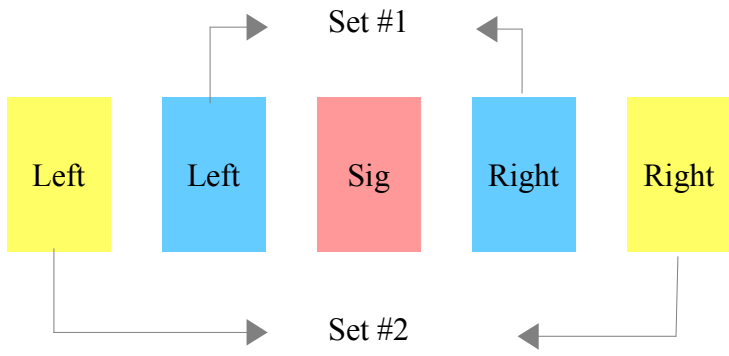
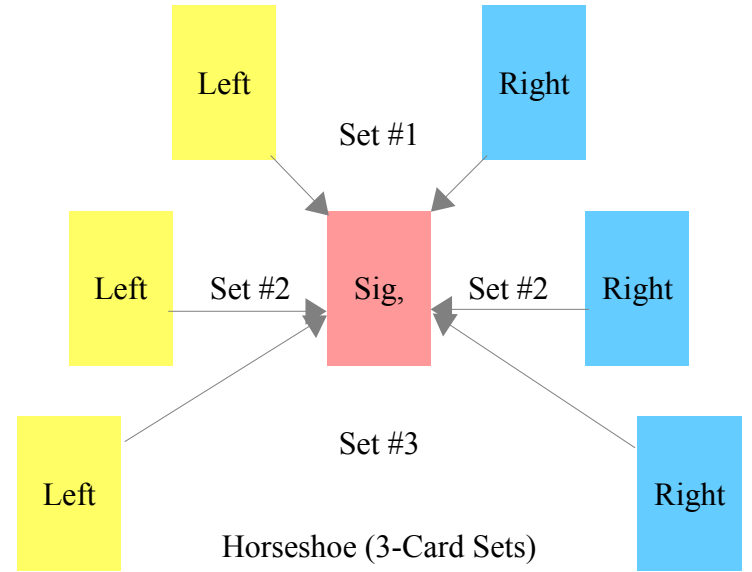


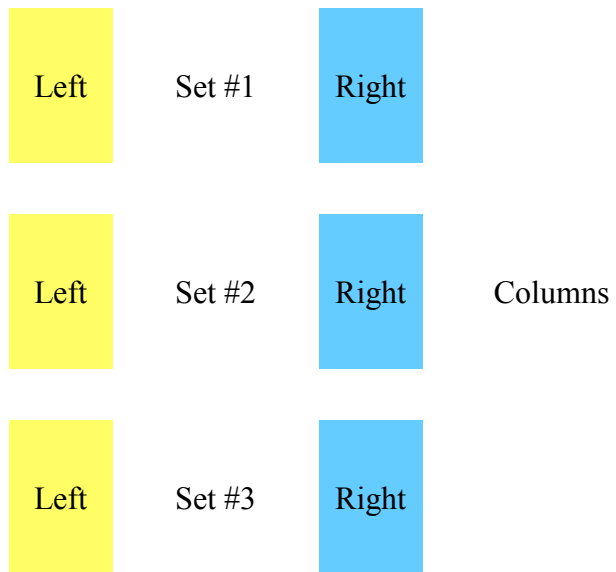
Ways to Read the Opening of the Key Pairs



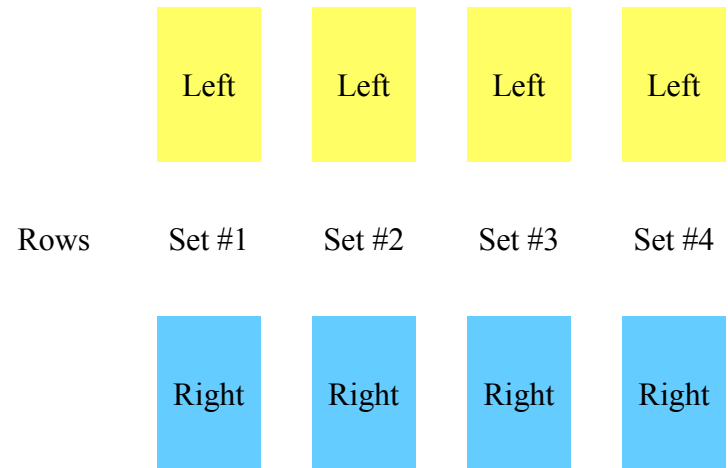
Brackets (2-Card Sets)



Horseshoe (3-Card Sets)



Columns



Rows

Another question that the *Book of Thoth* leaves completely unanswered is how one goes about actually reading the paired cards on either side of the Significator at the end of the First Operation of the “Opening of the Key” (OotK) method. “Make a story of these cards.” OK, Al, but are they to be read as paired sets bracketing the Significator (and if so, how are they rolled up?) or in a linear fashion: Left #1, Right #1, Left #2, Right #2, etc? Or how about a horseshoe around the Significator, reading the pairs top-to-bottom and possibly including the Significator in each set?

My assumption has been that you just “wing it,” interpreting each pair loosely in succession and then trying to stitch a narrative together out of the combined meanings. But this certainly doesn’t satisfy my need for a more structured flow in my readings. I set about examining the different ways these pairs can be put together to make a story. These four are the best I could do, but there may be other workable options.

The most straightforward way is to simply leave the cards in place after you spread out the pack and read them as bracketing sets on either side of the Significator, working from inside out. This leaves you with a series of blended interpretations that can be chained like a string of boxcars. My assumption is that the “inside” pair represents the beginning of that phase of the reading, and the “outside” pair reveals the outcome. But of course I could have it all wrong.

Another idea is to spread the paired sets in a horseshoe around the Significator, “inside Left” and “inside Right” at the top, and then working out and down each side. This has the advantage of being able to include the Significator as a focal point in a series of three-card sets. You then have a ranged set of triplets to chain together.

The next two are variations on a theme, just arranged slightly differently. One has you creating two columns, left and right, starting with the “inside Left” and “inside Right” cards at the top and working out and down. The Significator is excluded from this match-up. The combined interpretations are then sequenced as before. When using this one, I might think of it as a series of equations: $a + b = c$; $d + e = f$; $g + h = i$; and so forth. The products (d, f, i, etc,) would be stacked up and read as a linear story.

The last suggestion is to make two rows of the pairs, one above the other, with the Significator again being excluded. The “inside Left” card is placed at the left end of the top row, and the “inside Right” card at the left end of the bottom row; the rest of the “left” and “right” cards are then placed in order in their respective rows, from left-to-right, preserving the alignment with their paired counterparts. This is only a reading convenience and doesn’t alter the “inside-out” sequencing of the pairs as they appeared in the original line. The combinations are then read as above.

I doubt I would use that last one. The three-card sets of the “horseshoe” intrigue me, but the quick-and-dirty “bracket” approach may be good enough in most cases. If I want a bit more structure, I’ll use the columns. I seldom take the First Operation to the point of pairing anyway. I locate the Significator pack, do the counting and brief analysis of that, and then move on to a proper spread like the Celtic Cross, armed with the preliminary information gained from the OotK.