



QUAREIA

THE APPRENTICE

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MODULE 1 CORE SKILLS

LESSON 2 TAROT BASICS

If you already work with tarot, do not skip this lesson as there are certain points within it that are essential for future work in this course. Just read through the lesson and if you find any exercises, layouts, or other elements that you have not done before, focus on them and complete them.

Tarot is a core skill for magical training and it will become a major tool in your magical life. It is of the utmost importance that you master the skill of tarot if you wish to grow into an initiate and eventually into an adept. **So do not just do this lesson and then forget about tarot** – the tarot training in the early Apprentice years give you core skills that you can apply to check something out, find something, identify threat, and identify potential beings or spirit contacts. Without this skill, as magician you are essentially flying blind. Quareia uses tarot as a major magical tool, not as an exercise in philosophy or psychology, so if you are already familiar with tarot, you may find the tarot lessons and usage very different to what you are used to.

Some people learn the various tarot skills quicker than others, and if you find them difficult it is important to keep practising until you become proficient. Do not measure your level of accomplishment against the achievements of others: everyone who trains in magic is better at some things and weaker at others. It is rare that any magician becomes adept at all the magical skills in their lifetime. The key is to become proficient at all of them, and adept at some of them. The skill of tarot comes from practice, and plenty of it. Remember, to be a successful magician you must have at least proficiency in predictive card divination but preferably you should have good solid skills in the Arte.

2.1 THE RIDER WAITE DECK

Before you tackle actual readings, it is important to get to know the deck in basic terms. So let us have a look at the deck to see how it works. The Rider Waite tarot follows the classic tarot format, and it is the best deck for a beginner to use. It is not best because it is good, it most certainly isn't at all, but it has a divinatory and visual language that is well established in magic. Learning first with the Rider Waite tarot is akin to learning Latin first before you then go on to study European languages – Latin is a common denominator for a fair few European languages. Latin is also a language used in the sciences, which makes knowledge of it useful. As with Latin, so it is with the Rider Waite. Once you have gotten used to it and done the basic lessons, and then have developed to a point where you realise what limitations that deck has, then you can get rid of it and work with a better deck. But do not skip using the RW for the early Apprentice lessons – the struggles with it are more important than you would think.

2.2 MAJOR ARCANA

The classic tarot deck is divided into the Major Arcana and the Minor Arcana.

The Major Arcana tells you about the powers and influences that are flowing through a person or a situation. The Minor Arcana shows you how these influences actually manifest in a situation.

Power in people, events, and nature

Separate out the Major Arcana from the Minor Arcana and put the minor cards to one side for now. Spread out the major cards and put them in numerical sequence. You will notice as you look at them that some of the cards represent types of powers that run through people (the Fool, the Magician, the High priestess, etc.), some depict forces that influence events (the Tower, Death, the Wheel, etc.) and some depict powers that affect every living thing (The Sun, the Moon, the Star, etc.).

The 'people' powers tell you about various stages of human development that we all go through in one form or another. As a magician, you will learn to interpret these people powers in relation to who the person is, and if they are a magician or not.

For example, the Hierophant can represent an adept who has learned how to bridge between the worlds. But it can also represent someone who holds power in a spiritual or religious form, but is not a magician. So for example, if you were doing a reading about a nation and the Hierophant showed up, it is very likely that the person who wields the most power in that nation is a religious leader. The Hierophant can also represent dogmatic adherence to a religion. Really, it is all about the question, the context and the people involved. Such skill of interpretation takes time and lots of practice, and that will not come overnight.

Without me giving you guidance, separate out the major cards into three groups: power in people, power of events, and power in nature. Write down which cards you have grouped into the three different groups. Later on, revisit these groups to see if you would change anything as your understanding has grown.

Finding your key words

Bearing in mind the three groups you have created, now look at the little booklet that came with the deck. Look up the major cards and read through their descriptions. If you have a tarot book, look up the meanings behind each card. There will be subtle differences between a book and the booklet depending upon who wrote the book.

