

## DIMINISHING RETURNS

**IMPORTANT—BREAKING IN YOUR NEW DECK:** Often when decks have been stored for a while they need to be broken in so that they spread smoothly. Go to [www.mallofmagic.com/dr.htm](http://www.mallofmagic.com/dr.htm) for a video. You'll need to put a cloth napkin or a table cloth on a hard surface. Then take each card and apply a bit of pressure with the palm of your hand as you slide the card around on the cloth a bit to buff the surface. Flip the card over and do it again. Do this on all 52 cards. The entire process takes about 3 minutes. Now shuffle the deck a few times. You're ready to go!

**VIDEO INSTRUCTION** is available online. Go to [www.mallofmagic.com/dr.htm](http://www.mallofmagic.com/dr.htm).

There is a performance video as well as a video that shows exactly how to perform Diminishing Returns. If you prefer to learn from a written and illustrated description, continue reading below. I think you'll find that Diminishing Returns easy to master and will be a great addition to your repertoire!

**PROPS:** You have been supplied with the diabolical deck that will do all the work for you.

**NOTE:** It is recommended that you remove a joker from a red Bicycle deck to use as a cover card. It is also recommended that you remove the deck from a red Bicycle card case with the red back of the joker showing.

**EFFECT:** The spectator names any card. The named card is removed from the deck and placed aside. The deck is spread face up and is now found to be a miniature deck! The selection is the only normal card. The selection is now inserted into the spread. The deck is re-spread face up, only this time the deck is back to normal but the selection has become the only miniature card in the spread! When the miniature selection is removed from the spread, the card visibly changes to normal again. If you are able, you should go to the website and see the performance video ([www.mallofmagic.com/dr.htm](http://www.mallofmagic.com/dr.htm))

**SET-UP:** An examination of the deck will reveal that it is quite unusual. Each card has a normal face and a back that has a miniature card printed on it. (The ace of spades is the only exception.) About 60% of the surface area of the back is normal. This will allow rifling and some degree of fanning without flashing the miniature faces. The ace of spades will serve a special purpose. To prepare for performance, remove the Ace of Spades and seven of hearts. Shuffle the remaining cards until the pattern looks random. Be sure that all cards are oriented with the miniatures at the same end! Place the deck face down with miniature faces at the inner edge. Now place the gaffed ace of spades on top with the ace side face down. Be sure that the spread of mini cards on the back of the ace of spades has the 7H at the **outer edge**. Finally, place a normal red backed Bicycle joker face down on

top. It's a good idea to leave the seven of hearts out of the deck since it is prominent on the spread of miniature cards.

Notice that you can riffle the outer edge and only backs will show. (Except the 2nd card that has the miniatures printed on it.) The deck can be fanned if you are careful not to flash the miniature faces. Only a sliver of each card shows in the fan.

**ROUTINE:** Explain to the spectator that solid matter is not what it seems. Science has shown that matter is 99% empty space. Offer to demonstrate how magicians take advantage of this fact of nature. Remove the deck from the case and place it face down into left hand dealing position. Be sure that the miniatures are at the inner edge. Now riffle the outer edge of the deck as you say *"I could have you select a card by saying 'Stop' as I riffle through the deck. I'd rather give you a completely free choice."* During the riffling the spectators see backs on the cards subliminally selling the idea that the cards are normal. Fanning the deck at this point is a good idea but it's not necessary.

Grasp the deck with your right hand at its outer short edge with thumb on top and fingers underneath. Rotate the right hand palm down bringing the deck face up. This moves the inner edge to the outside. The miniature faces should now be at the outer edge of the deck.

Spread the deck face up between your hands. Casually remove the bottom joker and set it aside as you say, *"Which card shall we use in the experiment? Any card except a joker."* Let's say the spectator indicates the two of clubs (2C). Outjog the selection and square up the deck (leaving the selection outjogged). Say, "Between the time I pull the 2C from the deck and place it on the table, it will be twice as big as the rest of the cards." The spectators will watch the 2C carefully, assuming that it will grow. Actually all the other cards will seem to shrink, making your claim true!

The right hand now pulls the selection from the spread as the left hand holds the deck in dealing position. See **figure 1**. Note how the outer right corner of the deck rests between the left 1st and 2nd fingers. This is important for the spreading action that comes next.

