LEARN • PRACTISE • SHARE

John Ekin’s
Magic Class

Seven simple mysteries with everyday objects

01	The Key Card	2
02	The Twenty-One Card Mystery	3
03	The Jumping Rubber Band	4
04	The Restored Toothpick	5
05	The Vanishing Coin	6
06	The Gray Elephant in Denmark	7
07	The Linking Paper Clips	8

A little practice. A little surprise.

Read each lesson all the way through. Rehearse before you perform, take your time, and give your audience a moment to enjoy the mystery.

The Key Card

Someone chooses a card. You find it without asking a single question.

WHAT YOU NEED

One ordinary deck of cards.

PREPARATION

No special cards or preparation. Your remembered bottom card will secretly mark the selection.

STEP BY STEP

1. Before you begin, secretly remember the bottom card of the deck. This is your key card.
2. Hold the deck face down. Spread only the upper half and let your helper take one card. Keep the bottom card in place. Ask them to remember their card and show the others.
3. Close the spread. Put roughly the top half of the deck face down on the table. Have your helper place their card face down on that pile.
4. Put the packet still in your hand on top. Your key card now lies directly above their card. Do not shuffle.
5. Turn the entire deck face up. Spread through it from its face, moving one card at a time into your other hand. Their card appears immediately BEFORE your key card. Keep track of the previous card.
6. When your key appears, remember the card you just passed. Close the spread, pause, then remove that card and reveal it.

PRACTICE TIP

Practise face up first. Watch the key land above the selection, then notice how turning the deck over reverses the order you see.

SOMETHING TO SAY

“Your card is somewhere in here. Let’s see if it left a clue.”

The Twenty-One Card Mystery

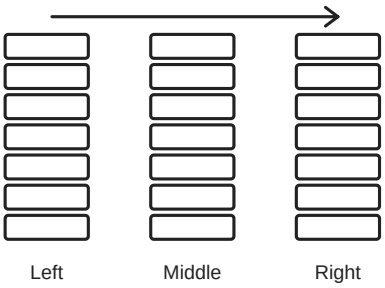
Your helper merely points to a column. Three deals later, you know their card.

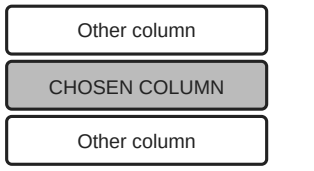
WHAT YOU NEED

Any 21 playing cards and a little table space.

PREPARATION

Count out 21 cards. Set the rest of the deck aside.





Repeat this after each of the three deals

STEP BY STEP

1. Deal exactly 21 cards face up into three columns: left, middle, right, then left again. Make seven rows and keep all cards visible.
2. Ask your helper to silently choose a card and tell you only which COLUMN contains it.
3. Gather each column into its own packet without shuffling. Turn the packets face down. Stack them with the indicated column BETWEEN the other two packets.
4. Deal the cards face up into three columns again, left to right. Ask which column contains their card. Gather the packets with that column in the middle.
5. Repeat once more: deal, ask, and gather with the chosen column in the middle. You have now dealt exactly THREE times.
6. Hold the assembled packet face down. Count ten cards from the top onto the table. Turn over the next card, number 11. It is their selection.

PRACTICE TIP

The chosen column goes in the middle after EVERY deal, including the third. Do not shuffle or deal a fourth time.

SOMETHING TO SAY

“You don’t have to name the card. Just tell me where it is hiding.”

The Jumping Rubber Band

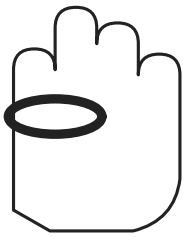
A band jumps from your index and middle fingers to your ring and little fingers.

WHAT YOU NEED

One soft, comfortably loose rubber band.

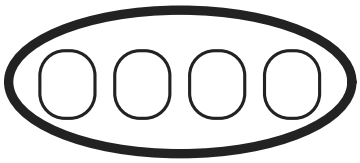
PREPARATION

Choose a soft band that stretches comfortably. Remove rings if they catch. Never use a brittle or tight band.



Back of hand faces guests

Palm towards you: four curled fingertips



All four tips inside the loop. Thumb outside.

