Learning Intuitive Tarot

Stephanie Arwen Lynch
Learn to read the Tarot intuitively. Use this book to dive in and get started reading for fun and profit.
Chapter One
The Morning Lesson

Quite often, I get this question: "What would you suggest to a beginner who wants to learn to read the tarot?"

And my first answer would be to PUT THE BOOK DOWN. “The Book” refers to any book on Tarot meanings including the Little White Book aka the LWB.

Yes, you read me. You don't need the book. In fact, I think that books can be hindrances rather than helpers to a beginner. You begin to rely on someone else's insights and don't look and listen for your own. For me, Tarot reading is a very intuitive divination system. In fact, I think most divinatory systems are tools for your intuition to scamper down. Think of the cards as a ladder!

Intuition is a gift we all have. Some of us have developed it by paying attention to it while others have allowed it to wither. You will need to water it and pay attention to it but it is still there.

The first two chapters are to help you learn *how* to learn. And, if you are an experienced reader, you might try this method with a new deck. I still do these steps when I get a new deck as a way of exercising my intuition and getting my logical self to take a hike.

First Things First
You will need something to write in and write with. Don't over think this. Just run to your local store and grab a spiral-bound notebook and indulge in a pen you like. If you tend to lose pens, buy a bit of ribbon and tie the pen to the notebook.

This can be the same notebook as your Tarot Journal (that’s in Chapter Three), but it doesn't have to be. You could have one of these notebooks for each deck in your possession if you so desire. I am assuming you have a deck. If you don't, go get one. A good beginner's deck is the Rider-Waite deck. I recommend the Radiant Rider-Waite.

**LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION**

Find a place in your home for reading. This can be a desk you have set up specifically for this or it could be your bed each morning. Just be consistent about it so you can have a spot that feels right to you. My desk is where my computer sits. It is cluttered with candles and stones and pens and decks. I clean it up and it will go right back to a disorganized clutter in a few days. sometimes hours. One day, I keep telling myself, I will have a clean desk.

Make sure you have a good light source. Luckily my desk is in a room where I have great sunshine through an East facing window in the morning. I also look out onto the greenbelt behind my house which is just lovely when the deer or the fox are in the fields. And a comfortable chair is a must. Don't hurt yourself! I
recommend reviewing ergonomics. Then go chair shopping if your chair doesn’t fit your correctly.

Invest in one that has an adjustable backrest in all directions. If you do much work at your desk, you will appreciate this!

**ENOUGH! LET'S GET STARTED**

Pick a morning to begin. Sit down in your spot and focus on being open to the Universe. If you can, take five minutes of quiet time before you begin your work.

When you are ready, shuffle your cards. There are many ways to shuffle. I won't tell you that any of them are bad. Some of them are harder on your deck than others, but you do what feels right to you. As you shuffle, hold this thought in mind.

"What does the Universe want me to be prepared for today."

Or any version of that. You are being open to being told what you need to learn for this day.

When you feel that you have shuffled the cards enough, place the deck in front of you. With your non-dominant hand (generally the hand you do NOT write with), cut the deck into three piles and then restack them.

Turn the top card over. Look at it for a minute. Is it reversed
(upside down)? Turn it right side up. You can add reversals in later. For now, use the upright position. Just study it.

Now write what you see in this card. Does it remind you of anything? Anyone? Any time? Jot down notes as you think about these questions. What colors leap out at you? What colors repel you? Any associations with these colors that come to mind?

Write. Write. Write.

Now note your general impressions of this card. What story is it trying to tell you? Don't worry about getting things "right." Just get the words down for now. When you feel like you've written everything important about this card, move to the next step.

**ARE WE THERE YET?**

No, we are not there yet. Once you have completed this first part, close your notebook and set it aside along with your deck. Get ready for your day and do what you need to. We will see you tonight for the rest of the lesson.

If you have read this first chapter and are still asking, “When do I start?”, the answer is NOW. Dive in. Trust your self. Remember, no one is judging you.
Chapter Two
The Evening Lesson

How was your day? Ready to begin the next phase of this method? Remember that this is how to learn. It’s a process. Allow yourself time. So you have found your space and claimed your chair. You shuffled; you meditated; you drew. Then you went about your day.

This is your next step. This is to be done at the end of your day just before bedtime. Allot about thirty minutes for this portion.

Return to your reading space and get your notebook and pen out. Think about your day. What was your overall theme? Fast? Boring? Angry? Laughter? Just find one word that can describe it for you.

Jot that down in your notebook. You can make this a new page or do it on the page you started this morning. Once you have that one word down, start writing about your day. What happened? Who did you talk to? What sticks in your mind? Let your mind wander and don't try to over-analyze this step. Just write.