Now for the big moment! With the deck still in dealing grip in the left hand, your right hand moves forward to place the selection onto the pad. (This provides misdirection for a discrep-

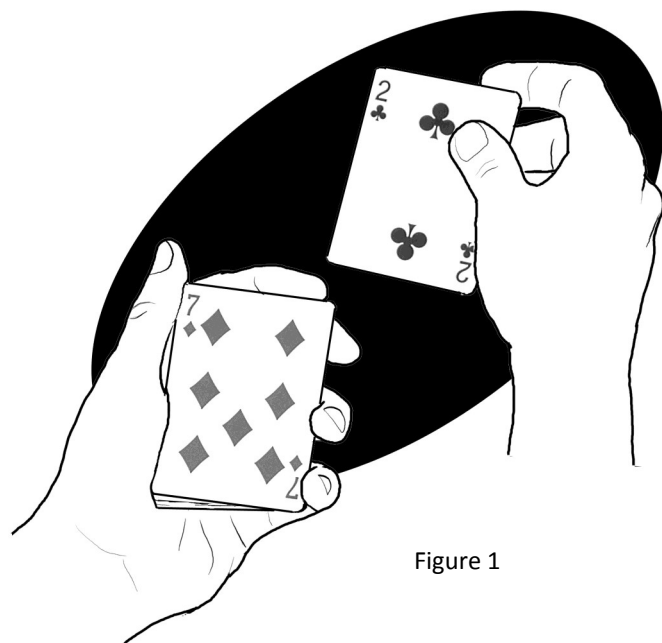


Figure 1

ancy that follows.) Simultaneously, the left hand turns palm downward while moving the deck to the right edge of your working surface. The left hand passes under the right arm as the right hand places its card on the table. The deck is placed onto the surface with its long edge parallel to the table's inner edge. The gaffed card with the miniatures printed on its back should be showing. Immediately spread the deck from right to left with your left hand. The left 1st finger controls the spread so the cards spread fairly evenly. (Figures 2 and 3 show these developments.) It will look exactly like a miniature deck spread face up! Furthermore the spectator's selection will not be seen in the spread. Apparently the entire deck has become miniature except for the selection! (Note: The gaffed card showing the miniatures will pass casual inspection but not close scrutiny. So it's a good idea to position your

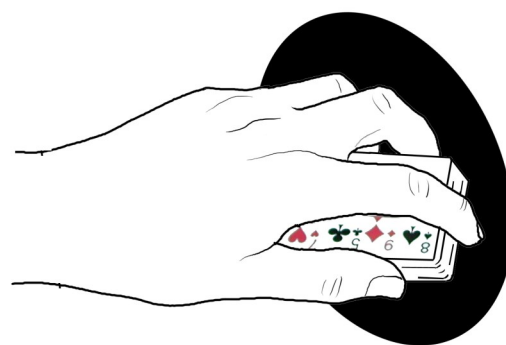


Figure 2

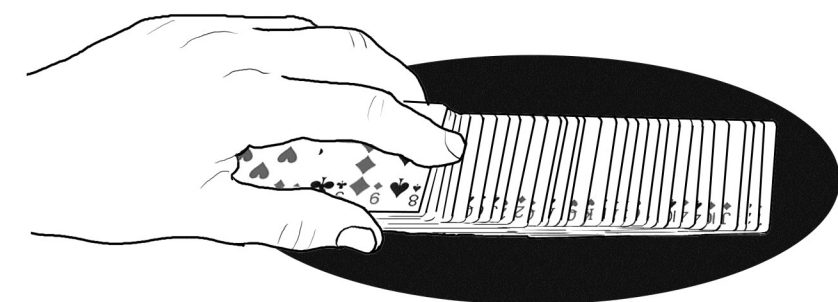


Figure 3

left hand hovering over the gaffed card at the left end of the spread. This way the spectators will not have a clear view of it.

Now pick up the face up normal selection, rotate it 180 degrees and insert it face up into the center of the spread. (The 180-degree rotation moves the end with the mini card printed on it to the inside.)

Position it in the spread as shown in figure 4. This shows dramatically how much smaller the deck has become. It also sets up for the killer finale.

The next action must be performed at a brisk pace for it to be deceptive. Apparently you square the spread (with the normal card in it) and immediately re-spread. Actually a small maneuver is performed during the squaring action.

