

Colorful, Elemental, Expressive Tarot

*Exploring Tarot suits, colors, elements
& how you can express them*



TAROT!NBETWEEN

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TAROT IN BETWEEN

The power of color in Tarot

Color is amazing!... The way our eyes perceive color is nothing short of spectacular. As a partially colorblind artist, I've swooned over color in art and symbolism for most of my life, even going through periods of appreciation for the absence of color. Though our human eyes are much more adept at picking up differences between dark and light rather than subtle color shifts, it's obvious that color can have a big impact on the perceived mood of a painting, company logo, movie scene, and even our living room walls.

Color symbolism thrives in Tarot as well, with yellow skies, blue waters and red garments giving off a certain 'feel' for the specific cards containing them. Of course there are many beautifully illustrated Tarot decks today, each with their own take on how color (or lack of color) makes the observer feel.

I think it would take years to dissect all the different color cues within even a single deck of Tarot cards, and that certainly is not my goal for this guide. Rather, I want to look at the broader picture, stepping back to identify how our physical bodies have evolved to react to certain colors and why those colors are commonly associated with each Tarot suit.

After going through each suit, I'll also talk about several ways we can use the colors of our chosen suits to express ourselves at any given moment. And yes, you can express yourself through color even if you don't consider yourself an artist!



Suit of Wands

Common elemental association: Fire



Spark of life

Common keywords for the suit of Wands:

Passion, progression, pleasure, sexuality, charisma, assertiveness, impulsivity

Wands are often associated with the thing that gets us out of bed in the morning, it is our spark, our drive and our determination to push forward no matter the circumstance. If we're not careful though, too much Wands energy can harm both ourselves and others through an excess of volatility and anger.

Common colors: Orange, red, magenta



We're starting off hot, with the Wands represented by colors that make us move. Throughout history, red has been the 'pay attention' color, in both good and bad ways. It's probably wise to pay attention to that bright red fruit that will give you a burst of energy, or the red blood dripping from your wound so that you can heal it properly. Even, perhaps in a more subtle way, the orange and red setting sun indicates that we should probably take shelter before darkness falls (where predators have a distinct advantage).

Ironically, red and yellow light also help us to relax because our bodies are used to shutting down right around the time the sun sets, bathing the sky in a warm glow. This is why many of today's digital devices have a 'night shift' mode. This mode helps block the stark white and blue light emitted from our screens (the same color as the sun around noon) and makes everything appear more yellow-ish instead.

Symbolically, the orange and red hues of fire can also represent progress. I think this is because fire has been a major cornerstone of human existence from the beginning... and without it, we wouldn't be able to move forward in our evolutionary journey. Our ability to control fire is extremely necessary, as its unpredictable nature can easily do more harm than good if we're not careful.

Suit of Pentacles



Common elemental association: **Earth**



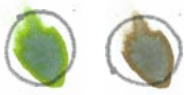
Slow & steady

Common keywords for the suit of Pentacles:

Realistic, orderly, steadfast, stable, secure, grounded, patient

Pentacles are often associated with the grounding energy and structure that keeps us safe, stable and alive. An excess of Pentacles energy can make us feel trapped, confined or held back from our desire to explore.

Common colors: Green, brown



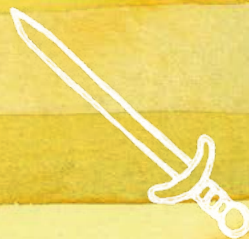
Green feels like home to us. This may be the case because for most of our history we used trees and plant life to build our actual homes and structures. Even going further back, our predecessors lived and evolved in trees, using leafy green canopies as both protection from ground-dwelling predators and also as food.

Green is also the combination of blue and yellow. Life was born out of the blue ocean and all life requires water to survive. The yellow sun provides warmth and nutrients to plant life, allowing them to reproduce and grow. So in essence, green is the combination of both blue and yellow in life and in color. The blue water is the source, the yellow sun is the catalyst for growth, and green is the result. Green is the culmination of life itself. Because of this, we tend to associate the color green with vitality and fertility as well.

