



John Bannon is well known to card trick aficionados. Known for constructing layered, easy-to-do effects with playing cards, his recent collections — *Destination Zero*, *High Caliber*, and *Dear Mr. Fantasy* — are widely acclaimed, international bestsellers. His new collection is sure to garner the same enthusiastic approval. In *Mentalissimo*, John brings his talents to bear on mentalism with playing cards. “I do card tricks,” he says. “Have a keen interest in mentalism. Am a fanatic about the construction of magic tricks. For me, a book like this is just what I look for. All of the above, in one place.” Almost all the effects use regular, unprepared cards. Most are impromptu.

The following is a pure demonstration of the performer’s and his participant’s psychic power. Together, they locate the participant’s genuinely thought-of card.

## Clean Out Of Sight

**PRÉCIS:** The performer offers to demonstrate his participant’s intuitive ability. He hands about half the cards to the participant and asks her to look through the cards, remember any one she chooses, and then shuffle the cards so that even she does not know the location of her thought-of card.

As a warm-up exercise, the performer divides the cards into two piles and asks the participant to use her intuitive powers to “see” which pile contains her mentally selected card. When she has decided on a pile, the performer fans it with the faces toward the participant and asks her to confirm that she was successful. The performer never looks at the faces of the cards.

Combining the piles and shuffling the cards, he repeats this warm-up exercise two more times. Depending upon her results, she may be successful or “telepathetic.”

As a final test, the performer shuffles the combined pile once more. He has the participant take the packet, hold it out, and concentrate on her card. The performer takes cards one at a time from the participant’s hand. Suddenly, he stops. He asks for the name of the thought-of card and turns over the stopped-at card. The participant and the performer, *without ever looking at the faces of the cards*, have successfully located the thought-of card!

**NOS ENCANTA:** How about discovering a truly thought-of card selected from a range of 24 cards? Not bad. Completely impromptu, too.

Sort Of Psychic, a longtime favorite trick, was a sleeper from *Destination Zero* (2015). It did not get much commentary, but those who liked it *really* liked it. I had used a mathematical eight-card reverse faro sorting

principle, then doubled the number of cards to sixteen and added a two-way out. In addition, I disguised the underlying procedure with a presentation that revolved around a guessing game — a “test” of intuition.

In that trick, I mentioned that the number of cards could be tripled to 24. The sorting principle still holds, except that after three trials the target card would be one of the top three cards. The upside is a lot more cards to choose from. The downside is that the two reverse faros would take a little longer. And a three-way out system would need to be deployed. Problem was, I didn’t have a three-way out that I was happy with.

Recently, I revisited the three-way out process in Dai Vernon’s *Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind* from *More Inner Secrets of Card Magic* (1960). I love the trick but have always preferred using a different ending — which is probably why it took me so long to make the connection. The Vernon process works perfectly here, especially because the performer apparently never looks at the faces of the cards.

**MISE EN SCÈNE:** Initially, I thought I would have to demonstrate *my own* clairvoyant powers during the “warm-up” exercises, because I would be doing the Vernon thing to find the thought-of card. Because you are essentially just guessing, it’s possible, if not guaranteed, that you will miss — and maybe all three times. The performer is not supposed to be incorrect. If the participant is doing the guessing, the misses have better cover, much like the original Sort Of Psychic. After all, why would anyone expect her to be correct?

Reconsidering, I think you can frame the

trick as testing the participant's intuitive or clairvoyant powers. Of course, the Vernon thing has to be reframed to make it look like the participant is doing something. So for the last phase, I have her hold the packet and concentrate on her card. Now I do the Vernon thing as if she were somehow guiding me. It works.

*"I used to say that I have no psychic ability whatsoever, but now I really think each of us has some clairvoyant power. Clairvoyance — that's the ability to see what can't be seen, to know what can't be known. Sometimes it seems like intuition. Do you believe in intuition? You know, I had a feeling that you did. I'd like to try a demonstration."*

Use a regular, shuffled deck. Spread off exactly 24 cards. Ideally, you will want to make this look casual, random, and imprecise. The best way is to do it fast. The best way to do it fast is to push the cards over in sets of three: Eight groups of three — easy to do with a little practice.

*"Here, take about half the deck and shuffle it."*

Hand the packet of cards to your participant. Ask her to shuffle it, then look through the cards and think of one of them. Then ask her to shuffle the packet again so she does not know where her card is. These conditions are really great. You can't possibly know her card or where it is. Your participant doesn't even know where it is.

