

THE ALBO CARD

Michael Ammar & Dr. Robert Albo

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Getting Started

The Albo Card is one which has one section of card printed backwards, as if a torn piece had been turned upside down before being magically reattached. In other words, the card is pristine except for a portion in which the printing is reversed, with back design printed on the face, and the matching portion of the face on the back.

The idea of reversing the corner used to identify the selection before fully restoring the card is an interesting, offbeat concept. But the Albo Card has something extra special going for it, because when you place it face up on a face-down deck, an optical illusion is created. The back design printed on the face of the solid Albo simply looks like the back of the card beneath it. That's right, the *gimmick* looks exactly like the card with a missing corner it will soon replace, so *people can look right at this gimmick and not realize it isn't the torn card they've just handled!*

Dr. Albo first made me aware of his card design by fax, asking if I could suggest a simple method for ending up with such a restoration. I put a crude model together, and after a bit of playing, I was suddenly struck by the powerful optical illusion mentioned in the previous paragraph - wow! Even magicians don't run into many illusions as perfect as this one.

When an Albo Card is face up on top of a face-down deck, an audience can look right at it without knowing an impossibility is about to happen. This is the perfect position for a magician to be in.



The Effect

A card is freely selected and torn to pieces. One piece is kept for identification. The remaining pieces are magically restored, except for one piece whose perfect fit is used to confirm the identity of the card. As a finale, you offer to restore even this last piece. But to really distinguish the experience, you restore the corner *backwards*, leaving them with a souvenir in a uniquely impossible condition.

Two different presentations

In a discussion with Mike Maxwell about why a person would restore the final corner of the card, Mike mentioned the idea of sending the card back in time, to a moment before the card had been torn. As I thought about this, it occurred to me that an interesting play on words would be possible if you were to magically mix up going backwards in time with the backwards restoration.

Magical mix-ups can be interesting, all the more so if there is a strong thread of logic running through it. I like the complex notion that even though we, as magicians, can break the laws of the known universe, we're still bound by the laws of a universe only we seem to know about. And if it's interesting to demonstrate how a certain gesture might produce a guitar, it becomes really interesting to think the wrong gesture might result in a cigar.

On the other hand, good souvenirs that have been created by magic are so rare, I've worked out a presentation that makes it happen by intent rather than by accident. If the result is a lifelong conversation piece, I'd rather the story be one of success rather than permanent evidence of something gone wrong!

So this handling zeros in on the singular objective of creating a lifelong memento. Following the presentation and handling for this particular routine, we'll look at a variety of ways to handle the three issues specific to this effect, which are:

- ☐ Vanishing the pieces.
- ☐ Switching in the gimmick.
- ☐ Restoring the corner.

Lifelong Souvenirs

"I attended a banquet honoring a famous magician, and one of the great moments was when a fifty-something man came to the podium to tell about having seen this great magician perform over 40 years ago. As he spoke, he removed a small gift box from his coat pocket. Opening the box, he carefully unfolded a few layers of tissue paper to remove a playing card. Written on the card were the initials J.P. and the date June 25, 1956. There was also a small round hole through the card, just off its center, and that's where the story got interesting.

"As a young boy, this man had volunteered to assist the magician in a trick. He selected a card and signed his initials, along with the date of the performance, then shuffled the card into the deck. The famous magician stood back, removed a fencing sword, and told the boy to throw the deck into the air. As the cards fluttered to the ground, the magician thrust his sword into the flurry. All the cards settled to the ground except for one, which was now suspended from the point of the sword.

"The man talked about the mixture of emotions he experienced. Surely this must be his card. But that was impossible. The magician slowly pulled the card from the sword, and when he showed its face, the man said he felt his heart open like a flower. That card went on to become one of his most prized childhood souvenirs.

"But what really touched everyone at that banquet was the way he carefully rewrapped the card and closed the box as he finished his story. It was clear that he was going to keep that card the rest of his life. Since that evening, I've been searching for ideas on how to create such an interesting gift, and I've got an idea I'd like to try.

