

# Kip's Rules of Magic

Magicians are often what keeps them from ripping each others' heads off. When it comes to magic, they often plunge in, unaware that any such... follows is my rendition of a few bits of wisdom to help you... Only use the tips that apply to you. Always remember... important principles could have consequences among other... advise that you ignore them at your own risk, but realize that you just can't ignore.

I have also included a list of what I refer to as magic blunders. Everything from ego to boring... kinds of tricks is mentioned. These ten magic tips are guidelines when it comes to practicing and performing magic. These tips probably aren't unique, but my take on the subject -- my perspective. Consider each rule. Experiment with the advice. And contact me, if you need to.

Most novice magicians want to skip straight to... Well, this ebook isn't about "tricks." Master the principles found... pages, and you will have a much easier time when you are acquiring... presenting your magic.

No, you don't have to get along with the other magicians in your community, but it helps if you do. Besides, haven't you... about some of the proper etiquette when it comes to sharing tricks, presenting tricks, and talking about your peers?

It's time for you to master the code of the magician. When you master the code, all sorts of magical help will be available. Magicians can be really nice guys.

Copyright © Kerwin Benson Publishing, 2008

All rights reserved. This ebook may not be altered in any way. As long as it remains unmodified, it may be distributed freely to those interested in learning magic -- the art of the magician.

This ebook should only be given to those who will keep the magician's code - don't give away secrets. Share with other magicians only.

This book is designed to provide information about magic etiquette and proper behavior among magicians.

It is sold with the understanding that neither the author, the publisher, nor anyone involved with the book is engaged in the rendering of legal advice, or advice and expertise for your specific situation, environment, or set of circumstances. Those involved with the production of this ebook shall not be held liable for ... well ... any misfortune that results from using the information in this ebooklet.

Employ a strong set of morals and ethics when performing, learning, and sharing magic. Always take the high road.

Author's Note: Apologies are in order: For lack of time, money, and available cartoonists ... uh ... all of the cartoons in this ebooklet are my attempts at humor. As I said, I am sorry for putting you through them. But, oh well.

# Kip's Rules of Magic

**by Kip Pascal**

# Table of Contents

**Introduction -- 5**

**Never Tell — Well, Almost Never -- 6**

**And Speaking of Sharing Secrets with Other Magicians -- 7**

**Practice Your Heart Out -- 9**

**The Biggest Magic Secret of All -- 11**

**Develop Ethics in Magic -- 14**

**10 Magic Blunders to Avoid --17**

**A Few More Thoughts -- 26**

## Introduction

When someone starts any new hobby, they want to learn the ropes as quickly as possible — especially those aspiring to become magicians and perform magic. s

Knowing the etiquette of the particular hobby can really help you discover the ins and outs that make it a unique pastime. You gain the respect of and acceptance by your fellow enthusiasts.

This really is especially true in the world of magic.

What follows is a short guide to help you learn some important pieces of what some would call the magician's code. It's by no means complete — you'll have to learn as you go. But it is my perspective on some important points.

Ignore the code of the magician at your own risk. Actually, you can do what you want — but if you make it a point to get along with the magic community, then your learning will be faster. And if you tick off too many magicians, you'll find your progress impeded.

I have seen it go both ways, over and over again, in different communities.

What I am saying is that if you follow the advice in this ebook, you'll learn magic better and faster, your performances will be more professional, and you'll enjoy magic more.

I wish you great success in the world of magic,

*Kip*

## Never Tell — Well, Almost Never

Magicians are great at keeping secrets. We have a code of not sharing how we accomplish our feats with the lay audience (non magicians).

In fact, this code is so important, that many magic organizations make their members swear not to divulge secrets to those outside the magic community.

Many magicians have cutesy phrases when asked how a trick is accomplished:

*How did you do that? Very well, thank you.*

*How did you do that? Better than most; not as good as the best; but still with a fair amount of skill ...*

*How did you do that? Can you keep a secret? Yes. So, Can I.*

*How did you do that? I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you. Magician's code requires that ...*

*How did you do that? With 12 mirrors, a Swiss Army Knife, the yolks of two eggs, lots of sugar, and a pair or pliers. Not really, but you wouldn't like the real explanation, so ..*

If someone asks while there is a big audience in earshot, then I'll try to respond with wit. I know that lines like the ones above have a slight tease factor to them.

Someone is honestly asking you to help their brain not feel so befuddled, and you respond with a witty, slightly rude, teasing comment.

