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Science

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# Tricks to Doing Magic

by George Samped



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|--------|--|--|
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# Tricks to Doing Magic

by George Sampas



Editorial Offices: Glenview, Illinois • Parsippany, New Jersey • New York, New York  
Sales Offices: Needham, Massachusetts • Duluth, Georgia • Glenview, Illinois  
Coppell, Texas • Ontario, California • Mesa, Arizona



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Illustrations by Karen Lewis

Photographs: Photo Studio

ISBN: 0-328-13458-9

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## Putting on a Show

Have you ever seen a handkerchief disappear from someone's hand? Do you know how to put a torn napkin back together? Have you ever wished you could make your brother or sister disappear? Of course, the handkerchief never really disappears, the torn napkin will always stay torn, and your brother or sister isn't going anywhere. These tricks are illusions. A **magician** tricks the audience into seeing something that is not really happening. How is it done? Keep reading, and you will soon know enough tricks to start filling your own magician's trunk!





## Rub a Quarter into Your Elbow

“Ladies and gentlemen, I will now rub this shiny new quarter into my elbow, making it disappear into my arm!” And sure enough, the magician rubs a quarter into her elbow, and it’s gone! We know that’s impossible, so how does it happen? It’s simple. You can do it too!

Using your right hand, rub the quarter against your left elbow while your left hand is resting against the back of your neck. The audience should not be able to see the quarter while it is on your elbow. After a few rubs the quarter slips through your hand and falls to the floor. Don’t worry; this is all part of the setup for the trick.



You then pick up the quarter with your left hand and place it in your right hand to start over. And again, you drop the quarter on the floor, making it seem accidental.

This time, however, you pick up the quarter with your left hand and only make it look like it has moved into your right hand. But it actually stays in your left hand. This is the key to the trick.

Then you start over, rubbing your right hand against your left elbow. As this is happening, you drop the quarter down the back of your shirt! Don’t forget, your left hand is on the back of your neck. Before you try this trick on your friends, be sure your shirt is tucked in. You don’t want your audience’s interest to **crumble** because the quarter hit the floor again and they figured out your trick!

Use your right hand to rub the quarter against your left elbow.





### The Disappearing Handkerchief

When done successfully, this trick looks very simple. All the magician does is stuff a handkerchief into her right hand while distracting the audience by talking to them. Then—presto! The magician opens up her right hand, and it's empty! The handkerchief has **vanished!**

How is it done? Well, this is where it is not so simple. This trick requires some preparation.

Before the magic show even begins, you have to make a “pull” that will help create the illusion the handkerchief has disappeared. You will use this pull to help you hide the handkerchief from the audience.



To make a pull, you need to cut a cardboard tube two inches long. On one end, punch a hole on either side and insert a straightened paper clip, forming what looks like a handle.

Attach a one-foot-long chain of rubber bands to the paper clip. Attach the other end of the chain of rubber bands to a safety pin. The safety pin should be clipped to the back of your shirt so that the pull hangs just above your waist. If you need to, adjust the number of rubber bands. Once you finish making the pull, put it in your back right pocket and put on your magician's jacket.



Can you see the pull attached to this magician's shirt?





The key to many tricks is for the magician to be a good talker. That's one of the best ways to distract an audience. When someone is talking to you, don't you usually look that person in the eyes? This is what helps magicians keep audiences' eyes away from what their hands are doing. Similarly, if someone you are talking with looks away from you, don't you usually turn to look where they are looking? This habit also helps magicians create their illusions.

To keep the audience in suspense, you might say, "For this trick, I'm going to need a handkerchief."





Show the audience the handkerchief, and then ball it up in your right hand. As you tuck the handkerchief into the pull in your right hand, look at the audience and say something to them. Remember that people tend to look at each other when talking. You might say something simple like, "Have I ever done this trick for you before? Are you sure?"

While you are talking to the **bustling** crowd, let go of the pull. Then open up your right hand. The handkerchief has vanished! To make it look like magic, you might snap your left fingers and "zap" your right hand. The audience is surprised, but you know where the handkerchief really is.



At this time, you reach into your back pockets, making it seem as though you are searching both of them for the handkerchief. Yet you look toward the left pocket, where the handkerchief is. Do not look to the right pocket. But while feeling for the handkerchief in the right pocket, grab hold of the pull and bring it around to the front, making sure it stays hidden in your right hand. Do not let the audience see it!



Put the handkerchief in the pull and then let go of the pull. Your audience will be amazed.





### Torn Napkin

This trick is a lot of fun because it is done with very few movements, and it is performed right in front of the audience's eyes. People cannot believe what they see!