Brown is the color of the roots beneath the ground, and the soil itself, from which plant life grows out of. Brown is often a symbol of unpolished earth, perhaps even representing the beginning or end of a cycle. Brown can be both the dominant color of a nascent forest and also the color of that same forest years later after a wildfire has destroyed most of the greenery. Such is the nature of the cycle of life.

Suit *of* Swords

Common elemental association: Air



Tactical intellect

Common keywords for the suit of Swords:

Impartial, intellectual, analytical, transitory, ambitious, communicative, thought-provoking

Swords are often associated with our ability to reason and sharpen our minds through analytical thinking. Too much Swords energy can be tormenting and cause us great mental stress, making us critical of ourselves and others.

Common color: Yellow



In nature, finding yellow often means you're observing a transitional process of some kind. Think of a tree's yellow-ish green leaves in the spring as the leaves begin to grow. Eventually the yellow makes way for a lush, deep, vibrant green that persists for several months. Then in the fall the leaves will again turn yellow (this time the yellow is a bit different, more orange perhaps), just before falling to the ground. The same is true for many fruits, they'll start off as the color of their green plant, then become yellow as they grow and then orange or red as they mature.

Of course yellow is also the color of the sun (or at least the way we perceive the sun here on earth). Historically, the symbol of the sun usually represents intellect because it sheds light on, or reveals, our true surroundings. The sun illuminates our path and guides us to where we need to go. When the sun is up, so are we... using as much daylight as we can to get things done.

The sun is the catalyst of all life, feeding plants and showing us how to move our intellect forward... but we must be careful not to overexert our minds when darkness falls and resting is required.

Suit of Cups

Common elemental association: **Water**



Emotional care

Common keywords for the suit of Cups:

Empathetic, intuitive, compassionate, sensitive, diplomatic, receptive, altruistic

Cups are often associated with our caring, loving and open-hearted nature... both for ourselves and others. An excess of Cups energy can weaken our individuality and make us vulnerable to those who want to take advantage of us.

Common colors: Blue, violet



Blue calms us... it helps us relax and, similarly to green, it makes us feel at home. Blue is the default color of our world. If we take a step back from the green forests on dry land... we'll see far more blue in both sea and sky. Simply put, our eyes see more blue from both water and atmosphere because both of those things more easily absorb longer wavelengths of light (red, orange and yellow light). Blue is basically our 'default' color. We even sometimes see it as grey because of how prevalent it is.

So blue is a color we can trust, similar to how we can trust our intuition. We don't need to 'see' it to know that it's there. Blue is reliable. That's one reason why blue is the most commonly used color in corporate logos. Marketing teams understand the power of blue... and whether you know it or not, you're more likely to trust a company that uses a lot of blue. Because it's everywhere though, blue can extend itself too thin or become overpowered by other colors. Be careful not to lose your identity or spread beyond the capacity of proper self-care.

Blue is a great color for relaxation, but be careful when exposing yourself to too much blue light! Despite what you may think, blue (and white) light actually can keep us up at night. This is because the noon sun and sky give off a lot of blue... and we're used to being awake, alert and attentive during this time of day!

Major Arcana

Common elemental association: All



Unity & balance

Common keywords for the Major Arcana:

Spirit, unity, balance, oneness, divine, fifth element

The Major Arcana are sometimes represented as a 'divine journey' through spiritual development. I look at the Major Arcana as the 'in between' element. This means that the pursuit of balance through the Tarot is a never-ending journey and the Major Arcana represent our constant need to express ourselves, learn and discover that balance. It's not really separate from the Minor Arcana in my opinion. The Minor Arcana are simply representative of the 4 basic elements, while the Major Arcana is the combination of (or lack of) those elements.

Common colors: White, black, all colors



The Major Arcana can represent all elements at once, or none of them at all. In the world of color, this means the Major Arcana can be represented by white, black or all colors combined. White light contains all of the colors in the visible spectrum while black is the absence of light.