"Take any card you want and don't worry if I see it. Cards are typically handled with respect and care because damaging one card actually means the whole deck is ruined. So it may seem a little crazy, but I'd like you to tear that card in half, down its length.

"Each rip creates an edge as unique as the loops and swirls of a fingerprint- an edge that no other tear could ever match. Continue by tearing those halves twice more, creating 6 pieces."



"Because of those unique edges, each piece has the potential to be a special keepsake, so just like that boy back in 1956, I'll put my initials and today's date on one of these for you to keep. Of course it doesn't feel special yet, but we're just getting started."



"I'll put the other pieces back into the deck, and I'll give you that as well. Hold the deck in one hand, your new souvenir in the other, and give each a small, magical sort of shake. Do you know what that does? You don't? Oh. It looked like you'd done that before, so I thought maybe you'd know what happened. The deck, acting as role model for those individual pieces, has amplified that magical shake. I'll show you what I mean. Just by riffling the deck, your Four of Clubs raises like the Phoenix from it's own ashes."



"But wait! Remember your souvenir? The one whose edges are unique in the entire world? Well, this Four of Clubs has some unique edges too, and the very idea that those edges might form a perfect match kind of scares me. Would you check? It's a perfect match! Wow! Will wonders never cease!"



"Actually, restoring something that was destroyed is one of the 7 Great Magical Wonders, and in this case, each of these two pieces make a perfect souvenir. So you keep this one, [give the small corner to the spectator] and I'll keep this one. And if you put your initials on here for me, that makes a perfect ending. Thanks!"



"You know, I've often thought about putting these two pieces back together, but then it would look just like any other Four of Clubs with initials all over it. Then I realized that if I REVERSED the corner, the very same edges wouldn't line up UNLESS I used magic. With the smallest magical rub, the edges melt together to create one very special souvenir, unlike any other Four of Clubs that ever existed. And you get to keep it!"

Key issues in performing this routine:

- 1) Forcing the card. You can simplify some parts of the handling if you can force a card using 'your favorite method.'
- 2) Switching the hidden corner for one apparently torn from the card.
- 3) Making the torn pieces disappear, in order for the card to be restored.
- 4) Switching the Albo Card for the card with the missing corner.
- 5) The restoration of the final corner.

Simple enough, and there are lots of established methods for most of these things, so we'll have a lot of resources to draw upon.

The Pocket Card

Chad Long suggested the wonderfully efficient use of the Pocket Card to vanish the pieces of torn card. To make a pocket card, you need two cards that match the back design of your Albo Card. Trim the lower right corner off one face down card. Put the cards with their short, uncut ends touching, and the whole, uncut card face up as shown. Tape the short ends together using clear tape, and using the tape as a hinge; turn the face-up card down. This secures the outer end of the pocket without any tape showing along the front edge.

Carefully tape along the long sides of the two cards. If you use clear tape it should be invisible along the long sides of the card. The back is open towards you. Because the back corner of the bottom card is cut away, you can riffle the back of the deck with your thumb to locate and open the pocket. You might want to mark this lower card for easier visual confirmation, then place the Pocket Card 3 or 4 cards down from the top of the deck.



Procedures

Carefully tear a corner from a normal, matching card that approximates the size and shape of the reversed corner of your Albo Card.

Place the rest of the card **face up** about 15 cards from the bottom of the deck, with the missing corner at the lower right position. To complete the set up, place the Albo Card face up, second from the bottom of the deck, with its 'torn' corner upper left position.



As the photo shows, this puts the printed torn corner of the Albo Card in opposite, diagonal corners.

If you'd like, you can give the deck a false shuffle or cut during the opening dialogue, before offering the spectator any card. Once the spectator commits to his selection, tell him it doesn't matter if you see what the card is as you place the deck onto the table and clearly show your hands empty. This routine is structured so you are clean at all the right times.