Don't worry about that for now; everyone views each card slightly differently, but each card has a common theme. Spot the common theme, think of one word that encapsulates its meaning, and write it down beside the name of the card.

Ensure that the one word (two at a stretch) also reflects the group that you have placed that card in. So for example, staying with the Hierophant, the key word could be 'bridge', or 'priest' (male or female), both of which essentially mean the same thing, but which can be interpreted very differently in readings. It is important that you settle on a word that works for you and that also reflects the card's description in the book.

2.3 MINOR ARCANA

Once you have a list of key words for each of the major cards, put them aside and get out the minor cards. Lay them out in front of you and you will notice that they are divided into four sets: Swords (air), Cups (water), Pentacles (earth) and Wands (fire). This is the first stage of learning about the four magical directions and elements.

The four magical directions

These four suits will teach you about the different expressions of influence that flow from the four magical directions, and they will also teach you about the four magical tools that belong in the four directions: the Sword, the Wand, the Cup and the Shield. They will teach you about how the elemental powers can manifest, how the magical tools can work, and what sort of power they bring through. That learning will come as a result of your work with tarot, and also through your ritual and visionary work as you go through each module.

Finding your key words

For now, look through all the minor cards, starting with the Sword/air cards, then the Wand/fire cards, the Cup/water cards, and finally the Pentacle/earth cards. Look at the pictures to see what they tell you. Then look at the booklet or book that you have on tarot and see what it tells you about each card, and when you have a reasonable idea of its meaning, choose a key word for the card.

Write your key words out in an easily readable list and when you do readings, use your key words for the major and minor cards to guide you in your interpretation. Don't worry about card reversals: we will not be working with those as it can just make life more complicated than it needs to be. The negative aspect of a card can be discerned from a combination of the card in relation to the question, and in relation to the position it lands in. Keep these word lists in your Quareia journal and revisit them periodically to see if your word choice has changed.

To get started with reading the tarot, we will first work with the four-directional layout. This layout will help you to develop your understanding of the magical directions when you come to work with them in the ritual magic lessons.

Note: The illustrated and lesson layout has the ‘north’ card at the top of the reading; the only reason for this is that most western maps have north at the top. When you work in ritual with the directions, your ‘home’ standing/working position will be in the centre facing south. And for many eastern cultures, south is ‘up’ on a map. So if you wish to work with the south at the top of the layout, that is fine. Just ensure you mark the top of each reading with S at the top for ‘south’. If an adept needs to look at your journal, they will be able to make sense of the reading.

2.4 WORKING WITH THE CARDS

Shuffling

How you approach shuffling the cards can be just as important as any other aspect of working with tarot. Everyone develops their own shuffling technique, but there are some points to consider in order to help the shuffling be successful.

One key factor is to ensure that you are fully focused on the question in hand as you shuffle. Do not be distracted by talking or allow your mind to wander: keep the question foremost in your mind as you work the cards. Also keep in mind as you shuffle what layout you will use: you need to focus on the question and the layout.

One good method for doing this is to work with your eyes closed. As you shuffle, think about the question, the layout you are going to use, and imagine you are searching for something through a ‘mist.’ Use your inner vision and imagination to create the sensation of trying to ‘pierce a veil.’

As you develop your own technique, you will find that after the initial shuffle, your hand action begins to slow down so that the cards are placed more precisely in their order. Once everything is in the right position you will sometimes feel them ‘lock’ in place. The accuracy of a reading relies on the focus of intention you hold as you work the cards.

Laying out

Once your deck is ready, then work from the top of the pile and place each card out. Once you have become accustomed to working with the cards, you may find that the answer you were looking for seeps into your mind even before you lay the cards out. It is as if you get a preview of what is coming. Not all readers have this experience, but for those with a strong natural ability, the flavour of the reading often emerges in the reader’s mind before the cards are laid out.

Interpreting

Once you have laid out the cards, take a moment to look at them in their positions. Remember, the meaning of the card and the meaning of its position should be read together. Go through each card one by one until you get to the end, and then go back to the beginning. Often a card/position will not make any sense until you have looked at the whole reading; then the meaning starts to unfold.