Before the show even begins, place a napkin in your left pocket and another in your right pocket. The napkin in your left pocket should be wrinkled. When you "look" for a napkin to use, each hand is placed in a pocket. But only your right hand has **appeared** with a napkin, or so it seems. Your left hand comes out of your pocket hiding the wrinkled napkin.



Tear the napkin into many small pieces.



As you talk to and perhaps joke with the audience, you begin to tear the napkin in front of their eyes. You should tear the napkin into many small pieces while you hold the wrinkled napkin in your left hand, hidden from the audience. Once this is done, gather the pieces in your right hand into a ball about the same size as the wrinkled napkin in your left hand.







Show the audience the ball of torn napkin in your right hand.



You then open up your right hand, exposing the ball of torn napkin. Poke at the napkin ball with the index finger of your left hand and ask the person nearest in the audience, “Do you have any magic powder?” Keep your hands together.

Everyone in the audience looks at the person to whom the question was asked. While that is happening, turn up your left palm, turn down your right palm, and drop your right hand to the side. The audience will not notice you bringing your right hand to the side if it is done very casually. In fact, the audience thinks you simply moved the napkin from one hand to the other. Remember to keep your hands closed to hide the napkins.



When the audience member cannot supply any magic powder, you might shrug your shoulders or scrunch your nose as if you are thinking. You place your right hand into your right pocket, as if you are looking for the powder. Actually, you are placing the torn napkin pieces into that pocket.

You then bring your right hand over the left and sprinkle some of the “magic powder” taken from your right pocket. The magic powder can be anything you want. Maybe you will use white sand, or perhaps colorful confetti or shiny glitter. The napkin is then revealed in the left hand, and unfolded to show that it has been magically put back together. Amazing—the audience can’t believe their eyes!

Practice this trick in front of a mirror before you show it to an audience and impress your friends!





### The Appearing and Disappearing Person

Vanishing acts always have a way of exciting and wowing audiences. Once again it's "Now you see it—now you don't!" Perhaps the most famous illusion, or at least one of the most popular, is when a person appears to be inside a box, and then disappears, or vanishes, into thin air! This trick is also a very old one. A magician first performed it in the 1800s.

The magician brings a tall box or cabinet to the stage and is careful to spin it around and show every side to the audience. The doors are swung open, and the magician might even step inside for a moment to gain some of the audience's trust.





In the middle of the box, the audience sees a post. When this trick was first performed, the post had a lantern on top of it that illuminated the box's interior. The post, as you will see, is one of the keys to this illusion.

Once the doors to the cabinet are closed, the magician might say to the audience, "You know, ladies and gentlemen, I really could use an assistant to help me with the rest of my show." Just then, a knock is heard coming from within the cabinet. The magician opens the doors, and out steps the assistant!



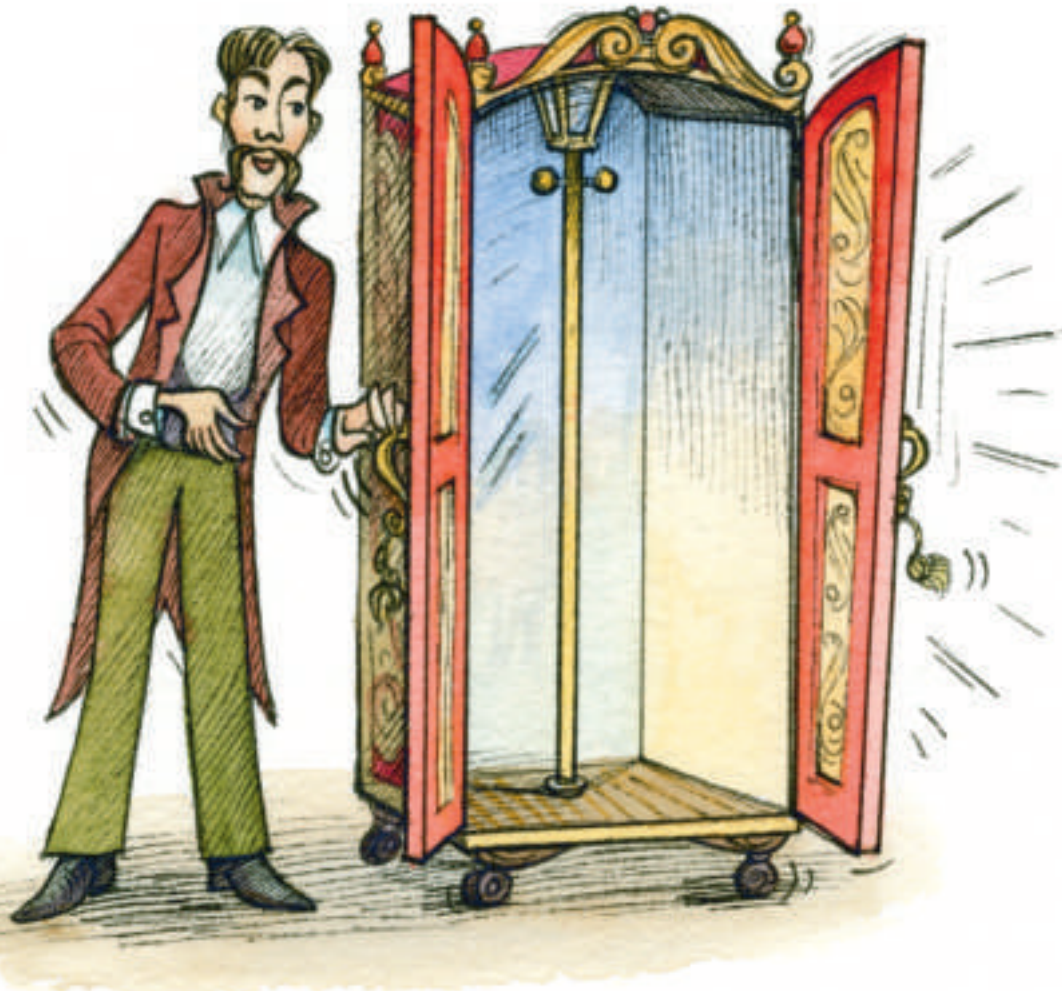
As you may have guessed, there is more to this illusion than meets the eye. There are two objects that move from the post in the center to the side walls of the cabinet. What do you think these objects are?

