

Present, Past, Future – Jack E. McCoy

This 25-yr. old effect has been called a masterpiece by some of my closest magic friends, maybe because they're friends and want me to be happy, or maybe because this illusion is truly badass. I can confidently attest that it's probably the latter. The two times I've performed it have been very successful and even had some begging me to tell them how I did it.

The illusion:

The magician hands a deck of cards to a spectator for examination and mixing. A book is placed on the table. A random card is shown and the spectator is invited to sign it. The card is poked into the front of the deck, partially extending out the front. The deck is placed on the table. During this the magician speaks, *"One of the biggest debates of all times has to be the contemplation of time travel. I've spent many years debating it myself and have come to a conclusion. It is possible. Let me start off with the easiest to prove, the present. See, the present is easy to prove as it's describing the here and now. For example, presently we are all here together, which is obvious to any of us still alive in this room. I also could say that presently we're in the middle of a card trick with Lisa, another obvious fact. See, proving the present is a no-brainer. But let me now step into a greyer area, the past. I say greyer because, for example, the present statement about the card trick is now a past statement. It's not too hard to prove as you were all here and know I'm telling the truth. But suppose we were to step back further, before we were together. That's where things get greyer."* The magician removes a book mark from his pocket. *"Let me tell you about this book. It's semi boring and I never finished reading it. In fact, I know what page I stopped reading it at. Lisa, if you'll help me again, this book has 250 pages and if you'll tell us any page between 1 and 250. Page 123? Wow, that's exactly where I stopped reading it! You don't believe me, do you? Well fine."* The magician puts the bookmark back in his pocket and speaks, *"I'll be right back."* There's a slight pause, *"O.K. I'm back. It didn't seem like I went anywhere did it, but I did. Yes, I went into the past. That's right. I can prove it. Lisa, do you remember what page you mentioned? That's right, page 123. O.K. I'll be honest. I really haven't read the book at all but I was going to make it look like I did. So, what I did was go back in time and put the bookmark at a certain location of the book, at page 123, then I came back to the present. Don't believe me, look!"* The book is rifled to page 123 and it is seen that the bookmark is there! *"You may be thinking there are bookmarks at all the pages, but as you can see, there's only one."* All the other pages are shown and sure enough there are no other bookmarks. *"Pretty impressive huh? That's the power of the past ladies and gentlemen. O.K., now for the most difficult feat, proving time travel into the future. Lisa, I want you to hold the book and make sure I from this point on, I never come anywhere close to it."* The book is handed to Lisa to hold. *"They say the past and present determine the future, so I'll use that theory in my attempt to prove it's possible. As you know, Lisa is holding the book and I'll never go near it again. Also, remember the card trick that I had begun? I'll now push her card into the deck."* The card is pushed flush into the deck. With empty hands, the magician continues, *"O.K. folks, I'll be right back."* A slight pause, *"O.K., I'm back. Didn't seem like I went anywhere did it? But I did. I went into the future. I did. I can prove it. See, moments from now, I did a card trick with Lisa's signed selection. It was amazing. Thank you very much."* This gets a laugh usually. The magician continues, *"After the show, I stopped Lisa before she could leave and asked for her card. She gave it to me. I then traveled into the past with her card and did something very special with it, after which I traveled forward to the present, the now. As you can see, the card is now gone!"* The deck is turned face up and ribbon spread. The signed selection has vanished, nothing palmed or hidden. *"Lisa, see that bookmark sticking out of the top of the book at page 123? If you will please, grasp it and gently begin pulling upward."* Lisa pulls the bookmark out of the book and now there is a string attached to it, and to the other end of the string is **the signed selection!** All may be examined. A very mind-blowing occurrence.

Preparation:



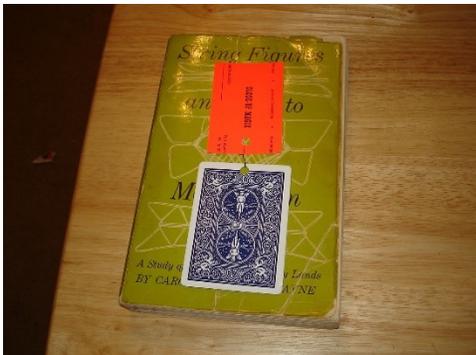
You will need scissors, dark thread, a hole puncher, a deck of card (for performance – 2 decks), a Sharpie or other marker, a softbound book, and some kind of bookmark. I use a business card.



Make sure the bookmark is slightly shorter than the length of the playing card. Note that I cut my card shorter. Punch a hole in the center towards the top edge of the playing card. Punch a hole in the bookmark in a similar location, but slightly lower towards the bookmark's center (just barely). Tie the string to the bookmark.

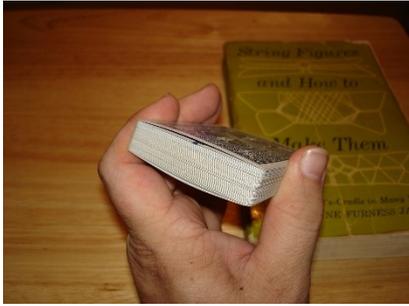


Place the bookmark on the back of the playing card, then wrap the string through the playing card's hole and tie it off. Cut off any excess string. You want to be sure that the bookmark, when hanging, doesn't hang below the bottom of the playing card. There's a reason for this which you will find out later on.



