



Inside Ed's Head

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The Aronson/Stebbins Memorized Deck (and how to memorize it.)

Many people have seen, or heard of, some amazing tricks that use a memorized deck, but few people have actually tried to memorize one. I hope to show that you can learn a memorized deck in a relatively short amount of time, and with less effort than it might take to master a clean double lift, or side steal. It's certainly easier than learning a classic pass!

In Richard Osterland's book Mystique, he discusses a serious drawback of a memorized deck, compared to a stack where the value of one card lets you know the value of the next card, such as "Si Stebbins," or "Eight Kings." Osterland points out that if you wish to know the card following another card in a memorized deck, you must first figure out the stack value of the card you've glimpsed, and then recall the card at the next value. This is much harder to do than adding three and going to the next suit, as you would when using the Si Stebbins stack.

In order to get around this problem, he suggests memorizing a deck stacked in his "Breakthrough Card System." In this manner, you have the benefits of a memorized deck, as well as a mathematically based stack, where each card is based on the value of the previous card. This also gives you the added advantage of helping out if your memory fails while trying to remember where a card is, or what card is at what number. If you can't remember what card is at position 26, just remember what card is at 25, and use the stack system to get the name of the 26th card. (If you can't remember 25 or 26, perhaps you need to practice more.)

I thought this was a great idea, but I've never been a fan of "The Breakthrough Card System." Mr. Osterland designed this system to eliminate the possibility of anyone noticing the alternation of colors that occurs in any of the stacked decks based on the CHSD alternation of suits. It is also virtually impossible for anyone casually going through the deck to notice any mathematical relationship of one card to the next with Osterland's system. Of course, this means that the system is more cumbersome than Si Stebbins, or Eight Kings, or any such system. It would be nice if there were a system where there was no obvious giveaway of colors alternating, but still (almost) as simple as any of the CHSD systems.

Simon Aronson to the rescue! In his book The Aronson Approach, he presents a simple variation of the CHSD order, that doesn't have any obvious repetition of colors, while being just as easy to use. Still using CHSD, if the card in your stack is an ace, two, three, or four, just skip to the next suit of the SAME COLOR. With the Aronson idea, the first thirteen cards in a Si Stebbins deck are: AC, 4S, 7C, 10H, KS, 3D, 6H, 9S, QD, 2C, 5S, 8D, JC. The first thirteen cards of the "Eight Kings stack would be: 8C, KH, 3S, 10C, 2H, 7D, 9C, 5H, QS, 4D, AH, 6D, JC.

I worried a bit that this might not be as deceptive as the "Breakthrough Card System." So I set up the Aronson/Stebbins stack, and used it for laymen and several knowledgeable magicians. I deliberately did a trick that had the spectators looking through the deck for a specific card. NO

ONE, noticed the Si Stebbins “plus three” arrangement. Since the Stebbins set-up is easy to use, this is the setup I decided to memorize.

Now all I had to do was memorize it! As anyone who knows me even casually, I have a TERRIBLE, memory. That’s why I computerize everything. So I had to take my time, and learn a mnemonic system.

I used the one Osterlind presented in Mystique to learn my stack. This turned out to be a small mistake. I found the phonetic alphabet he used did not work well for me. (I confused the 8 and the 9 too frequently) I also used the “tag words” for the cards and numbers that he listed in his book. I realized this was a bad idea, in that I could create better card-number images in my head if I created my own words. (If this isn’t making any sense, read on.)

Day 1 - Memorizing the Digits

You will need to learn a “phonetic alphabet” that associates a sound/letter with the digits 0-9. What follows shows what SOUNDS can stand for single digits. You can probably learn this in just a few sessions of 10-15 minutes at a time. Since you’ll only be dealing with the numbers 1-52, you’ll find that you can easily make up a word that stands for any number.

- 1 – l (A single downstroke)
- 2 – n (two downstrokes)
- 3 – m (three downstrokes)
- 4 – r (fouR)
- 5 – f,v, ph (FiVe)
- 6 – sh, ch, j, soft g (george), tch (notch) (no reason for this, just part of the system).
- 7 – t,d (A capital T and a 7 look somewhat similar, D is a similar sound to T.)
- 8 – b, p (A capital B looks like an 8. P is a similar sound to B)
- 9 – g (hard g, gate), k, q (a g looks like a 9, the others sound similar to hard G)
- 0 – z, s (Z for zero, S is a similar sound)

[Note: This is NOT the phonetic alphabet I used to memorize the Aronson/Stebbins stack. To test that this alphabet works better (for me), I used it to memorize Juan Tamariz’s Mnmonica stack. This worked out much better, and I seem to have fewer missed cards.]