STEP BY STEP

1. Put the band around your index and middle fingers near their bases. Show the BACK of your hand to the audience. Keep that side facing them.
2. With your palm towards you, use your other hand to pull the palm-side strand of the band outwards into a loop.
3. Curl ALL FOUR fingertips into that same stretched loop: index, middle, ring and little finger. Keep your thumb outside.
4. Let the band settle across the pads or nails of all four curled fingers. From the back, it should still look as though it surrounds only the first two fingers.
5. Remove your other hand. Straighten all four fingers together. The band slips off the first two and settles around the ring and little fingers.
6. Show the band’s new position. Stop there while the surprise is fresh.

PRACTICE TIP

Check that all four fingertips enter the same loop before opening your hand. If stretching hurts, use a larger band or choose another trick.

SOMETHING TO SAY

“These two fingers are first class. Those two have just been upgraded.”

The Restored Toothpick

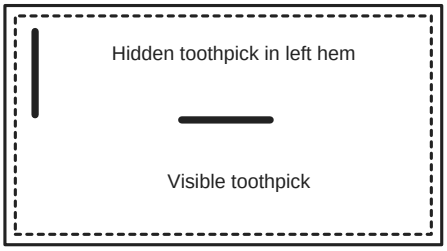
A toothpick is wrapped in a handkerchief and broken. You open the cloth and reveal it whole.

WHAT YOU NEED

A cloth handkerchief with a stitched hem and two wooden toothpicks.

PREPARATION

Use a cloth with a wide stitched hem that can conceal a toothpick. Check that the hidden toothpick is easy to locate by touch.



STEP BY STEP

1. Secretly slide one toothpick inside the stitched hem of your handkerchief. Keep the second toothpick in view.
2. Show the cloth casually, holding the corner near the hidden toothpick. Do not offer it for examination.
3. Put the visible toothpick in the centre. Fold the cloth over it, then fold again into a loose bundle. Keep track of the hidden toothpick in the hem.
4. Through the cloth, grasp the HIDDEN toothpick in the hem. Keep the centre toothpick away from your grip. Bend the hidden one until it snaps. Let everyone hear the crack.
5. Rub the bundle as though repairing the wood. Open the folds, keeping the hem and its broken pieces under control.
6. Tip the untouched toothpick from the centre onto the table. Let your helper inspect it. Put the cloth away with the broken pieces enclosed.

PRACTICE TIP

Break only the hidden toothpick. Keep the broken wood enclosed in the hem and discard it carefully afterwards.

SOMETHING TO SAY

“Breaking it is the easy part. Let’s try the other direction.”

The Vanishing Coin

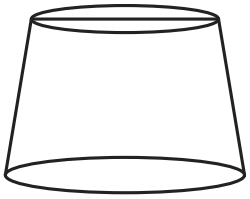
A covered glass slides over a coin. When the cover comes away, the coin has vanished.

WHAT YOU NEED

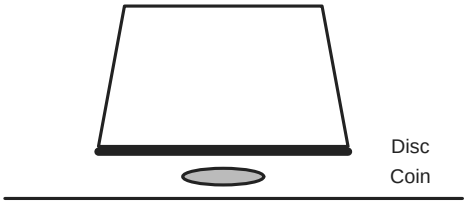
A clear, flat-rimmed tumbler, a coin, two sheets of matching plain paper, a paper napkin, pencil, scissors and glue.

PREPARATION

Trace the glass rim on one sheet. Cut a disc to cover the opening, trim it flush and glue it neatly to the rim. Let it dry. Set the glass mouth down on the matching second sheet.



Paper disc glued to the downward-facing rim



Cutaway view: disc conceals the coin

STEP BY STEP

1. Set the prepared glass mouth down on the matching paper. Put a coin beside it, well away from the paper’s edges. Keep the glass upside down throughout.
2. Drape the napkin over the whole glass, including its lower edge. Grip the glass through the napkin.
3. Lift only slightly. Move the covered glass over the coin and set it down. The glued paper disc now hides the coin.
4. Remove the napkin without moving the glass. Viewed from above, the disc blends into the sheet and the coin seems to have vanished.
5. To bring it back, cover the glass again. Lift slightly and move it aside. Remove the napkin to show the coin again.

PRACTICE TIP

Use plain matte paper and overhead viewing. Shadows or a visible glued edge can reveal the disc. Never lift the uncovered glass or offer it for inspection.

SOMETHING TO SAY

“We’ll put the coin under glass for safekeeping. Apparently that was too safe.”

The Gray Elephant in Denmark

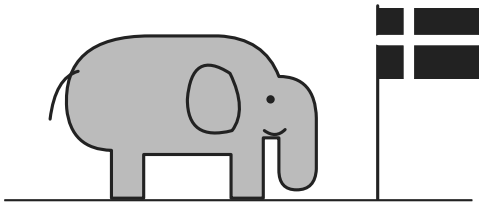
A few sums lead to a country, an animal and a color. You try to name all three.

