



by Lulu Fletcher

Free Tarot Basics



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TAROT HISTORY

The first evidence of Tarot cards being used for divinatory purposes dates back to the 1500s in France.

Personally, I find this topic to be quite controversial. Over the years I have seen it spark many a debate simply because there is so much contradictory information written about the Tarot and its history. So, for the purpose of this exercise I will share with you what I find interesting and believe to be true.

The Tarot has a fragmented history and is shrouded in an air of mystery. The designs in the Major Arcana can be traced back as far as 1440 when the first known deck appeared in Italy. Originally the cards were designed as a game played by Nobles. The cards were first used like a normal playing deck of cards. The game played at that time was similar to that of what we call 500, bridge or trumps - it was called Tarocchi. A version of the game was based around the idea that the participants were to collect "tricks" in order to win the game. The cards represented those things that were of importance at that time. Gender, wealth and social status played a major part of what daily life was like and the role that was played. The cards covered such things as ranks of medieval society, virtues, cosmos and academic sciences.

The court cards were symbolic of how life was at that time. The trumps are a collection of images ranging from ordinary figures - The Fool and The Magician - through to powerful figures of the medieval world - The Emperor, The Empress and The Pope, to images of virtues - Fortitude, Justice and Temperance, to the great forces of life - The Wheel of Fortune, Death and The Devil, finally reaching rather cosmological imagery in such cards as The Sun and The Moon.

If the same game under the same conditions existed today these cards would show as "The Treasurer", "The Premier" and the "The Journalist". This would be followed by "Popularity", "War", "Economic Collapse" and "Scandal".

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STRUCTURE OF TAROT

The Tarot deck is divided into two sections. The 22 Major Arcana and the 56 Minor Arcana. The Minor Arcana is then divided further into "suits" - Swords, Wands, Cups and Pentacles. Each suit has four court cards - King, Queen, Knight and Page, as well as ten Pip cards.

Major Arcana

The Major Arcana forms the foundation of the Tarot deck and consists of 22 cards. They are the "movers and the shakers" of the Tarot deck. "bigger picture" stuff. They represent a path to spiritual self-awareness and depict the various stages we encounter as we search for greater meaning and understanding throughout life. Your patterns at that moment. They hold deeply meaningful lessons.



Minor Arcana

The remaining 56 cards are known as the Minor Arcana. these are the cards that provide the "every-day detail" and deal with practical aspects or issues that have a minor or temporary influence. Your situation in that moment. These cards are made up of 4 suits - Swords, Wands, Cups and Pentacles. Each suit is strongly linked to the 4 elements - Air, Fire, Water and Earth.



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THE FOUR SUITS



FIRE = WANDS = ACTION, TASKS, EMPLOYMENT, BUILDING, PASSION



Fire represents the fundamental energy of things, the vitality we have, the action we take and the movement of life. This is all represented in the suit of Wands.

Wands refer to action and doing. Things such as work, career, travel, energy flow, movement and inspiration. The wands can also speak of our passions. They can bring awareness to our intentions and our manifestations.

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THE FOUR SUITS

AIR = SWORDS = COMMUNICATION, IDEAS, INTELLECT AND STRIFE



Air represents the mental level of life. Intellect, reasoning and logic. It is represented by the suit of Swords.

Swords refer to power of thoughts, rationality and the intellect. Swords are known as the "bad news" suit, due to the messages of strife and conflict that is often brought into awareness by the images on the cards. The swords also speak of how we communicate. So when you are working with the swords, take note of the angle of the sword as this will give clues as to the type of communications taking place. Swords can also advise of surgery, or the cutting away of ideas, thoughts, people and places; eg. severing relationships. Swords are swift and fast. Move with the speed of a thought.

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THE FOUR SUITS

WATER = CUPS = FEELINGS



Water represents the emotional and the creative/intuitive level of life. It is represented in the suit of Cups.

Cups refer to the emotional life, relationships, feelings and creativity. When noticing water on a card, take into account how that water is being presented. It is flowing gently? Are there some waves to be aware of? Or is it sitting stagnant? Is the lack of water being brought into your awareness. Water is represented in three stages: flowing, frozen or vapour. How does the water feel when you are looking upon it. What is it reflecting back to you?