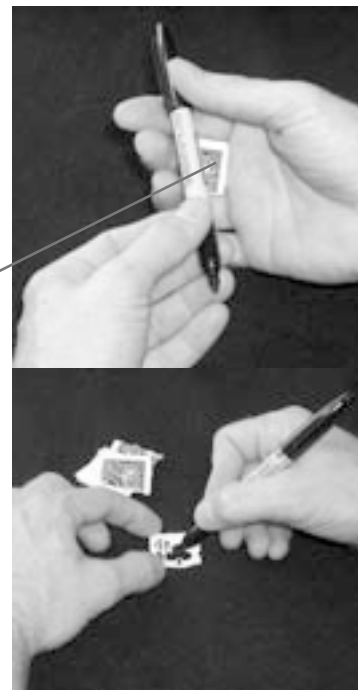


I like the idea of having the spectator tear the card, but I need the pieces to be a fairly predictable size and shape because of the hidden corner. So I walk the spectator through the process of tearing the card into six pieces, by mimicing the first tear down its length, then putting these two pieces together and tearing those into thirds.

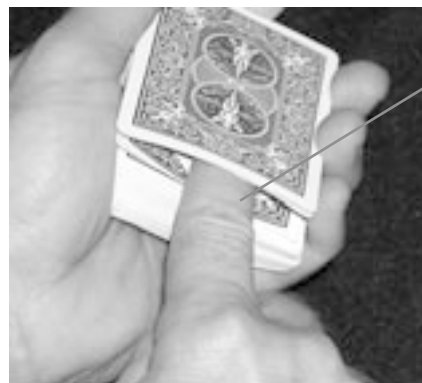
Switching Corners

Ask the spectator to put the pieces on the table as he completes the final tear. Casually take the Sharpie from your pocket and Finger Palm the hidden piece as you move the cap to the back of the pen.

Pick up the pieces with the hand holding the hidden piece, add it to the top of the torn pieces and casually thumb this extra piece off the stack and write your initials on the face.

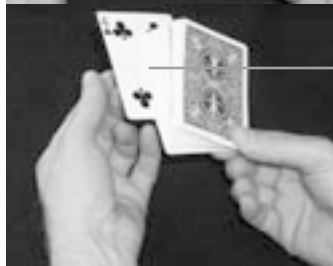


This casual approach to the extra corner takes the heat off the idea of 'switching' corners. Give the corner to the spectator, then pick up the deck and riffle to the Pocket Card. Push the torn pieces into the Pocket Card, and if you feel bold enough, hand the deck to the spectator and ask him to give the deck a shake. If you are uncertain about this, don't take any chances and hold onto the deck yourself!





Retake the deck and pinch the lower right corner between your right thumb and index finger. You must be holding the same end of the deck that was facing you when the trick began, because you must be pinching the same corner that is missing from the torn card. This means you'll be holding onto every card BUT the face up card, because you'll be pinching the missing corner.



With just a little practice you'll be able to riffle the upper left corner and the selected card will jump out of the pack in a pleasingly magical way.



The left hand retakes the deck, leaving the torn card sticking out from the front. The right hand takes the upper end of the protruding card and pulls it to the right, so that it pivots around the left index finger, which is curled around the front of the deck. This brings the missing corner into view in an interesting way, but also turns the torn card end for end. Now it faces the same direction as the Albo Card, still second from the bottom of the deck.



Act as if that is, in fact, the entire effect, and allow the spectator to confirm that the corner does match the gap in the card.

Place the torn card on top of the deck and hold a break above the bottom two cards with your right thumb as shown.

The right index finger picks up half the deck and kicks it over into the left hand. You are about to do an Edward Marlo add-on move that has become fairly standard in Ambitious Card routines. But because of the missing corner and the illusion created by the Albo Card, it becomes a wonderfully disarming, seemingly full-view, face-up switch.

The left hand holds its packet firmly, with the index finger along the front of the deck. The right hand, holding its packet from above with a two-card break held by the thumb, will push the torn card forward just over an inch. The left index finger helps make sure that just the torn card moves forward.



