

“So Many Presentations, So Little Time!”

Submitted by Anthony Barnhart

The Gathering 4 Gardner has to be the most diverse conference in the world. The conference attracts participants from a host of different fields. While there's no question that participants are enthralled for the *entire* conference, every person has one set of talks that they look forward above all others. Let's use a rather unique, magical method to ensure that you'll find a talk that interests you at this year's conference! Imagine that there are **10** talks happening over the course of a day, but you only have time to attend the one that interests you the most. Please gather 12 slips of paper of any size and a pen...I'll give you a moment to do so.

Set two of the slips aside. We won't need them until much later.

You may be interested in talks about *art*...Whether it be performance art like magic or the art of optical illusion. On one of the slips, right the word "**ART**." Leave this piece of paper on the table, with the writing facing up.

You may be more interested in the scientific or mathematical topics at the G4G. These talks are usually about solving problems of some kind, so write "**PROBLEMS**" on another slip and put it on top of "ART."

You may not care for the experimental side of problem solving (nobody's perfect!), opting instead to focus on mathematical problems. So, write the word "**MATH**" on another slip of paper and add it to the top of the pile.

As a magician and a psychological scientist, I find myself most attracted to the illusions, so write "**ILLUSIONS**" on the next slip and put it on top of the "MATH" slip.

Illusions need not be only sensory. Illusions can also happen solely in your mind. These cognitive illusions often constitute the work of a magician. Write "**MAGIC**" on another slip and add it to the top of the pile.

One trait that's probably shared across the diverse attendees of the G4G is a healthy skepticism that naturally falls out of an awareness of science, mathematics, and illusion. Please write "**SKEPTICISM**" on the next slip and place it on top of the pile.

Skeptics typically don't believe in miracles. They believe that any *miracle* is likely to have a natural cause, and many so-called miracles involve some kind of trickery. Write "**TRICKS**" on a slip and place it on top of "SKEPTICISM."

Although I've suggest a lot of categories for talks at the G4G, you may not have a preference for any of them. You may just be interested in attending talks that are interesting. On the next slip, write "**INTERESTING**" and add it to the pile.

Finally, puzzles of all sorts are ubiquitous at the G4G. On the next slip, write "**PUZZLES**" and add it to the pile.

On the final slip of paper, write "I PREFER TO HEAR _____ TALKS" and write your favorite category from above in the blank. Keep in mind that some things are naturally plural, like *tricks*,

puzzles, and *illusions*, while others are singular. Set this slip aside and pick up the other nine. Make two piles as follows: Take the top slip, which has the word "PUZZLES," and set it to your left on the table. Set the next slip to your right. The next one, "TRICKS," goes on top of the first--then another on top of the second--and so forth with the rest of the slips as if dealing hands of cards.

The word "ART" is on one of the slips that ended up on top. Take that pile of slips and drop it on top of the "PROBLEMS" pile. Turn the whole pile over, so that the writing faces down. Take the bottom slip, with "ART" on it, and imagine that the table has a clock drawn on it. Since this is the **10th Gathering 4 Gardner**, place this slip, writing side down, at the imaginary 10 o'clock position on the clock.

Take the next slip from the bottom, which is "MATH," and set it writing down at the 11 o'clock position. Continue removing slips from the bottom of the pile and placing them at the appropriate clock positions, moving clockwise. You'll run out of slips at 6 o'clock. Set the "I PREFER" slip at 7 o'clock. Then use the two blank slips to fill the remaining clock positions.

Put your finger on the "I PREFER" slip. Think of the category you most prefer, and, starting with the slip at the 8 o'clock position, spell the name of this category, moving your finger clockwise from one slip to the next for each letter. For example, if you want "MAGIC," you'll spell the "M" on the slip at 8 o'clock, the "A" on the slip at 9 o'clock, and so on. Stop on the last letter of the word.

Keep your finger on the slip you reached. Gather the rest of the slips in any order and put them away in a separate pile. Turn over the slip under your finger and see if it matches the type of talk that you'd most like to see at the G4G. If so, I hope to see you there! Amazing!

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Adapted from Tamariz, J. & Navarro, G. (2008). Barbecue party. *Verbal Magic* (pp. 73-76). Seattle, WA: Hermetic Press, Inc.

Note from Tamariz and Navarro (2008), p. 76:

This trick uses the idea of progressive spelling: the principle of employing words or names, each of which has one more letter than the previous one. The principle dates back at least to the 1920s. Dr. James Elliott may have been the first to employ it. Another principle active here is that of "The Tapping Trick" or "Tapping the Hours," which appears in texts as far back as the late fifteenth century. Early descriptions of it appear in Luca Pacioli's "De viribus quantitatis" (1486-1509) and Horatio Galasso's "Giochi di carte" (1593). The innovation of using pieces of paper with words on them almost certainly belongs to Stewart James, who used it in "The Last Drink," in the August 1962 issue of "New Tops" (Vol. 2, No. 8, p. 18).