Not the best response in my book.

It's much better to make a friend. Explain honestly why you can share the secret, and seem almost apologetic. Or encourage the person asking to explore magic and become an amateur magician. Further explain that magicians share secrets with other magicians.

## And Speaking of Sharing Secrets with Other Magicians ...

There have been more fights among magicians over the sharing of other secrets than almost any other topic (except invention, which we'll get to later).

One magician sees another magician perform a trick. The spectator magician is completely baffled, and so just has to learn the trick.

The performing magician finally agrees to teach the magic trick, if the recipient agrees not to teach anyone else. That promise won't be reinforced, because the very first time the new performer of the trick tries it, another bargain will be made with the next magician, and so on.

What's worse? The first magician wanted to be the only one in the area performing that particular trick, but now, like wild fire (or magician's Dragon's Breath), the trick has spread. Everyone is doing it.



So, how do you resist explaining your tricks to others in the art, without looking like a giant jerk?

The answer is to point them in the direction without explaining. Go ahead and tell them the official name of the trick. That's your first line of defense.

Next, share the name of the magician who invented the trick or the variation you are performing.

Finally, to be really helpful ... and if the requesting magician is that persistent, point them in the direction of the book or video. Tell them where they can find it.

Two final pieces of advice about sharing with other magicians:

- If you invented the trick yourself, then get it into print BEFORE you share it with anyone. Make sure you receive the credit. There will be no question once you share your pet trick.
- Don't be too eager to give up secrets to other magicians. Hold something back, so you can swap. More than once, I have witnessed one magician sharing freely and then asking the other for the secret to just one effect and meeting resistance.

*“What the \_\_\_\_\_. I just shared a zillion tricks with you. What do you mean that you're keeping this one a secret? This is messed up!”*

**Make sure you have a secret or two in reserve, for swapping purposes.**

## Practice Your Heart Out

You might as well learn good habits right from the beginning. In magic, practice is a must.

Magicians can't count the number of times they have taught amateurs how to do trick, only to have the budding magician practice once or twice, and then completely botch the performance of the trick for a spectator.

Practice until you are smooth, BEFORE you start performing for people.

Magicians loved to make jokes about developing such great skills because they had no social life in their youth. Translation: They had to practice so much, that they didn't have time to date.

Note: Although it could be the reverse. It could be that these young magicians can't get dates, so they have a lot of time to practice.

Anyway, magicians love to break tricks down, practice each move individually, then recombine the moves into a solid effect. They vary the rhythm and speed of the technique. they pay attention to angles (practice in front of mirrors). They even video their performance in an attempt to make the performance even smoother, more professional, and more astounding.



You really do need to practice each trick to the point that you don't have to think about what the next step or move in the trick is. You can't clue into your audience's reactions, if you are trying to remember the next move. You won't be able to expertly vary the patter, if you are sweating the secret move that you are about to attempt.

Even though I said that you shouldn't tell your secrets, you might want to have one confidant for your magic. Maybe a relative or a spouse. It could be a best friend or your magic assistant.

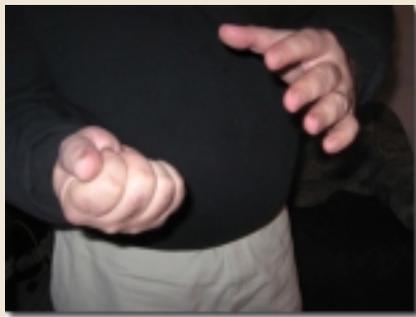
Find someone who can lend a critical eye. This person also has to observe the magician's code. And your confidant should always brag that he or she knows how it's done. Your confidant will help you perfect timing and angles. Your confidant will listen to the patter repetitively, trying to help you make it even tighter.

Note: I followed my wife around for a year with a coin.

No, I didn't want to buy anything from her. I was developing a new Retention Vanish.

I wanted her to "see" the coin go into the other hand.

I really demanded precise timing, so I followed her from room to room, "How's it look now? How about now? And once more?"



Don't abuse your rights with your confidant. Make sure you practice before you do your practice performance on a live person. I remember pounding the palm of my grandmother's right hand with my outstretched fingers, as I perfected my Coin Snatch, switching one coin for another in the participant's hand. I bruised Grams' hand on more than one occasion. What a great confidant she was.

