



RETROACLE

USER GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

The Retroracle is an expanded adaptation of the traditional Lenormand deck. The description below gives some background for those who are unfamiliar with Lenormand cards, while the next section in this guide explains the unique additions which have been incorporated into this deck.

Lenormand decks contain 36 cards, rather than the 52 cards which are included in a modern standard playing card deck. Each of the cards in a Lenormand deck features a primary image, e.g. *Rider*, and a corresponding, secondary playing card insert, e.g. 9♥. The 36 inserts comprise Ace, King, Queen, Jack, and pips Ten to Six of the four suits - Clubs, Hearts, Spades, and Diamonds. These inserts are so called because in many popular decks they appear as miniature cards, inserted on top of the primary image.

The Lenormand deck as now commonly recognised originated in 18th century Germany, where many playing card decks were printed with only 36 cards (indeed some European decks, and certainly many games from this period, still omit pip cards 2-5). Recent research has proved that the first recognisable Lenormand deck was printed in Germany by Johann Kaspar Hechtel as part of a game called *The Game of Hope* (*Das Spiel der Hoffnung*). Surviving reports and advertising materials from the period indicate that the deck was available at least as early as 1799.

Many of the images included in Hechtel's deck derive from earlier sources, and evidence has been uncovered to show that coffee cards of the period used for fortune telling heavily influenced Hechtel's choice of images. But *The Game of Hope* is generally agreed to be the first deck which specifically includes the images and inserts which appear in all subsequent Lenormand decks.

The name *Lenormand* itself often causes some confusion. Hechtel did not use this name, and only later decks appropriated it from the famous French fortune-teller Marie-Anne Lenormand. Madame Lenormand's fame reached its peak during the Napoleonic period, some time after the publication of *The Game of Hope*. It was only as late as 1846 - three years after her death - that an edition of the deck was first published using her name in an opportunistic attempt to capitalise on her reputation.

Decks based on Hechtel's prototype are, strictly speaking, called *Petit Jeu* decks, to distinguish them from the more complex *Grand Jeu* deck which purports to follow more closely Mme. Lenormand's own, unique deck. The *Grand Jeu* deck has never been as popular as the smaller, simpler deck and is only used by a very few specialist readers. Nowadays, whenever readers and writers refer to Lenormand they are usually referring to the 36-card deck based on *The Game of Hope*.



Portrait of Marie-Anne Lenormand, believed to be the only authentic likeness in existence

Lenormand decks remained popular throughout the 19th century - both as a fortune-telling device and simply as a conventional games-playing deck in areas of Europe where 36-card decks continued to be used. Lenormand was, however, largely eclipsed by the Tarot revival at the turn of the twentieth century. The spotlight cast on Tarot meant that by comparison Lenormand was relegated to the background. Certain Lenormand decks (or variants such as 'Gypsy Witch' decks) have always remained available in both Europe and North America, but they have never received the attention or analysis devoted to Tarot. Until very recently, Lenormand remained mostly a specialist interest, appearing only as a minor footnote in Tarot guides.

Recent years have seen a strong revival of interest in Lenormand, with new books and decks being published at an ever increasing rate. More new Lenormand decks have been printed in the past five years than in the past hundred, and Lenormand is now even more popular than it was in its original 19th century heyday. While Tarot remains more widely recognised in the public consciousness, there probably now exist as many Lenormand readers as Tarot readers. There are certainly as many decks.

Importantly, interest in Lenormand has also spread worldwide. Rather than being restricted to Europe and North America, readers and collectors are now to be found all over the globe.

The increased variety of decks, coupled with their much wider availability, has driven interest in Lenormand to new heights. The reasons for this explosion of interest are of course open to debate, but it is reasonable to speculate that Lenormand's new-found popularity may be ascribed to three main factors.

First, Lenormand delivers much simpler and more direct messages than Tarot. This appeals to readers looking for clear, unambiguous answers. Learning Lenormand is certainly much easier to learn (at least in the initial stages) than Tarot. The deck is of course only half the size of a Tarot deck, and the imagery is usually much less elaborate.

Second, Lenormand also remains comparatively untarnished by the 'occult' associations which can make some beginners nervous about exploring Tarot. Lenormand uses less threatening imagery (there are, for example, no Devil or Death cards in a Lenormand deck), and more sensitive novices are therefore more comfortable with it.

Third, the sequence of the images and overall structure of Lenormand have encouraged many professional and amateur artists to create new, original decks. Lenormand decks are in many ways easier to produce than Tarot decks, so ever more artists and designers are becoming attracted to them as a potential project.

ABOUT THIS DECK

Before I became a professional designer, I worked for many years within research and consultancy. During my previous career I was regularly posted all over the world. Although I went as far as Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, and South Africa, I spent most time in Eastern Europe. I travelled to Poland more regularly than to any other country, and became well acquainted with many of its cities.

