

PRINCIPLES OF MAGIC

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NOTHING SUPERNATURAL

All magic tricks are just that; tricks. They are closely related to puzzles. When a person performs card tricks at a party for example, everyone knows there are secrets to how they work. No matter how incredible magic card tricks are, no matter how impossible magic effects seem to be, simple contrivances, mechanics, psychological secrets, and sleight-of-hand are what make them work. Magic effects are accomplished only by purely natural means. Supernatural abilities are never involved.

REMEMBER THE IMPACT

As an experienced Texas magic performer and Texas magic shop owner, I encourage magicians as they learn how to do magic tricks to try and remember the impact a magic effect had on them the first time they saw it performed. It is easy to forget just how strong a magic effect is once a person knows its secret.

PROTECT THE SECRETS

The art of magic is protected when its secrets are protected. A magician must learn how to overcome the temptation to expose the secrets of tricks. This is magic's most important rule. If everyone knows the secret of a trick, then the effect of that trick is no longer astounding. Excitement diminishes and the effect's entertainment value dwindles. It is the secretive nature of magic effects that gives them their mystery and charm. And surprisingly, most people do not want to know the secrets of tricks. Rather they just enjoy being amazed and mystified. When a spectator asks how a trick works, a magician should just be polite and simply say that it is against his code of ethics to reveal its secret.

DON'T WARN THEM

Magic tricks are most powerful when an audience doesn't know what's coming. The magician who tells an audience that he is about to make a handkerchief disappear has just challenged his audience to "catch him if they can." The element of surprise has been greatly diminished, a primary ingredient why magic effects mystify. Rarely should a magician tell an audience what he is about to do before he does it.

DON'T REPEAT A TRICK

In the same way a joke is not as funny the second time it is heard, a magic trick is not as powerful the second time it is seen. Their climax gives both jokes and magic effects their impact. When the climax is known, impact is lessened. Magic is always more powerful if an audience is left with only first impressions. Therefore magicians should resist the urge to repeat a trick.

Also since audiences tend to watch more closely the second time a trick is performed, they are much more apt to discover its secret. So when spectators say, "Do that again," what they are really saying is "Now that we know what you are going to do, do it again so we can discover the secret!" As we have performed illusions professionally for many years in Fort Worth magic, Dallas magic, and Houston magic

circles, we have adopted the rule to never perform the same trick before the same audience a second time using the same secret.

ENTERTAIN WITH MYSTERY

There are three types of magical entertainers: (a) the magician who performs his tricks like they are just puzzles, (b) the magician who does not respect his magic effects, and (c) the magician who seeks to entertain and mystify. Through our many years of experience as a Fort Worth magician, Houston magician, and Texas magician, we know that the most entertaining magician is the magician who entertains with mystery.

MINIMIZE ARROGANCE

A magician should be aware that due to the nature of magical effects, it is easy to fall into an "I can do something you can't do" attitude. Such attitudes are very irritating. Cockiness and arrogance tends to create discord that few people find pleasant. A magician should try his best to entertain his audiences with congeniality, and at the same time fool the heck out of them!

AVOID PARALLEL COMMENTARY

A common pitfall for magicians is for them to tell their audiences verbally what they are doing as they perform. Magicians who do this usually haven't planned beforehand what they are going to say. In the cut and restored rope trick for instance as a magician apparently cuts a piece of rope in half, there is no reason for him to say "I am going to take this pair of scissors and cut this ordinary white rope into two separate pieces." It is usually odd for a magician to tell his audience what he is doing as he does it.

DON'T RAISE SUSPICION

A common mistake for most beginning magicians is to point out what should be obvious. For example, if a magician displays a gimmicked cup that he wants his audience to think is not gimmicked, why would he say, "I have an ordinary ungimmicked cup?" Such an attempt to sway suspicion may cause suspicion, and this is especially bad if indeed the cup is not ordinary! It is usually better for a magician to just casually display the cup to his audience and treat it as ordinary. Nonchalance will lead an audience to conclude that the cup is ordinary when in reality it may be gimmicked to the hilt.

IT'S DONE WITH MIRRORS

It is a good idea for a magician to initially practice his tricks and routines in front of a mirror. A mirror is a great tool to help a magician learn what an audience will see. Mirrors are also helpful to for checking angles when learning new sleights. It is not good for a magician to always practice in front of a mirror however, for he can become psychologically dependent upon watching himself as he performs. A good alternative to the mirror is the video camera. By its use, a magician can see himself perform while he is at leisure. This will allow himself to critique himself more readily and get a better view of his overall performance.

NERVOUSNESS DISAPPEARS WITH CONFIDENCE

A magician should never perform a trick in front of an audience until he has first rehearsed it thoroughly. When he becomes confident in his ability, much of his nervousness will disappear. Also as a magician performs the same magical effects and routines in the same way time-after-time in front of audiences, more confidence will grow. He will know what he is going to say before he says it. He will know what he is going to do before he does it. He will know how an audience usually reacts at different points in his routine because he has performed it many times.

PERFORMANCE BRINGS REFINEMENT

The polished magician is the magician who has performed his act in front of live audiences many times. The more a magician performs a particular trick or routine, the more polished his performance will become. Proper timing, flow, and continuity will become apparent. The rough edges of the performance will become refined.

Even the best magicians in the world must go through this trial and error process. Granted seasoned magicians are more apt to see polish more quickly because of their experience, but magic performance is still refined only through multitudes of performances. Magic is a performance art form and it requires patience, endurance, and trial and error before proficiency and high art is reached.

BUYING MAGIC

One of the most enjoyable aspects of magic is acquiring and learning new effects. However great magicians are not usually famous for how much they know or how many tricks they own. Rather they are recognized for doing a few effects well and for being entertaining when they perform those effects. Since magic effects are expensive and there are thousands of tricks available, a magician should buy his effects only from a reputable magic shop that is willing to help him make good choices and provide quality equipment. These are the goals of our Illusion Warehouse magic shop. Our prices are competitive and we don't carry questionable items. We try to develop relationships with our customers, help them progress in learning superior magic effects, and be mindful of their needs as they learn the art of magic.

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