If there is still something you are not getting, sometimes it works to sit quietly and say to yourself, ‘okay, tell me about this’.

Write down or photograph the reading so that you can go back to it after a few hours and look again. What I have always found is that when in doubt, the simplest interpretation is often the right one. Some students may find it helpful to regularly refer to my book *Tarot Skills for the Twenty First Century*.¹

2.5 FOUR-DIRECTIONAL LAYOUT USING SIX POSITIONS

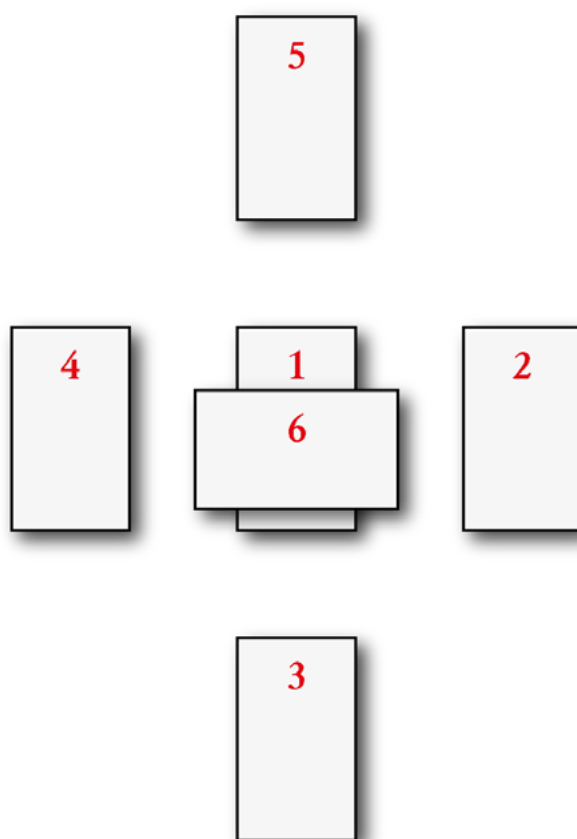


Figure 1: The four-directional tarot layout

¹ *Tarot Skills for the Twenty First Century* by Josephine McCarthy. TaDehent Books 2020 Exeter UK. Is also available for free as a PDF on Quareia's website on the 'free books' page.

The directional attributes

These are general magical attributes that can be used not only in magic, ritual and vision, but also in divination. Once you have a basic idea of the powers that flow from these magical directions, you can use that knowledge to work with the directions for tarot readings.

1. Centre

Body/self/land/starting point.

(Always start at ground zero – you are seeing from this perspective and this is what all of the directional powers are affecting.)

2. East

Air, swords, words, intellect, training, teacher, mind, utterance, incoming, the beginning.

3. South

Fire, wands, leadership, energy, the stars, reaching potential, the future, the path ahead.

4. West

Water, cups, emotions, relationships, psychic ability, populace, outgoing, end of something.

5. North

Earth, stones, pentacles, substance, ancestors, ancients, Underworld, the distant past.

6. Relationships

This position is about how things directly affect you and your relationship with them.

It can stand for people, animals, powers, spirits, toxins, basically anything that affects you directly.

There are many more directional attributes, and as you develop as a magician you will learn far more subtleties, interlinks and connections. But it is unwise to swamp yourself beneath a ton of lists: start simple and go from there. These are a very basic list of magical directional powers and how you use them in readings will depend largely on what you are reading about and what you need to know.

2.6 *TASK: READING ABOUT THE ENERGY IN YOUR HOME*

In your first reading, you will look at the energy in your home. This is an important tarot skill to develop, and over time you will learn many different ways to look at the energy of a place. Different reading layouts can be used depending on what you are looking for and what the situation is, but for now you will work with this simple layout. Today you are simply going to look at the overall energy of the space in which you live. If you live in a house with more than one storey, do a reading for each storey in turn. If your living space is just one room, then just read for that room.

