

About the Flow Tarot: The Tarot of the Water Element

Why a water tarot?

Imagine that all the water on Earth, from the beginning of time until just this moment, could be swirled together into a single being, with a single voice. And this being stood before you, offering you all the wisdom of its experience. And all you had to was ask....

This deck was created with the idea of communicating with the Ancient Water Element: The timeless, ageless water that has wrapped our planet from the beginning, and will be here until the end.

If it had a voice, had a memory, had a way of communicating and could gently advise humans when called upon, what would it say?

What message would it bring to you? What would its voice sound like? A man? A woman? Neither? Both? Or would it be a symphony of different voices, all moving together?

Would it be young or old? Would it speak slowly, like a bubbling stream, or impart its wisdom in thunderous bursts, like the pounding surf?

Picture yourself coming to the edge of the land and sitting before the Ancient Water Element. Sit down on the sun-warmed sand, close your eyes and ask your questions. Then imagine the surf carrying a gift to you. Open your eyes. On the beach, revealed by the retreating waters, are a set of images. Portals. Cards you can hold. Messages you can take away with you and refer to again and again, even when you are far from the water's edge.

These cards are your connection to the Ancient Water Element. Ask it for guidance no matter where you are. Through these images, it can reveal to you a bit of its deep wisdom when you need it most. And its first message to you is this: Just like these cards, you too are a portal. You carry the same vast endlessness inside you, everywhere you go. Because you are, and always have been, a child of water.

Welcome to the Flow Tarot: The Tarot of the Water Element.

Why just the element of water?

Water is the element that makes up more of Earth than earth itself does.

The ancient element of water has been here since the beginning of our planet and will be here till the end of it. The water that runs through your fingers at your kitchen sink is the same water that dinosaurs drank.

Water is the strongest force on earth, able to crumble continents with its waves and drive apart mountains with its ice. It is the universal solvent, capable of dissolving more substances than any other liquid.

About 70% of the human body is made up of water. Coincidentally, more than 70% of Earth is covered in water. And the human body is little more than a vessel for water, walking around separated from its source.

Water shapes everything on Earth. It falls as rain then freezes suddenly, piles high in snow only to melt again in the spring. It moves gently through cycles or crashes against the land. It can force things to stop under the weight of its snow, or force things to speed up in the free dive of a waterfall. Seasonal floods reshape the land in cycles. And the loss of water leaves the ghosts of waves imprinted in the dust.

Water moves through us all the time, waking or sleeping. You consume fresh water and cry salt water. You hold a literal water cycle within us. You drink in rain...but you are made of oceans. A few days without water, and you'd die just as a tree in the desert.

Water is your birthright. You are part of it, and it is part of you. Open up to the water inside and around you. Let the images in these cards transport you. Feel the spray on your cheeks, the waves lapping at your toes. Let the words written on the cards become a channel of communication, a common language of intention, connecting you to this ancient element.

Water is your guide, your friend, a part of you that is constantly flowing around you and through you. It is never separate from you. Ask what message the Ancient Water Element might have for you, and let the flow of water transform you.

Connect with the deck

How the Flow Tarot works

This Flow Tarot is a 78-card tarot deck centered entirely in the element of water.

The deck suites have been changed to reflect that. Wands is now Waves, Pentacles is now Ponds, Cups is now Clouds, and Swords is now Snow.

In each image there is a reminder of this nature of water. Water will always change into something else. The rain will fall, ice will melt. The rising tide will turn and go out.

As you ask questions and receive answers, try to intuit this flow. What is the next right choice for you? Where are you being pulled toward? What are you being asked to leave behind?

Each image contains the small within the large. Sprinkle drops of water into a river, and they dissolve into the rushing current. But scoop your hand into the river again, and the water returns to its smaller droplets. Consider this when asking questions of your cards: What are the small parts of the issue at hand? What is the big picture? Could identifying either of those help you gain clarity?

If you get a card you don't connect with at first, consider the past, present and future of the image. Ask what conditions it took to get to this state. For example, if you pulled an image of a storm, ask where was your attention drawn that you didn't notice the dark clouds gathering on the horizon? Is there a shelter from this storm in the present moment, or are you already getting soaked? What do you imagine your future surroundings to look like once this storm passes? There is guidance here for the metaphorical storms that sometimes sweep through our lives.

Cards as Portals

The images in these cards are of actual places on Earth. Places where you could travel, feel the water at your toes, the sun on your face or the ice melt beneath your fingers.

Meditate using the image as a focus. Create art with the colors. Write a journal entry with a texture or sound as your prompt.

Ask yourself questions about the image:

Where are you in this image? Are you looking straight down, seeing the edge of the water roll up to your feet? Are you looking ahead, seeing the beach stretch out before you? Or are you flying high over it all, and seeing where the vast network of rivers and streams finally meet the sea?

Do you feel invited to interact with the water? Or would it be dangerous to get too close? Do you want to dip your hand into a gentle waterfall, or seek shelter from a looming storm?

Is it day or night? Bright or dark? Cloudy or light?