This should leave the right hand packet directly over the left-hand packet. The right thumb drops the two bottom cards onto the left packet, just as the left-hand turns palm down. After a brief pause, the left index finger pulls the torn card back, just as the left hand turns palm up.

With the proper timing, the corner is seen to be missing until the instant the Albo Card comes into view. There is nothing to question, and yet they are already set up for the big ending, and the torn card is safely out of the way third from the top of the deck.





Brace the card against the deck as you ask the spectator to initial it for you.

Now retake the corner and place it face up onto the Albo Card, as if you are going to repair the card in the normal way. Again an amazing illusion is created, as the corner will seem to actually go with the card on the deck. After all, that's exactly what they expect to see.

The two approaches to restoring the corner upside down probably require equal handling, but which you should use will depend on how close your audience is. If you are in a stand-up situation, where people are not looking right down onto the deck, you might do it this way: Turn the corner face down and while you seem to place it directly on *top* of the deck, actually place it *inside* the deck.

You can conceal this easily by tilted the top of the deck back towards yourself, and then simply rub the corner of the card to create the magic which restores it.

If your audience is looking right down on the deck, it is probably better if you very openly place the torn corner upside down onto its matching, printed corner. Don't do anything openly suspicious with the torn corner - just openly place it on the lower right corner of the 'torn' card. As you cover this corner with your right hand to give the deck a magical squeeze, the left little finger pulls the extra piece around the side of the deck, where it can be clipped against the bottom card.

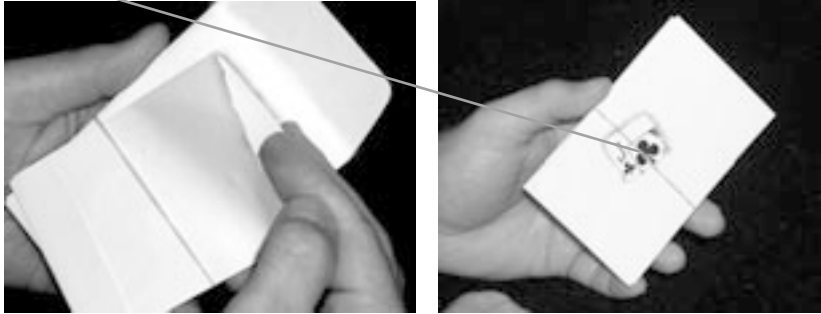
This is exactly like the fake pick up of a coin from on top of the deck, where the coin ends up hidden below the deck. This idea was popular for a while in the Eighties, either from a Paul Harris or a Larry Jennings routine, if not both. But it works exactly the same with a corner.

Slowly reveal the restoration and then present this permanent impossibility to your assistant as a memento of the experience!



Backward in Time

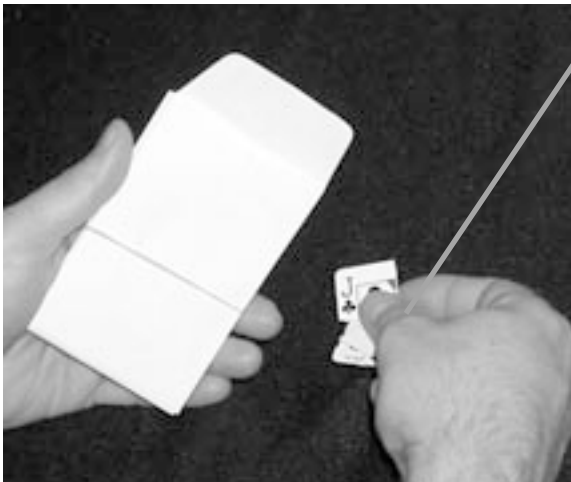
Begin by preparing a stack of pay envelopes to switch the torn pieces for a restored card with one corner missing. Using an envelope just large enough to hold a playing card, cut the top flap off one envelope, and place it on top of 6 or 7 other envelopes. The flap of the second envelope should lay over the front of the top envelope, looking as if it were attached to it. Tear a corner off the card that matches your Albo Card, and place that partial card into the second envelope, the one whose flap seems to be coming from the top envelope. Place a rubber band around the center of this stack, holding them together in a firm, but not too tight, grip. The corner you just torn off is held against the bottom of this stack by the rubber band. This is placed in either pocket.



