

Use and Create Tarot Spreads

Tarot Spreads

Tarot spreads are an effective way to get a lot of information in a single reading. Spreads allow the cards to work together to form cohesive statements and themes.

There are a few basic kinds of spreads.

Predictive spreads speak of events in the past, present and future, and show a “timeline” of events. The Celtic Cross and The Seven Sisters are good example of this kind of spread.

Meditative spreads focus on the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of the querent. There are no positions that predict the future. The Body, Mind and Spirit spread is a meditative spread.

Situational spreads may be predictive, meditative or both. These are spreads designed to solve a specific problem, such as a decision-making spread or a love relationship spread.

Three-Card Spreads

A common type of tarot spread is the “Three Card Spread”. In this spread, each of the three cards must have a designation. Some three card spreads are:

Past, Present and Future

Body, Mind and Spirit

Relationship (Partner One, The Relationship, Partner Two)

Morning, Afternoon, Evening

There are many ways to deal a Three Card Spread:

Shuffle and then deal the first three cards off the top.

Shuffle and break the deck into three piles. Turn over the top card in each pile. You can “go deeper” by turning over the uppermost cards, or “get to the bottom of it” by looking at the bottom card of each pile.

Fan the cards out on the table and pick three cards from anywhere in the deck.

Interpreting Spreads

Keep these thoughts in mind when interpreting a spread.

Tarot will give you the answers you need, sometimes instead of the answers you requested.

Be flexible when interpreting cards in position. Sometimes the position is extremely meaningful, sometimes less so.

Sometimes cards can mean more than one thing at the same time.

Look at the graphic layout of the spread and see what you see. For ex., what are the characters looking at?

Pay attention to trends in images, color, suit and arcana distribution, numerical runs and repetitive numbers.

Search for patterns, themes and key points to create a cohesive reading.

Associate specific meanings with individual cards and card combinations to give detailed readings.

Blend the meanings of cards together to give more info.

The Worry Spread: An Original Three-Card Spread

What are you worried about? Card One reveals your attitude and perception of it, Card Two reveals what action you need to take, Card Three reveals the reality of the situation.

Create a Custom Tarot Spread

Create one-time-use spreads for yourself, or for a client. These are good for a particular question or situation. Consider the factors, players and possibilities. Create positions for each. You can create positions for each possible decision, each person, true feelings, highest good, surprises, helpers, fears, tools, influences etc.

You can use as many or as few card positions as you want, pull them any way you want, and create any shape you want.

It's Up to You

When you give a reading, you may choose to interpret the spread card-by-card in order, or simply pull out the primary concerns, themes and advice from the cards. You may interpret trends first, and then talk about the individual cards. You may ask the querent which of the cards draw or repel them the most. You may perform more than one spread, or pull extra cards for clarification in dialogue.

Create General Spreads

A general spread can be all-purpose, like the Celtic Cross, or can have a more specific purpose.

It is a spread that you will use repeatedly, and that anyone could use.

Decide on the purpose of your spread, and its name. Decide how many card positions you want, what each card position will mean, and how you will lay them out graphically.

You can create a spread themed for a specific deck, such as a "Will of the Goddess" spread for a Goddess Deck.

You can modify a traditional spread, such as the Seven Sisters, to make it your own.

You can create specific auspicious cards, for instance if the Fool falls into the significator position, or if a Cups card falls into a "water" position in a Four Elements-themed spread.

Your Spread Could Include:

A significator that defining who the querent is at this moment

An obstacle card, defining the problem

A holiday theme, and arrange the cards in the shape of a holiday symbol

Cards for the past, present and future

Card positions that are associated with a list, such as a card for each of the four elements, or a card for each month of the year, each Pagan holiday, each of the Twelve Steps, etc.

Interpretations for Standard Card Positions

Significator: Years ago, this card would be cognitively chosen by the reader, generally from the Court, to represent the querent. Today we usually draw it at random, along with the rest of the spread. It can reveal the priorities, presentation and personality traits of the querent at the current time.

Alternatively, it may speak to the querent's biggest concern or worry, or their overall mood.

Past: This can indicate a significant event, feeling, person or transition in the querent's past (either recent or distant). It can also indicate a place where the querent got stuck in their thinking or healing. It can suggest a core value or principle that is important to the querent. It can speak of something about the querent's family, ancestors or legacy. It can indicate the roots of the current problem.

Present: This can be very much like the Significator. If both positions exist in the spread, see how the Present card blends with the Significator. This card may indicate current events, people, energies and priorities in the querent's life.

Future: This card can indicate a very specific impending event, or speak to a general mood over time. If this is not a desirable card, read it as an opportunity to prepare for, change or avoid that particular possibility. If this card indicates a particular action, attitude or activity, you may read it as advice toward achieving a desired future.

Outcome: Read this card in conjunction with the future card if both positions exist in the spread. This card can also specifically discuss the end of a current cycle, the long-term future, or the resolution to the current concern. It may also offer advice as to how that resolution would be achieved.

Crossing, Obstacle or Challenge: This can be a specific problem, either unresolved issues from the past, or something current. It could be a negative personality trait, a difficult person, a challenging goal. It is usually related to the biggest issue or concern.

Crown, Head, or Sky: This indicates what is foremost on the querent's mind. It can be what they are actively thinking about, worried about, deciding, hoping, or trying to achieve.

Hopes/Fears: This can discuss goals, motivations, limitations, and self-imposed obstacles.