

Sleight-of-Hand Cheat Sheet for Magicians.

Sleight	Purpose	Key Point
Double Lift	Show two cards as one	Keep edges perfectly aligned
Double Turnover	Reveal a false top card	Turn over naturally, without hesitation
Pinky Break	Secretly mark a position	Keep the break tiny and invisible
Thumb Break	Hold a secret position	Best during casual handling
Overhand Shuffle Control	Control a selected card	Maintain a relaxed shuffle rhythm
Hindu Shuffle Control	Control/force cards	Keep the action consistent
Riffle Force	Force a specific card	Timing matters more than speed
Classic Force	Have a spectator take a desired card	Practice timing and audience reading
Elmsley Count	Conceal one card while apparently counting	Keep rhythm even
False Cut	Appear to cut without changing order	Make it look incidental
False Shuffle	Apparently shuffle while retaining cards/order	Prioritize naturalness
Top Change	Secretly exchange a card	Use attention and motivation to cover the change
Glide	Secretly substitute the bottom card	Keep the hand position natural
Palm	Secretly conceal a card	Avoid gripping or stiff fingers
Pass	Secretly cut/control the deck	Don't make speed the primary goal

Sleight	Purpose	Key Point
Classic Palm	Conceal a coin	Hand should look completely relaxed
Finger Palm	Conceal while keeping fingers usable	Don't curl the fingers unnaturally
Thumb Palm	Temporary concealment	Useful during transfers
French Drop	Simulate taking a coin	The empty hand must behave as though it holds the coin
Retention Vanish	Create the visual impression of a transfer	Coordinate timing, gaze and hand movement
False Transfer	Pretend to move a coin between hands	Give the receiving hand a reason to move
Shuttle Pass	Secretly exchange coins	Maintain identical hand movements
Coin Roll	Flourish across the fingers	Develop slowly for smoothness

The five rules

1. Naturalness beats speed. A slow, motivated movement can be more deceptive than a lightning-fast one.
2. Look where you want the audience to look. Your eyes are one of your strongest misdirection tools.
3. Give every movement a reason. Don't adjust the deck simply because a secret move requires it.
4. The secret action happens between important moments. Avoid treating the sleight itself as the dramatic beat.
5. Practice the effect, not just the move. Rehearse what you say, where you look, when you pause and what the audience believes is happening.

Quick practice routine

- 5 min — Fundamentals: breaks, grips and palms
- 10 min — One sleight: slow repetitions emphasizing consistency
- 5 min — Misdirection: practice gaze and timing
- 5 min — Full trick: perform without stopping after mistakes
- 5 min — Camera: record from spectator eye level and review your hands

Golden rule: *The audience should remember the magic—not the move.*