With this phonetic alphabet memorized, you can make a word for any number. The number 1 might be law, or oil. Ma, or aim, could be 3. 7 could be tie, or toe. 18 could be lab, or lip. 33 might be mummy, or ma’am. 52 could be fan or fun. You should note that it is the SOUND of the word that determines the digits, so that knee (kNee) would be a 2, for the N sound, not a 9 for the letter K.

Day 2 – The first ten cards.

You will now need to make up mind pictures that associate a word you make up for the stack-number, with the word you make up for the card.

Words for cards

Mnemonics for the forty numerical cards are created by appending the value of the card, to the letter of the suit. The Ace of clubs could be CoaL, or KeeL. Two of hearts: HeN. Five of spades: SaFe. Ten of diamonds: DiCe. I won’t give any specific words for these, as I think it’s best if you create your own words.

The court cards are:

	Clubs	Hearts	Spades	Diamonds
Jack	Club	Heart	Spade	Diamond
Queen	Cream, Clean	Queen	Steam, Scream	Dream (Rhyme, Spelling)
King	King	Hinge	Sing	Drink, (Rhyme, Spelling) Ding

Although I used the Aronson/Stebbins stack, I decided I didn't want the AC, to be the top card, so I cut the deck to bring the 10S to the top, 7H to the bottom. This way I could use the seven of hearts with Osterland's "Miracle Thought Projection," while retaining the stack. (Of course, you can use this system to memorize any stack you wish.)

I suggest you memorize the deck, ten cards at a time. Take a red-backed stacked deck, write a "1" with a black marker on the back, and then create words for the card and the position that are easily linked together with a vivid or bizarre word picture. For the 10S at position 1, you might try SouSe (Spade is first letter, final "s" sound gives 10), and Law. (The "L" stands for 1.) Imagine a very drunk man being tossed in the hoosegow by some keystone cops. (A souse is violating the law.) It's a good idea to write the number words, and card words down on a separate piece of paper, to help you remember the pictures as well. After you create the image in your mind, say the image to yourself or out loud, so you can hear it. This way you involve the visual and auditory parts of your brain in the process. Do this for the first ten cards. Once you've done ten cards, go over them face down from the top to the bottom, recalling your picture for one through ten, and recalling the card. Turn the cards face up, and in order, try to remember the stack number for each card. Finally, shuffle the cards, and go over them several times more, face-up, and face-down. After a relatively short time, you'll have all ten cards memorized.

Day 3 to 6 – The rest of the deck

Start the next day by reviewing the previous cards that you've memorized; make sure you have them firmly in your memory. Now take the next ten cards (twelve cards on the last day). And repeat the process from day 2, until you have them memorized. Then put ALL the cards in stack order and go over all of them. Finally, shuffle the cards and check that you know all the cards.

Why Six Days?

OK, this is the way I did it. There's no reason you can't do this in one day, or perhaps learn the phonetic alphabet and thirteen cards at a time; so you can do it in four days.

Practicing

At first, you should run through your shuffled deck face-up, and face-down, a couple of times a day. At first, it will probably take ten to fifteen minutes to go through a deck once. After a few days, a single run-through should be enough, and then you'll be able to skip days. Another way to practice is to go to www.stackview.com, and download their free software for practicing with stacked decks. I've created a file (www.magicianssoftware.com/aronson-stebbins.svf) that can be opened in Stackview, that will let you practice the Aronson-Stebbins stack.

Day 7 – A simple memorized deck trick.

You might consider doing this after one or two tricks with your memorized stack. Give the deck a jog shuffle, keeping the top half intact. Ask the spectator to deal cards face-down on the table until he has the urge to stop. He should now look at the card he stopped at, memorize it and insert it in the middle of the cards he has left. He now gives them a cut, and hands them to you. Since

you've been counting the cards as he deals them, you know the card as soon as he stops, so you can use any procedure you wish to reveal the card.

If your spectator deals more than half the deck, you still have an easy out. The first card of your stack is on the bottom of the dealt pile. Just have him replace his card on top of the pile, cut it and hand it to you. You now can find it using your key card.

A Final Word

As was mentioned at the top of this article, memorizing a mathematically based stack gives you two notable advantages over a non-mathematically oriented stack. You can easily figure out the next card in the stack, and you have an additional arrow in your quiver if you have a memory lapse. You do, however, miss out on the tricks built into some stacks. In Simon Aronson's [A Stack to Remember](#) and [Bound to Please](#), and Juan Tamariz's [Mnemonic](#) there are many tricks you can do that are inherent in their stacks. Most of these are poker deals, bridge deals, etc., so if this type of trick appeals to you, check out their books, and memorize their stack.

Good luck!

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