On these visits I developed a love for vintage Polish graphics and illustrations, which you can still see everywhere - on posters, matchbox covers, tickets, and flyers. Poland has a strong tradition of graphic design, and has a very distinctive style all of its own (I'd strongly recommend anyone who's interested in design looking up classic Polish movie posters). So I decided to make a fun, light Lenormand which took its initial inspiration from this school of design.

Designing the deck was harder than I expected - simplicity can often be more difficult to get right than a more elaborate, layered style. I worked through many different versions of the deck, rejecting many card designs in the process, before finally arriving at a style that I was happy with. In particular, I experimented with various textures and treatments to achieve the specific atmosphere I was looking for. I didn't want these cards to look too sharp and crisp: rather, I wanted them to have a nostalgic, retro feel. I hope that the final deck reflects this aim.

From the very start of the design process, I knew that I wanted to create cards which reversed the usual arrangement of Lenormand cards, where the playing card insert appears as a supplementary device overlaid onto the main image. Instead, I was interested in following the layout of traditional playing cards (e.g. the Six of Clubs) and fitting the image associated with each card around the pips. In this way, the cards could function together as a regular deck for playing card games, as well as working as an oracle deck.

While this didn't present too big a problem for the small pips, finding a way for this to work for the Courts (Kings, Queens, and Jacks) - while keeping the overall look and feel of the deck consistent - did turn out to be a real challenge. Eventually I devised a solution where all the main images are presented within a central panel.

I considered for some time whether or not to include titles on the cards. I was conscious that with the pips all in place, as well as suits and numbers in opposite corners, there was a danger of the cards appearing too cluttered and busy. I hope that the approach I finally decided upon - to include titles within the borders - works for everyone.

Titles are included in both English and Polish as a tribute to the deck's initial inspiration. Many thanks to Pati Bywalec for checking my translations.

Initially I'd only planned on creating a 36-card deck. Once I was into the project, however, I realised that I liked the idea of expanding it into a full 52-card deck (54, including Jokers). While this was partly due to my enjoying the process, I also became interested in trying to cover more themes than the 36-card Lenormand deck allows. While I recognise that a regular 36-card Lenormand deck can cover a wide range of experiences and situations (particularly when cards are read as combinations), I sensed some definite omissions. I therefore decided to take the opportunity to plug what felt to me like the most important gaps by designing extra cards for pips 2 to 5 of each suit - an additional 16 cards.

My choices as to what additional themes to include have been quite subjective, but certainly weren't made without a great deal of thought. In particular, I attempted as far as possible to choose subjects which offered some symmetry or relationship to cards already within the Lenormand deck. To take one example, while there exists a card for the ending of a partnership (Scythe) and for the beginning of a new one (Ring), I felt there was no card to indicate the re-establishing of a broken relationship or a reunion - so I added the Bridge (2♥) to fill this gap. Similarly, while there exists a card for friendship (Dog), there seemed to be nothing to denote work colleagues, who often represent just as important a part of modern life - so I created the Bees card (5♣).



The 16 additional cards which appear within the Retroracle, created as unique additions to the traditional Lenormand inventory of 36.

In terms of what images I used to represent the new topics I've included, I decided to take the existing Lenormand 'families' as a starting point. I've therefore included several new cards which add to the existing collection of flora (Grapes, Ivy, Mushroom), fauna (Ass, Bees, Ape, Peacock), and household objects (Compass, Hourglass, Mirror). Throughout, I've been mindful of only using images which seem to fit comfortably with the overall Lenormand repertoire and which I could easily imagine appearing in a traditional (albeit expanded) Lenormand deck.

The meanings of all the additional cards - as well as the traditional 36 - are described in the following section of this guide.

Adding another 16 cards did, of course, raise the issue of whether to present cards in their traditional numerical sequence (i.e. Rider = I, Clover = II, Ship = III) or whether instead to abandon these numbers and to present cards by order of suit (1♠, 2♠, 3♠, 4♠, etc.). I spent a considerable amount of time on this question, but eventually determined that for a full 52-card deck the latter approach made more sense.

The Retroracle can, of course, be used as a regular 36-card Lenormand deck by removing the additional cards. It's entirely up to individual readers how they prefer to use the deck.

CARD MEANINGS

I. IMAGES

The 36 primary images within the main Lenormand deck have remained largely unchanged since *The Game of Hope* was first published. While a small number of cards sometimes bear different names (e.g. 'Crossroads' for Paths, or 'Park' for Garden) and the overall style of the cards may have changed considerably, the original sequence of images has now remained consistent for over two hundred years - a remarkable survival.

In recent years, valuable research has been carried out on the sources for the images included within *The Game of Hope*. Sufficient evidence now exists to confirm that Hechtel's deck itself drew much of its inspiration from earlier fortune telling coffee cards. These coffee cards incorporated many of the images handed down to us - or at least used images which are very similar to those adopted by all subsequent Lenormand decks. At least one set of 32 cards from 1794 includes many familiar images (although these appear in a different numerical sequence from that adopted by *The Game of Hope*). So it now appears beyond doubt that Hechtel's own deck took many of its images from earlier cards - rather than being a completely original invention.

