

Lucky You

Effect

A chosen card is found at a position established by randomly chosen numbers.

Set-up

You'll need a fifty-three-card deck — a full deck and one Joker. You also have a known card twenty-fourth from the top of the deck. If you don't mind pre-setting the deck, this known card can be the Joker. If working from a shuffled deck, you can use a faro check to identify your key card on the fly.

Apart from the deck, have three blank-on-both sides business cards (or other similarly sized pieces of blank paper) and something convenient to write with. A Sharpie marker will work perfectly.

Five wonderful spectators, Angie, Betty, Carly, Danielle, and Erica, will assist you.

Method and presentation

Comment that you play the lottery from time to time, and when you do, even though you can pick any six numbers from one to forty-nine, you always play with your “lucky” numbers. And those numbers are, in fact, one through six.

Before you’re labeled as a mad man, explain that even though this may not be obvious to everyone, the probability of drawing numbers from one to six is identical to the probability of drawing any other combination of six numbers. You may be weird, but you’re not stupid.

Although your “lucky” numbers haven’t really worked yet in a lotto game, you still feel that they’re your lucky numbers. They might not work for getting you tons of money, but what about other situations? It’s time to test that out.

Take out the three blank business cards and rip them through the center, width-wise, leaving you with six, almost square pieces.

You will now write the following single-digit numbers on both sides of each of the six pieces of paper: $1/4$, $2/5$, $2/5$, $3/6$, $4/7$, $6/9$.

(Even though you stated that your lucky numbers are one through six, the method requires you to write seven and nine as well. To explain this discrepancy, I jokingly comment that I like to boost my luck by including the two extra numbers, which are considered lucky in Chinese culture. The educational part of the booklet ends here.)

The orientation of each numbered side of paper is important. Turn the first piece of paper so the torn edge is on the bottom. Write “1,” then turn the paper over such that the torn edge will be on top. Write “4.” Place the piece aside and take another piece of paper. Again, with the torn edge on the bottom, write “2,” turn it so the torn edge is on top and write “5.” Place it aside and repeat this procedure with the other four pairs of numbers. Run through this a few times and you will see there is very little to actually remember.

After you’ve prepared the pieces of paper, give them to Carly. State that in a moment she will make two decisions — a random one and a conscious one. Instruct her to cup the pieces in her hands and shake, mixing them up like an impromptu lotto machine.

Take out a deck of cards and obtain a break below your key card, twenty-fourth from the top (locating either the pre-set Joker or by the means of a faro check). Distribute the top twenty-four cards between Angie and Betty. The remaining twenty-nine cards are split between Danielle and Erica.

Everyone shuffles their respective packets. Once they are happy with their mixes, ask if either Angie or Betty wants to pick a card. If they can’t decide in less than two seconds, nominate one of them yourself.

Let’s say it’s Angie. Ask her to peek at and remember the bottom card of her packet. Just to be sure, ask Angie to show the card to others so in case she forgets it, not all is lost. As she does, take the two packets from Danielle and Erica. Extend your hand with the combined packet of twenty-nine cards and ask Angie to place her face-down packet on top of the one you’re holding. Betty then drops her packet on top of everything, thus reassembling the deck, but most importantly, positioning the selection twenty-fourth from the top and thirtieth from the face.

(At this point you can give the deck a Red/Black overhand shuffle where you run single cards in the middle, keeping in mind that the selection is slightly off center. Also, don't forget that after the shuffle the selection will now be thirtieth from the top and twenty-fourth from the bottom. This is optional, so for explanation purposes the shuffle has been omitted.)

Turn the deck face up and place it on the table. All of the dirty work here is done. Now it's time to cheat a bit with the pieces of paper.

Ask Carly to shake the pieces of paper for the last time then drop them to the table, like dice. She is instructed to line them up in a single row.

After that, it's time for the second and final decision — the conscious one. All that matters to you is the orientation of the papers in relation to their torn edges. Ultimately, you must end with any two pieces with torn edges at the bottom and the remaining four with the torn edges on top (or vice versa). Such an arrangement will force one of two numbers: twenty-four or thirty. Depending on the current orientation of the pieces, you'll ask Carly to do one of four actions.

If the pieces are in the correct orientation, no further actions are required. However, you can give Carly the option to turn all six pieces over or to keep them as they are. This action will simply change the force total from one to the other.

You might end up with all torn edges on top or bottom. In this case, instruct Carly to pick any two pieces and turn them over.

You might end with only one edge facing one direction and five facing the other. In this case, instruct Carly to pick any three pieces and turn them over.

And, if you end up with three edges on top and three edges on the bottom (see *Illustration 2*), instruct Carly to pick any single piece and turn it over.

In the end, the visible numbers will total either twenty-four or thirty.

Ask Carly to add the numbers together. If the number is twenty-four, instruct Betty to turn the deck face down and deal twenty-four cards from the top. Ask Angie to name her selection. Betty turns over the twenty-fourth card, revealing it to be Angie's selection. A miracle!



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If the total is thirty, the cards will be counted from the face, just like the deck is positioned on the table. Here, though, ask Angie to name the chosen card before the dealing process starts, and stop Betty one card before she reaches number thirty. It's time to build up everything, repeat the conditions and all that jazz. After that, ask Betty to deal the next card and Angie's card will be seen. A miracle, too!

Credits

Some years ago I stumbled upon a very interesting mathematical principle used in Shigeo Futagawa's "Stunumbers", published in Karl Fulves' *Self-Working Number Magic: 101 Foolproof Tricks* (1983). That was my starting point and after playing around with the concept, this trick (including other variations) came to be.

I later found out Amazing Randi's "Numeral-oh-gee" in Harry Lorayne's *Apocalypse* – Volume 2, No. 6 (June 1979) that uses the same clever principle that allows you to force a specific total using four pairs of numbers.

Predating both of those publications is George Sands' "One to Eight" from William Simon's *Mathematical Magic* (1964). Be sure to check out all of them, though.

I believe the roots of that principle go back to Bob Hummer's "Poker Chip Baffle"/"Poker Chip Mystery", marketed around 1941. You can find it in *Bob Hummer's Collected Secrets* (1980), written by Karl Fulves.

Ryan Schlutz' "Card at Any Sum", a clever trick that bears some similarities both in plot and the method, can be found in *False Anchors* – Volume 2 (2017).

The Red/Black overhand shuffle, usually credited to Laurie Ireland, can be found in Charles T. Jordan's *Thirty Card Mysteries* (1919/1920) in the context of a trick called "The Dealing Dovetail Detection".