One of the workers in the magic shop I owned printed buttons that we sold. The button didn't have any drawings or photos. Just the following slogan:

**Practice Means Never Having to Say You're Sorry!**

## The Biggest Magic Secret of All

There is one magic secret that you should keep close to your heart. If you are to become a master magician, you'll never share this secret with anyone else. If you want to be an accomplished magician, then you'll only share this big secret with your closest magic cronies.

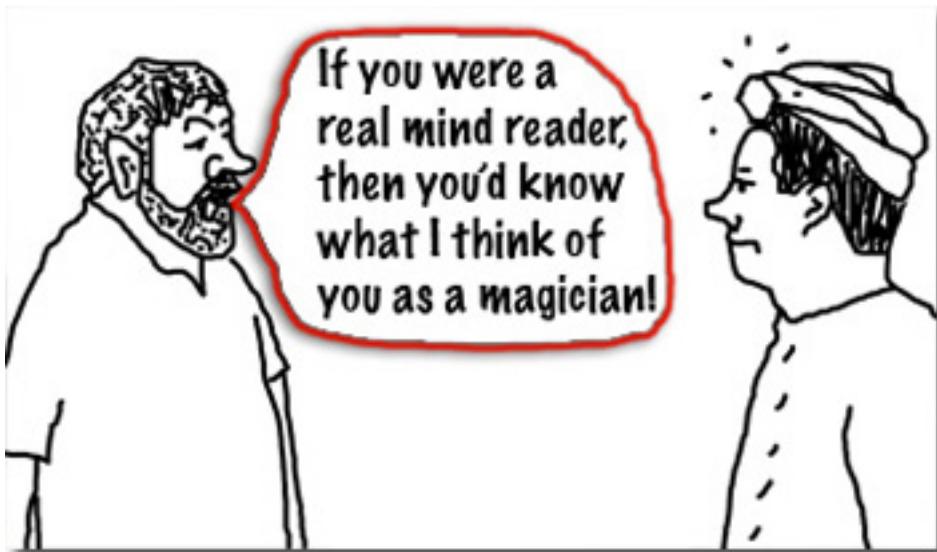
If you want to call yourself a magician, you'll keep this secret from the lay audience.

And if you want to be as bad as at least half the magicians out there, then you'll share your knowledge freely.

What am I talking about?

The secret you should keep to yourself is the bad opinions you have of some of the other magicians.

I am referring to the fine art of badmouthing other magicians.



Whether we are talking about famous magicians, like David Blaine, or your local competition, you should make a pact with yourself right now, to keep your bad opinions to yourself.

Note: I promise you that badmouthing other magi will NOT elevate your status. It seems to have the opposite effect.

### Here's my personal philosophy of how to talk about other magicians:

1. Ask the layperson's opinion of the magician first. If you keep your new friend talking, then you might never have to lend your opinion.
2. If I am being asked my general opinion of the best magicians around, I freely name my buddies in the art. It feels good to give a friend a positive compliment, through a third party.

Who knows? The kudos may find its way back to your friend.

3. Sometimes, I am asked direct questions like, "Did you see David Blaine blow that last trick in his special? Did that look like a death-defying dive to you?"

In which case, I comment that yes, David looked embarrassed, but did you see the rest of the TV special? What did you think of the trick where 3/4 of the deck just vanished? Or the coin trick where ...

I shift the focus. I don't pretend that I didn't see the bad trick, but I shift the focus and try to give the spectator a "sound bite" to repeat to others, like "I heard from a professional magician that the trick David performed with four cards is destined to become a classic of magic. It was that good."

4. When someone asks about a magician I don't like ...

I try to pull the keep-them-talking-with-questions game.

If I am asked about a local magician, I either look for a compliment of one item that they do well. Or I may mention a known fact, "He's famous for producing coins into a bucket."

Or I may mention a small connection, "I saw him at the magic lecture, a couple of weeks ago."

I really do try to keep it positive, when I am with non magicians.

Note: Once, there was a local magician who was gaining a reputation. I really tried to like this guy, but he kept asking criticizing questions about me behind my back. So, even though I wanted to be friends at first, I pretty much gave up on him as a friend.

Someone I knew, a non magician, asked me about this guy. And my acquaintance kept pushing, unwilling to leave it alone. (And I had tried asking him what he thought of the magician.) This guy wanted to know which one of us was better.

Finally, my ego slipped in, and I said, "Look, I have been doing magic most of my life. I put myself through college with magic; I owned a magic shop; I taught magic for years and years; I even write magic books and articles for a living. This guy has only been into magic for 5 years. Where can you compare? Give him a break.