The credible history which has now been established for Lenormand largely discounts the theory that there exists any secret philosophy or system embedded within it. Although some have tried to assign astrological or cabbalistic associations to Lenormand cards, it needs to be said that these attempts are mostly exercises in post-rationalisation. It is sometimes worth remembering that Lenormand was originally just a game.

Throughout this guide I refer to the pictures featured on the cards as *images*, rather than as symbols. Unlike Tarot, Lenormand decks contain neither personifications of the virtues (Temperance, Fortitude, Justice) nor symbols which require religious or cultural explanation (Hanged Man, Wheel of Fortune, Tower). Lenormand cards simply show *images*. This makes the cards easier to understand by any reader, regardless of his or her own cultural background.

Lenormand also benefits from a relative unity of thought: so far, at least, its study has not yet divided into different schools. In this respect, Lenormand is very unlike Tarot, where different decks often attach quite different meanings to the same card. For example, a specific Tarot card's meaning can differ greatly depending on whether it has been drawn from an early Marseille deck, a Golden Dawn variant, or Aleister Crowley's later Thoth deck.

Lenormand is entirely free of this complexity and potential for confusion. Whatever the shape, style, or theme of a Lenormand deck, its cards always carry the same basic meaning. The Tower could be represented by a mediaeval gothic structure, the Empire State Building, or a termite mound, but it always remains the Tower, and its meaning always remains broadly the same.

The images on Lenormand cards - and also those extra cards included within this oracle deck - should ideally be read quite literally, rather than symbolically. It is important to recognise this when first learning to read Lenormand. For those used to reading Tarot, which relies heavily on detailed interpretation of symbols and metaphors, this adjustment can sometimes require some effort.

It is certainly helpful to put aside at an early stage familiar meanings of those images which appear in both Lenormand and Tarot. The Tower and The Sun in a Lenormand deck, for example, are not the same as The Tower and The Sun in a Tarot deck.

Lenormand cards tend to work best when they are treated as the building blocks for creating miniature scripts or 'visual sentences'. How these visual sentences are constructed and read is described later within this guide, where a number of different card layouts are demonstrated.

The meanings listed in the following section are all my own, and are not intended in any way to be definitive. They should, however, be sufficient for new readers to familiarise themselves with the basic meanings usually assigned to each card. Over time, as you become better acquainted with all the images, you will doubtless develop your own intuitive associations with specific cards.

Those meanings attached to the additional cards unique to this oracle are, of course, entirely my own.

In an attempt to make the card meanings easier to remember, I have also assigned a single keyword to each card. Again, these keywords are my own suggestions and should not necessarily be taken as definitive.



MAN

The enquirer, if the enquirer is male.

If the enquirer is female, the Man shows a man close to her, e.g. her husband or father.

Please see the note on Jokers in this section for information on reading for same-sex couples.



BRIDGE

"Reconciliation"

A reunion after a split, or reaching a peaceful solution to a conflict.

Forgiveness, putting previous bad feelings aside to reach agreement, willingness to compromise, amnesties.



ASS

"Laziness"

Lethargy, idleness (either physical or mental), not accepting the need to move or to change.

Obstinacy, listlessness, a refusal to make the first move. Digging one's heels in for no good reason.



GRAPES

"Indulgence"

Abundance, wealth, excess, spoiling oneself.

Enjoyment of one's success and wealth - but also drunkenness, gluttony, and neglecting one's health through over consumption.



SEED

"Genesis"

The germ of a new idea or project - the initial inspiration which has the potential to develop into something great.

Creativity and conception, a new beginning, start-ups.



STARS

"Direction"

Signs or signals to be followed. In the modern world, technology and computing.

Clarity, navigation, design, planning, strategy, technology, the internet, astronomy, astrology.



TREE

"Health"

Physical and spiritual health and wellbeing. Often, the enquirer's own culture and family background.

Nature, nurture, organic growth, diet, roots and ancestry, patience, healing, medicine.



MOON

"Intuition"

Creativity and inspiration. The internal opposite to the Sun's external qualities.

The subconscious, the irrational, fantasy, oestrogen, the id, the right brain, the hidden and psychic world.



RIDER

"News"

News of some kind, received in either verbal or written form. Also, unexpected change.

Swiftness, flight, a messenger, a visitor, a person in uniform, a horse, bicycle, or motorcycle.



DOG

"Loyalty"

Friendship and trust. A trusted friend, colleague, or partner.

Honesty, support, trust, 'being there', dependability, assistance, intimacy, an advisor or companion, a domestic pet.