**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY:** The sorting procedure from Sort Of Psychic can be used here, but the method about to be described uses a straightforward dealing procedure instead of the reverse faros. You'll have to remember to treat the second clairvoyance attempt differently, but this small deviation may be a worthwhile tradeoff.

Take the cards from your participant and deal them into two twelve-card piles. I deal the piles quickly and tell my participant that, while I am dealing, she should try to discern which pile contains her thought-of card. Dealing can be dead time. Use this opportunity to fill in the plot a bit. For example:

*"I want to test your intuition, but first, let's try a few warm-up exercises. I am*

*going to divide the cards into two piles. As I deal the cards, I want you to use your intuition to figure out which pile has the card you are thinking of. If you think about it, while a simple test, it's impossible, right?"*

As you finish dealing, ask her to choose one of the piles. If you like, you can ask her to hold one hand over each packet as if trying to feel the "vibrations."

Of course, she may choose correctly or not.

Pick up the designated packet, fan the faces toward your participant, and ask her if she was successful or not. Either way, she will identify which packet contains her card. If she intuited incorrectly, the card must be in the other packet. That said, this "game" is far more subtle than the typical direct question "Did you see your card?" And light years beyond "Which pile is your card in?"

The effect you are going for in this warm-up exercise is not great, but given the incredibly fair conditions, somewhat interesting. If she succeeds, note that she could have been lucky and offer to repeat the trial. If she fails, say you will give her another chance.

**REPEAT AS NECESSARY:** Assemble the two packets by placing the packet that contains the card onto the packet that does *not* contain the card. An advantage of the 24-card packet is that you have enough cards for a credible jog shuffle.

With your right hand, take the packet in position for an overhand shuffle. On the first "chop," take more than half the packet, then run one card injogged, and shuffle off. Again with your right hand, regrip the packet, getting a thumb break under the injog, and shuffle off to the break. Finally, toss the remaining cards on top. This shuffle preserves the top twelve cards, short and sweet.

Now give the packet a quick Ose False Cut.

This time, again deal the packet into two smaller piles. It's best to be glib and spout some mumbo jumbo during the deal.

*"If you think about it, because you are only thinking of a card, you didn't touch it or take it out of the deck, the only way*

*to know which pile has your card is by a clairvoyant power, right?"*

Again, ask her to use her psychic power to determine which packet contains her card. From this point, proceed exactly like you did the first time. Fan and show her the chosen pile and ask if she was successful.

This is important: the thought-of card is now somewhere among the bottom six cards of each pile, so you must *place the incorrect pile onto the correct pile.*

Offer to play a final time. Again, there are compelling reasons for this. If she missed twice ("tele-pathetic"), she should have one more chance. If she hit twice, the third time's the proof that it wasn't a fluke. And of course, one hit and one miss means a tie-breaker is necessary.

A quick Hindu shuffle followed by an Ose False Cut is a bit easier than an elaborated jog shuffle. (Hindu shuffle: grasp the inner end of the deck with your right hand from above, but don't grasp the whole deck; leave at least six cards in your left hand. Now continue the Hindu shuffle by pulling small packets of cards onto the cards you left behind. Notice that the lowermost cards of the deck stay where they were.)

Again, deal the packet into two piles. Once more, have her select a pile. Fan and show it to her. This time, *place the correct pile onto the incorrect one.*

Here's the cool part. Right now, her thought-of card is among the top three cards of the combined packet. Really.

**THE MAIN EVENT:** Regardless of how she has done, tell your participant that she was just "warming up." Give the combined packet a jog shuffle, but this time you only need to preserve the top three cards.

Now do a final jog shuffle as follows. On the first "chop," take more than three cards, then run four cards singly, injog the fifth, and shuffle off. Regrip the packet, getting a thumb break under the injog, and shuffle off to the break. Finally, toss the remaining cards on top. This shuffle places the three target cards at the fifth, sixth, and seventh positions from the top. Square and table the packet.



Now we're ready for the Vernon thing. Hand your participant the packet and have her hold it in dealing position so you can get to it. Ask her to concentrate on the thought-of card.

With your right hand, take the top card and place it in your left hand. Do the same with the next three cards. As you remove the fifth card from the pile, glimpse it by lifting it at a slightly steeper angle (Photo 1). As you place the card in your left hand, get a left little-finger break under it.

Glimpse the sixth card in the same way, then place it on the left-hand pile.

Right now, the thought-of card is: 1) on top of the pile your participant is holding, 2) on top of the left-hand pile, or 3) second from the top of the left-hand pile, and you have a break beneath it.