And that's about as mean as it gets.

5. If you are queried about a famous magician that turns you off ...

Again, I suggest turning it back on the questioner. Ask his or her opinion.

If you are asked again and again, you don't have to spill your guts, and tell what a jerk this person has a reputation for being amongst other magicians, or how he screwed a guy out of his invention. What works for me is a simple, "I am not really into Goth magic."

Then I switch the conversation to some other great magician that I do like.

Simple, no fuss. No muss.

One last time, I urge you to keep the gossip to yourself.

Maybe share with your best friends in magic — if you have to. But that's it.

Be known as the classy magician who only spreads goodwill. Your reputation will benefit from the positive comments. I know it.

## Develop Ethics in Magic

As you start to think about a Magician's Code, you form your ethical foundation. Don't steal tricks from other magicians; don't buy or share pirated tricks and/or information. Respect intellectual property.

Some people believe that all information is theirs for the taking. They don't respect copyrights, pirating laws and so forth.

We won't discuss this subject in the broadest sense ... pirating and bootlegging on the Internet and in countries like Singapore, China, and Mexico.

I would like to encourage you to be very ethical when it comes to magic. This is the time to support the creative artist — the magic inventors and writers out there.

I have seen far too many magicians call it quits and stop inventing quality magic, because they get sick inside each time their creation is pirated. Knockoffs are never fun.

Let's keep these creative souls in the game. Besides, you don't want the mass stuff that is being sold by the tens of thousands. Look for the more original items.



**So, what can you do about it?**

If you hear that someone like Penguin or Magic Makers is knocking off magic or somehow being dishonest, don't immediately believe what you hear.

It could be someone trying to smear their name(s).

On the other hand, if you hear bad comments about them over and over again, then you have to start believing what you hear — especially if you are fairly new on the magic scene.

At that point, you should start boycotting the offending company.

Where should you buy?

**Support the inventors, of course.**

After all, the offending company probably copied their creations in the first place. So, go to the source of the good magic, and support the creator. Don't support the pirate.

Note: If you need a list of creative magicians get on Asher's Announcements. ([LeeAsher.com](http://LeeAsher.com)) He recommends some of the more creative minds out there. Oh, and his magic is worth looking at, too :-)

By the way, you should keep others honest, too. Let your favorite magic shop, whether local or online, that you don't support knockoffs. Inform them that there are many shops that would love your business. They can either get honest or get lost.

One last note, you can, if it's your style, wave your ethics around like a badge of honor. If you know the bootlegs from the originals and know which distributors rob the creators blind with their bad deals, then you can share your knowledge with the world. (Be careful of slander and libel. Do not defame. List objective facts, of what has happened ... make no judgment. Allow others to draw their own conclusions.)

I think a private boycott is safer. Remember the advice about bad magicians. The same could be said of bad magic companies.

“So, what do you think of that no-good, pirating, knockoff, bootlegging company?”

OK, one more last thought ...

Concentrate on being a class act. If you are classy, you'll develop a strong moral and ethical standard. You'll be polite, yet have opinions. You'll stand firm when it comes to honesty.

Let's make the less traveled road more and more traveled.

Do what's right. Be ethical. Be classy. And ... don't forget to support the individual, creative magical talents.



## 10 Magic Blunders to Avoid

I thought we could end this ebooklet on the magician's code with 10 Magic Blunders to Avoid. As I mentioned before, this ebooklet by no means covers a complete set of rules of etiquette, but it's a good start.

I am trying to give you honest advice on how not to tick off the entire community of magicians around you.

These are what I would call *major boo-boos* in the world of magic:

**1. Exposing Secrets With a Bad Performance** — There are some dynamite tricks out there that will only fool the audience if well rehearsed. Don't ruin it for the other magicians with a poor rendition of the effect, that exposes the secret to all.



**2. Copying Unique Patter (which makes it less unique)** — You hear a magician absolutely slay his audience with a routine filled with jokes, one-liners, and a real theme to the effect. So, you borrow the routine, and steal the jokes.

If someone else wrote the joke, it's theirs. And if it's standard patter, One, Two, Three Days ago, I was performing the guillotine routine, then the jokes are worn out and old.

You're smart. Change the joke, to make it your own ... "On your mark, get set, Going to the store yesterday, I saw ..."