HEART

"Love"

The enquirer's own emotional life - his inner wishes, his loves, and his desires.

Feelings, passion, warmth, desire, affection, tenderness, kindness, charity, the heart as an organ of the body.



STORK

"Progress"

Improvement - if the enquirer gets the timing right. Often, pregnancy and births.

Promotion, a shift of direction or priorities, good planning and forward thinking, maternity and childbirth.



HOUSE

"Home"

The enquirer's home.
But in some very specific scenarios, a safe house or refuge away from the home.

Sanctuary, shelter, creature comforts, a large building, a website, a home business.

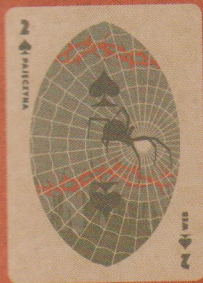


WOMAN

The enquirer, if the enquirer is female.

If the enquirer is male, the Woman shows a woman close to him, e.g. his wife or mother.

Please see the note on Jokers in this section for information on reading for same-sex couples.



WEB

"Danger"

Walking into a trap, opportunism, a hazardous situation from which it will be difficult to escape.

Allowing oneself to be tempted, seduced, or exploited. Failing to assess risks, getting oneself in too deep.



MUSHROOM

"Hunting"

Something concealed that will need effort to uncover. A hidden treasure.

Research, browsing, and collecting. The necessary process of gathering the facts before a final decision can be made.



PEACOCK

"Vanity"

Superficial glamour, beauty which is only skin-deep. A preoccupation with appearance, materialism.

Arrogance, pride, self-delusion. Fashionable and expensive goods bought for effect.



MIRROR

"Reflection"

Introspection. Accepting truths about oneself and about one's priorities in life.

Self-assessment and analysis. Recognising how one appears to the rest of the world, rather than just to oneself.



TOWER

"Authority"

Government agencies, the armed forces, the law, educational establishments, large corporations.

Law and order, 'the system', military and police forces, hierarchies, rules and regulations, tax.



LETTER

"Correspondence"

Written communications - both printed and digital, e.g. email or text messages.

Mail, documents, newspapers, contracts, bills, invoices, statements, cheques.



GARDEN

"Society"

A place where people meet. Nowadays, this can indicate social networks as often as a physical place.

Meetings, clubs, parties, reunions, conferences, teamwork, the countryside.



ANCHOR

"Stability"

Security, often after a difficult period. But it can also indicate fixed attitudes.

Security, safety, settling down, a safe haven, legacies, conservatism, reactionary beliefs, prejudice.



SHIP

"Movement"

A journey - which could be spiritual as well as physical. The card frequently indicates a foreign influence of some kind.

Adventure, travel, long distances, a rite of passage, a large vehicle or vessel.



CHILD

"Innocence"

Usually the enquirer's own childhood, but sometimes another child or a pupil known to the enquirer.

Inexperience, immaturity, naïveté, simple pleasures, play, fun, a new beginning, a pupil or student.



BOUQUET

"Delight"

Sweet and graceful pleasures which bring charm and joy in life. Often, an unexpected and welcome gift.

Happiness, charm, a present, a positive surprise, colour, beauty, generosity, romance, good taste.



LILIES

"Maturity"

Wisdom and inner peace gained from experience. Sexual confidence.

Serenity, wisdom, experience, mercy, inner security, relaxation, ageing, retirement, sex and sexuality.



SUN

"Success"

Positive power, dynamism, and achievement. A card of great energy.

Light, heat, consciousness, science, masculinity, testosterone, the ego, the left brain, the physical world.



IVY

"Decline"

Failure of a project or relationship - often because of a refusal to change.

Not adapting until too late, or not keeping up with the times. Something old-fashioned and outdated.



TUNNEL

"Solitude"

Loneliness, withdrawal, exile, isolation. Not being able to fit into a situation or group.

Feeling apart from others and being unable to connect to them, reclusiveness, friendlessness.



HOURGLASS

"Patience"

Taking one's time. Being being prepared to wait, rather than rushing into a situation.

Self-control, restraint. Meditation. Assessing opportunities rather than seizing them impulsively.



APE

"Folly"

Reckless, stupid behaviour - which one will inevitably later come to regret. Embarrassment.

Foolishness, acting or speaking without thinking, misjudging what others may not consider a joke.



CLOVER

"Luck"

A welcome bonus, but nothing life-changing nor permanent. A small stroke of luck.

A windfall, a lucky break, an opportunity, hope, a turnaround, a tonic, recovery after a short illness.



BIRDS

"Chatter"

Small talk or gossip. But also sometimes the casual intimacy between siblings and close family.

Conversation, telephone calls or messaging, a date, an interview, a small meeting, a debate.



KEY

"Solution"

A problem solved. An achievement which will open doors to future success.

Discovery, access, passwords and entry codes, pass certificates, passports and visas, clues, destiny, the soul.