Doing the reading

Mix up your deck properly and shuffle them using the shuffle method outlined above. Keep in mind your question, which is *“show me the energies present in my living space,”* and also keep in mind the directional pattern that works through the layout: 1 = centre, 2 = east, 3 = south and so forth. If you are opting to lay out the cards with south on top, bring the cards out in the same order, just put east to your left instead of to the right.

When you have finished shuffling, lay out your cards in the sequence pictured in the diagram above and then sit back and look at it.

Look first at the centre of the reading. This shows you the core energy that is currently in your living space. Then look at what is in the east (position 2). Think of that card in relation to what is in the east section of your space: is it a bedroom? A kitchen? Look at each of the directions and think of the spaces that are in those directions. If the reading is for a one room living space, look in that direction of the room, what is there? What pictures, belongings, furniture etc.?

Once you have spent a little time looking at the cards, looking at the pictures and understanding what element it is (fire/Wands? air/Swords?) or what power it is (is it a person card like a King or Queen?), then write down the reading so that you have a record of it. You can take a picture of it, but also write it down in your journal.

The first thing to note in your interpretation is, where are the major cards? If any major cards have fallen in any of the directions, that will tell you that the power coming from that direction, be it good or bad, is stronger than the others. If you get a lot of major cards (and you had mixed up your cards properly and shuffled well), then it may be an indication that you are sat on top of a power spot, or that there is a lot of power around you as an individual, or the room is having a shift of power and is coming into focus. You will learn more about such things later in the course. For now, just take a note of that.

Identifying good and bad areas

If you get a very bad card in one (or more) of the directions, then you need to identify which room or area of a room it refers to and mark that down in your journal. Once you have finished this general look at your living space, you will focus on any really difficult areas.

In the general reading, note the very good directions and the very bad. Identify which area of the house or which room that refers to. The good ones will show you where the strong, healthy and regenerative areas of the house or room are, and the bad ones will show you where there are unhealthy areas of the house or room, or even an object that is a bad influence on the space.

Transient energies

If you get minor cards that are not looking so good, they may refer to transient energies, so you would need to repeat the exercise in a week's time to see if the difficult influence is still present. If it is, you will need to address it by doing a directional reading for the difficult room. Write down which areas show up as difficult (if you are unlucky, all directions will show problems).

At this point, it might be an idea to get a basic but functional compass – it will come in very handy for rebalancing spaces, and is a tool I use all the time.

Figuring out why an area is difficult

Now go and look at those areas in the house. Are there statues, magical objects, mirrors, piles of clutter, or anything obvious that could potentially cause an issue? Is it an area of the house that is very busy and used a lot? There are a variety of basic things you can do for now to make your space a bit easier energetically until you learn how to tackle the problem properly.

2.7 TASK: BALANCING A DIFFICULT SPACE

Once you have identified the difficult areas of the house, clean up any clutter, organise whatever is in that area or room, and make sure the room is clean. Use the four-directional reading to identify which direction in the room has the most problems (major bad card, or lots of Swords). In each very difficult direction place a good sized jar filled with three quarters salt and a quarter water, and do not put a lid on it – it needs to be able to absorb the bad energy into the water. Basic small grain cooking salt is all that is necessary, you do not need fancy salt. Be aware that as the water evaporates it can leave salt behind which can damage furniture, so place the salt water cure on a plastic or ceramic mat. Do not use metal as it will get discoloured or damaged from the salt. Carefully top it up with water when it dries out and don't fill it to the point that it spills over as it will also spill some of the bad energy held in it. It is good to change them after a few months. To dispose of them, get a bin bag or plastic bag. Carefully carry the saltwater and jar outside, place it in the plastic bag without spilling any on yourself, tie up the bag and carefully put it in the trash bin. If that is not possible for any reason, empty the jar down a drain **outside**, do not empty it in your home. Put the jar in the plastic bag and throw in the trash. Then go home and wash yourself with salt and liquid soap, and put your clothing in the wash.