**3. Calling The Trick Your Own** — Sometimes tricks are so good, that you really wish you'd invented them. After performing the trick for a few years, you start to believe that you are doing the effect *your* way. So, you start to call it your trick.

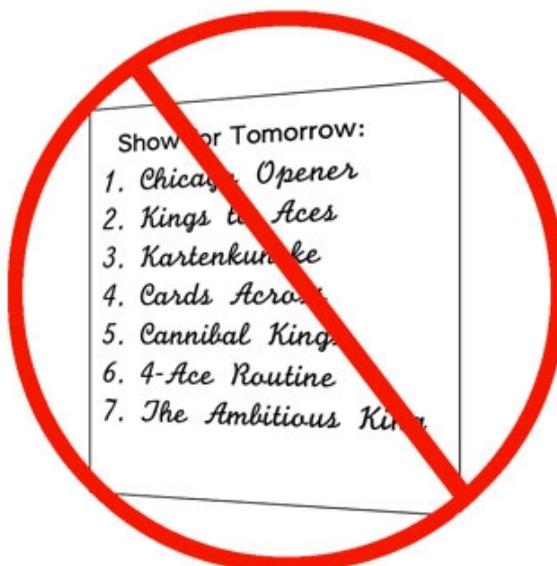
When all is said and done, it's really the same trick. Not enough variation to be called a variation. It's stealing by reason of a faulty memory. Don't do it.

No, you didn't invent The Asher Twist (unless the person reading this "is" Lee Asher).



**4. Boring The Audience with Card Tricks** — Card magicians love card tricks — the rest of the world loves ONE OR TWO card tricks at a time. It's a rare magician who can perform exclusively with a deck of cards without boring someone.

If you do one Darwin Ortiz trick after another, no matter how baffling they are, the audience will only see a bunch of the same ... tricks where cards transpose or transform.



I am not saying it can't be done, but pulling off an entire performance with a deck of cards really is an art. If you don't understand pacing, variety of magical effects, and so forth, then you'd be better to add variety .. do a coin trick or two, maybe a color-changing knife routine. Something with safety pins or cups and balls.

**5. Boring the audience with coin effects** — The same can be said of coin tricks, except there are even fewer effects possible (some say). Just reread Mistake #4 and substitute the phrase coin effects every time you see card tricks.

Just remember, variety is the spice of ... a magic performance.

**Coin #622, #623, #624 ...**



**6. Believing Your Own Press** — If you practice magic, and perform your effects correctly, you will fool people. With astonishment comes a certain amount of adulation, if not appreciation.

It's typical phenomenon. With a magician's demonstration of skill, there usually follows a swelled head. Egos grow.

Some magicians turn into real jerks. Others stay grounded, and stay nice.

My advice to you is to stay nice. Don't let success go to your head.

I am not telling you to be overly modest. Just don't be a boor, a legend in your own mind.



**7. Being Caught Off Guard** — I know a lot of magicians who are only magicians when they have their giant boxes to push around or those who can only create miracles when they have a deck of cards in hand.

Hogwash! If they were real magicians, they could do magic anywhere, at any time.

Be better than those who have to have their props. There is a lot to be said for impromptu magic. And I don't just mean a pocket trick to be performed for one spectator. Be ready to stand up and entertain a hundred people.

The occasion will arise, someday. I promise.



Note: Once, I was at a health and wellness convention (1200 conferees), representing my school district. I was in a class of about 150 people, waiting for our session's presenter. The presenter was late. We found out that we'd have to wait about 20 minutes for our teacher.

The natives were getting restless. So, I stood up and gave everyone a mind reading demonstration. And all we had was the white board and markers, and I had a couple of lists written on the back of two of my business cards.

I did two tricks, and kept 150 teachers utterly entertained. And no, I didn't have to. And no, it wasn't my job.