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THE FOUR SUITS

EARTH = PENTACLES = MATERIAL POSSESSIONS/BODY



Earth represents the physical level, our physical world and all that it represents including the body. It is represented by the suit of Pentacles.

Pentacles refer to matters of money, finances, wealth and banking, material possessions and to the physical body. All things tangible - things we can touch. Pentacles also represent Mother Nature and all she contains. So in the pentacles we can get a feel for natural therapies and body movement like yoga. We also get to see people as the Naturopaths as well as the Bank Jonnies.

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STRUCTURE OF SUITS

The Court Cards

Kings and Queens represent mature men and women.

Knights represent young men, and Pages young women or children.

The court cards can also represent the nature of someone eg. a King of Swords could represent a strong-minded woman.

The court cards can also allow you some insight into the physical appearance of someone - Wands represent fair haired, fair skin and light eyes. Cups represent light brown to medium brown hair, with slightly darker skin. Swords represent those who are dark haired, dark eyed, while Pentacles represent the darker skin and black hair.



The Pip Cards

This section deals with the cards numbered from 2 - 10. These cards deal with the everyday issues of life - the finer details of what is happening in and around us, our ups and downs. They can indicate past, present and future obstacles, challenges or opportunities along with any potential fears to be faced.

These cards can provide great insight and help with daily decision making.



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STRUCTURE OF SUITS

The Aces

The Ace of Cups brings its strength to the area of emotion and creativity. In a reading, it stands for new creative projects. This will often take the form of falling in love and starting a new relationship. Even where this an established relationship, it can often act as a channel for a new influx or creativity. This card can represent the news of birth, the energies or friendship and family, deep commitment, happiness and connection to life, as well as advising of incoming spiritual and/or intuitive energies, engagement, weddings and pregnancy. If health has been of concern the Ace of Cups indicates a return to good health, or a positive outcome.



The Ace of Swords speaks of attitude, intellect, new ideas, breakthroughs, legalities, stress and conflict as well as support and efforts to learn/study - whether for student or teacher. The Ace of Swords can represent the severing of an area of your life that is no longer serving you. It can also represent someone who has a sharp tongue. This card can remind you to look after your spine or that you may be having or hearing about someone having surgery. As a characteristic, the Ace of Swords stands for single mindedness and strength of purpose. We can achieve anything when we are devoted to a single goal. Its blade cuts away the old and makes way for the new attitudes and new ways of thinking and this allows for continued growth.

The Ace of Wands is about pure or new action, travel, work and that of career. In a reading, the Ace of Wands represents a change in work, a new job or promotion. A decisive move towards doing something that more accurately reflects one's nature an unique character. The Ace is about good news on its way, a thumbs up, or go-ahead. It can also indicate a move such as a change of residence.

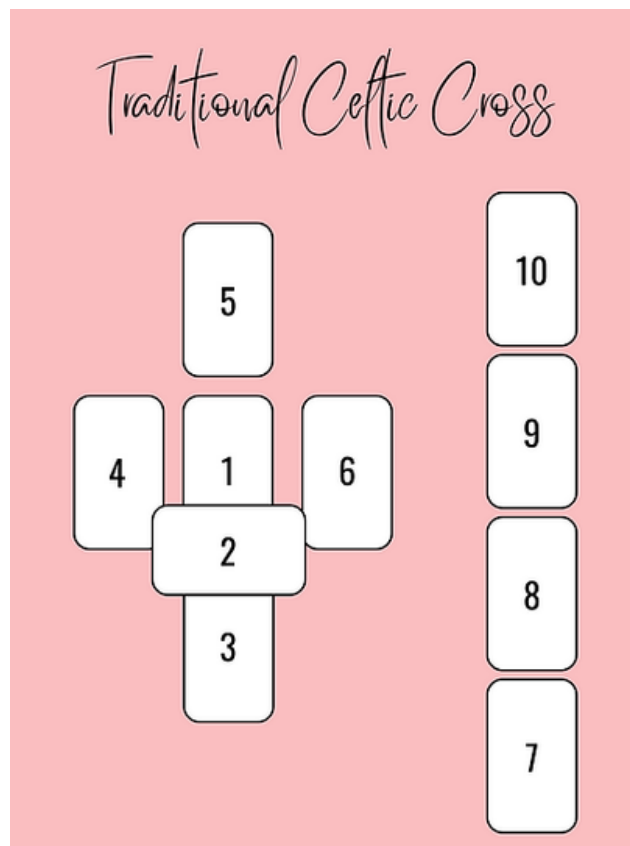
The Ace of Pentacles has to do with the material and worldly possessions. It speaks of abundance, promotion, wealth, financial status, banking, windfalls, inheritance, investments and savings. This card also represents health and the care of the physical body. Its combination of new beginnings with the physical, health and monetary realms covers a wide range of events. An improvement in financial status, or a change of home, are potential meanings, depending on other cards around it. In a question of health it would be a strong positive indication.