If there are artworks or sacred pieces (demon masks, deities and so forth) in the direction, you need to discern if they are helping, hindering or causing the problem. If they are causing a problem, wrap them up and get them out of the space or put them in a cupboard. If that is not enough then you need to find a way to get rid of them or give them away to someone whom they will not affect badly.

The way to find that out is to do a four-directional reading for the room asking *“what would the energy of this room look like if I took out X?”* That way you will be able to figure out what is helping and what is not by the answers that you get.

If there is a serious problem, don't panic: you have lived there okay so far, but it is something that you will need to tackle in the long term. Follow the advice in this lesson, and as you progress through the first module, you will learn more and more techniques for dealing with problematic energies. You need to learn how to do those techniques properly for them to be effective, and that is going to take time.

For now, the salt water cure will lessen any issues. And keep the problem areas as quiet as possible. If there is a sound system there, move it. If there are lots of very 'busy' things like computers, toys etc.,

move them. What will also help is to identify the really good energy areas in the house/room and use them more than the bad energy area. It may mean having to change the whole room around, but if that is possible, then it is good energetically for the space as it stops long term ‘clumping’ of energies in corners.

Flying Star Feng Shui

If the balancing of house energies is something that really interests you, then look up the Flying Star Feng Shui system. I have found it very useful in difficult houses, but I have also found that it does not work exactly: maybe the land where it developed and the land where I lived were not quite the same in terms of relationships with the stars etc., but it was near enough to be very useful. I don’t get into the deep complexities of the Flying Stars system, but I do pay careful attention to the basics such as the inherent directional stars and the visiting/flying stars, and the relationship between them. Again, use the tarot layout to track your progress, to see what would work and what would not.

Example: a difficult kitchen

Let’s suppose we have done a reading for a house and in the south, the Tower card appears. We identify the south room on that floor of the house as being the kitchen. So we do a second reading for just that room, and once again a destructive card, the Ten of Swords (which is the lesser version of the Tower), appears in the south position. We look around the kitchen with a compass and note that the cooker is in the south.

Now, remember that often the simplest interpretation is the best. In a kitchen, we have a cooker in the south (which is a fire position). A cooker is also often a source of house fires (fryers bursting into flames etc.). So you need to find out if there is a fault with the cooker that is going unseen and will set the house on fire, or if there is just too much of the element of fire in that direction. To identify the issue, I would use a Tree of Life layout² to first look at the cooker and ask, *“is this cooker safe to use for the next twelve months?”* The final card will let you know if there is a major danger. If it is not the cooker or cooking methods (also check that with a Tree of Life reading), then it is most likely too much fire energy is in that area. That can be countered by placing a vase or jar full of water near the cooker, or a small pan full of water left on the cooker. However, stale water attracts bad energies, so ensure that you pour it out each day and put in fresh water. If you need to jump ahead to Apprentice Module II Lesson 2 in order to learn the Tree of Life layout for identifying danger, then do so. Then come back and continue on with your step by step training.

Sometimes, particularly if you are on a fiery land (like desert or a volcanic outcrop etc.) having a cooker in the south in a south room might just be a bit too much. You may need to do two further readings which looks at the problem from a slightly different angle. The first one would ask, *“what would the energy of this room look like if we fixed or replaced the cooker?”* (rather than asking if the cooker is ok.) If the reading looks fine, then there is a hidden fault in the cooker which is building up to become a house fire.

² Tree of Life layout Apprentice Module II, Lesson 2.

Remember, energetically, a fire starting in the south of a room has a lot more energy behind it to take off. (This might be reversed if you live in the southern hemisphere, I honestly don't know.)

2.8 SUMMARY

Learning good tarot skills is paramount to your success as a magician. Do not fall into the trap of learning tarot through psychology or heavily interpreting your tarot through psychology: it really does not work well that way as divinatory tarot. Learning tarot in the way I suggest above will give you a wide field of understanding that will grow and develop as you grow and develop into an initiate, and finally, an adept.