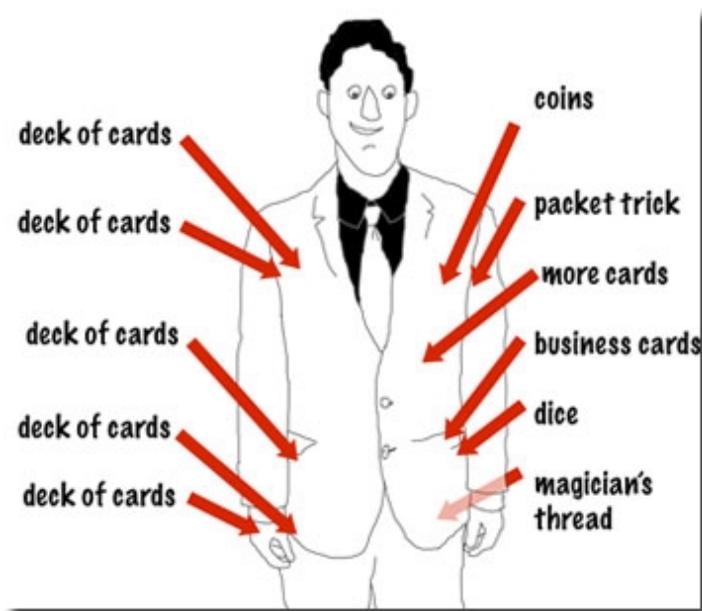
And yes, I had a great time. People thanked me for the rest of the conference, and I developed quite the reputation. If I had wanted to, I could have scored a bunch of performances with a little networking. (I was a full-time teacher then, so I didn't have time to do magic shows, other than to use tricks to teach in the classroom.)

**8. Forcing Your Magic** — I love to do magic. And when I was a kid, I loved to do magic ... and as a consequence, my parents do NOT love magic.

I forced tricks on them once too often in my youth.

Some magicians are magic boors. Wanna see a trick? Wanna see a trick? Huh? Do ya?

When I said be ready to perform at a moment's notice, that doesn't mean that you should always perform for every pair of eyes that focuses on your hands. Don't ram your magic down everyone's throat.



You don't have to wait to be asked, but don't be forceful ... or labeled a magic nerd. If you need help in this department, definitely read *Coin Snatching: The Reputation Builder*. It gives a lot of advice on building your reputation in magic indirectly.

It's more subtle to have someone else bring up the subject. You can also learn to make points with magic ... where it really does illustrate a point. You don't want to come across as a show off.

Humble pie sells. Believe me. Nice sells.

**9. Performing on Command** — Wait! Didn't I just advise that you be ready to perform on command, whenever needed (See #7)? And if you aren't going to show off to everyone, then isn't a request the perfect opportunity?

Well, yes and no.

You are not a trained Labrador Retriever who performs tricks on command.



If you aren't being paid, then it's up to you when you want to do a trick. Don't always do a trick when asked. You get to orchestrate events. In your mind, quickly weigh the benefits of performing right when asked. Then, perform if you want to, or if it would benefit your reputation, and especially if it will land you a future magic gig.

Remember, it's always your choice whether or not to perform. If you are asked nicely, I encourage you to do something — a quick routine with a coin or a business card. But if someone snaps his (or her) fingers, then go ahead and resist the temptation to entertain.

They may not be able to train you to perform on command, but you can train them to ask politely.

**10. Being a Total Loner or Following The Pack** — As a final tip, may I suggest that you avoid the two social extremes in magic.

Those who follow their own paths and never contact other magicians usually ... aren't as good as they think they are. They also spend a lot of time reinventing the wheel. And they often keep secrets of principles and gimmicks that aren't really all that secret.



97% of the magic population would benefit from having at least some contact with other magicians in the community and around the world. The other 3% really are creative loners, who should be left alone and allowed to create. (Far be it for me to impose my rules on 100% of the magic population. Let's allow for creative difference.)

At the other end of the scale, there are magicians who absolutely can't think for themselves. They jump on every new bandwagon. They always follow the crowd. Their shows seem cut from the same mold.

While I do promote the community spirit among magicians, I am not a crowd follower. I really do like taking the road less traveled. And yes, it has made all of the difference.

## A Few More Thoughts

Do you want to know where I learned these principles or rules of magic?

By observation.

Each time I saw a magician do something that had a bad consequence or seemed low class, I made a mental note of it. (Nowadays, I'd open a new computer file.)

Certain magicians are a class act. They deserved to be studied and analyzed ... and admired.

Other magicians are real duds. They too merit some examination. Avoiding undesirable behaviors in yourself makes sense, right?

If you want to learn about some pretty cool magicians out there, I suggest you sign up for [Asher's Announcements](#).

If you are looking to improve as a magician, then sign up for my ezine, [The Magic Mentor](#).

As mentioned before, if you want to build your reputation then read [Coin Snatching: The Reputation Builder](#) (It gives a lot of general advice about building one's reputation in magic.)

And if you have any questions, please contact me.

To your success in magic,

*Kip Pascal*