“Magicians use magic words because the right language can access the basic programming of reality. In the same way computer hackers crack the codes to software programming, magicians use words to hack the codes that define the laws of nature. I’ll show you what I mean - select a card.”

“Now tear that card down its length — now tear those strips into thirds.”

Force the Four of Clubs anyway you like, as long as you maintain control over the location of the Albo Card, which we’ll talk about later. As they are tearing the card, take out the stack of envelopes and steal the corner into the finger palm of either hand. Take the six pieces of card in your free hand, and casually dump the pieces into the opposite hand and onto the hidden corner. As the free hand moves down to pick up the envelopes, casually flip all the pieces over at once by curling the fingers in towards the palm. This moves the extra corner to the top of the stack. Then casually thumb over the top piece – which is the extra corner – and give it to the spectator as if it really didn’t matter which piece you gave him.



“Hold onto one of these – and I’ll place the rest of the card into the envelope.”

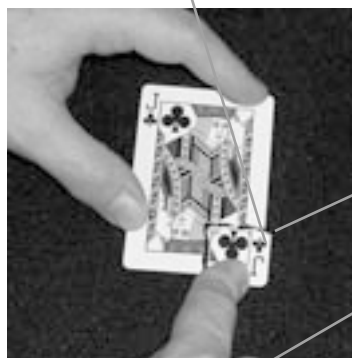
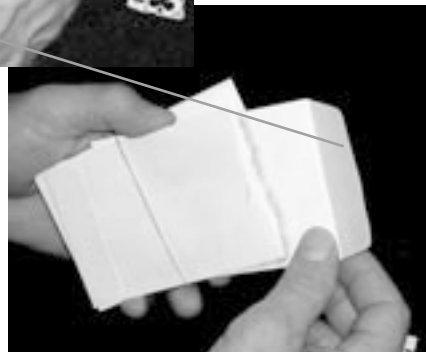
“I’ve written the word RESTORATION on the envelope for a reason.”

“There are only a few basic effects in magic. If you make something appear out of nowhere, that’s a Production. You could make something Disappear. You could cause it to Levitate, or you could do my favorite – Restoration. Wouldn’t it be great to saw a woman in half, and then restore her into one piece? Or to put something back together that you’ve accidentally broken.”

"All I have to do is wave the envelope gently back and forth, and when you open the envelope you see that the pieces of the card you've selected have restored themselves – except for one piece."

After placing the pieces into the pocket of the top envelope, pull the flap hanging over the top as the stack is casually turned towards you. The second envelope will be pulled up as if it were the one containing the torn pieces. The rubber band holds the top envelope back, as well as keeps the pieces from falling out. Casually put the envelopes away as you remove the pen to sign the envelope.

Now create the magic moment - cast a shadow, wave the pen like a wand, or magically wave the envelope. Tear the top off the envelope, and dump the card out. Following the magic moment is the theatrical moment - when the spectator confirms the restoration by matching his corner to the card.



At that moment, obtain a break over the bottom two cards with the right thumb. This will separate the Albo Card and one regular card from the rest of the deck. Kick cut the upper half of the deck into the left hand, which then picks up the partially-restored card.

Turning the left hand palm down as it picks up the card puts the selection face down on top of that packet.

Immediately use the right hand packet to flip the selection face up. As the selection turns over, allow the bottom two cards to fall from the right-hand packet on top of the torn card. This is the J. K. Hartman Drop Switch, and it works beautifully here!

This puts the Albo Card face up on top of the deck, followed by a regular card, the partially-restored card, and then the rest of the fact down deck. The face side of the Albo Card that shows the back design will look exactly as if the card beneath is visible because of the missing corner.