When using pigment (for painting or printing), it's the exact opposite. White is the absence of pigment while black is the combination of every pigment (sometimes mixing many colors makes a muddy brown or green color, but in theory it should be black).

When I paint, sometimes I like to mix dark green, dark yellow (brown or sienna), dark red, dark violet and dark blue together to make what is known as 'chromatic black'. This type of black pigment will look almost the exact same as any store-bought black pigment, but under certain conditions (lighting changes, application thickness) it will produce subtle shades of color that make it more appealing to the eye.

In essence, this is what the Major Arcana represent to me... the oneness and wholeness of black or white, but with the subtle beauty of every other element.

How you can use color & elemental expression everyday

Ready for the fun part?! Unless you're a color theory nerd like me, learning how to use color in our everyday lives is what really matters!

Self-expression is incredibly important because it allows us to be true to ourselves and relieve any bottled up energies that will, one way or another, make themselves known. If we neglect our desire to express our feelings, thoughts or ideas for too long, we can become bitter, passive aggressive or worse.

Using color is only one way to self-express, but as we just learned, colors can be extremely impactful! So what are some examples of how we can use color to express ourselves everyday?

Changing your environment

One of the most effective ways to color our world is to color our personal spaces. There may be a limited amount of control you have over changing your personal space, but if you can find a way to even bring a little piece of yourself into the spaces you spend a lot of time in... it can go a long way.

Paint & wallpaper

Obviously painting a room, or putting up wallpaper, is not a daily activity. Because of this, if you find yourself able to change a space in this way, consider long-term effects that a certain color will have on you and other potential inhabitants. The semi-permanent nature of this type of expression does make it a great opportunity to understand what kind of energy you want to feel when existing in this space.

For example, when entering an office or work area (which you'll likely be doing regularly), do you want your mind to be constantly stimulated and active? If so, yellow, orange or red hues may work well. But some might find those hues too overwhelming or stressful. At home, if you have a room of relaxation (bedroom, sacred space, living area), it might help you to relax even further if you surround yourself with a cool blue or neutral green hue.

Ultimately, this is a very personal decision. Your surrounding environment will impact the way you feel when entering any space... and changing the paint color or wallpaper of that space plays a huge part.

What's in your space?

Changing things around in our space can happen a lot more frequently than changing the paint or wallpaper of a room. We can enhance our experience and focus our intentions when we're in our

spaces simply by rearranging even a few items of our choice.

Personally, I have a few different colored lights and light bulbs that are easy to move around and attach to bookshelves, easels, etc. I always have a red light shining in one corner of my living space that becomes more apparent at night. The red light reminds my brain that it's time to relax.

I also have lots of crystals and a few candles that I move about depending on my mood. Wall hangings, art and posters can help change the mood of a room too, and plants are also a very good way to infuse life into your space!

Changing your appearance

The Tarot can help us on our eternal journey to achieve inner balance through self-discovery and personal growth. In the meantime, it's always fun to show ourselves (and the world) just how we may be feeling at any given time with our personal style choices.

I am definitely no fashion expert, but when it comes to color, I just love playing around with various combinations of the following:



Clothes



Hair color



Makeup



Nails

I find that it's fairly time consuming to get everything coordinated and looking as badass as I would want it to... but it is so much fun! I particularly enjoy the challenge of getting my eye makeup to look good (every so often, I don't wear it every day), as well as putting on some nice synergistic nail polish.

Even though I don't partake in it daily, my anxiety does increase if I'm unable to express myself every so often by making personal fashion choices. In my opinion, fashion isn't something that should be forced or expected by anyone other than ourselves.

Making something that's yours

Not everyone wants to create art, and that is totally fine. Artistic expression is only one kind of self-expression and it isn't necessarily for everyone. But for those of us who are interested in the arts and crafts, getting out some different colored pens, markers or paints can excite the hell out of us! Here are a few methods of two-dimensional artistic self-expression that can help you identify with your

current elemental vibes:

Highlight it!