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SPECIFIC CARD SPREADS & LAYOUTS

Traditional Celtic Cross

- Shuffle the cards.
- Place the deck facedown on the table.
- Fan the cards pit – allow the Querent ('one who seeks') to choose a card.
- Place this card face up in position One.
- Put the deck back together in one pile.
- Pick the top card and place if face up in the position Two.
- Pick the next card from the top of the deck and place face up in position Three.
- Continue until all 10 cards are placed. You are now ready to read.



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SPECIFIC CARD SPREADS & LAYOUTS

3 CARD SPREADS USING VARIOUS INTENTIONS

Three Card Spread

1
Past

2
Present

3
Future

Three Card Spread

1

2

3

What do I need to
let go of?

What is
working?

What do I need to
embrace or add?

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UNDERSTANDING THE LAYOUT & POSITIONING OF THE CARDS

Position/House #1

Represents the Querent at the moment in time.

This card represents the Querent as they present at that time. It may indicate life circumstances or something that has been on the Querent's mind lately. More often than not, this card is symbolic for the Querent themselves.

Position/House #2

Immediate Influences

Shows the sphere of the influences or obstacles that are occurring now or are just ahead in the immediate future for the Querent that are going for or against the Querent.

Position/House #3

Here and Now

Most recent circumstances in the Querent's life. This can include events and circumstances from last week to next week and maybe a little more either side. This is the right here, right now information.

Position/House #4

Past Influences

This is information about the past. The decisions, circumstances, or situations that made an impact in the direction that the Querent has undertaken. As this is about the past – we may or may not need to talk about it. Personally, I use the house more for confirmation that I have made a connection with the Querent.

Position/House #5

Messages from Spirit

I personally use this House as a way to connect to the Querents Guides and Spirit Folk. All the other Houses are about the detail or the everyday stuff and potential directions in relation to the everyday stuff of what is going on. This Houses is more the energetic "FEEL" about what Spirit want them to know or what Spirit are acknowledging.

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UNDERSTANDING THE LAYOUT & POSITIONING OF THE CARDS

Position/House#6

Immediate Future

The influences and situations that are coming into being. The near future events and current direction should the Querent continue along their current path. The time frame is usually approximately 6-8 weeks. TIP: It can help to look for what numbers jump out at you here to give an indication of time.

Position/House #7

Head Space

This House represent the Querents thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes in their current circumstances. REMEMBER: the mind is a powerful thing.

Position/House#8

Surrounding or Outside Influences

This shows the influences currently impacting the Querent. It may indicate people having an impact or how the Querent is impacting upon others.

Position/House #9

The Heart Space

This is what the heart is feeling. Sometimes it includes hidden desires and fears. It is important to check that the Head and the Heart are congruent. TIP: recommend reading the Head and the Heart consecutively.

Position/House #10

The Final Outcome or Destination

The final results of the current situation and circumstances should the Querent continue along their suggested or current trajectory. Generally, this is within a 6-12 month time frame – depending of course on the intention you set prior to commencing the reading.

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UNDERSTANDING THE LAYOUT & POSITIONING OF THE CARDS

****All advice, suggestions, information, and readings are fluid and changeable.**

*****Anything raised or suggested DOES NOT replace medical or legal advice. For information required about health or legal matters – Querent must seek professional medical and/or legal advice.**

REMEMBER – FREE WILL

The Houses are read in a different order to how they were laid out. The intention behind this is to help with the flow of the information/story.

The order to read the Houses in, is as follows:

#4, #1, #2, #3, #7, #9, #8, #6, #10 and lastly #5.

