

Stone Cold Mental

ESP Card Instructions



Created by
Jeff Stone

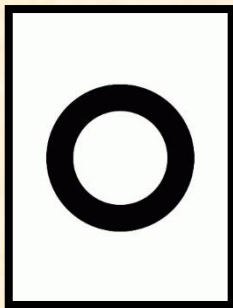
Introduction

Traditionally, the standard way¹ of marking a deck of ESP cards is based on the values 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 being assigned to the **circle** (1 line), **cross** (2 lines), **waves** (3 lines), **square** (4 lines), and **star** (5 points) respectively. See the images below. However, the “three” card (i.e., the **waves**) is somewhat a point of contention amongst some mentalists. Although the original Zener / Rhine cards used the waves, some mentalists feel that a **triangle** is a better shape than the **waves**. It also works nicely for the memory peg by assigning the number 3 to **triangle** (3 sides).

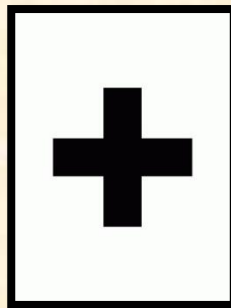
In an attempt to satisfy all, **triangle** cards are available (sold in packs of 25, and separately from the standard pack) for those who prefer the **triangle**. The catch is that if the **triangle** is secretly marked (more on the marks momentarily) as the “3” card, then the mentalist won’t be able to use the **waves** and **triangles** in the same deck at the same time. Many prefer to have this as an option. That being the case, the **triangle** is (sort of) marked as the “6” card (more on that momentarily) rather than the “3” card. That way you can use all six cards in the same deck if you wish.

Below is a visual reminder of the association of the number and its corresponding symbol as discussed above.

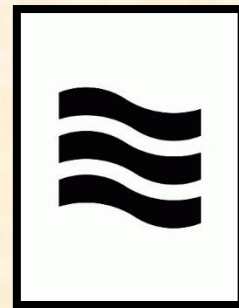
Circle: 1 line



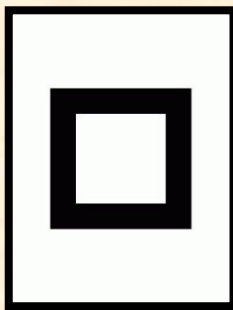
Cross: 2 lines



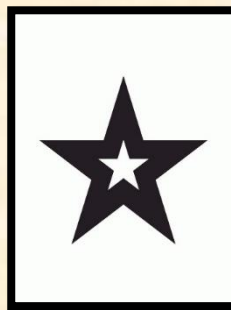
Waves: 3 lines



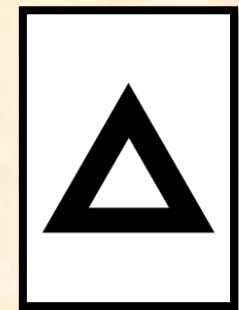
Square: 4 lines / 4 sides



Star: 5 points



Triangle: “leftover”



¹ The mnemonic for the ESP symbols appears to be the creation of Don Paul and was published as *Order Mnemonic for ESP Cards* in the 1960 booklet, *ESP Handbook and Workshop Kit* written / compiled by Arthur Hastings.

In addition to Don Paul, this 32 page booklet contains contributions from Ed Marlo, U.F. Grant, Bert Allerton, Tony Corinda, Joseph M. White, and Mr. Hastings himself.

Different Marking Sizes

Two different versions of the cards are available. One version has “small” marks, and the other version has “large” marks. Note that the “large” marks are still not seen by layfolk unless they know what to look for. The “small” marks are definitely more subtle. For those of who are a bit farsighted, the larger marking system may be the best option. Below are images for both versions of the marking systems. Don’t be fooled by how big (both the “small” and “large” versions) appear below. They are very much zoomed in for teaching purposes only. At the end of the instructions, you’ll find actual size images of the marks that you can print out to help you determine which ones work for your needs.

The Marking Location

On the back of each card, in the top left area is a cross of sorts (not to be confused with the ESP **cross** symbol) that is meant to look, roughly, like a “twinkling star” (not to be confused with the ESP **star** symbol) in the sky. This is where the markings are located.

Also note that the bottom right has the same cross / “twinkling star” and is also marked. However, the markings are upside down / reversed such that when the card is rotated, the marks will be properly oriented and in the left hand corner. In other words, the card backs are perfectly symmetrical, and the marks are to be read in the top left corner regardless off the orientation of the card. The marking area is circled in **red** below. The actual marking system is explained after the image below.



The Marking System

The left image below shows a closer look at the “twinkling star”. It’s made up of four quadrants numbered one through four starting at the top left and moving clockwise. In each of those quadrants, you’ll find a dot corresponding to the card it represents, e.g., a dot in quadrant #1 means that the card is a *circle*. The center area represents position #5 for marking a *star*.

The middle, and right images below show what the dots look like and where they will physically be for each of the markings. Note, the cards will only ever have one dot. The middle, and right images show all of the dots for explanations purposes only. No card has all of the dots.

Lastly, note that on the backs of the “small” marked version of the cards you’ll find two extra circles. These circles are always in those locations (on the “small” marked version of the cards) and have nothing to with the marking system. One is in the top left quadrant, and the other is in the top right quadrant.