COFFIN

"Conclusion"

The necessary end of a situation or of a relationship. In some rare cases, physical death.

Cancellation, redundancy, stagnation, terminal illness, death, a closed box, darkness.



BOOK

"Secrecy"

Inside information, which can often be of a secret or confidential nature.

Restricted or banned material, apocrypha and arcana, books, papers, protected files, knowledge, libraries, magic and the occult.



SCYTHE

"Cutting"

Something needs to be cut away. This may be painful, but its removal will bring longer term benefits.

Removal, separation, surgery, efficiency, practicality, ruthlessness, knives, sharp tools.



FISH

"Enterprise"

Work, particularly independence and self-determination. Often, freelance employment.

Freedom, start-ups, independence, flexibility, expansion, water, a freelance worker.



PATHS

"Choice"

Called Crossroads in many traditional decks, the need to make a considered decision.

Decision making, determination, evaluation, analysis, free will, gut instincts, consequences.



RING

"Partnership"

A coming together, in both personal and professional contexts. In some instances, marriage.

Weddings, union, alliance, agreement, collaboration, a promise, contracts, a merger, jewellery.



COMPASS

"Reason"

Logic, science, and measurement - particularly in terms of weighing up both sides of a question.

The rational side of the personality, ordered thought, careful analysis, good sense, structured planning.



NEEDLE

"Repair"

Patching up or mending something which has become worn, torn, or broken.

Fixing a problem when it needs to be fixed ('a stitch in time'), making the most of available resources during trying times.



ARCHER

"Focus"

Ambition - identifying a clear target and setting one's sights on it. But sometimes also a warning against impulsiveness or ruthlessness.

Strategy and tactics, striking a blow, making the first step.



BEES

"Teamwork"

Colleagues within the workplace - as opposed to private friends or family outside of work.

Working together, collaboration, collective effort, productivity, roles and hierarchy, delegation.



CROSS

"Sacrifice"

A burden, of either a physical or spiritual kind. Loss, grief, and regret.

Physical or spiritual sacrifice, religious devotion, suffering, illness, guilt, bereavement, repentance.



MOUNTAIN

"Obstruction"

An obstacle which will take effort to overcome. This can be either external or internal (e.g. writer's block).

Challenge, delay, interruption, inertia, paralysis, immobility, denial, stiffness.



MICE

"Damage"

Disruption and disorder - either due to interference or through neglect and lack of proper management.

Loss, theft, erosion, ruin, deterioration, untidiness, dirt, vermin, parasites.



FOX

"Trickery"

A sly, ingenious person, working against the enquirer. Often, a devious work colleague.

Intrigue, plotting, manipulation, bending the rules, 'getting away with it', office politics.



BEAR

"Strength"

Money, especially home finances. The Mother Bear who provides for and protects her offspring.

Power, weight, prudence, protection, bank accounts, insurance, savings, wealth and assets.

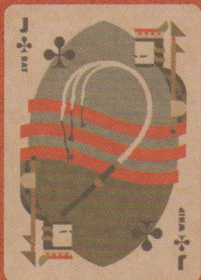


SNAKE

"Betrayal"

Deception or deceit - from a known person. Also, complexity and difficulty.

Treachery, twisted words, jealousy, rivalry, rivers, winding roads, pipes and tubes, tangled wires and cables.



WHIP

"Conflict"

A clash, where the enquirer may be either the culprit or the victim. Sometimes, physical violence.

Arguments, culture clash, bullying, threatening behaviour, violence, sport and competition.



CLOUDS

"Doubt"

Uncertainty, particularly in a confusing or complex situation where there may be no clear 'yes' or 'no'.

Vagueness, indecision, scepticism, cynicism, depression, fog, smoke, gloom.

II. JOKERS



The Retroracle includes a Red Joker and a Black Joker, which readers can choose either to use or discard, based on their own preference.

The Jokers may be used by readers who wish to make readings concerning same-sex couples. In this scenario, the Red Joker indicates a male partner, and the Black Joker a female partner.

In more general spreads, the appearance of a Joker should be used as a suggestion to think again, either in terms of how the original question put to the cards has been expressed, or as a prompt to considering an alternative interpretation of the spread.

III. CARDS AS PEOPLE

As well as the meanings listed on the previous pages, the deck contains cards which may also be taken to represent people. These are the King, Queen, and Jack cards. In traditional cartomancy, these cards are all believed to represent people with particular characteristics. Although the main focus of a reading is usually on the main image (e.g. House, Bouquet), gathering information about people requires a shift in attention to the insert (e.g. King of Hearts, Queen of Spades).

Opinion remains ever divided as to the origin of how inserts came to be allocated to specific cards. The Game of Hope included German pips, but earlier coffee cards generally did not. In truth, no-one has yet devised a convincing explanation as to why or how inserts were attributed. Various theories have been proposed, and specific meanings for all the inserts have been developed, but these are too detailed to describe in this booklet. They are, however, easily found online.