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SOME COMMON SYMBOLS

Angels

Angels in the Tarot system are symbolic of divine messages. They are messengers of important information and communications and provide clarity. In a reading, their appearance indicates a message, which, may be coming in the form of inspiration, divine intervention or subtlety. Angels also symbolise higher thought and ideals. It may be a sign to take a look at how one is communicating. Angels also remind us to balance our energies.

Arches

Arches are symbolic of openings, passageways, thresholds, and initiations. In a reading, the arch is a symbol of new direction and to move forward for you are protected by the structure, further indicating that your world will expand.

Armour

Armour represents protection, strength and preparation. A few questions to ponder upon if armour is brought into your awareness: Do you need to prepare for something? Are you adequately protected? Are you wearing a suit of armour to avoid connection? Are you armoured up adequately? Are you about to enter into battle?

Birds

Birds symbolise higher thoughts and matters of the spirit. They represent the element of air. Being creatures of the air, they can also symbolise higher ideals. They represent freedom, inspiration, and ascension. When a bird symbol flies into your reading it is a message of rising to a higher level and that there is a need to free oneself from bondage and choose to make the heart light. Birds have long been identified with messages from spirit and those who have departed and so their presence can also be an indication that there is a loved one watching over or wanting to pass on a message.

Bull

The Bull is a symbol of power, royalty, stability, grounding, force, stubbornness, and potency. When Bull charges into a reading we know we are dealing with some powerful forces. Messages are being brought into one's awareness such as to stand your ground, grounding oneself in nature and self-assertion. It is shown in the World and Wheel of Fortune card because the Bull (Taurus) is one of the fixed signs of the zodiac. The bull also carries the symbolic meaning of resistance to change, being stubborn and inflexible. The bull's true nature is one of peace – like a peaceful giant. The message could also indicate the meeting of an amicable friend. The metaphor “a bull in a China shop” comes to mind. Travel and is predisposed to a charging nature and reminds us to pause to consider where we are charging to and why.

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SOME COMMON SYMBOLS

Cities & Villages

Cities and villages are symbolic of uniting together. They can be considered centres or gathering of people, thoughts, energy and ideas, diversity, customs, law and order. They are a symbol of a group that meets for a common goal. They can represent protection, teamwork or a group effort is required.

Clouds

Clouds symbolise the element of air. They can make us feel dreamy, threatening, mystical or lazy. Clouds provide a good symbolic insight into the mood of the situation. Clouds speak of change as they come and go. They can move quite quickly or rather slowly. Clouds can also represent hidden things – clouded by judgement and confusion. They are also indicative of revelation. Similar to when an epiphany or a bright idea comes out of nowhere. The metaphor – Every cloud has a silver lining comes to mind indicating a need to look deeper and higher.

Flags

The flag is an announcement of change, something has shifted, and a flag makes the world aware of this shift. It is a bright, bold obvious sign that a new day is dawning. The flag is about “in-your-face” transformation – an event to announce to all who will hear. Take time to consider your announcements. What is it that you want to draw attention to?

Grapes

Grapes and grapevines typically represent abundance, prosperity, blessings, transformation, the good life and fertility.

Hoe

A hoe is a tool and as such its symbolism deals with work, resourcefulness, a time to harvest and accomplishment. The hoe is also a reminder that one can make their way easier by using the resources available. The hoe is also connected to the old adage “what we sow, so shall we reap” when the hoe pops out at us in the cards, we might consider what kind of sowing we are doing and how we are utilising our resources. A question to consider is “are we doing things the hard way, or should we recruit some help?”

Horn

Much like a flag, the horn is a symbol of announcement, only more forceful. Horns symbolise a joyous, boisterous, victorious and triumphant announcement. They signal that something has happened or is about to happen. Horns indicate both victory and an oncoming attack. They also indicate that we are about to “hear” something or some news of importance.

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SOME COMMON SYMBOLS

Horse

The horse symbolises dealing with strength, motion, action, instinct, speed and vitality. Horse is also a strong spiritual symbol and an emblem of incorporating all the elements to maintain an equal and powerful balance – a force of nature; harnessed, reined in and brought under control. Horse values freedom and travel and is predisposed to a charging nature and reminds us to pause to consider where we are charging to and why.