Again, these marks are **not** part of the “system.”

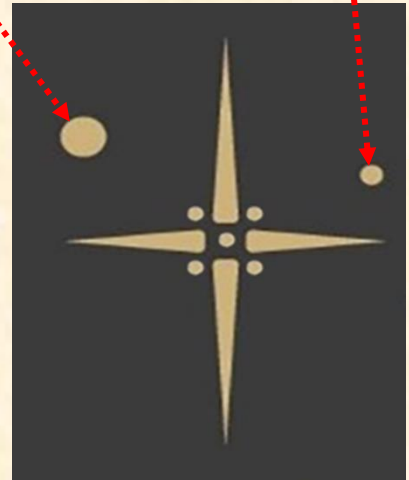
Positions 1 through 5 clockwise



Dot Locations (large)



Dot Locations (small)



The “Large” Version Marks

Each of the six images below shows the exact marking for each of the cards. The only exception to the quadrant markings is the **triangle**. If you happen to own the **triangle** cards, they are marked by having no dots in the “twinkling star” area. Note that these “large” marks are not subtle, but unless you’re looking for them you won’t see them (unless you’re a magician who naturally sees stuff like this. :0]

Circle: Dot in Position “1”



Cross: Dot in Position “2”



Waves: Dot in Position “3”



Square: Dot in Position “4”



Star: Dot in Position “5”



Triangle: Dot in Position “0”



The “Small” Version Marks

Each of the six images below shows the exact marking for each of the cards. The only exception to the quadrant markings is the **triangle**. If you happen to own the **triangle** cards, they are marked by having no dots in the “twinkling star” area.

You’ll note that these markings (especially on the actual cards) are much more subtle than the “large” print version. They’re a little trickier to see, especially the **star** (marked in the middle of the “twinkling star”). If you’re not careful you may mistake the **star** mark for “no marks” which won’t matter if you’re not using the **triangle** cards. When you see “no marks” it’s either the **triangle**, or the **star** being misread (i.e., you overlooked the marking in the center of the “twinkling star”). But if you don’t use the **triangles**, this isn’t a problem, i.e., if you don’t use **triangles** and you see “no marks” it must be the **star** (that you’ve mistaken for “no marks”).

As mentioned earlier note that (other than the **triangle**), there are two extra **circles** near the “twinkling star”. One in the top left quadrant area, and one in the top right quadrant area. This can also help you identify the **triangle** since they are missing from the **triangle** card, i.e., if you are using the **triangles** in your deck and you see “no marks” and you’re not sure if it’s actually a **triangle** or if you overlooked the mark in the center that tells you it’s a **star**, you can use the added information that the two extra circles are missing to verify that it’s actually a **triangle** (or vice-versa – the extra circles **are** there, so you know it’s the **star**).

Circle: Dot in Position “1”



Cross: Dot in Position “2”



Waves: Dot in Position “3”



Square: Dot in Position “4”



Star: Dot in Position “5”



Triangle: Dot in Position “0”



Practice

Now that you know how the markings work, shuffle up the cards and deal through them one at a time (face down) and practice looking at the mark as you deal it. With each card, just say the name of the card out loud as you deal it to the table to test yourself. Eventually it becomes second nature. Good luck!

Acknowledgements

As is always the case when it comes to all things Stone Cold Magic, many other folks have their fingerprints on my work. In this particular case, the reader may have even been involved. Sometime in 2022 I sent out a survey to everyone to get their feedback on which back designs everyone like the most. You may have been one of the voters. Thank you!

Also, Dan Paulus and Derrick Welling consulted on how to mark the cards. Paul Draper, Randy Naviaux, Jess Cone, Derrick, and Dan also gave feedback on the overall “feel” (both physical and metaphysical) of the cards. Thank you!

Survey Results

Below are the aforementioned survey’s results. You’ll notice that the design we ultimately decided on was the second place by votes. Ultimately, we made an executive decision to override the voters and go with design number 2. Among the reasons for this decision, one of the main reasons was that the marking system we came up with was better on the “runner up” cards.



Actual Size

On the next few pages, you'll find the actual size of the card backs. Shown are the "large" and "small" versions of the ***triangle, star, circle, cross, waves,*** and ***square.*** The "large" version is shown on the left, and the "small" on the right. If you print these pages out you can get a sense of which version works best for your needs. Be sure to print them at 100% zoom.

Triangle and Star Actual Size

You'll note that the "small" and "large" **triangle** cards are identical. They are shown on the same page as the **star** cards so you can compare "no marks" (i.e., the **triangle**) to the center marks (i.e., the **star**).

Triangle: Large Mark Version



Triangle: Small Mark Version



Star: Large Mark Version



Star: Small Mark Version



Circle and Cross Actual Size

The **circle** cards are marked in the top left quadrant of the “twinkling star” and the **cross** is marked in the top right quadrant.

Circle: Large Mark Version



Circle: Small Mark Version



Cross: Large Mark Version



Cross: Small Mark Version



Waves and Square Actual Size

The **waves** are marked in the bottom right quadrant of the “twinkling star” and the **square** is marked in the bottom left quadrant.

Waves: Large Mark Version



Waves: Small Mark Version



Square: Large Mark Version



Square: Small Mark Version