Once you have done this, go back and reread what you wrote this morning. How does your first impression of the card compare with your overall theme of the day? Can you see anything new in the card now that correlates to your day?
Take a few minutes to compare your notes from the morning to your notes from this evening. Write down anything that is similar.

And now, finally, open the book that came with your deck. If you don't have a deck, then find a book or a website with meanings.

Write down key phrases from the book or site. See what you may have missed. See what you saw in the card that the book doesn't mention. Don't worry if your interpretation varies from the book. This is very normal.

And do give yourself a pat on the back when you see all the things you got for yourself without reading the book. This is your intuition at work.

This daily lesson is one to be done every day for at least three months. I try to pull a card once a day, but I no longer do the writing unless it is a new deck.

When you pull a card that you have already seen, do not go back to your notes. Do the card in the same way. Yes, you will remember some of what the book said, but you will also be able to place your own spin on it because you will remember what the card meant for you the first time you had it.

Good luck as you take this journey into the fascinating system of Tarot. If you want to learn more, watch for my online class offerings and available books.
Now let’s talk about how to create a Tarot Journal. As I mentioned, this can be the same thing as your Am/Pm Tarot work. Personally, I make it a separate thing. But that is up to you. Keep that in mind as you continue to the next chapter.
Now that you have established a pattern of how to learn the Tarot and build your knowledge along with your trust of your own intuition, let’s talk about Tarot journals. Tarot journals, for me, are something every student should keep. And I think we are all students. My current Tarot journal is full of spreads and thoughts on readings. As you start your Tarot journal, know that you join the many of us who also utilize this unique tool for opening up the world of Tarot for ourselves. I use mine as a learning aid as well as a meditation tool.

But this first journal will be a study aid. You will need the basics. Something to write with and something to write on not to mention a Tarot deck--these will be your three basic necessities. You may want to use an old deck (check flea markets, used bookstores, Craigslist, etc.) or you can buy a duplicate of the one you are studying with. For my study journal, I used a large 8.5 x 11 blank art book for this project. The very front page is your title page. Take a deep breath. This is your Fool’s leap (and I promise it will all be
Find the courage to write on the first page. That is the hardest thing for many of us -- "ruining" that lovely white paper with ink. But it has to be done! So I offer you this exercise to begin.

On the very first page of your journal write your name. Now place an apostrophe and then the letter 's'. Now write Tarot Journal. WHOA! Get out of town. Just like that, you have just named your journal. Mine reads Arwen's Tarot Journal. It may seem silly, but you have to break that barrier first! Do use stamps and colored pens/pencils etc. if you feel like decorating. Remember that no one will be looking at this journal unless you allow them.

On the next page, write Table of Contents. Enter “The Journal Spread” on the first line. That’s the first thing in your Tarot Journal. Now skip three to five more pages. That’s where you will list your contents. Do the following spread. Write it down on the page.

The Journal Spread
1. What Will I Learn From This Journal?
2. What Will Block Me From This Journal?
3. Why Is This Journal Important?

The cards are laid out in order in a row. Write the spread name and the questions along with what cards show up in those positions. Use your AM Tarot technique if you get a card you aren’t familiar with. Let your mind go and write. As before, no one is judging you.

Now remember that spare or old deck? After you finish your journal spread, label the next page 0 The Fool. If you have the deck, glue the Fool on this page.

Random Tip: I put four cards in the upper left corner then moved to the upper right corner for the next four page. Then four cards on the bottom left pages and four followed that on the bottom right pages. Then I rotated through that sequence until all 78 cards were in the book. For me, I only allowed the front and back of each page for this first journal. You may want to allow more. Totally up to you.
So you have started with the Major Arcana. Next are the suits. I suggest the following order: Swords, Wands, Cups, Coins.

And that’s it. That’s the bones of your first Tarot Journal. You don't need much else unless you are a crafty type. Remember your journal doesn't have to be a fancy handmade book. You can use a .99 cent notebook from the local Whatever-Mart. It's your journal, your journey, and no one else needs to see it.

Back to the pages with the cards. What to do with them?

Write in the journal. Use your Am/Pm Tarot work to jot down important ideas. Create poems for each card. Oh yeah, you're marking up pages. You might even have to scratch a word out. I give you permission to have ink blotches and misspellings and stick figures that don't even look like sticks. I give you permission to draw when you don't want to write and to write when you don't want to draw. You can glue collages here. You can use gel pens in flaming pink or blackest black. You can use a super fine point or a Sharpie(tm). The key is to USE something so you are working on your journal.