**Here are the details:** The palm down left hand steadies the left edge of the spread while the right hand moves to the right edge of the spread. The right fingers (or finger nail) lift the right-

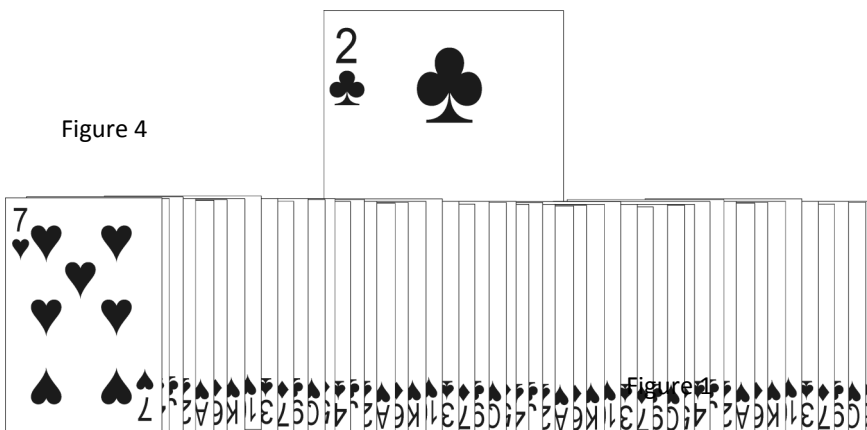


Figure 4

Figure 1

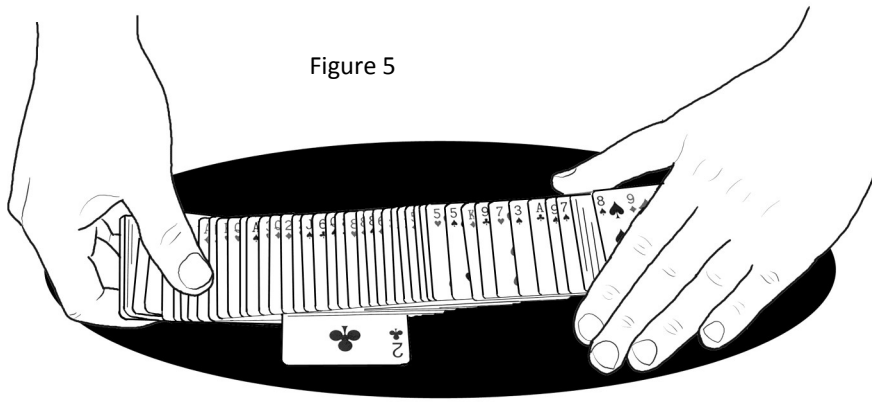


Figure 5

most card a bit. The right thumb presses down on the spread as the fingers do the lifting. Once the card has been lifted a bit, the right fingers go under the spread at the far right in readiness to push the spread to the left. The left hand acts as a stop as the right hand moves to the left and

squares up the pack. **Figure 5** shows the squaring in progress. Now, once the pack is fully squared against the left palm, the left thumb holds it against the palm as in **figure 6**. The left hand immediately turns palm up, reversing the deck. Simultaneously the palm down right hand moves over the deck providing cover for the protruding card. The right hand immediately takes the deck (**figure 7**) and spreads it face up from left to right. It will appear to the spectators that the deck has grown again to normal size. This entire action - the squaring, reversing and re-spreading should be one fluid motion.

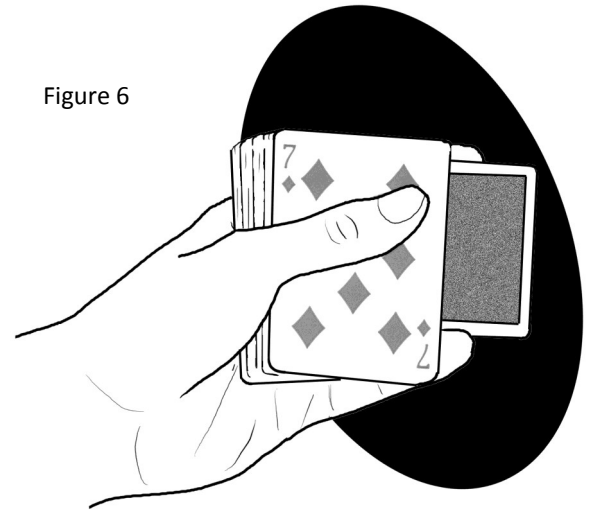


Figure 6

Because of the orientation of the selection in the deck, the miniature version of the selection will show in the center of the spread as in **figure 8**. Adjust the spread so that most of the face of the miniature shows. Be careful not to spread so far that the back portion of the selection shows! Apparently the deck has grown but the selection has shrunk.