WHAT YOU NEED

No props needed. Paper and a pencil or a calculator are optional.

PREPARATION

Learn the sequence. Use English country and animal names. The sums always give D; Denmark, elephant and gray are likely choices, not certainties.



An unexpected travelling companion

Example starting number: 7

$7 \times 9 = 63 \rightarrow 6 + 3 = 9$

$9 - 5 = 4 \rightarrow D$

Denmark $\rightarrow$ E $\rightarrow$ elephant $\rightarrow$ gray

The sums always give D.

The final choices are likely, not certain.

STEP BY STEP

1. Ask your helper to think of a whole number from 1 to 10. Keep it secret. Give each instruction separately and allow time for the sums.
2. Ask them to multiply their number by 9.
3. If the answer has two digits, add those digits together. If it has one digit, keep it. Everyone now has 9: for example, 7 × 9 = 63, then 6 + 3 = 9.
4. Ask them to subtract 5. They now have 4. Do not announce that result.
5. Ask them to turn the number into a letter: A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, and so on. Their letter is D, but do not give it away.
6. Ask them to think of a country starting with their letter. Say, “Use the first country that comes to mind. Keep it to yourself.”
7. Ask them to use the SECOND LETTER of the country’s English name to think of an animal. Then ask them to picture its usual color.
8. Pause, then say, “There can’t be too many grey elephants in Denmark.” If they chose differently, smile and ask where their thoughts took them.

PRACTICE TIP

Only the arithmetic is certain. Someone may choose Dominica, Djibouti, an eagle or an elk. Treat a different answer lightly and never blame your helper.

The Linking Paper Clips

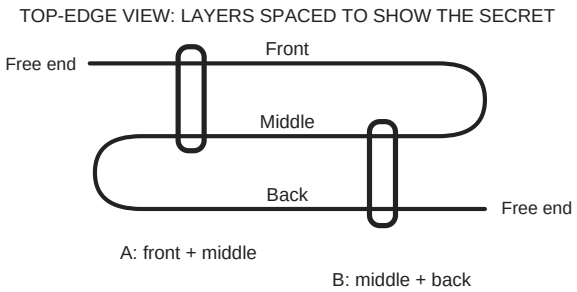
Two separate paper clips leap off a folded bill and land linked together.

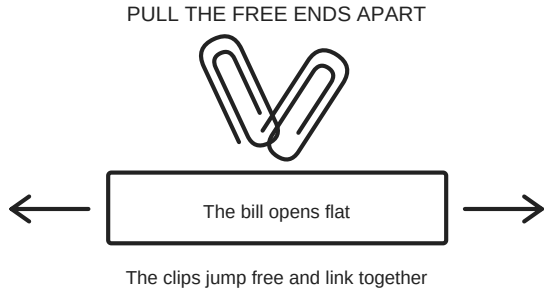
WHAT YOU NEED

One dollar bill and two ordinary metal paper clips of the same size. A strip of paper about 6 × 2½ inches can replace the bill.

PREPARATION

Use straight, undamaged clips. Fold across the bill’s length into thirds like an accordion, not like a letter. Keep the bends slightly rounded.





STEP BY STEP

1. Fold the bill into three overlapping panels, accordion-style. Seen from its top edge, it should form a flattened S or Z, with a free end on each side.
2. Near the free edge of the front panel, slide a clip down over the top edge. Grip only the FRONT and MIDDLE layers. Keep the short loop outside, facing you.
3. On the opposite side, slide the other clip down over the top edge near the back panel’s free edge. Grip only the MIDDLE and BACK layers. Its short loop faces away.
4. Check that the clips are separated and each grips exactly TWO layers. Neither should hold all three layers or sit on a bend. Leave the free ends exposed.
5. Hold one free end in each hand, not the folded bends. Work over a table so you can retrieve the clips.
6. Pull the ends apart smoothly, finishing briskly as the bill opens flat. The clips slide together, jump free and link. Do not tear the bill.
7. Pick up the linked clips and show them. The bill and clips may be examined.

PRACTICE TIP

Open the bill slowly in practice to see the clips meet. If they miss, check the S fold, two-layer grip and opposite positions. Try moving each clip a little nearer its panel’s free edge.

SOMETHING TO SAY

“These two have never met. Let’s see whether a little money can bring them together.”