These first steps of learning how to read using the directions will provide you with a rock solid magical base of understanding that dovetails in with the early phases of your ritual and visionary training. Together, these will provide you with the most ancient magical keys that are necessary in order for you to move forward with your training. Like all magical skills, tarot is about practice.

2.9 TASK: KEEP A TAROT JOURNAL

Have a separate journal that you keep (a physical one, not an online one) for all of your tarot readings. This is really important. Your tarot lessons and your tarot practice should be written down in such a way that you can look back in a year or two's time and still understand what you've written. Not only will you be able to gauge how much progress you have made, but you will also be able to track the events, powers and influences that are running through your life.

2.10 TASK: FURTHER READINGS

Do a four-directional reading for your home. And then do one for each room in the house. If you live in a single room dwelling, then read for your room, and also for the land the building stands on. Write down the results and any remedies you decided to use to balance troublesome areas of the house (salt/water etc.).

If you decide to look up Flying Stars Feng Shui, do a map of your house or room for the year as many of the influences are always moving year on year. Traditionally, the change over occurs in early February each year (Chinese new year), but I have found over the years that sometimes you can feel the shift starting to occur a month or more before February. So sometimes I do the change around of elements and colours in late December or January depending on how strongly I felt the shift. As you get more confident with your intuition, you can check that intuition with a Tree of Life reading.

Once you are used to the layout, do a four-directional reading for your neighbourhood, and then one for your city. Work with the directional layout to look at different things over a period of two weeks, until you feel that you are getting the hang of the layout and are able to interpret it adequately.

2.11 **TASK: KEEPING NOTES AND FOLLOWING UP**

Write each reading down, take note of the difficult areas it reveals in your neighbourhood and city, and then if you can, go visit them to see if you can feel the energy – or even identify where the bad energy is coming from. Also take notes on your observations and any actions that you take to change a room or space. When you have changed a space, do a followup reading to see if the change was a good remedy or if more action is needed. Write everything down.

2.12 **ADDENDUM:**

CLEANING AND CARE OF CARDS AND YOURSELF AFTER READING

Once you have finished reading, it is advisable to go and wash your hands with soap. If it has been a difficult reading, or if the reading was used to look at difficult, dangerous or unhealthy situations, or your hands just feel off or a bit grimy it is a good idea to put some salt in the cup of your hand before adding liquid soap and water. This will break any energetic ties, and it will also clean off the ‘sticky’ energetic residue that can sometimes accumulate on your hands during readings.

Cleaning the deck

Depending on how often you use the deck (and always after very difficult readings) it can be a good idea to clean the deck itself. This can be done by ‘bathing’ the deck in the smoke of frankincense resin burned on charcoal, or by putting the deck in a plastic bag, pouring in dry salt, and giving it a good shake. Another method I use is to pour some drops of pure frankincense into the cup of my hands, rub my hands together and then handle the cards by rubbing them lightly. I also put a few drops in the box they are stored in, and also on the cloth I lay out to do the readings on. I also regularly put the reading cloth in the washing machine with my washing.

Using salt or oil to cleanse a deck can limit the lifespan of a deck, but it is more important to stay clean than to have a grubby favourite deck for years. This is why, for most readings, it is wiser to use a common, simple deck that can be easily and affordably replaced on a regular basis. My deck usually lasts me about a year before I have to replace it, and I use my deck regularly. Sometimes I keep a deck for the long term and only use it for very special readings, and I get backup copies of the same deck to use regularly. Remember, a deck is a tool, not a keepsake.

Store your deck in a box, and keep it away from children, pets, etc. Wrapping the deck in a cloth and using a cloth for layouts also helps to limit any unhealthy energy residue from being left behind on the surface that you lay the cards on, and also it helps to stop the deck getting dirty. The cloth should be washed regularly.

Cleaning yourself

The first rule for keeping yourself clean after a reading is to wash your hands with salt and soap as soon as you have finished. Do not do or touch anything else until you have cleaned your hands. If the reading session was particularly hard or the subject matter was very unhealthy, then also rub some salt over your ‘third eye’ area, and then wash your face.