The Infinity Symbol (also known as lemniscate)

This is a geometrical representation of the endless and eternal nature of energy. Energy cannot be created or destroyed; it can only be transformed it simply continues on forever in motion. This symbol reminds us of the infinite nature of our spirit as well as our thoughts. When this symbol comes to our attention it may be a message that we should consider the consequences of our thoughts and deeds – the effects of which can be infinite.

Lantern

The lantern carries with it all the meanings that deal with light. It is the vehicle for intelligence, truth and illumination. In Hinduism and Buddhism, a lamp is a symbol of life. Lamps also serve as a devotional symbol and embody the spirit of virtue, faith and vigilance (lighting a candle in memory, as well as lighting the way through the darkest hour). When the lantern of the Hermit shines brightly into our awareness it is a symbol of clarity coming through and life revealing precious gifts of us.

Lightning

Typically, the meaning of lightning deals with instant, divine and cathartic intervention. It is a major message from a higher source, a message for the observer to wake up and pay attention. Lightning was viewed as a creative spark to the Native Americans as it signified the winking Thunderbird. Linked with both fire and water, lightning is also viewed as both creator and destroyer in many cultures. Lightning can be an indication of those “out of the blue ideas – sudden inspirations and ideas. Lightning is a reminder to pay attention to what creative or destructive forces are at work in your life.

Lily

The lily has symbolic meanings of purity, innocence, and fertility. The lily also symbolises vulnerability and the freedom to be ourselves, as well as allowing others to be themselves. The lily is a symbolic flower of health and provision, it can be a signal of growth, development and has a quality of innocence. Lily can be indicative of new relationships and births.

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SOME COMMON SYMBOLS

Lion

The lion can signify one of the four fixed signs of the zodiac and symbolise dealing with strength, courage, royalty, passion, nobility, pride, and protection. Much like lightning, the lion is viewed as both saviour and destroyer in ancient cultural myth. Somewhat of a paradox, lion stands as a symbol of spiritual valour and for the beastly needs of the flesh. When the lion roars at us in the cards we are encouraged to consider the level of our courage. Are we seated in faith or flesh? Are we protecting others or ourselves? Are we being strong or stubborn?

Lizard

With symbolic meanings of renewal, vision, enlightenment and rebirth, the lizard makes its appearance on the male court cards in the suit of wands/rods/sticks. The lizard or salamander, suns itself on these cards to signify the importance of vision in the midst of action. In fact, in ancient times it was believed that the lizard renewed its sight by looking into the sun. A symbol of demure perspective in the face of monumental physical force, the lizard is a tiny reminder that big results come from small conscious efforts. It is said that the salamander is depicted as a lizard or a dragon and is known as the only creature to make it through the fire unscathed.

Lobster

Also depicted as a crab or crayfish in some decks. The lobster symbolises cycles regeneration and protection. These creatures are lunar symbols; they cast off their shells for new ones. This is where the rebirth/cycling association plays its part. The protective symbolism is evident by the hard outer shell. When the lobster in the Moon card crawls into our consciousness, we are reminded of the cyclical nature in our lives and what protection we may need for our chosen or guided path on which we journey. The Lobster can also symbolise the hidden, dark, deep parts of ourselves that needs to be addressed or that may come to the surface every now and again and so we may be asked to look deep within.

Pillars

Pillars are about balance. Typically, the focal point of the card is planted steadfastly between the pillars. This is a visual indication of middle ground. When the pillars come into our awareness it is time to consider matters of balance, tact, diplomacy, and strategy. It is a sign that going between may be more advantageous than taking the proverbial high road or low road. Rather than seeing things as left or right, black or white, perhaps we can consider a middle road – a third option with a new and different perspective. Pillars are also indicative of crossing a threshold – similar to that of entering a new phase or initiation into the next stage. The rite of passage so to speak.

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SOME COMMON SYMBOLS

Ploughed fields

“As we sow, so shall we reap” is the prime symbol meaning being the ploughed fields. When these fields come into our awareness, we need to be mindful that what we do and how we do it is pivotal to our harvest. If we are lazy and sloppy with the planting of our seeds, we will be disappointed with the results. However, if we invest the time to plant, nurture and grow our rows, we will be rewarded with abundance. Ploughed fields are also a symbol of time. It takes time to reap our rewards. We must allow for germination and patience is required as we wait for the results we are expecting from our labours. The ploughed field can also be an indication that the hard work has already been done.