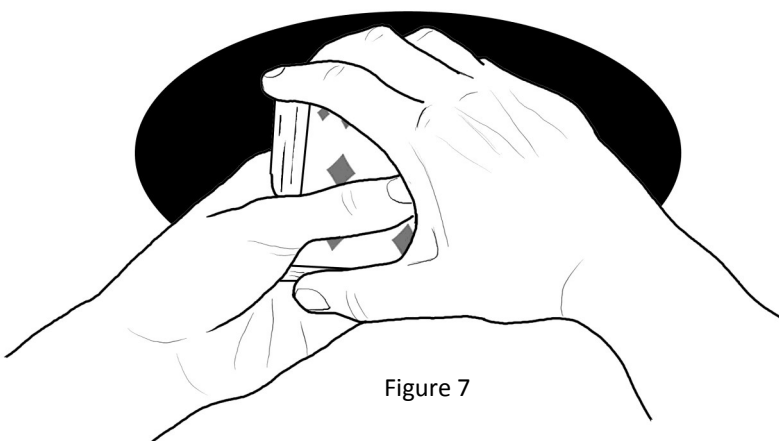


Figure 7

To end you will visibly cause the selection to grow back to normal as follows: The left hand presses lightly on the spread just to the right of the location of the miniature card. This prevents the normal back part of the selection from showing during the next action. Now the right hand reaches over the left arm and grasps the miniature selection at its outer left corner. The card is grasped

with the fingers underneath and the thumb on top. Now, once the right hand has control of the card, it quickly pulls the card from the spread and immediately rotates palm down, bringing the normal face of the selection into view. It should seem that the miniature selection has visibly grown back to normal size. To end, the selection is placed at the face of the spread and the deck is squared face up. The joker is placed face up at the bottom, allowing the deck to now be turned face down.

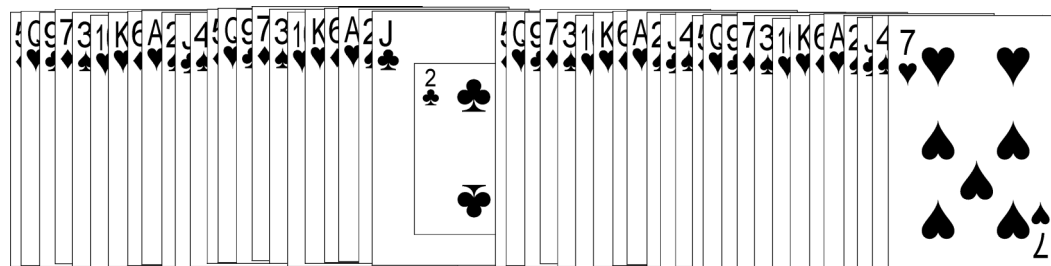


Figure 8

Figure 8

**FINAL THOUGHTS:** Diminishing Returns is an extremely visual and mind blowing effect. Even so, the handling is very simple. It only involves spreading the cards properly. It should only take a small amount of practice to master the routine.

I would recommend that you visit the website listed at the beginning and watch both the performance video and the explanation. Any questions you may still have should be answered there.

## BONUS ROUTINES

When I performed at the Magic Castle in Hollywood in 1996, I featured an extended version of Diminishing Returns. I began the routine with a shrinking card box (a la John Cornelius) and added a visual phase that was published in my first book *Powerful Magic* (1983) called *The amBIGuous Card*. This was reprinted in 2006 in *Power Plays*.

There is a demonstration video as well as video instructions for the performance of *The amBIGuous Card* as [www.mallofmagic.com/dr.htm](http://www.mallofmagic.com/dr.htm). You'll need the password you received with *Diminishing Returns*. It's on the backside of the artwork that came with the deck.

I'd love to hear your comments or ideas about *Diminishing Returns* and *The amBIGuous card*. Email me at [mpowers@mallofmagic.com](mailto:mpowers@mallofmagic.com).

## **CREDITS**

The idea of spreading a normal deck sideways using a cover card that looks like a spread of miniatures comes from the diabolical mind of Brother John Hamman. In Brother John's routine, the deck is spread face down. This allows the use of a normal deck with one gaffed card. The gaff consists of a normal card with miniatures glued on its back. It's similar to the gaffed ace of spades except the minis are face down in a sideways spread.

I developed a face up routine with a named card but only a few cards could be named. Steve Biller had the idea of using a full deck of gaffs with mini faces showing. I added the use of the partial back at the opposite end which allows the deck to be spread, strengthening the feeling that the cards are normal.

The Magic Castle routine uses the Diminishing Returns deck in conjunction with The am-BIGuous Card and a Cornelius Shrinking Card Case. I plan to post video of that routine on the website as well.