Have you ever looked into a mirror from an angle and been able to see someone who could not see you? Have you ever used a mirror to look around a corner? Well, that is similar to what is happening inside the cabinet.

There are mirrors extending from the top of the cabinet to the bottom. They are connected to the cabinet in the back corners, and they swing from the side walls to the center post. These mirrors are reflecting the sides of the cabinet. So when the audience looks through the front doors of the cabinet, they think they are looking at the back wall. But they are actually seeing a reflection of the cabinet's inside walls.

The appearing and disappearing person is a very old magic trick.





That's pretty clever, isn't it? But where does the assistant come from? The assistant is already hiding behind the mirrors when the cabinet is brought out. After showing the cabinet's interior to the audience, the magician closes the front doors. Then the assistant swings the mirrors to the side walls (the backs of the mirror are painted to look just like the inside walls of the cabinet) and steps past the post to knock on the door!

The assistant simply steps back into the cabinet in order to "disappear." While the magician is talking with the audience and saying a few "magic" words, the assistant steps to the back wall and pulls the mirrors closed against the post. The audience will wonder how the assistant managed to **escape**.



The assistant moves the mirrors inside the cabinet to complete the illusion.





## Guess Which Hand

If you want to do this trick successfully, the audience should see only the following. First, you hold a quarter in front of the audience. Then, you place it into one of your hands and place both hands behind your back.

After making it seem like you are shifting the quarter between hands, bring your hands to the front. "Which hand has the quarter?" you ask an audience member.

The audience member chooses a hand. You open up the hand that wasn't chosen and reveal the shiny quarter. Then you say, "Sorry. You guessed wrong. Do you want to try again?"

Ask an audience member to guess which hand holds the quarter.



This goes on for as long as you want or as long as the audience members can handle being tricked. Why does it work? Because the quarter that's seen is not *the* quarter; it is *a* quarter.

Before the show, place a quarter in your back pocket. When you shift the quarter between hands behind your back, grab the quarter from your belt. Though both hands have a quarter in them, the audience only sees one hand at a time.

These tricks are simpler than you thought, aren't they? All tricks and illusions involve playing with perception. What people see, and what they think is happening, may not be what is *really* happening. But maybe your audience will be so impressed with what they have seen that they will build a **monument** to you!

Put a quarter in your back pocket before the show begins.





# Glossary

**appeared** *v.* was seen, came into sight.

**bustling** *adj.* noisily busy, hurrying.

**crumble** *v.* fall to pieces.

**escape** *v.* to get out and away; get free.

**magician** *n.* person who entertains by art or skill of creating illusions, especially sleight of hand.

**monument** *n.* something set up to honor a person or event.

**vanished** *v.* disappeared suddenly.



# Reader Response

1. Compare the illusion of magic tricks with the reality of how the tricks are performed. How are an audience's perceptions of what they see different from what is actually happening?
2. Predict what an audience's reaction will be when a torn napkin seems to put itself back together in the "Torn Napkin" trick.
3. Using a chart similar to the one below, list two words from the glossary that are opposites of each other. Add more opposites to the chart.

| Word | Opposite |
|------|----------|
|      |          |

4. How did the pictures help you learn about the tricks?