Pomegranates

Pomegranates are symbolic of abundance, fertility, luxury, generosity and union. They have been used in some cultures as a symbol of marriage and love. The pomegranate with its leathery outer skin and its juicy sweet interior is a symbol of encompassing bliss, reminiscent of passion and luxury. It is also a strongly feminine symbol and is associated with female sexuality. When visions of pomegranates come into awareness, it is time to consider the power of the divine feminine side. The pomegranate is also a message to tap into the luxurious side of life and to recognise the richness, abundance and wonder that surrounds us at every turn. Take the time to notice the blessings.

Rabbit

If rabbit hops into a reading it can be symbolic of the ability to be decisive and quick. Rabbits can be timid and are also considered a symbol of fertility -hence the saying breed like rabbits. Rabbits are also close to the ground which is a good reminder to ground oneself and to remain grounded in your endeavours.

Rose

A long-standing symbol of purity, promise and beauty. Love. The rose symbolises the promise of new beginnings and hope. We must also take the thorns into consideration with the promise of new hope we may have to endure a few stings.

Free Tarot Basics

SOME COMMON SYMBOLS

Sphinx

The symbolic meaning of the sphinx deals with guardianship and protection of the secrets of life. Long considered to be a tyrant in myth, the sphinx was said to ask passers-by riddles only those who could answer correctly were allowed entrance into the gate they guard. If the sphinxes come into our awareness in a reading we are called to answer a riddle – using all of our senses and determining the secrets ha may be holding us back.

Snake

The symbolic meaning of the snake deals with renewal and rebirth, mostly because they shed their skin during each cycle in growth. Snake reminds us that sometimes we outgrow things. Snakes are also cold blooded which means they depend on their environment for their body temperature. This is a symbolic message that we need to be adaptive, flexible and adjust as best we can to our circumstances. Snakes represent the feminine wisdom and psychic abilities. When the snake slithers across the cards into our awareness, we may need to ask ourselves if we need to shed a part of ourselves to allow further growth. Perhaps we need to be a little more flexible in situation. Snake can also be alerting us to our health, or the health of someone around us.

Stained Glass

Symbolic of perception. Our perception can change according to our experiences and beliefs. How are you currently seeing your situation? Are you seeing things clearly? Or are you looking through rose-coloured glasses? When you seem to be looking through the stained-glass window of you reading. It's a sign to begin getting honest about your perception. Glass windows can protect us from outside sources.

Stars

It's in the stars! We have been able to look up at the stars for a long time – to direct us and to guide us with awe and wonder. The symbolic meaning for stars deals with shedding light on our lives, offering us navigation when we need it, and providing consistency in our lives when we seem to be all over the place. When the stars wink at us in a reading, it is time to look to a higher source for direction. We are born blessed with beautiful light within us and sometimes the stars are a reminder to sit with our own light, so the starry light within our hearts can illuminate our way. The number of points on the star that comes into your awareness will also provide us with some deeper meaning. Sometimes the star can be quite literal – A star is born! You are a Star! Or simply a wish granted as in wish upon a star

Free Tarot Basics

SOME COMMON SYMBOLS

Snail

The snail carries his home upon his back. Homes can represent security. What do you define as your security? What are you carrying around with you? The metaphor Home is where the heart is comes to mind. Snails also represent a slow and steady pace.

Throne/chair/bench

Support. This is what supports us. Is the chair strong enough to support and sustain us? Thrones, chairs, and benches also refer to our status. The more decadent the more status we have achieved. Chairs also offer us a place to rest -, which then brings the question are we resting? Do we need to rest and take a load off? Do we need to take a seat or take our place? Is our seat in disrepair or is it in good order?

Tomb

Lying to rest the thoughts and things that are no longer serving us, or that are outdated. The tomb in the tarot really has nothing to do with death. It's more about freeing ourselves from our outdated beliefs and behaviours, and our small ways of thinking. Coming out of the constraints allows us to enter into a new phase as we evolve.

Wreath

News and announcements. Wreaths also represent protection, peace and purification. They can often mean victory as the winner in ancient times was crowned with a wreath laurel. This led to the term – resting on his laurels – meaning one was relying on his previous attributes, winnings or credentials.

Free Tarot Basics

EXERCISES

What do you notice when gazing upon the following cards?

What thoughts, sensations or emotions come up for you?



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