Archaic-looking cards are spread in patterns across the table. Fantastical drawings, unfamiliar suits, intricate arrangements … What could it all mean?

Tarot reading is looked to by many as a source of wisdom or spiritual guidance. To the uninitiated, however, tarot can seem confusing. What’s keeping readers and enthusiasts across the world intrigued after all these years?

According to the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s website, tarot cards most likely originated centuries ago in Europe. The earliest known cards have been dated to the mid-1500s. However, these were simply part of a card game and were not thought to be associated with any mystical forces. “Reading” tarot cards was a practice that emerged far later.

Interest in the occult blossomed in Europe during the late 18th century. According to Brendan Koerner with Slate, authors such as Antoine Court de Gébelin and Jean-Baptiste Alliette wrote books that connected the game with divination and ancient mythology.

Today, tarot reading is a widely practiced tradition, but can a reading tell someone his or her fortune? Can only a psychic or mystic read tarot cards, or can anyone learn the art? Check out what several experienced tarot card readers have to say.
“The future is extremely malleable depending on a person’s choices and intentions. Tarot is a meditation of acting forces in the present moment and the immediate past, plus the possible outcome if these forces continue their momentum.”
- Suzan Royce Moore

“I would say go and get a reading from someone who is talented and knows their craft. I would also say to go out and check out as many books as you can. There’s a lot of different books out there that are really good. The two authors that I love the most are Mary K. Greer and Rachel Pollack.”
- Talon Thomas

“Tarot reading is used to predict the future.”

“It’s the idea that you have to be special, you have to have special powers and abilities, in order to practice. That is simply not true. These are skills anyone can learn, as long as they make the space for such subtle information.”
- Shira Klinger

“Find a tarot deck you like and hang out with it. Play with the cards. Center yourself. Arrange the cards until they are oriented and aligned for you at this place and in this time. See what they say. You can learn more later, but this first step is vital.”
- Suzan Royce Moore

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