

When you first start working with the tarot, your 'reading style' is probably not going to be uppermost in your mind. You'll no doubt be concerned about the meanings and how on earth to remember them, or, if you're an intuitive reader, whether you can trust your intuition and how you'll find enough to say to the people who ask you for a reading - 'it'll take me 5 minutes and then I'll run out of things to say'. (Actually, that won't happen; if you make enough of a connection to the cards the meanings will come. You put your mind into neutral and allow yourself to say what streams off your tongue. Even after 34 years I often listen to what I'm saying and think 'what on earth am I talking about? Is this total rubbish or does it make sense?' Often it sounds like garbage to me, so I often ask the client whether it makes any sense to them. It's rare that they look absolutely blank and say it's total rubbish.) reading style But to return to style. When I first started researching the tarot I had about 5 books I read constantly, one by Alfred Douglas being the most useful. Douglas's approach was quite Jungian and that suited me; I'd become interested in psychology at the age of 18 and so references to the unconscious, myth and archetypes rang all sorts of bells, and actually inspired me to start reading into history, mythology, and psychology - I have always said that the tarot educated me. Jung's personality types - intuitive/creative, feeling- or sensory oriented, or intellectual - made perfect sense in correspondence with the suits (Wands, Cups, Discs/Pentacles, and Swords). My readings naturally had the same slant - they were concerned with underlying concerns, background history and all that entailed, and interpersonal issues, often at work. The readings worked fine, especially using my own deck, but I wasn't sure this was actually what most tarot readers did. So when I began reading professionally, I figured I'd be a one-off, doing psychological tarot - and in fact, I met a psychic fair reader who informed me that she didn't know what sort of reading I was doing - it wasn't tarot, she said. It was only when I met other tarot readers that I was reassured: most readers nowadays consider that their readings are more counselling than psychic. Some readers prefer to concentrate on character-readings and past issues, and avoid looking into the future (based on the premise that it's all in flux and can change without warning). However, I know the cards can, and do, look into the future - often with frightening accuracy. It's just we haven't got there yet. Trust the cards - they will be telling the truth; it's our own vision which is limited. Don't worry if you don't consider yourself psychic. In my experience 'psychic readings' contain a lot of the reader's 'stuff', whereas by using the tarot (especially if you get the client to draw the cards), you have a good chance that they will be accurate: all you have to do then is to interpret them. We all have some sort of psychic awareness, but it can exhibit in different ways. Each ordinary sense - sound, sight, taste, touch and smell - is matched by a subtle level, or 'psychic' sense. So you might get words or ideas 'coming through' (clairaudience), some 'see' clairvoyantly; some 'just know' things, sense atmosphere or get information on places (claircognizance); some can pick up information from items such as hair or wristwatches (psychometry and psychokinesis). Some can sense energies in and through the body (clairsentience), and the subtle level sense of smell (clairgustant) may well be something we used to rely on far more (animals have far greater olfactory abilities, but we are certainly still able to pick up on sexual pheromones, for instance). Indeed, it may be that all these extrasensory abilities are atavistic - throw-backs to our animal origins, when our lives depended upon what we picked up from the environment. This 'secondary awareness' is just about being fully awake. In our polluted, over-stimulated, over-populated world, we have forgotten what life is really about. Anyway, finally, the most important 'style' a tarot reader needs, is to develop empathy. Empathy, the ability to feel someone else's emotions and reactions, isn't necessarily inborn. Some have no empathy at all, and they would not be particularly good tarot readers. However, the ability certainly can be learnt: practice by putting yourself into someone else's shoes. Ask yourself 'how would I feel in this situation?' And, of course, the more life experience you have the more you'll be able to understand how others feel.

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