Some readers place great emphasis on inserts, believing them to be integral to a reading. Others view them as a distraction. The characteristics assigned to the following cards are presented here as an option which you may either observe or disregard according to your own preference.



A young person (either male or female) with dark hair. Active, ambitious, and full of energy. Often a person who is quite physically oriented, i.e. enthusiastic about sports and exercise.



A cool, clever woman with dark hair. She likes being involved in whatever's going on, and prides herself on her good judgement. She may be a dark horse, with more going on under the surface than is apparent.



A mature man, usually married, with dark hair. He has good business sense and may have obtained some influence in his field. He is protective of his family and those who work for him.



A young, serious and purposive person (either male or female) who inspires warmth and devotion from all those who know them. Generally unmarried, and possibly quite vulnerable.



A warm, loving mother figure (a mother, aunt, or nurse) who is cherished, and of great emotional importance to the enquirer. Ever reliable, and the source of great comfort in troubled times.



A father, uncle, or guardian figure who cares a great deal about the enquirer. They are of great emotional importance to the enquirer.



J♠

A young person (male or female) with dark hair. They like to take charge, and can be ruthless in pursuit of their ambitions. They know how to use the rules of the game to win.



Q♠

A woman with dark hair who likes to take charge of a situation. She knows how to achieve what she wants, and can dominate proceedings. Often, a widow or divorcee.



K♠

An older man with dark hair, sometimes the 'third man' in a relationship. An authoritative figure who likes to be the boss in any situation (e.g. a judge, an employer). He can be suspicious and cautious.



J♦

A young person (male or female) with fair hair, full of restless and nervous energy. Often creative and mercurial, to the point of instability. They can be over-concerned with money.



Q♦

An older woman with fair hair, intelligent and quick of wit. She can find it hard to resist interfering in other's affairs. Often somewhat competitive, she can be a dangerous rival.



K♦

An older man with fair hair who has achieved great success in life, especially within business. Intelligent and practical, he can often be very oriented towards money and material reward.

IV. COMBINATIONS

One of the best ways to gain a fuller reading is by reading cards together as combinations. This is where two or more cards appear next to one another. While it is, of course, possible to read all cards individually, treating them as combinations often delivers much more precise detail.

With 52 cards in this deck there are of course many hundreds of possible pairings, and some books and websites provide long lists of combinations. I personally believe that it is bad practice for beginners to try to learn all these combinations before first acquiring some confidence with cards at an individual level. I would therefore recommend a more intuitive approach in which readers start out by creating their own combinations, based on one simple rule - that the second card **describes and elaborates on** the first.

As you become more familiar with the deck, you will no doubt begin to develop and recognise your own combinations.

Described here are some examples of possible combinations. They are presented in pairs, to help you understand how the card order can dramatically change the meaning of the combination.

Combination 1a. Fish and Coffin, *a false start.*



The Fish denotes new ventures, particularly in business. But the description card, the Coffin, means that these are soon destined to end.

The combined meaning here is, therefore, a plan which is over before it has begun or which fails ever to get off the ground, i.e. a false start.

Combination 1b. Coffin and Fish, *the end of a job.*



In this combination, the cards are reversed. The Coffin signifies an ending. The description card, the Fish, denotes work and business. So here we see the ending of a project or job. It may even indicate a total change of career, or leaving employed work to become a freelance.

Combination 2a. Ship and House, *a trip home*.



The Ship denotes a journey of some kind. The House describes the nature of this journey, so this combination specifically denotes a trip back home. Whether this journey is just temporary or a permanent move will be indicated by other adjacent cards.

Combination 2b. House and Ship, *relocation*.



The House shows a message about home. The Ship supplies the necessary description and detail. This combination indicates that the home itself will move, i.e. relocation. Given the international flavour of the Ship, this could indicate relocation abroad, i.e. emigration.

Many users of oracles - particularly Lenormand readers - often use three card combinations to help provide answers to very direct questions. Two very simple examples are provided below.

Question 1: Where are my sunglasses?



In this example, a reader has returned from holiday and has been unable to find her sunglasses since she's been back. She asks the oracle where they might be, and deals three cards: Coffin, Dog, and Ship.

Read quite literally in this instance, the Coffin suggests that the glasses are in a box or case. By itself, this is of course of limited help. But using the next two cards supplies the necessary detail.

The Dog indicates a friend, and the Ship denotes travel. So when these three cards are read together, the immediate answer to the reader's question is: "In your friend's suitcase".

Question 2: Why is he acting upset with me?



In this example, the reader senses that her partner is upset by something that she's said or done, but she can't place what she's done wrong. She asks the oracle for some clues, and deals three cards: Ape, Fish, Ivy.

The first card confirms immediately that she's right to think that she made a mistake - most likely by saying the wrong thing and making a joke out of something that her partner didn't find funny.