Also, make sure that both the bookmark and playing card, when separated and in hanging position, isn't longer than the book (in length).

Performance:



Place the bookmark on the back of the face down playing card (as in the third image on the previous page). Place them on top of the deck (the playing card should be face down). Now place a regular card face down on top. If you were to look at the end of the deck (as pictured), all you should see is a tiny bit of string. Place this arranged deck in your left pocket with the marker in the same pocket.

1. Hand a matching deck to the spectator for examination and shuffling. Once done, retrieve the deck with your left hand and reach into your pocket. Switch the deck out with the gaffed one as you also retrieve the marker that's in there as well. The right hand brings the book into view from wherever you're keeping it. The book and marker is placed on the table.



2. The deck is held in dealer's grip (as pictured). The index is in the middle of the front edge of the deck, the string hidden from the spectator's view.



3. Spread the deck by first spreading the top card singly and slightly forward. Now clump push off, then spread as usual. This gives a very clean and fair display of the deck.



4. Close the spread by pushing the right and left hand directly towards each other. Because of the nature of a spread, the cards will be skewed with the top card slightly forward. Remember to keep the deck's front either parallel to the table or even slightly downward during this as not to flash the string.



5. The right-hand assists in squaring the deck, the left index assuming its original position as the deck is straightened.

You will now do a double turnover, the bookmark going along for the ride, sandwiched between the cards. The method of the double turnover is the way I always do it but may be new to you.



6. The right hand grasps the top two cards in biddle grip, the index on the top, the middle finger replacing the left index in hiding the string. The right thumb is in the center of the near side. Remember to keep the string hidden by first placing the right middle finger on top of the deck and sliding it over the front edge, the left index moving out of the way at the last moment. The right thumb lifts up on the near side to separate the top two cards in preparation for the double turnover.



7. The deck is raised slightly where the top of it isn't visible to the spectator. The right hand raises the top two cards (with the bookmark between them) off the deck. The moment they're separated, the right index reaches around the left side of the double. Bow the double slightly.



8. The right index pulls the left side upward and rightward, the double rotating between the thumb and middle finger. The hole in the face up card is hidden from the spectator by the right middle plus the deck being tilted upward.



9. Start lowering the top of the deck slightly downward, the left index taking over its original spot as the right hand lets go and moves out of the way.



10. Look at the card showing as if being random and name it. This gives the excuse for the deck not being completely downward and level. The index is blocking the hole from view. It can even bend more on top of it if long enough. My fingers are short and fatter.



11. The right-hand moves onto the near side of the deck, the thumb on top, the index on the bottom.



12. The left thumb moves up against the index to hide the hole. The deck is rotated counter-clockwise, pivoting between the thumbs and indexes of both hands.



13. Supporting the deck by both hands, ask a spectator to sign the top card. Doing this gives a perfect excuse for the deck being held in this unusual configuration.

You will now palm the signed card and bookmark away as you pretend to check the ink for dryness, remove the top card and poke it into the middle of the deck. Here we go:



14. After the signing, rotate the deck back to its original position in the left hand. The right hand covers the top of the deck, palm down from above, the fingers along the front and the thumb on top. Make sure the front of the top card is in the position with the fingers as it would if it was palmed, for that's what you're about to do. With the thumb, rub the signature, pretending to be checking the ink for dryness. The top of the deck should be slightly angled towards yourself.



15. The fingers press against the top front of the deck and push slightly forward. The signed card will snap up into the palm.



This is another view of the card popping up into the right palm.



16. Pushing forward even more, the bookmark will be dragged forward until it moves over the front of the deck. This will cause it to snap up into the palm as well. Curl your right hand, locking down on both the selection and bookmark.



With the right thumb, lower onto the top card of the deck. Notice that the left hand as turned more palm towards yourself so the spectators can't see the top of the deck. The right thumb slides the face up stranger card upward until the right fingers can move onto its back and grasp hold of it between them and the thumb.



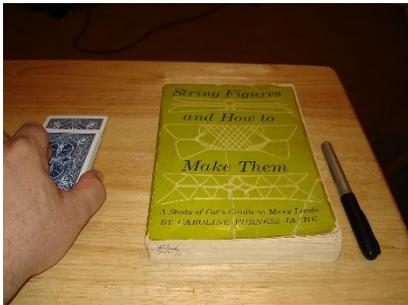
17. Rotate the stranger card's top towards yourself until it's face down. Poke it into the middle of the deck from your side.



18. The left pinky moves below the deck.

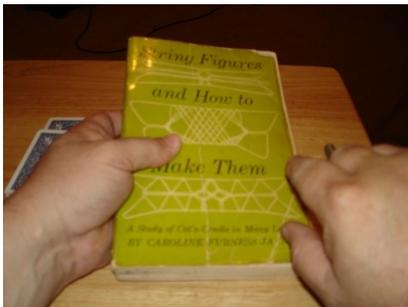


The pinky starts straightening as the finger keep hold of the end of the deck. This will cause the deck to rotate counter-clockwise.