Random Tip: Use the same color for the titles of the twenty-two Major Arcana and a color for each suit. This
will help you when you are flipping through looking for things. Or color the upper right corner as a marker for each group.

Interpret them. Jot your interpretations down in the journal. And note, I said YOUR interpretations--not the LWB's. The Little White Book has its place in the world, but this isn't one of them.

Don't worry about making long in-depth entries here. Just slap down on the paper what you get from the cards. Draw pictures in your journal of what the cards look like or what leaps out at you from the cards. Again, there is no wrong way of doing this unless you are just not doing it. Crayons or colored pencils might be fun to have on hand. What color is the strongest for you when you look at the card you drew?

All you are doing here at first is writing down what YOU see in the card. You can look at the LWB once you have finished that and add information from there so leave some room.

By the way? This may be something that is never complete. Let yourself be okay with that if you can. Tarot is an ongoing learning for me. I started in 1981. You do the math.
BONUS SPREAD

The Joy Seeker’s Spread

0 What is joy to me?
1 Where do I find joy the most easily?
2 Where must I work to find joy?
3 What do I allow to block my joy?
4 Who is my joy mentor?
5 What is the Universe's gift of joy for me right now?
What if your life's purpose were simply "Seek Joy"? Would you have the courage? How hard is it to release the negativity? Can you begin to imagine it? Your life filled with joy. Laughter replacing the tears. Hope shoving out the negativity? Seek joy, y'all!

For me, my own personal negativity is an anchor. It holds me back from reaching the heights I know I can attain. I'm so human, y'all. I get mad for the silliest of reasons. I get my feelings hurt. I think the world is out to get me. Then I remind myself of a wonderful quote by Albert Camus.

"Gazing up at the stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe." - Albert Camus (1913-1960)

And it hits me. The Universe is not out to get me or anyone. The Universe is "benign indifference." And I do not mean indifferent as in uncaring. I mean that the Universe does not differentiate between me or you or Donald Trump or the homeless man on the street. The Universe makes things available. We have to avail ourselves of that availability. Can I say "avail" one more time? HA!

Consider this. A banquet is laid out before you. You can eat any of it. It
is all exactly what you like and need. But you hesitate. Negativity creeps in. What if this is some version of Candid Camera? What if someone is watching how silly you look when you eat? What if there is something wrong with the food? What if. What if.

What if a banquet was offered to us every day and not one of us ever even nibbled? Another quote I love is from "Auntie Mame." She says to her nephew Patrick, "Life is a banquet and most poor sons-of-bitches are starving to death."

So, are you taking the joy from life and nourishing yourself with it? Or are you leaving joy on the table while claiming you can’t find any? I have claimed Professional Joy Seeker as my new job title. To that end, every day I am intentionally noticing joy in my life. It can be so small. A friend's laugh. A co-worker's accomplishment. The way a fresh muffin bursts with flavor. Or in laughing at your own foibles.

So that’s why I developed this Joy Seeker’s spread. When I started working on this spread, my first rendition only had five questions. This one still only has five questions, but there are actually six.

Still with me? It’s okay. I’m not good with numbers but I’ll show you
what I mean. Take another Fool’s leap with me. Let’s look at each question.

The first position is "What is joy to me?" and it is position 0. Yes, zero. As in the Fool who wanders from beginning to end and back again. What better representation of joy than this character? Here you explore what joy really means to you. I can hear you now.

"ARWENNNNNNNNNNNNN! I got Death as my zero card!"

Well, okay, that's a hard one, right? Or is it? Death represents change, right? Maybe you are one of those mercurial Gemini types who revel in change. They can feed off the ever-present multi-tasking that life represents.

Free your mind. Lose the negativity. That's really important. Joy is like a hummingbird. If you are constantly in a stormy, unhappy place, joy will fly elsewhere.

The next card asks "Where do I find joy the easiest?" SO that's pretty much a gimme. Isn't it? Why am I hearing that voice in my head saying,
Okay so you got a card of despair and loneliness and depression for where you find joy the easiest. Ummm, maybe the Universe is telling you that you enjoy being depressed? Look! I am saying this because I used to be that person. I used to be down all the time. So maybe it's a nudge to stop enjoying being sad? Or on the other hand, maybe you excel at helping others move away from those sad, lonely spots and you find joy in that.

You have to examine things with an open mind and an open heart.

Now the third card is "Where must I work to find joy?" Here is where I would expect a 4 of Cups or a 10 of Swords. Conversely, what if you get a really happy card like the 10 of Cups? Again, consider all the angles. For me the 10 of Cups could show up because I sometimes get tangled up in being happy for my friends in loving relationships and feeling sorry for myself. So I can see where I might have to work to find joy in the 10 of Cups. Make sense?