Ask the spectator if he would like to try using some magic words, then ask him to hold his hand out flat over the table. With the Albo Card face up on top of the deck in the left hand, pick up the corner and place it directly over the corner that seems to be missing from the top card.



Pick both the corner and the Albo Card up together, with the right fingers covering the lower right corner as it holds onto both.

Now you're holding the card and corner in a way that seems to reconfirm the match up, while you hold the Albo Card away from the deck without revealing the surprise ending. Casually move to place the card and extra corner under his hand. As the card moves under his hand, the right index finger pulls the extra corner back into Thumb Palm.

As you have the spectator push down on the 'pieces', you can either get rid of the extra corner as you put the deck away, or if you feel comfortable with it, you can hide the corner somewhere in the deck as you place it onto the table.



"Move your hand in a circle, rubbing the two pieces together, and say 'Backwards, backwards. Backwards in time.'"

"That's the magic words to send those two pieces back into time, to a point before they were torn apart. But wait, did I ask you to say 'backwards' 3 times? I'm sorry, that's one too many. It did go back to a previous time, and when it got there it tried to double backwards again, and you can't do that. Look!"



"You see – that's the thing – when you are a magician, you have to be careful what you say, even when you're just talking to yourself!"

Additional Approaches

The following ideas are just some of the possible handlings that could be used with this memorable and miraculous souvenir.

Vanishing the Pieces

The Clip Card Vanish from my book puts the pieces into a paper clip for a convenient false transfer. The opposite hand could be concealing a paper clip, so just the pieces vanish, leaving the clip behind. You would need to be able to ditch the pieces, and would have to be able to gain secret access to the paper clip left behind. Maybe as you go to the pocket for the first clip...

Pocket Card in the deck. This leaves everything self-contained, and in the hands. This is good for close-up, as people can see there are no pieces in the deck. But would this be effective or as convincing from on stage?

Envelope switch. This takes us away from the deck, but maybe that's a good thing, turning this more into a stand-up piece? This way, the 'piece' envelope is switched for the 'restored but missing corner card' envelope.

ShowCase Wallet. This is a Z-fold type card wallet for producing business cards. The restored card could be in one side. Put the pieces in the opposite side, and just open and close the wallet. Another way of looking at this might be to call it a real-world card box you can put in your pocket.

Switching the Gimmick

Palming off two cards is a really nice way to be clean at the end. But palming scares most people.

The Ambitious Card Add-On. This one is illustrated, and it looks perfect. It is a tiny bit trickier to do with the corner missing from the card being added on, but it's not bad.

The Turn Over Drop Off. This might be the Braue Add-on, or a J.K. Hartman switch of some sort. But turning the Albo Card from face down to face up, using the packet in the right hand Biddle position to drop off two cards, looks terrific.

Triple Lift, with double backer in between. This way you could put the torn card on top, Triple Lift, and the double backer then covers the torn card.

Classic Pass. Guys who spend 100 hours or more learning to do the pass tend to go out of their way to do it. They'll like the fact that without palming, they were able to add on 26 cards.

Lapping. There are two different ways to time this lapping. Both involve moving the Albo Card to the top of the deck as the corner is being matched to the torn card. The first switch begins with the torn card face down on

the table. You seem to be sliding it to the edge with deck in hand in order to pick it up. Actually, just allow the torn card to fall into the lap. The second switch - just place the torn card directly on top of the Albo Card, using a careful wrist turn to conceal the Albo Card. As the right hand reaches towards the left for the pen, the left hand tilts back and drops the torn card into lap. *This switch, using the right arm to give a little cover, probably looks the best.*

Side Steal gimmick from center onto the torn card on top. The problem is that you'll either need an indifferent card on top of the torn card, meaning you'll need to steal 2 cards, or you'll need a careful wrist turn as you confirm the final restoration.

Envelope Switch. Moving away from the deck to create the Albo card restoration means you lose the ability to be way ahead after switching the gimmick in.

