

## The Significance of Reversed Cards in General

The appearance of reversed (“upside-down”) cards in a tarot reading is a source of endless confusion for novice readers who are still struggling to understand the upright meanings. Many simply throw in the towel and avoid dealing reversed cards, which is often recommended by tarot teachers and books, at least until more experience has been gained. I spent some time scouring my memory for the various “flavors” that might be squeezed from the occurrence of reversed cards in a spread. I sometimes think of them as “turning over rocks to see what crawls out from underneath.” Entire books have been written on the subject (notably by Mary K. Greer and Joan Bunning), but - although I should - I have not yet read any of them, so any similarities between those books and the following are purely coincidental.

Reversal can highlight a sensitive or vulnerable period for the querent, perhaps a “tipping point” where the situation can go either way. There are countless variations on this theme but, in general, reversal changes the angle or mode of delivery for a card's influence rather than significantly altering its meaning. Reversed cards are more cautionary or advisory than prescriptive, and often serve as signposts pointing down less visible byways in a reading that may otherwise remain unexplored. Numerous reversals in a spread may show an undercurrent working at cross-purposes to the main thrust of the reading, “for good or ill.” This can also reflect a very complicated or difficult situation.

"Blockage," but more often a “difficult passage” than an insurmountable barrier; adversity; “hard truths.”

"Delay," inconvenience; a missed connection or wrong turn; interrupted, inhibited or incomplete action; (often our own fault).

"Detour" or “U-turn;” temporarily and unavoidably put off-course, rerouted or side-tracked (usually an external obstacle)

"Surprise;" expect the unexpected; something sneaking up behind you; being “blind-sided” by events; lesson learned. “Oblique” and “skewed” are similar ideas for “out-of-left-field” influences.

“Avoidance,” as in literally “looking the other way;” “head in the sand;” a “Hanged Man moment,” sacrificing time and initiative; procrastination; “sitting on one's hands;” denial; “blame-shifting;” passive-aggressive resistance.

"Idling" or “marking time,” chronic backsliding; wasted effort; “stuck in neutral;” loss of focus or traction; “wheel-spinning;” an opportunity lost or at risk – missing the “point,” the “boat or the “big picture;” “the one that got away.”

"Time-out," a pause to reassess the situation from a different angle (“step back and take a deep breath”); a chance to rethink or regroup; “buying time;” mitigation; “damage control;” “putting on the brakes.”

“Passive,” casual, informal, indifferent; noncommittal; unenthusiastic; incurious; yielding; accepting; benign; slow-and-steady; subdued; monotonous; uninspiring; aimless; a necessary sacrifice; giving up; letting go; “going with the flow.”

"Diminishing" in its potency or significance, more inert than dynamic; mild, faint or weak; rudimentary or provisional; declining; receding; regressing; fading; faltering; “out of gas;” a “false start;” impractical; unripe; unlikely at this time.

“Internalized” or subconscious; something that is suspected but not known for sure; speculation; a hunch or premonition; a subjective viewpoint; suppressed; withheld; withdrawn; private; reserved; aloof.

“Confused,” unclear; inconclusive; distracted; scattered; vague; fuzzy-headed; flaky; lost; clueless; out-of-touch; opaque; unobservant; mistaken; insecure; inattentive; careless; obtuse; taken aback; wrong-headed; vulnerable to error.

“Contrary;” hostile; negative; unresponsive; uncooperative; unsympathetic; unyielding; obstructive; obstinate; reluctant; touchy; incorrigible; obsessive; closed-minded; critical; an open enemy or agenda; opposition; the “Devil you know.”

“Subtle” or unobtrusive; veiled; “behind the scenes,” perhaps not known until it's too late; implied; suggested; hard to pin down; questionable; devious; misleading; underhanded; manipulative; evasive; furtive; reticent; illusory; imaginary; unique; concealed; latent; finesse but also guile; a hidden enemy or agenda; the “Devil you don't know.”

“Ambivalent;” uncertain; indecisive; of two minds; fickle; on the fence; hedging; waffling; self-questioning; conflicted; two-faced, unreliable, vacillating – especially the court cards; “the “horns of a dilemma” (no “right” answer).