The second card in the combination, Fish, relates to work, so this offers a further clue that the mistake she made related somehow to her partner's job.

The third card, Ivy, denotes something out of date or old fashioned. Once the reader sees this, she immediately remembers a joke she made about her partner's job being boring. While she only meant it as a joke, it's clearly rankled her partner much more than she realised. Now she recognises what she's done wrong, she's in a better position to make amends and resolve the problem.

CARD LAYOUTS

I. FIRST PRINCIPLES

Many different layouts for oracles are available: this section is only intended as an introduction. As you become familiar with the Retroracle, you may develop your own, e.g. quick 'pulls' with few cards, or more complex layouts which cover many aspects of life.

Personally, I have found the following broad guidelines to be useful:

I. Cards should be read from left to right, and from top to bottom.

II. Cards to the left and top of a layout relate to the past-present, i.e. what has already happened, or what the enquirer cannot change.

III. Cards to the right and bottom of a layout relate to the present-future, i.e. where the enquirer can still affect the situation through choice.

IV. Cards work best if they are first read individually, before being put together into combinations.

V. A single card may be preselected to focus the subject or topic of a reading. This card is called the *Significator* and is preplaced in the centre of a layout. For a male enquirer, the Man card should be used. For a female querent, the Woman card should be used.

If a layout is being cast to represent a specific question, then a different Significator can be chosen to relate directly to that question.

For example, for a question about love and relationships, the Heart card may be selected as a Significator.

For a question about work, the Fox or the Fish may be used.

For a question about home and family, the House may be used.

On questions of money, the Bear may be used.

II. STRING READINGS

The simplest card layouts are strings, where cards are dealt in a single row and read from left to right. If a Significator has been chosen, this should be placed in the centre.

The number of cards used depends on the detail desired, but the most common layout for quick questions uses just three cards to represent past, present, and future.

Two example strings, answering specific questions, are shown on the following pages.

In our first example, the enquirer wishes to know whether they would be happier in a new job. Three random cards are selected from the deck, which are then read from left to right.



PAST



PRESENT



FUTURE

The Fox suggests that a colleague has been creating difficulties in the enquirer's current job, most likely by undermining his position. This has produced an impasse shown by the Mountain. A possible future is shown by the Fish, where the enquirer makes a fresh start, perhaps by going freelance.

Drawing a further, final card and adding it to the string helps to clarify the likely outcome.



SUMMARY

The Sun is a highly positive card, indicating energy and success. It reinforces the message of the spread overall, and confirms that making the move suggested by the final card would provide greater happiness for the enquirer.



PAST



RECENT



SUBJECT



SOON



FUTURE

Here, we look at a question asked by a woman who has recently split up with a male partner. She is looking for advice as to whether she should give the relationship another attempt.

Because the question is so specific, it makes sense to use a Significator to represent the other person. Here the Man card has been used as the focus of the enquiry. Because questions of love are more complicated than many others, five cards have been used rather than just three. Five cards allow us to look both further back and further forward.

The first card, Birds, shows that their relationship was founded primarily on talking: Birds denote conversation and chatter. But we also need to consider cards that do not appear. There's little here to indicate genuine passion. None of the cards which suggest either sexual attraction or compatibility, i.e. Heart, Sun, or Ring, are present. It is tempting to conclude, therefore, that from the beginning the relationship was perhaps founded on a slightly superficial basis rather than anything more meaningful.

The second card, Scythe, is a clear indication of the recent break up. Taken as a combination with the Birds, this strongly implies that the reason for the split was that the conversation between the two partners was somehow cut short. Perhaps the jokes and banter between them dried up the better they got to know one another, such that they became tired or eventually annoyed by one another's talk.

Looking to the future, the Ship card suggests that rather than trying again with her previous partner, the enquirer and her ex-partner would both instead benefit from putting some distance between themselves for a while. Given the context of the layout, it appears that the two certainly need to give themselves a break from one another. At the most basic level, the Ship is suggesting that the enquirer needs to move on.

The final outcome of the layout is represented by the Dog card. The appearance of this card in the final position in the string suggests that ultimately the enquirer and her former partner have the potential to become close friends, rather than remaining as lovers. The continuing absence from the layout of any key cards indicating love and partnership suggest that the relationship between the two will eventually be strong, but will be of a platonic rather than a romantic nature.

As described in the first example, after reading the main string of cards, readers often draw one further additional card. This extra card can be used to sum up the overall message of the layout as broadly positive, negative, or neutral.

Opinions occasionally differ on the allocations of these qualities to individual cards, but my own preferred attributions are summarised on the next page. Alternative attributions can easily be found online.

Some readers believe that drawing a single card in this way can in fact supply a direct answer of yes, no, or maybe to any question - without even needing to place the card within a string. In these instances, drawing a positive card, e.g. Bouquet, would be read as an answer of yes, while drawing a negative card, e.g. Fox, would be read as an answer of no.