ShowCase Wallet. Same as above - you lose a lot of the special time misdirection.

Restoring the Corner

The Rub Away Vanish-type move that covers the card with the palm once it is away from the deck. Actually, now that I've played with this, I realize you don't need to cover the Albo Card at all! If it is on top of a tabled deck, you can just pick it up by that corner, and your fingers provide enough cover!

If you had some **double-stick tape on the base of the thumb**, they could turn the corner face down onto the table, and as you cover it with the hand holding the Albo Card, the tape would pick the corner up for a perfect vanish.

Directly picking the Albo Card up, holding it by the corner, apparently covering it perfectly with the extra corner. As the spectator covers the card and piece, the extra corner is pulled into Thumb Palm.

Slow-motion add-on, actually slipping the corner into the deck.

Actually putting the corner onto the card, **only to slip it under the deck**, as you seem to be pressing it onto the card. This is similar to the card and coin ideas that were popular back in the Eighties.

Russ Polizzi created this wonderful, new routine featuring the Albo card, and I think you'll love it! If you walk through this outline of the routine with cards in hand, you'll see how the Albo card is used over and over again in a most clever and satisfying way.

Begin with the four cards matching the Albo Card spread through the deck in alternating colors. The suit matching the Albo Card is at the back of the Face Up deck, upside down, with the reversed corner in the lower left corner.

ALBO TWISTO

Photo Key

DC = Indicates where 2 cards are held as 1.

RH = Right Hand **LH** = Left Hand

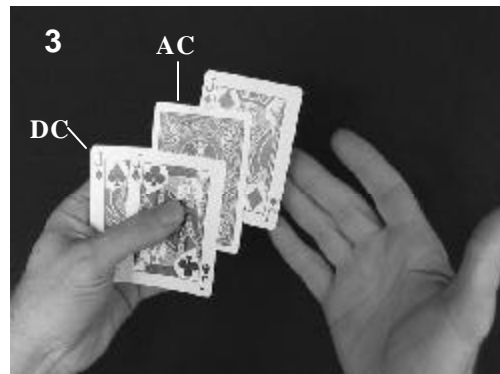
FD = Face Down **FU** = Face Up **AC** = Albo Card



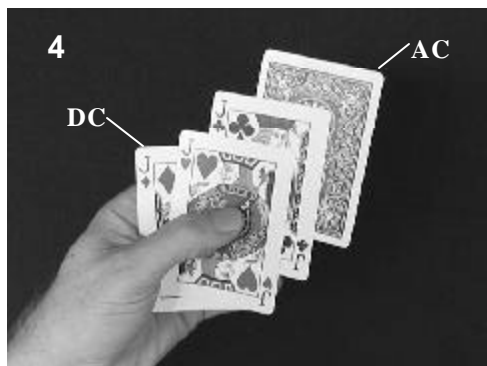
1) Upjog all four matching cards, and add the Albo Card as they are removed from the deck. Hold in RH Biddle Grip. LH Thumb reverse counts into spread, end up with double on the ace, with Albo Card beneath it.



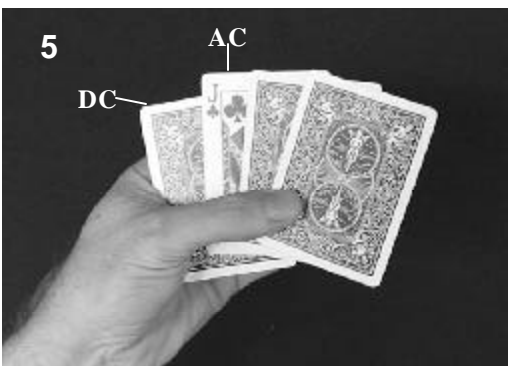
2) Close and magically gesture. **Ascanio spread to show first reversal.**