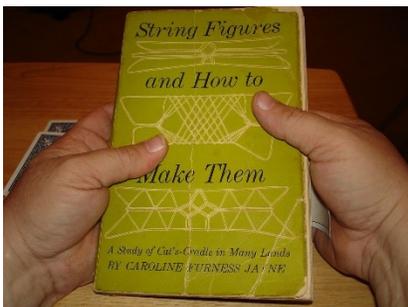


19. Once the deck is rotated forward, with the outjogged card towards the spectators, place it on the table.

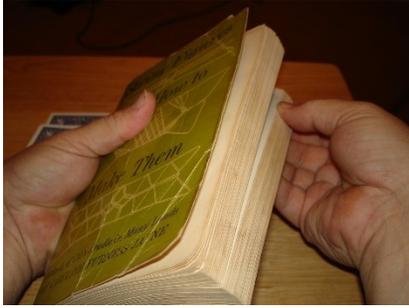
Steps 14 – 19 is one smooth flowing thing. To the spectators, you simply checked the ink for dryness, removed it and poked it into the decks center. Remember, the spectators can't see the face of the stranger card. This move keeps that from happening. This is a very old move that I learned from S.W. Erdnase's book 'Expert at the Card Table', dating from the turn of the 20th century. I've barely modified it.



20. The left hand picks up the book and raises it up to the right hand.



21. The right hand rotates palm upward as the book is moved into its crotch. the palmed items move below the book.



22. The back of the book is downward. The left fingers take over holding the palmed items, holding them up against the book by the fingertips. They're not palmed by the left hand, but just clipped against the book. This allows the right hand to come out from the bottom of the book and the fingers seen to be empty. The right-hand rifles down the front right corner of the pages, showing the page numbers.



23. The right hand then lowers back below the book and repositions the selection and bookmark back into palming position. After the spectator names a page and you pretend to time travel, curl the right hand slightly until the items are securely palmed. The hands rifle the pages until they find the chosen page. The palmed cards are safely hidden by the fingers and book.



24. The left hand now gains complete control of the book, the thumb bending the left pages slightly open, the fingers and index helping to hold and support the book. The right-hand moves into the opened book. Now, let the palmed items squirt off the fingers and deep into the book. This happens almost automatically as the card is already flexed. The lower part of the right hand is used kind of like a springboard. Remember, the spectator(s) are on in front of you and can't see inside the book.



25. The right hand grasps the right side of the bookmark only.

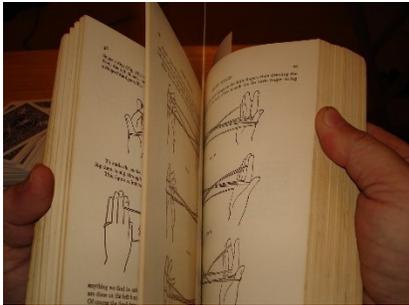


26. The bookmark is rotated counter-clockwise and upward.



27. The bookmark is left protruding out of the top of the book. Close the book and grasp it tightly to straighten the bend in the selection plus keep everything in place.

The work is done! Yae!! All that's left is the buildup.



28. First, grasp the book by the spine with the left hand, the open side rightward. The right hand grasps the exposed part of the bookmark and rotates it towards the upper right corner of the book, where the page numbers are. Slightly raise it upward or downward to slightly open the pages at their upper numbered corners so the spectator can see that the bookmark is at the mentioned page. Move the bookmark back to its original spot. Now, with the right thumb, rifle the pages from the left towards the bookmark. Stop just a few pages before the chosen page. This is to show the spectators that there are no other bookmarks on any other page.



29. With the left thumb, repeat the process with the pages further from the chosen page, showing the same.

30. Close the book and hand it to the spectator. Have them hold it in their left hand, by the open side. The spine should be pointing outward, away from their hand. Direct the spectator in gripping the book semi-tightly. Holding it this way ensures the bookmark/card will come out of the book without tearing or breaking. In other words, by the spectator holding the book by the open side, his grip keeping the pages shut, the bookmark will be on the opposite side, held in place by the friction of the pages and not his hand.

31. Push the outjogged card into the deck, go through the time travel patter. Turn the deck face up and ribbon spread it to show the vanish of the selection. Now, without going anywhere near the book nor the spectator, have him/her grasp the exposed end of the bookmark and lift upward. Watch their expression when they see a string attached to it and then their signed card attached to the other end. The hole in the card even further baffles them.

Practice this trick until smooth and you will find it an amazing piece of magic. Also, I recommend practicing the palm in front of a mirror to learn where the flashes may occur. One aspect that comes to mind is to be sure that the right palm stays towards your body and not straight downward because the hand is somewhat folded and the portion of the palmed card/bookmark may flash at the area of the thumb base. Mirror practicing is important anyway with close up magic.