Ok I get this is kind of a dorky one but I can't stop thinking about it because it's so weird and simple and still pretty fun. I'm going to have to give full credit to my wife for this, she is the Queen of multi-colored highlighting! If you're a student or just like to read those old fashioned paper books and you find yourself highlighting a lot... put those highlighters to good use by getting a color for each element and getting highlighter crazy! If there's a specific, highlight-able passage that's just screaming earth energy... make it green (or whatever your earth color is).

This is also a cool exercise because it helps us identify the energy of the certain elements and their Tarot suits in real-life circumstances. We get to apply our elemental knowledge while actively using color... win-win!

Journaling

I'm the type of person who always gets real excited about starting a journal, has big dreams and ambitious visions about how awesome it will look when completed... then never gets past the second page...

Journaling can be huge for helping commit things to memory, or just to get stuff out of our brains so our minds don't explode...

There are a million types of journals you can buy (or make) and even more ways to fill them up with awesome self-expressive-ness... I like to make sure that if I use a pen, it has waterproof ink! I've actually filled up about a dozen or so pages (including awesome doodles) in one journal and did not realize (until a hot day rolled around) that just a little bit of sweat was enough to smudge multiple sentences into oblivion!

Enough about my ink troubles though... when it comes to using color in journals, here's a few tips to keep in mind:



If you use wet media (like watercolor, gouache or acrylic paint), take note of your page thickness and absorbance. If your pages are too thin, they'll crinkle and shrivel up when you add water.



If you use ink and a wet medium (or if your hand sweats sometimes), make sure you're comfortable with the way your ink reacts to water! Even inks labeled 'waterproof' sometimes smudge a little.



If you're inserting photos or art of any kind, it may rub off or stick to the page it closes on! To counter this, you can put a thick sheet of any wax coated paper between your pages (glassine paper).

Experimenting with paint n' stuff

I'm going to come right out and say it... painting isn't for everyone! I say this because I used to teach painting to teenagers and adults and sometimes it can simply frustrate people. I'm also not an art therapist (happened to be married to one)... I know that introducing art haphazardly to anyone in an 'art is for everyone, just try it' kind of capacity can actually raise stress levels quite a bit.

That being said... if you are interested in experimenting with paint (or other color infused art stuff), here are some general tips:



Yes there's really cheap paint out there but it kinda sucks (for most things). You can totally buy cheap paint sets that are pretty great for beginners, but just a warning that mixing colors (or even just putting a lot of color on your surface) might be frustrating. Beginner paints are almost always thinned out with fillers, making the color appear dull or too transparent.



Don't be afraid to just let go. This tip is something that I have to remember constantly as well... it's really easy to want to control our art, especially if we think that's how to make it look good... but 95% of the time it's the letting go that produces better results. This is doubly true for beginners. It will never be perfect so just see what happens when you mix those two (or three, or four) colors together and leave it alone!



Follow your instincts! This kinda goes along with letting go... You have to remember that this is your art, you cannot proceed unless your intuition is in line with your actions. If you get a hunch that something isn't working, try something else. Creative expression is one of the most intuitive actions we can take as humans. Follow your inner path and don't worry too much about what your head is saying.

What colors & elements resonate with you?

I hope this guide was helpful in helping you to understand how our bodies react naturally to color and how we can use color more often as a powerful, elemental self-expression tool!

Feel free to use the blank templates at the end

As with everything related to the beautiful Tarot, we give it life and help it evolve by applying our own personal meanings and experiences. You can fill out the blank template pages at the end of this guide to help you work through what each suit represents to you, along with what element(s) and color(s) they're associated with.

Suit of _____



Elemental association(s):

Keywords:

Color(s):



Description:

Suit of _____



Elemental association(s):

Keywords:

Color(s):



Description:

Suit of _____



Elemental association(s):

Keywords:

Color(s):



Description:

Suit of _____



Elemental association(s):

Keywords:

Color(s):



Description:

Suit of _____



Elemental association(s):

Keywords:

Color(s):



Description: