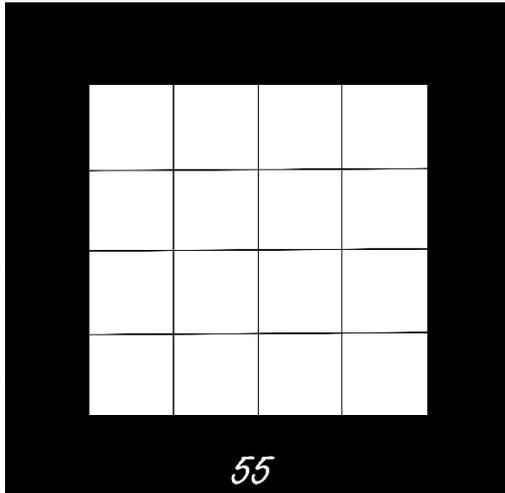
## **THE MAGIC SQUARE**

And now for something *totally* different. I want everyone to find something useful in this six-part series, and if coin sleight-of-hand isn't your thing, maybe this is. Math teachers sit to attention for this routine; but please understand that all teachers and counselors can use this, both for amazing entertainment and as a vehicle for a variety of messages.

Bear in mind that you can do this routine for one student or an auditorium full of students (using an overhead projector), and you can do it online or in person.

### EFFECT & PRESENTATION

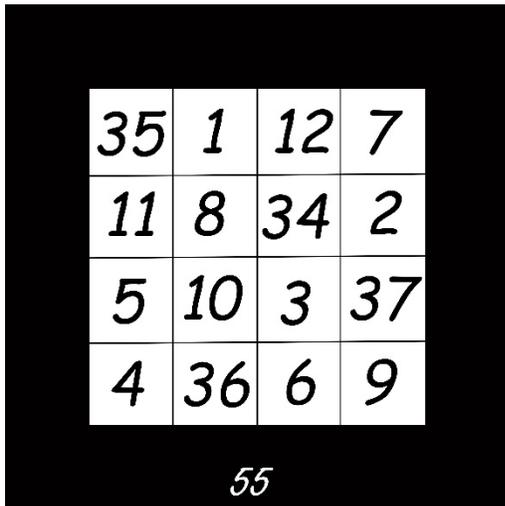
Begin with a 4-by-4 grid of 16 squares, which you have drawn on the board, or, if you are doing this for one student or a small group you can use a piece of paper.



Ask a student for a number larger than 35 and less than 100. (You'll never be asked why it has to be larger than 35. But if someone were to ask you, simply respond that a number less than 35 would make it too easy, and you want this to be impressive.)

Let's say the student says 55. Write "55" on the board, somewhere outside the grid.

"Okay, give me a moment to collect my thoughts and study the grid." You stare at the grid as if deep in thought, and then start quickly filling in the squares with numbers –one number in each square. Do this as fast as you can.

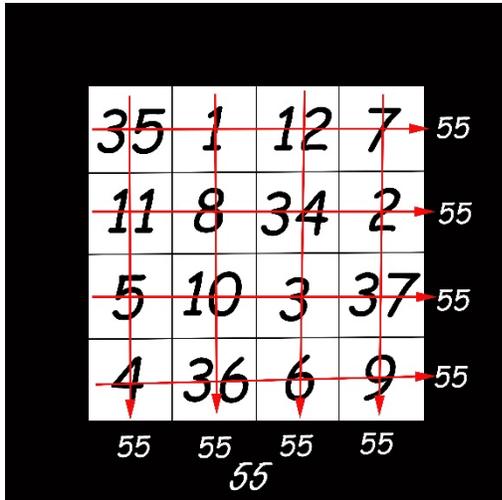


When you've finished, step back so the audience has a full view of the grid and say, "Do you see your number, 55?" They will say yes.

"Where do you see it?" They will point to the 55 you wrote outside the grid. "Yes, but do you see it *inside* the grid?" They won't see it because you didn't write 55 in any of the squares.

"Oh, really? You don't see 55 inside the grid? But it's there! What if we consider the columns to be *addition problems*. Let's add up the columns."

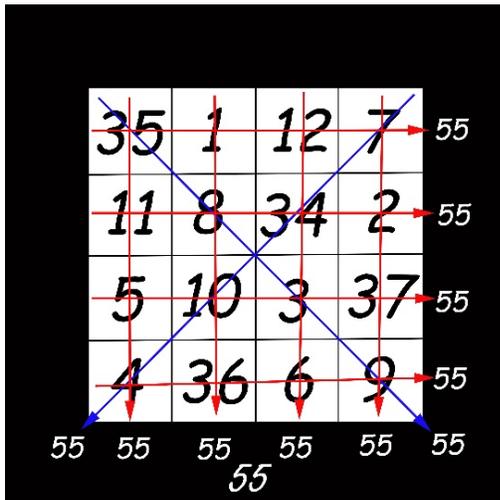
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Add them out loud, as quickly as possible, and place the total (55) at the bottom of each column.

(Add quickly because you don't want the presentation to drag – there's a *lot* of adding in this routine!)

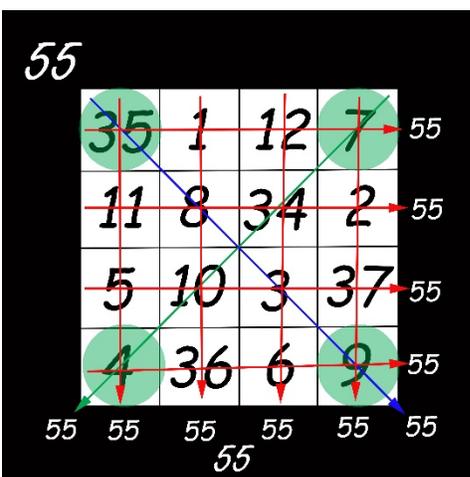
"But wait," you say, "there's more. What if I told you that all the *rows* also add up to 55?" Proceed to prove that statement, writing "55" at the end of each row as you add up the numbers.



But wait," you say again, "there's more! What about the *diagonals*?"

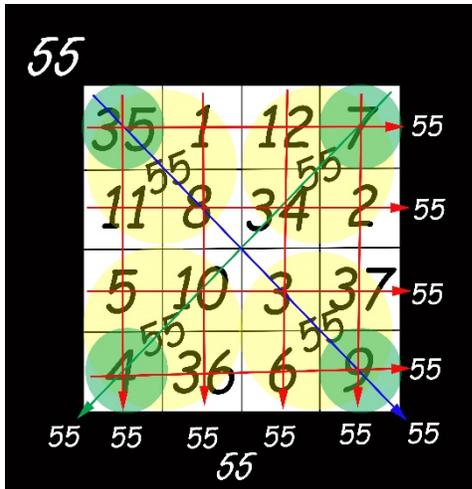
Add them up and write the totals.

(NOTE: Every time I finish adding, I write the total somewhere on the board, because in the end I want that board to be dramatically covered with "55's"!)



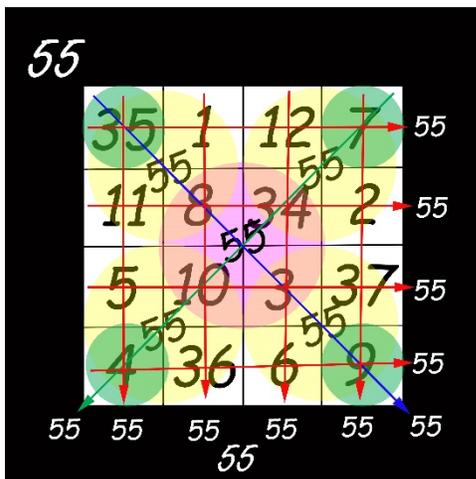
"But wait . . ." (By this point, with a little prompting the kids themselves will shout "there's more!")

". . . look at the four squares in the corners!" Add them up and jot down the total down somewhere.



“But wait . . . !” Proceed in the same manner to add up the four squares that form mini 2x2 grids in the upper left and right quadrants, and lower left and right quadrants (highlighted in yellow in the picture).

I like to write the total in the center of each quadrant, as you see in the picture here. However, if you feel that creates too much numerical confusion on the board, feel free not to write the total at all, or write it somewhere else on the board . . . maybe along the top margin. Again, I like to end with the board covered with “55’s” (or whatever your total is).



“But wait!” As a finale, add up the four squares in the very center of the grid – 55, again!

End with your final triumphant statement: “You didn’t see it, but 55 was *everywhere!*” (Which is why I like the total to be written lots of times all over the board..)

## THE METHOD

Simple: I assume you are a mathematical genius that can pull this off. QED.

However, in case you aren’t, there are actually dozens of ways to create a magic square, some of them very complex. I’m going to give you a very simple method for accomplishing this amazing feat. You will need to do a bit of memorization, but it won’t be difficult.

