

DIY DECK

CREATE YOUR OWN TAROT CARDS

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STRETCH TAROT



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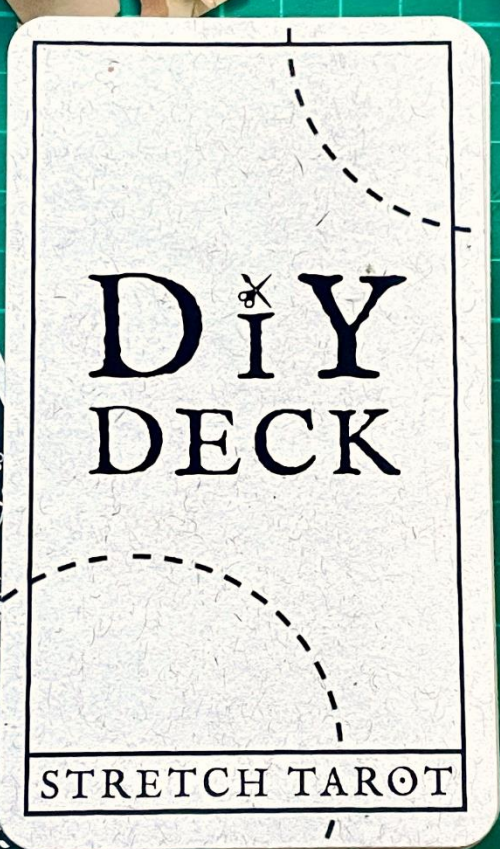
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INTRODUCTION

You are about to begin an exciting journey into the mysterious world of Tarot. Like the Fool standing on the cliff top, you are at the start of a path that will lead you deep into each of the cards, transforming your understanding of the Tarot, and maybe yourself along the way.

If you are new to Tarot,

I hope this project will give you:

- A clear understanding of the Tarot's structure and its correspondences.
- Insight into the meanings of the cards.
- Practical tasks to help engage you.
- A personal connection to the Tarot beyond what is possible from study alone.

If you are new to mixed media art,

I hope this project will give you:

- Confidence to experiment and play.
- Instruction and materials to create your own mixed media collages.
- Practical tasks to develop your skills.
- An understanding of how art and creativity can help to unlock a deeper level of Tarot meaning and use.

Whatever your level of experience or knowledge, this book will be your companion in creating your own Tarot deck step-by-step.

My Story

I have had a fascination with playing cards for as long as I can remember, and when I first discovered Tarot as a teenager, I was immediately hooked. My first deck was a second-hand copy of the *Rider-Waite-Smith* (RWS), and I eagerly started to practice reading the cards and attempting to memorise their meanings. From the beginning, I had a sense that there was something greater hidden behind their symbolism, and I became frustrated with my inability to access it. I started to dig deeper, reading what I could and researching other Tarot decks. Seeing how many different designs of deck were out there, I was inspired to begin making my own, and two years later, *The Stretch Tarot* was born.

Why DIY?

The process of creating *The Stretch Tarot* was a two-year journey of discovery. I didn't realise it when I first started, but making my own deck was one of the most powerful things I could have done to deepen my understanding of Tarot. Here's why:

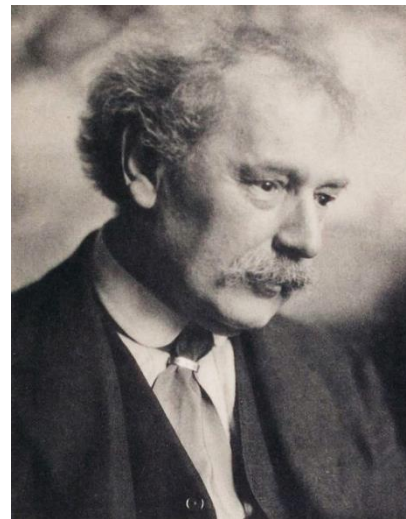
- When we simply read about a subject, most of the information we take in is lost very quickly.
- Active engagement with new learning through creative and sensory tasks helps to store knowledge.
- Making your own deck slows down your Tarot study, encouraging you to spend time reflecting on each card thoroughly, and at a pace which suits you.

The Secret Doctrine

In his 1910 book, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, A.E. Waite (1857-1942), co-creator of the RWS, writes of a 'secret doctrine' hidden within the cards. He states that:

*The Tarot embodies symbolical presentations of universal ideas, behind which lie all the implicits of the human mind, and it is in this sense that they contain secret doctrine.*¹

Sounds fascinating, doesn't it? Unfortunately for us, Waite keeps this doctrine secret, often preferring to tell us what the cards *do not* mean rather than what they *do*.



Arthur Edward Waite

Like Waite, I also believe that there is a greater hidden meaning within the Tarot. I do not claim to understand it fully, because one of the things I have come to understand over the years is that there is no end to what Tarot can help us to learn.

Tarot speaks in pictures and patterns. Pondering the cards is simply the best way for curious minds to access their hidden meanings, because trying to put it into words limits their possibility of meaning.

You only need to go to an occult bookshop to see that there have been countless books written about Tarot and what the cards mean. The fact that so many writers have felt it necessary to contribute their ideas to this field shows that there is an inexhaustible possibility of meaning within the cards, but also that any definitive meaning is difficult to arrive at and explain.

Tarot is not the *only* way of unlocking the 'secret doctrine'; it is one of many paths up the same mountain. However, Tarot is an effective tool for reaching it, using symbolism which speaks to the psyche, and a form which can be shuffled and manipulated to create endless angles of approach. Using Tarot gives us methods of experiential learning which, for many, are more accessible than reading dense, cryptic texts.

