

# Writing a Question

Most of the time you will want to consult the tarot because you are facing a problem or challenge. Something about your life is troubling you, and you want to understand why it is happening and what you can do about it. The best kind of tarot reading for this situation is the Question Reading. You write a question about your problem, and you receive your answer by interpreting the cards. The question helps you relate the guidance you receive to your situation in a way that makes sense. In this lesson, I describe how to create a question for a reading you do for yourself.

The first step is to review your situation thoroughly. Think about all the people involved, directly or indirectly. Go over your options for the future. Let your mind wander freely. You want to look at your problem without judging or censoring any part. Jot down the ideas that occur to you, but try not to be too systematic. You want to use your intuition, not logical analysis.

Once you have finished your review, you can write your question. Here are some suggestions:

## Accept Responsibility

Write your tarot question to show that you accept responsibility for your situation. Consider these two questions:

1. Should I put my father in a nursing home, or take care of him in my house?
2. What do I need to know to decide on the best living arrangements for my father?

In the first question, the writer gives up her responsibility for making a decision. She wants the cards to **tell** her what to do. In the second question, she is simply asking the cards to give her more information. She knows the decision lies with her.

It's tempting to write the first kind of question. We all seek the certainty that we're making good choices, but the tarot can't make our decisions for us. Avoid questions that deflect responsibility, such as:

- **Questions to be answered "Yes" or "No"**

Will I get the job at the ad agency?  
Can I stick to my diet this month?  
Am I ready to retire?

- **Questions beginning with "Should..."**

Should I let my daughter live at home?  
Should I go out with Jose?  
Should I apply to more than one university?

- **Questions asking only about time**

When will George ask me to marry him?  
How long will it take to find a new car?  
When will I get my promotion?

Instead, begin your questions with phrases such as these:

- Can you give me insight into ...
- What do I need to understand about ...
- What is the meaning of ...

- What is the lesson or purpose of ...
- What are the circumstances underlying ...
- How can I improve my chances of ...
- How might I ...

## Keep Your Options Open

Write your question to show that you are keeping your options open. Consider these:

1. How might I encourage my mother-in-law to move out?
2. What do I need to know to get along better with my mother-in-law?

In the first question, the writer is not keeping his options open. He has decided on one solution - having his mother-in-law move out. The second question is more open-ended. It's OK to narrow the scope of a question as long as you don't decide on the answer ahead of time. Both of the following are open questions, but the second is more specific:

- How would a switch to sales impact my career?
- How would a switch to a sales position at Purdue Insurance impact my career?

## Find the Best Level of Detail

Seek the fine line between wording that is too vague and too detailed. Here are three questions on the same topic:

1. How can I improve my work situation?
2. How can I reorganize my desk so that Tom can find my files?
3. How can I improve the flow of work between Tom and me?

The first question is unfocused. It doesn't specify which work area is of interest. The second question is too detailed. It looks at one minor aspect of the problem. The third question is best because it finds the balance between the two. Include only the details necessary to make clear what you want to know.

## Focus On Yourself

When you do a reading *for yourself*, you are always the central character. Your question should focus on you. There are times when questions about others are fine but not when you are concentrating on your own concerns.

Sometimes you may not realize you are orienting your question around someone else. Consider these:

1. What is behind Arthur's drinking problem?
2. How can I assist Arthur with his drinking problem?
3. What role do I play in Arthur's drinking problem?

The first question focuses totally on Arthur and his problem. In the second question, the writer is included, but his *attention is still on Arthur*. The third question is best because it is grounded solidly in the writer's own experience.

## Stay Neutral

You want to stay as neutral as possible when writing your questions. It is easy to begin a reading convinced that your position is the right one, but if you truly want to receive guidance, you need to be open to other points of view. Consider these sets of questions:

1. Why am I the only one doing chores?
  2. How can I foster a spirit of cooperation concerning the chores?
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1. How can I make people listen when I'm talking?
  2. What is going on when I try to communicate, but feel others aren't listening?
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1. How can I make my boss stop asking me to do overtime?
  2. Why have I had to do so much overtime recently?

In the first questions, the writer feels his position is the correct one - others are not getting with the program! The second questions are more neutral and open-ended.

## Be Positive

Be positive when writing your questions. Consider these:

1. How come I can never get my research published?
  2. How can I locate the ideal forum in which to publish my research?
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1. Why can't I overcome my fear of public speaking?
  2. How can I improve my ability to speak to groups effectively?
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1. Can you help me understand why I always blow a tournament in the last round?
  2. Can you help me find a way to push on to victory in a tournament?

The first questions have an air of defeat. The second questions are more confident. The writer knows she will be successful given useful advice.

You may be wondering why I have gone into so much detail about writing a question. This process is a focusing exercise that prepares you for the reading that follows. Writing a question usually takes no more than three or four minutes, but, for that small investment in time, you reap big rewards. You understand your situation better and can interpret your reading with more insight.

Bunning, Joan. "Lesson 7 - Writing a Question." *Learning the Tarot: A Tarot Book for Beginners*. York Beach, Me.: S. Weiser, 1998. 19-21. Print.