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You will need to remember four three-number sequences:

1...12...7

11...8...2

5...10...3

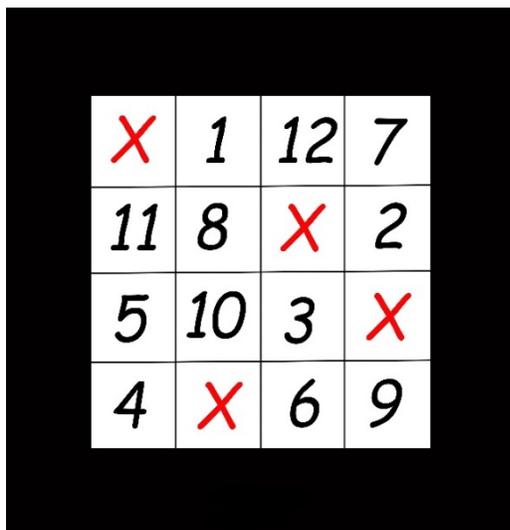
4...6...9

*Be sure to memorize the numbers as you see them above, as four rows of three numbers each.*

Although this may look intimidating at first, upon closer examination you'll see that we're only talking about a string of numbers about the length of a standard phone number including area code. Also, it helps that no numbers are repeated – it's just every number from 1 through 12. And only three of the numbers are double-digits – 10, 11, and 12. So it's really not difficult to memorize this sequence. Repeat it in your head a few times, write it out a few times, and you'll have it. And once you have it, a brief review prior to performance will suffice to bring it back.

(TIP: If you're doing this from a distance, as, for instance, at the front of a large class, there is a way to avoid all memorization, which is by writing the numbers very faintly in the corners of the respective squares to which they are always assigned for this routine; however, you must ensure that the students can't see the cribs, and you'll have to erase the magic square before anyone can approach for a closer look.)

Once you've memorized this simple sequence, you're halfway home to being able to present this mental miracle. You have memorized the proper sequence of 12 numbers – but remember that we are dealing with a 16-square grid. What about the other four numbers? Well, you won't know what they are until the student names the number you're going to use as the total, a two-digit number larger than 35. When the student gives you that number, you'll know instantly what the other four numbers will be – you just have to know where to insert them into the grid.



X	1	12	7
11	8	X	2
5	10	3	X
4	X	6	9

Think of the squares into which those four numbers will go as the “blank” squares. They are located where you see the “X” marks in the picture.

The twelve numbers you have memorized will always go exactly where you see them in the picture. Since you've memorized them as a sequence of four rows of three numbers each, filling them in is quite easy – you just have to skip over the blank squares. You will go back and fill in the blanks *after* you've written the other numbers (except for the first blank square, which is the very first square you fill in).

## Memory Tips

If you find memorizing the number sequence less than challenging, feel free to skip this section; otherwise, the tips I give you here should quell your anxieties.

The **first row** begins with a blank, which we'll deal with later. That means the first memorized number you'll write is a 1. How easy is that!

The square next to the 1 is 12. That's easy to remember because the previous square was 1; now write 1 again, followed by 2 (which is double 1) to create 12.

The next number, and last in top row, is the lucky number 7 – also easy to remember. It wishes you good luck for the rest of the magic square.

The **second row** begins with 11 – so once again you are starting a row with 1's. That's easy to remember, but as an extra mnemonic aid you can remember that because this is the second row, you need to add a second 1 – thus forming "11."

The second row ends with 2. If you think of 11 as two ones to be added, the total would be 2. This helps me associate the 11 with the 2 as the first and last numbers in the row. That leaves only the 8 to be remembered by rote.

The **third row** has 5 followed by 10, which is easy to remember because 10 is 5 doubled, so I just remember to double the 5. The next number is 3, which looks similar to a 5 (just flip the top loop around) and is a small odd number like 5 – so it's easy for me to associate 5 with 3.

The **fourth row** is 4, 6, 9. I don't know about you, but that just seems easy to remember. Just think 4, 6, 8 – a natural sequence – then remember that instead of an 8 it's actually a 9.

Slightly trickier is remembering where the blank squares are, but here's a tip that makes it literally a no-brainer. Make a little mark in the corner of each of those squares, big enough for you to see but small enough not to be noticed by the audience. Now you can fill in the memorized numbers while skipping over the marked squares.

But, honestly, it's not hard to remember because one of the blank squares is the *very first square* in the upper left corner. So, you really only have to remember the position of the other three blank squares.

## Method Continued

A student gives you a number larger than 35 and you write that number on the board for reference. You pretend to study the grid, marshalling your intuitive genius for an impossible mental task (!). Now you start to write, beginning with the upper left square, which is one of the blank squares. More on how to know what number you put there later; for now, let's move on to the next square, which takes a 1. Then fill in the 12 and the 7.

Drop down to the second row and fill in  $11 \dots 8 \dots \_ \dots 2$ , skipping over the blank square for now (represented here by the “\_”).

Drop down to the third row and fill in  $5 \dots 10 \dots 3 \dots \_$  skipping over the blank square for now.

Drop down to the fourth row and fill in  $4 \dots \_ \dots 6 \dots 9$  skipping over the blank square for now.

Now you go back and fill in the three squares that are still blank. How do you know what numbers to put in all four blank squares?