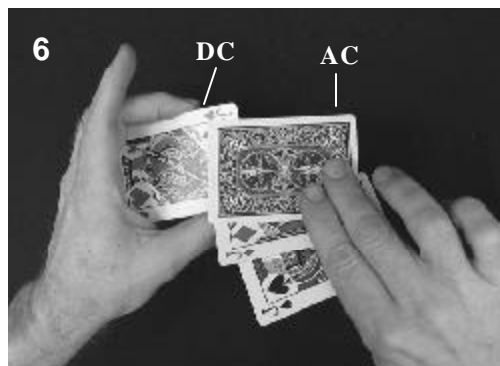
3) Close spread and gesture. Get a break above two cards in the LH, then **reverse spread the top 3 cards to show the next reversal.**



4) Close spread and turn over *like a book* to show backs. Move the top card to the bottom. Flick cards while FD, and then turn FU like a book, and get a break over bottom 2 cards. **Reverse spread top 3 cards to show third reversal.**



5 & 6) Close spread and turn over like a book. Break over bottom 2, and with the cards FD, do a 'fan' type of spread, holding the bottom 2 cards as 1. **The Albo Card is shown FU as the 4th card reversed.** The right fingers can conceal the Albo corner of this card, if you want to show both sides at this point as in photo 6.



7) Close spread and do an **Elmsley** to show all backs.



7a) **Toss bottom card to table** - this should match the Albo Card. You can spread the remaining cards into a fan, holding last as a double.

8) You can mark the corner, but ultimately **tear off the Albo corner** "To make things easier to follow." Pick up remaining FD cards. **Move top card to the bottom.**

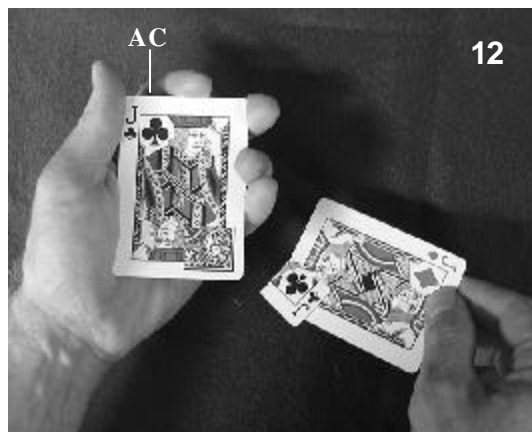


9) Put FU torn card second from bottom, *and* put the little piece in with it.

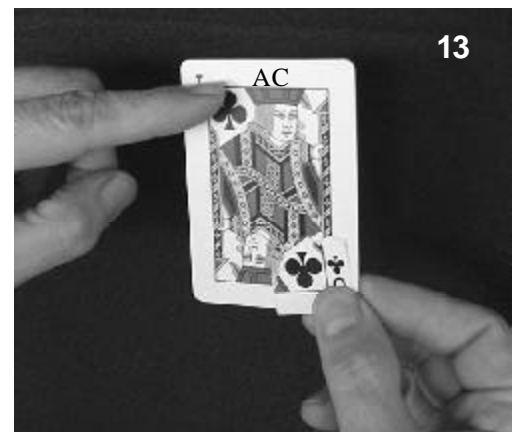
Do an Elmsley Count to show the card has restored itself, placing final card from the count onto the bottom of the stack.



10) Pinching stack by lower right corner, flick the card and the corner and torn card will reappear. Essentially, the card has reversed *and* restored itself, only to again reverse and re-tear itself!



11) & 12) Once again move the top card to the bottom of the FD stack. Flex left wrist inward, buckle bottom card, and insert torn card so that it is upjogged 2nd from bottom. Left index finger pushes it flush as RH removes top card to scoop up the corner. This beautiful retention vision switch brings the Albo Card into view.



13) Holding torn corner over the reversed Albo corner, ask spectator to sign the card.



14) This is great cover for this moment. There are several options for restoring the corner. For example, reverse the extra piece and cover the 'torn' portion of the Albo Card as you pick up both. As you blow on the card, allow the extra corner to drop into finger palm and using LH, flip card over end for end to conclude.