¹ A.E. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, University Books, New York, 1959. Page 59.

Ultimately, what you get out of Tarot is relative to what you put in. The longer you live with it, the more you think about and reflect on it, the more it will begin to reveal to you. I strongly believe that *your* personal revelations are more important than anything I could tell you about Tarot, or that you might read in another book.

In guiding you in the creation of your own deck, my hope is that you too might begin to catch glimpses of the ‘secret doctrine’. It is not a guaranteed outcome, and you will have to put in the work, but I hope that the experience will generate new ideas, lines of inquiry, and ways of seeing for you as it has for me.

The Golden Dawn

There is an historical precedent for using art to understand Tarot. **The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn**, a secret society set up in London, 1888, heavily featured Tarot in its teachings and rituals. Members of the Order were introduced to the meanings of different Tarot cards as they progressed through grades of initiation, and members of the Second Order were expected to draw or colour their own decks.²

The Order studied Tarot alongside topics such as **Qabalah**, **Numerology**, and **Astrology**. It may be of interest to you to research the overlaps and correspondences between these topics and Tarot as you begin creating your *DIY Deck*.

Notable members of the Golden Dawn wrote books about Tarot and worked with artists to create their own decks, which in turn have inspired other writers and artists, creating a lineage of ideas which can be traced back to the Order’s teachings.

Those members are:

- **A.E. Waite** and **Pamela Coleman Smith** (1878-1951), creators of the RWS.
- **Aleister Crowley** (1875-1947), founder of **Thelema** and co-creator of the *Thoth Tarot* with artist **Lady Frieda Harris** (1877-1962).
- **Paul Foster Case** (1884-1954), founder of **Builders of the Adytum** (B.O.T.A) and co-creator of the *B.O.T.A. Tarot* with artist **Jessie Burns Parke** (1889-1964), a black and white deck designed to be coloured in.

Rider-Waite-Smith

I have already mentioned the RWS, named after its publisher, the **Rider Company**, and its creators, A.E. Waite and Pamela Coleman Smith. The RWS is, unquestionably, the most famous Tarot deck ever created. Its popularity and widespread distribution have made it the

² See: Chic and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, *The Essential Golden Dawn: An Introduction to High Magic*, Llewellyn Publications, Minnesota, 2021.

definitive deck. Many artists have looked to it as inspiration when creating their own decks, and many books about Tarot use it as a basis.

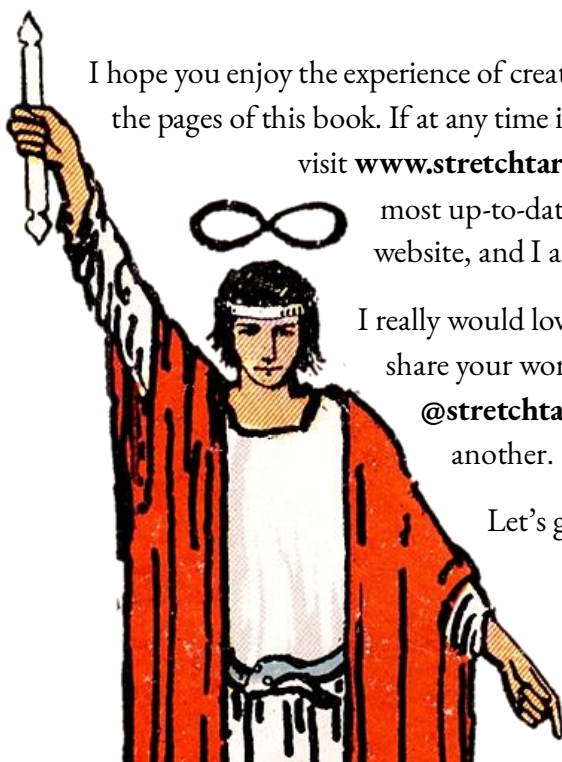
Following suit, **Chapter Two** of this book uses the RWS to illustrate the basic card meanings, and in **Chapter Three**, I demonstrate the process of making your own cards using the RWS as inspiration.

Getting familiar with the RWS is a wise move if you really want to know about Tarot. Once you are, you will see just how deeply engrained Waite's ideas and Smith's artwork are into the Tarot world.

How To Use This Book

This book is designed to support and guide you through the process of creating your deck, as well as providing you with images to cut out and collage. As you create your deck, be prepared to destroy this book!

- **Chapter One** guides you through the whole process of your project, from planning to execution. It offers a suggested practice to help you meditate and reflect on your cards, making the process as meaningful as possible.
- **Chapter Two** provides an overview of the structure of Tarot, as well as basic card meanings to use as a starting point. It is designed as a quick reference chart, illustrated using the RWS, which you can return to over the course of your project.
- **Chapter Three** is focused on the materials, tools, and techniques of mixed media art. It provides practical advice and instructions to get you creating art in this style.
- **Chapter Four** contains over 370 public domain images for you to cut out and use in your collages.
- Finally, **Chapter Five** offers brief instruction on how you can scan or photograph, edit, and print your finished deck ready for use.



I hope you enjoy the experience of creating your own Tarot cards and that you find value in the pages of this book. If at any time in the process you feel that you need support, please visit www.stretchtarot.com as I will be posting further content. My most up-to-date contact information can also be found on my website, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

I really would love to see what you create, so I encourage you to share your work online using **#stretchtarot** and tag me, **@stretchtarot**. That way, we can support and inspire one another.

Let's get started.