*Simple. For the first blank square, the one in the upper left corner – which is the first number you will write, **mentally subtract 20 from the student's number**. The difference is the number you'll put in the upper left corner square. Even for the mathematically challenged (like myself!) it's easy to subtract 20.*

Now fill in all your memorized numbers, then go back and fill in the three remaining blank squares, like this: **add 1 to the number in the upper left square (the number you obtained by subtracting 20 from the student's number) and write the total in the bottom-row blank.**

**Now add 1 to the number you just wrote in the bottom-row blank, and write that number in the row above that (i.e., the third row).**

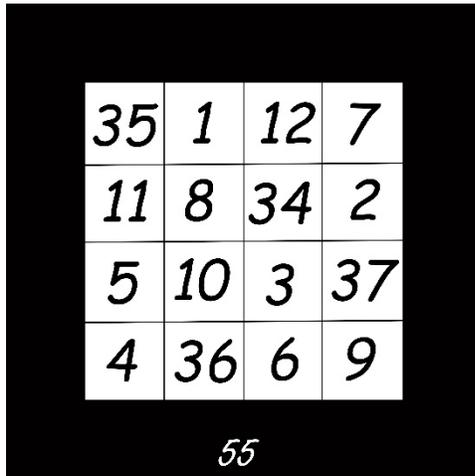
**Finally, subtract 3 from the number you just wrote in the third-row blank, and write that in the second-row blank.**

This may sound confusing in print, but just remember: add 1, add 1, subtract 3. That's the formula for filling in the three blank squares, based upon the number you wrote in the upper left square at the beginning (which you got by subtracting 20 from the student's number).

**(NOTE:** I suggest that when you get to the part where you fill in the three blank squares, you use your body to block the audience's full view of the board as you fill in the blanks. You want to create the impression that you are creating the magic square spontaneously rather than

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using a formula. If they see you leaving blanks, then going back and filling them in with sequential numbers – in our example, 35, 36, 34 – it looks formulaic. I allow the audience a pretty full view while I'm entering the memorized sequence, but when it's time to fill in the blanks I step fully in front of the board so the audience can't follow the process.)



35	1	12	7
11	8	34	2
5	10	3	37
4	36	6	9

55

Here again is the completed example in which the student's number was 55. Study this picture and you'll see how it all fits together.

That's it. I hope the memory tips I've given you have convinced you that this routine is not as difficult as my lengthy prose might make it seem. If you are willing to put in a minimal amount of work, you'll have a fantastically impressive routine that you can do *anywhere, anytime*, as long you can find a piece of paper and a pencil!

### CUSTOMIZATION

You can do this routine simply to impress students: "Wow, this teacher is amazing!"

It's also a very entertaining routine because it's intriguing, and it becomes more and more impossible as you add up more and more rows, columns, diagonals, etc.

But this routine is also perfect when you want to say something to students about not jumping to conclusions or making assumptions. In the above-presentation, the teacher asked whether anyone saw the number 55 in the grid, and no one saw it. And yet it was there – just not in the form everyone expected.

It's also about persistence: if you don't immediately find what you're looking, do you give up? Maybe it's there, but you have to keep looking.

It's also about asking the right questions. The teacher's question, "Do you see your number, 55, inside the grid?" turns out to be the wrong question to ask; or, rather, the question needs to become more specific: "Do you see your number inside the grid *in some other form* than '55'?" Science, literary criticism, historical studies – they all depend upon asking questions and being creative in how you ask those questions.

It's also about *pattern recognition*. If you zoom in on each square individually, you get nowhere; but if you see *rows*, and *columns*, and *diagonals*, well, then you discover something! When

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you're not making progress down in the trenches, pull out into wide-angle view and look for patterns.

Similarly, it's about *the Big Picture*. It can be a metaphor for the way we look at life: sometimes you have to stand back and take in the big picture in order to see the meaning. Are you trying to find the "55" in your life, but you've been looking in all the wrong places, turning over this rock, opening that door, without results? Maybe you have to shift your whole approach, and start asking about the big picture. Maybe you're lost because you don't really know where you want to go.

It's about *thinking outside the box* – literally, because the grid is composed of 16 separate boxes, and if you get stuck inside the boxes you'll never see 55.

It's about *seeing opportunities*. Opportunities are all around us, but sometimes you completely overlook them, just like you overlooked 55. It was right in front of you inside the grid. It was across rows, up and down columns and diagonals, shouting from the corners, winking from the center . . . yet you remained oblivious. You have to be on the lookout for the opportunities around you, otherwise they'll pass you by.

Whether you're doing this for a full auditorium or for one student, it's entertaining, amazing, and memorable; and it will knock the audience off-balance long enough to give you an opening for your message of choice. It all boils down to memorizing the grid, and the procedure for inserting the four additional numbers into the blank squares.

Keep a copy of the grid all filled-out in a desk drawer and you'll always be ready to present this with just a few minutes review.