Okay, the next question is "What do I allow to block my joy?" Ouch, right? Because this isn't "what is blocking my joy". It is what am I do-
ing to block my joy. Some days I just hate self-responsibility, don't you? But there it is. This is the card that forces us to face how we stand in our own way as we try to achieve joy.

Let's look at the next to last card, okay? This one asks, "Who is my Joy Mentor?" Who should I watch to learn more about finding joy? Everyone of us has someone in our life who can teach us something about how to find joy. Maybe you are a parent with three kids who keep you so busy you can not even stop to tie your own shoe. Look at the children. Find out how they let joy in their life. Or ask a friend who seems to be chipper all the time. "How do you do that?"

And believe them when they answer. For years, I practiced something I learned from a therapist. Fake it until you make it. Literally smile when you do not feel like smiling. Be happy when you do not feel like being happy. Fake it until it becomes a part of who you are.

Our joy is in our hands. It is in how we perceive our world and ourselves. Do you talk down to yourself? Do you secretly call yourself names? You draw that energy to you when you do. This is one of my personal hardest battles. I am over 51 years old and have spent a lifetime calling myself names -- fat, inadequate, broken. You name it. I
probably called myself worse. So it is a daily ritual for me to look myself in eye in the mirror and remind myself that I am a gorgeous woman with a great sense of humor and a talent—no, a passion for writing.

*You need to be your own publicist.*

For the final position, I use a version of a question that is the final in many of my spreads. That is "What is the Universe's gift of joy for me right now?"

It is a gift, darlings. It is a precious gift that you do not need to pay for or do anything for. Remember that smorgasbord Auntie Mame mentioned? This is the Universe picking something up off that table and handing it to you. You just have to reach out. Accept it for the gift that it is.

This spread was published as the Spread The Joy spread in the Little White Book (LWB) that goes with Paulina Cassidy's Joie de Vivre Tarot, U.S. Games Systems, Inc., 2012.
Recommended

A few of my favorite books

Tarot for Yourself, Mary K. Greer, Llewellyn
Tarot Wisdom: Spiritual Teachings and Deeper Meanings, Rachel Pollack, Llewellyn
Learning the Tarot: A Tarot Book for Beginners, Joan Bunning, Weiser
Every Day Tarot: A Choice Centered Book, Gail Fairfield, Red Wheel/Weiser
Mary K. Greer's 21 Ways to Read a Tarot Card, Mary K. Greer, Llewellyn
The Complete Guide to the Tarot, Eden Gray, Bantam
The Tarot: History, Symbolism, and Divination, Robert M. Place, Tarcher
Understanding the Tarot Court, Mary K. Greer & Tom Little, Llewellyn
Recommended

A few of my favorite decks

The Gaian Tarot, Joanna Powell Colbert, Llewellyn
Cat's Eye Tarot, Debra Givin, U.S. Games Systems, Inc,
Joie de Vivre Tarot, Paulina Cassidy , U.S. Games Systems, Inc.
Mary-El Tarot, Marie L. White, Schiffer Publishing
Radiant Rider-Waite, U.S. Games Systems, Inc.

A few of my favorite places

The American Tarot Association
Tarot Association of the British Isles
Aeclectic Tarot
Tarotholics
About Arwen

Arwen began reading the Tarot in 1980 when a friend handed her the Thoth deck. She didn’t really like the Thoth deck then (her opinion has changed since) so she moved on to the Herbal Tarot which she still has in her collection of Tarot decks.

Her fascination with this introspective divination system grew right along with her bookstore bill. She began to read for friends to see if her readings were correct. What she learned surprised her and her friends as she began to open up on intuitively. Her friends began referring their friends to her and Arwen finally began to read for people she didn’t know.

Her online business Tarot By Arwen was launched in 2002. She became the president of the American Tarot Association in 2007. Her interests are very eclectic but her approach to the Tarot is on a Jungian basis.

Arwen sees the Tarot as a tool to help see things that need to be seen. Rather than doing strictly divination-based readings, Arwen attempts to deliver readings that gently guide you to taking charge of your own life and making your own decisions.
She is fond of comparing the Tarot to looking at a road map.

“If the map says bridge out ahead, what fool is going to keep driving?”

This something her clients know by heart. Self-responsibility is the key to getting the most from a reading with Arwen.

When you sit down with Arwen in person or via Skype, you can expect to laugh and maybe cry. Her compassionate readings will help you see things that you need to embrace as well as things you need to work on.

Find new tools to deal with old problems through a personal consultation with Arwen. Take a workshop to invigorate your writing or tarot skills.

To schedule your reading with Arwen, please email her or call 512-221-6001.

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