Although oracle decks can deliver very direct and immediate messages, expecting any deck to deliver such polarised and unequivocal answers is, in my own opinion, expecting too much. It also, of course, very much neglects the specific messages attached to the cards themselves. Using single cards to answer questions in this way is not, therefore, an approach I would personally recommend.

	♣	♥	♠	♦
1	RING Neutral	MAN Neutral	WOMAN Neutral	SUN Positive
2	COMPASS Positive	BRIDGE Positive	WEB Negative	IVY Negative
3	ARCHER Neutral	ASS Negative	MUSHROOM Neutral	TUNNEL Negative
4	NEEDLE Neutral	GRAPES Neutral	PEACOCK Negative	HOURLASS Neutral
5	BEE Positive	SEED Positive	MIRROR Neutral	APE Negative
6	CROSS Negative	STARS Positive	TOWER Neutral	CLOVER Positive
7	MICE Negative	TREE Neutral	LETTER Neutral	BIRDS Neutral
8	MOUNTAIN Negative	MOON Neutral	GARDEN Neutral	KEY Positive
9	FOX Negative	RIDER Positive	ANCHOR Positive	COFFIN Negative
10	BEAR Neutral	DOG Positive	SHIP Positive	BOOK Negative
J	WHIP Negative	HEART Positive	CHILD Positive	SCYTHE Negative
O	SNAKE Negative	STORK Neutral	BOUQUET Positive	PATHS Neutral
K	CLOUDS Negative	HOUSE Positive	LILIES Positive	FISH Positive

III. GRAND TABLEAU

The Grand Tableau is the oldest and best known Lenormand layout. It originates from The Game of Hope, and follows an 8/8/8/8/4 pattern. Alternative Grand Tableaux are sometimes used, for example a 9/9/9/9 pattern, but the layout shown below is the traditionally accepted form.

The illustration below uses the main 36 Lenormand cards (excluding pips 2-5 of each suit). But all 52 cards can of course be used, according to preference.



THE GRAND TABLEAU

The Grand Tableau is a complex layout, and these notes serve only as a very basic introduction. The following rules should be observed:

1. The focal point is the Significator. The reading shown here is for a man, so the focal point is Row 2, Column 5.

(Note: a Significator should not be pre-selected or pre-placed in the layout, but should fall into position naturally as dealt.)

2. The column in which the Significator appears represents the present.
3. Columns to the left of the Significator represent the past, those to the right the future.
4. The most important and influential aspects appear in the same row as the Significator. These are the forces and situations closest to him.
5. Cards below the Significator are elements of life over which he has control or influence. Those above it are elements which are controlling and influencing him.
7. The four bottom cards (often called the 'fate cards') are read as a mini-layout in their own right. They serve as an summary for the whole Tableau, and should be read as a string from left to right.

Following these rules allows one to create a detailed portrait of the enquirer's present, past, and future. But this is only the beginning of how the Tableau works. By focusing on cards relating to particular aspects of life, e.g. work, family, or love, it can answer different questions within a single layout.

We can use the example Tableau shown on the previous page to demonstrate this versatility.

To ask about money, we look to the card which represents finances, the Bear: this card appears beneath the Significator in the layout. Cards beneath the Significator are within the enquirer's control, so it appears that he is in control of his finances. But the Bear's position in relation to the Significator should also be examined. Its distance from the Man, appearing far in the future, suggests that at least for now our enquirer is not thinking about money decisions a great deal and is instead postponing proper consideration of this issue until some time in the future.

Similarly, if the enquirer wishes to know about partnerships, we would locate the card which signifies partnerships, i.e. the Ring. In the layout shown, the Ring appears far to the left of the Man. This suggests that he has not had a meaningful partnership for some time. Looking at the cards between the Ring and the Man indicates what has happened since his last relationship.

The cards which appear here are Clover, Heart, and Ship. Clover always indicates something temporary. Taken in combination with the Heart, we can surmise that he may indeed have experienced brief flashes of passion, but has immediately moved on, as indicated by the Ship. So he has not had a partnership for some time, but he may well have enjoyed a few one night stands.

Other cards often used for specific questions are:

Love and desire: Heart. **Work:** Fish or Fox.

Marriage: Ring. **Money:** Bear.

Childhood: Child. **Pregnancy:** Stork.

Home life: House. **Friends:** Dog.

Health: Tree. **Sex:** Lily.

Education: Book. **Illness:** Cross.

Many more advanced techniques are available. These include reading diagonal substrings, reading the four corners and the central cross, and knighting (i.e. connecting pairs of cards positioned relative to one other as in a knight's chess move).

To explain all of these techniques would require a much longer and more detailed booklet than it was possible to prepare for this deck. Fortunately, information about these techniques is widely available in the books and resources listed in the following section.

FURTHER READING

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