How are the other elements in the card shaped by water?

What is the next state for water to flow into? When will the river freeze? When will the snow melt?

Turn inward to discern what the card might be asking of you in the moment:

Is the card asking you to soften, to let things go and fall like rain?

Is the card asking you to make a journey off the beaten path, somewhere deep within, where you can reset and see your goals?

Is the card asking you to recognize when things are frozen in place, and you have no way to change it but to let it melt?

Is the card telling you a story? Where did the water in the image come from? Where is it going? Are there connections in the water story of the card to your own personal story?

Finally, check in with all your senses when viewing these images:

Are there things you can touch, sensations you can feel on your skin, if not the water itself? Are there sounds of gentle rain or birds in a forest? Can you see a wider view than you did before? Would the bite of cold shock you, or comfort you? Does the space smell like soft earthy forest, or does it smell like lightning in the air? Could you dip a cup into this water and be nourished?

Water is everywhere, around you and inside you at all times. And like a stream twisting and winding across the land, this deck is just the beginning of a journey. Your connection to water is not constrained to the message in these 78 images. It can be whatever you want. The Flow Tarot opens the way for the element of water to spill over its banks and flow into your life.

Questions about the the Flow Tarot

Why have the suit names been changed?

While most tarot decks are modeled on the cardinal elements (Wands - Fire, Pentacles - Earth, Cups - Water, Swords - Air), the Flow Tarot uses only forms of water in the suits. And because the water element has no use for things like wands or swords, the symbolism in this tarot was changed to terms better suited to a water deck:

Waves (Wands) salt water, active energy, world systems, life-supporting environments

Ponds (Pentacles) fresh water, resources, smaller networks, interconnectedness

Clouds (Cups) rain and clouds, emotions, unconditional nourishment, renewal

Snow (Swords) ice and snow, clarity, challenging situations, choices and acceptance

Which card names have been changed?

A few cards have been changed to better suit the water element as well:

The Floating One (The Hanged Man) a card of acceptance, of neutrality and of being in the truest state we can experience only in water: floating.

Darkness (Death) a card of transformation, because water does not die. It only transforms itself into another form to be renewed.

Balance (Temperance) a card of how living things adapt to the extreme cycles of water in a harsh environments

The Stars (The Star) a card of pathways and guidance, the balance between the self-lit creatures in the dark universe that is the sea, and their connection to the self-lit orbs hung in the dark universe beyond our atmosphere

Where are the humans?

There is one human in this deck...holding the cards. The human is you!

However, by intention, this deck has no other humans in the images, and no evidence of human activity or human-made environments. It is so you can see the water element as it was today or yesterday, a thousand years ago or a thousand years from now. It is the clear, undiluted expression of water on our planet, without any interference, reshaping or limiting from human activity.

All the images were curated (and many of them specifically created) to fulfill the connection between the card's meaning and an image of water on Earth. The deck is not an artistic rendering, instead made of photos and photo-realistic digital art, so that you can imagine becoming a part of this real place.

Why aren't there more animals?

The animals in this deck were chosen because they best represent the human side of the tarot. Their message is in how they use water or how they adapt to the changing environment. There are lessons for humans in how these animals learn to live at one with the various forms of the water element.

Why is gender in the cards when water doesn't have a gender?

Water is not gendered; it occupies all things equally, fully and unconditionally. It does not lose its essence when it moves from gentle dew to a rushing river. Keeping gender in the card names is an easy way to understand the kind of energy at work in the cards, either individually or in balance with one another. The female-gendered cards have more passive, encompassing or gently flowing energy. The male-gendered cards have more active, directed or surging energy. Gender in the Flow Tarot is simply an expression of energy.

Why aren't the Major Arcana numbered?

Words are messages. Numbers are measurements.

Writing numbers across the images makes our human minds instantly want to quantify, measure, order and ultimately limit. Water is not hierarchical. There is no top or bottom, no up or down. It will occupy as much space as it needs, changing its form to fill a vessel, and spreading out again when it pours out.

Leaving the numbers off can help you, in some small part, see where the gentle edges of the message might be rolling into one another. It reminds you to let that message spread into the spaces you are opening up.

And for this same reason, in the Minor Arcana cards the numbers are written out as words. It is a subtle reminder to let the essence of the water element flow through the suits. Don't focus on putting it in an order, instead listen for the message.

Why isn't there a greater emphasis on shadow and light?

Water can sometimes have a negative impact on humans. However, water does not have a negative or positive side. A good or bad. Even when tragedies happen, water is not intentionally harmful to humans.

Each suite contains within it aspects of water that would be harmful to humans. You could freeze in the snow, drown in an ocean, be struck by lightning from a cloud, or die of thirst in a desert.

The shadow is there, along with the light. The two are inseparable.

When reading these cards, listen for the message that might speak to the shadow side of an issue you are confronting. Use the key words on the card to gain insight into a new perspective. Ask questions that shine light into the dark: Are you being nourished in this situation? Can you find a shelter from the storm? How can you break the ice and continue to grow? How can you flow around this obstacle?