

## Head to Head

### Pete McCabe

This is a fun, engaging, easy-to-improvise presentation, with a super clean, easy to remember handling and a hard-hitting effect. Basically, the spectators engage in a mind-reading contest, after which you show them what real mind reading looks like.

#### Go

Recruit two spectators—I'll call them Alex1 and Alex2—for a mind-reading contest. Hand the deck to Alex1, saying "shuffle these, you'll play defense." I like to give both contestants a few mind-reading pointers, but I do not explain what "play defense" means.

For reliable comedy, give each spectator one specific instruction, and make them opposites. I like to tell Alex1 to relax, then tell Alex2 to tense up. This helps draw the audience into the experience, and every time Alex1 gets a little tense, a friendly "relax" gets a good reaction. Vice versa with Alex2. It's a lot of fun.

Tell Alex1 to relax and take out any 8 cards, think of any one of them, memorize it, and mix them up. Tell Alex2 to look away and tense up.

Now the game begins. You take the eight cards, remove any four, and hold them up so only Alex1 can see them. Alex2 "reads Alex1's mind" and guesses whether Alex1 can see their card or not, and Alex1 confirms or denies the guess. It's vital that Alex1 tell the truth here, so make sure you pick a spectator who is willing to admit it, even if they "lose" the contest. Either way, that was the first trial, so discuss who won, how did they choose, etc.

At this point you know which group of cards has Alex1's card. Reassemble the groups, making sure the four with Alex1's card go under the other four. This is all while you are talking about whether Alex2 was right or not.

Spread the packet of eight cards and outjog every other card. Strip out the four outjogged cards, keeping them in order, and hold them up so only Alex1 can see them. Do NOT change the order of the cards or the trick won't work. Mention that you have some of the same cards but some new, so it's 50-50 whether Alex1 will see the selection or not.

Alex2 again tries to read Alex1's mind, and Alex1 will either confirm or deny. Again you assemble the cards so the group with Alex1's card goes underneath, while discussing

how well the contest is going.

One last time, outjog every other card, take the outjogged cards and show Alex1, Alex2 guesses, Alex1 answers, put the group with Alex1's card on bottom.

Put the cards down, and as you do, glimpse the bottom card of the group. Thanks to the binary sort process, that is Alex1's selection.

Take a moment to review the results of the mind-reading competition. Congratulate the winner and make an excuse for the loser. Talk about how this was just a very simple form of mind-reading. For a big finish, you'll try the real thing.

Review the basic facts; Alex1 shuffled, took any 8 cards, thought of any one, and never told anybody which one. You have never looked at the face of any card. This is all true and quite an impressive list of conditions.

Read Alex1's mind. Take your time.

### **Notes**

The competition premise does a great job of making it fun for the spectators and highlights the impossibility of what you do after. Everything is very casual and there are no moves.

If you use a marked deck, put the packet that has the selection on top each time, instead of underneath. With this handling, after three rounds the selection will be the top card. Read the mark from there.

Do you remember how Andy recently asked for the best version of the 21 card trick? Well, this is the same method as the 21 card trick. You divide the cards into groups, the spectator tells you what group their card is in, and you put that group into a specific place. Repeating that process sorts their card to a known location. This version has several advantages over the original, the biggest one being the irresistible nature of the mind-reading contest between the two spectators.

Happy Holidays to all us Jerx.