



MAGIC YOUTH INTERNATIONAL

I.B.M. Ring #199, Raleigh, NC



MAGIC APPRENTICE COURSE

LESSON PLAN 2

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ETHICS IN MAGIC: Exposure of Magic Secrets (5 Minutes)

Exposure in magic refers to the practice of making magical methods (the "secrets" of how magic tricks are performed) available to those who are not magicians. It is generally frowned upon as a type of spoiler that ruins the experience of magical performances for audiences.

Standards vary for who should be counted as insiders. Some define magicians as "those who have demonstrated some commitment to magic as a performance art". Others use the stricter "those who are members of a magic club or society". A more liberal criterion would be "Have the inner-workings of a magic creation been distributed to people who have not asked for that knowledge?" This is the difference between publishing a "secret" in a dictionary or on a magician's web site and publication on the back of a cereal box or on prime-time television.

Exposures are performed by both professional and amateur magicians as well as members of the public. Some have been performed as part of stage shows or in other public media including the Internet. More recently, exposure of magic has taken place on the internet, certain video sharing interfaces, discussion forums, and blogs being the main sources at exposing illusions.

One notable case of intentional exposure was when Val Valentino, as the "Masked Magician" starred in the Fox series *Breaking the Magician's Code* in 1997-98. Valentino exposed several illusions on network television. He was ostracized from the magic community and received heavy criticism from magicians for going against the joint International Brotherhood of Magicians and Society of American Magicians ethics statement.

In the 1970s James Randi received criticism as well as support in exposing the methods of alleged psychic Uri Geller. Geller insists that his stunts, such as spoon bending are supernatural and not magic tricks. Consequently, Randi feels it is important to expose that type of trickery. While Randi has refused to reveal some of his in depth theories on Geller, he has explained simple methods of trickery that Geller uses. Most famously, Randi explored some of Geller's deception in the 1982 book *The Magic of Uri Geller* (later renamed *The Truth about Uri Geller*). In the book he devoted a chapter titled "The Magician's Attitude and How It Changed" about the initial criticism he received in exposing Geller's methods. Randi noted years after the publication he received apologies from

many of the magicians who criticized him. In 1974 magician Sam Dalal wrote a letter in support of Randi to *The Magigram*, explaining:

"I perform the "spirit slates" trick, but I wouldn't charge 5 pounds to produce a message from someone's dead mother! And I charge for deceit, but not for the deceit itself, only the entertainment I provide through it. The day I start selling something I can't deliver . . . like "psychic healing" and the messages from "Little Green Men" . . . and hope to be taken in earnest all the time -- I hope somewhere there will be a Houdini, a Randi, or a Bongo with the moral courage and decency to stop me!."

Randi has continued his mission in exposing psychics who claim their performances are divine. In 2007 Randi exposed Geller's alleged paranormal claims, and explained, "these revelations are not going to interfere in any way with the work of professionals who use the art of conjuring in order to entertain," and "the magicians will be astonished to see just how crude and inefficient most of these methods are, in comparison with what they use for their audiences."

In contrast, Penn & Teller performances often include themselves exposing their own tricks for purposes of entertainment. Penn Jillette has said that while the duo show the audience how a trick is done, it is often done so quickly or with different mechanics, that while the audience learns it is a trick, they cannot follow. As a result, the duo will repeat the trick fooling the audience even after the audience knows how its done.

Exposures as such should also be carefully distinguished from *apparent* exposures performed by magicians during an act; these 'exposures' invariably turn out to be illusions in their own right, usually compounded in mystery by their apparent similarity to a previous trick (or outright jokes — one example is a magician who claims the secret to unlinking rings is that "the rings have holes", and then points to the "hole" in the middle of each ring). Since a primary rule of magic is "never perform the same trick twice", if a magician appears to be doing so, a surprise ending will almost assuredly follow.

HISTORY OF MAGIC: The Beginning (5 minutes)

[Source: The Illustrated History of Magic [(Updated Version), Milbourne & Maurine Christopher, 1976]

The theatrical aspects of Magic began to formalize through the performances of a Frenchman by the name of Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin around the 1840's. Referred to by many as the "Father of Modern Magic," Robert-Houdin enthralled the people of his era with many mechanical wonders. He also has the distinction of using magic to stop a revolution.

In 1856 Algiers, the Marabouts were religious leaders inciting the colonized natives to break their ties with France. Aware of the native superstitions, Emperor Napoleon III sent Robert-Houdin with his Light and Heavy Box. This illusion terrified the strongest men the native Marabouts could find. Robert-Houdin could

control this roughly 8" by 12" box so that the weakest child could pick it up but the strongest man could not. Though modern audiences would be bored by this simple display of electromagnetic principles, these concepts were totally alien to 18th century Algerians. The Marabouts ascribed great powers to Robert-Houdin and believed that he would be able to overpower their forces with his greater magical powers. The conflict ended peacefully and in France's favor.

Magic in America actually started well before this with the Native American Shamans or Holy Men. They would "cure" disease by spitting out chicken blood and bones from their mouth after acting like they had "sucked" the diseased organs out of the sick person. They would also "float" arrows using horse hair as the secret levitating ingredient. Amazing what you can do around the old campfire.

Theatrical magicians were itinerants during the late nineteenth century. Among these were Alexander Herrmann and John Henry Anderson, who billed himself as "The Wizard of the North". In Colonial times, Richard Potter, the first African American magician of note, would travel and perform feats which fool even today's magicians.

THE THEORIES OF MAGIC: Productions

Beliefs differ, however, it is generally accepted that there are seven basic illusions in magic. These are Vanishes, Productions, Transformations, Restorations, Teleportations, Levitations and Penetrations. Tonight we'll cover the first: Vanishes.

Productions: In the previous lesson we spoke of making things vanish. Once vanished it is generally a good idea to bring them back. Old Vaudeville audiences would become irate with performers who simply vanished a bird, rabbit or individual. They theorized that the bird or rabbit may have been harmed in some way. Causing the animal to reappear assuaged these fears and kept the program on an entertaining level.

Anything that can be vanished can be produced. We can produce silks, cards, coins, animals, assistants, fruit, cars and even elephants. The effect is limited only by your imagination and available resources.

Today we'll demonstrate various ways of producing items from common objects such as envelopes, paper bags and the common thumb tip.

Demonstrate the creation of a double wall envelope

Demonstrate the creation of a double wall paper bag

Demonstrate placement of the load

Demonstrate the Square Circle