Act like you received a gentle psychic impulse and say something like "Did you feel something? You must be concentrating very hard. What card are you thinking of?"

Her card will be one of the two cards you glimpsed, or it will be the one you did not see.

If it is a card that you have not seen, it is the top card in her packet. Point to the top card of her packet and ask her to turn it face up.

If it is the top card of your left-hand packet, turn it face up.

If it is the card second from the top of

your left-hand packet, conventional wisdom would have us do a double turnover, which would leave us with a cleanup issue. Humor me — let's do Al Leech's Snide from *Super Card Man Stuff* (1965).

Recall that you have a left little-finger break beneath the top two cards. Place the tip of your right second finger in the middle of the top card of the left-hand packet. At the same time, put your right thumb along the rear edge of the broken cards (Photo 2). Now pretend to slide the top card forward with your right middle finger, but actually, with your right thumb, push the double forward about an inch (Photo 3). Then release the break, and move your right hand away.

Continuing, turn your left hand palm down to show the face of the outjogged card (Photo 4). Bring your right hand over to take the outjogged card, thumb on the face, fingers below. At this point, you have a choice: either glide the back card of the double with your left fingers, or push the card back with your right fingers. Whichever you decide (I prefer to push the card), remove the outjogged card and toss it onto the table.

In any event, you have conclusively demonstrated your participant's psychic ability and together you found her thought-of card! Be sure to give her all of the credit. Nice work!

**WRAP-UP:** Okay, this trick is a little more leisurely than usual. I have found, however, that participants get invested in the game-like atmosphere of the warm-up exercises.

Also, the jog shuffles and false cuts help deflect from the basic procedure.

Nailing the genuinely thought-of card without apparently looking at the faces isn't bad either. Try this in a casual, relaxed situation.

#### POSTMORTEM — BACKGROUND AND CREDITS:

The mathematical sorting principle at work here is an old one. The only credit for this procedure I have seen is to Max Maven (a.k.a. Phil Goldstein) in a trick called Out Of Sorts in *Thequal* (1984). The principle is likely older than that; even Dai Vernon had a version of this sorting principle before I was born — On the Up and Up, in *Scarne on Card Tricks* (1950). Max's application is, as far as I understand, the seminal one you see around today. Max credits Alex Elmsley and Bob Neale for similar concepts.

There have been a number of versions of the basic divination trick, but none (that I am aware of) that expanded the set from eight to sixteen (or more) cards. My additions are primarily two:

The first was to combine the principle with a system of outs in order to increase the range of possible thought-of cards. In *Sort Of Psychic*, I introduced the idea of adding outs, which allows for a greatly expanded range of choices. That trick used sixteen cards and a cross-cut force as a two-way out. The contingencies also help to disguise the procedural aspects of the trick. With an acceptable three-way out, why not increase the number to 24 cards? A slightly longer sorting procedure seems like a small price to pay.

Second, I also disguised the procedure with a presentation that revolves around a guessing game. There are a number of advantages to this guessing process over the classic mathematical one. The main one is that you are not always identifying the pile with her card in it. She is telling you which is the correct pile, directly or indirectly, but the focus is not on the identification and it doesn't seem nearly as obvious.

**REVERSE FARO:** If you love, or at least are indifferent to, the reverse faro procedure, here's how to put the reverse faros back in.

The first clairvoyant attempt is free; you can divide the cards into two piles however you like. But you must place the correct pile onto the incorrect pile before proceeding to the second attempt.

On the second clairvoyant attempt, divide the cards with a reverse faro by outjogging every other card (Photo 5), then stripping out the outjogged cards to form a second pile. Again, place the correct pile onto the incorrect pile before proceeding.

On the final attempt, once again divide the cards with a reverse faro and again place the correct pile on top.

All set — the thought-of card is one of the top three cards.

Among others, Raj Madhok prefers to do the reverse faros. He notes, "On the final reverse faro, once you're past the top six cards, you can be sloppy and outjog and injog groups of cards rather than singly. This makes it look less precise and contrived — that is, less mathematical."

**ROUGH AND READY:** Twenty-four cards is the maximum, but you can do the trick with fewer cards if you want.

Raj Madhok and Liam Montier both suggest letting the participant shuffle and freely cut off "just less than half the cards." **M**

*John Bannon's Mentalissimo is a 218-page hardbound collection of thirty effects, illustrated with black-and-white photos. Available for \$55 from Squash Publishing or the author: [www.johnbannonmagic.com](http://www.johnbannonmagic.com) or [www.squashpublications.com](http://www.squashpublications.com). Dealers contact Squash Publishing.*