



QUINTA THOUGHTS

Here are some ideas for Phill Smith's Quinta procedure that I've found useful in the few years that I have been utilizing the technique. They're technically pretty small additions, but I like them.

I think the Quinta technique is fairly perfect, but when I can, I like to add these touches to make it even more perfect (for my tastes). What these changes will allow you to do is spell out what's going to happen before you even get the number, seemingly in explicit detail. It lets you tell your spectator, "We'll start with the coin on the far left. That will be 'one' and we'll count the objects—'one, two, three'—back and forth until we get to your number."

This is a combination of a physical and verbal subterfuge. The verbal subterfuge allows you to always use the basic count. And the physical subterfuge allows you to always start on the left side. These can be used separately or together.

### **Physical Subterfuge**

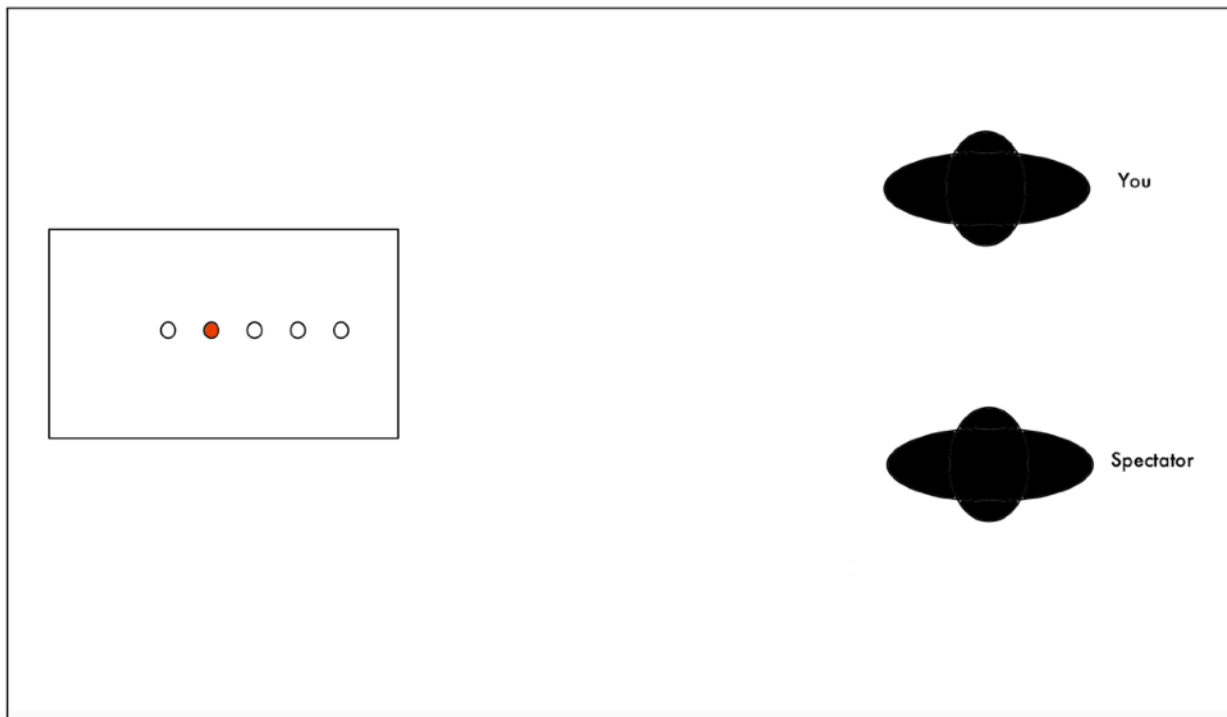
I've had a couple times while using Quinta that someone would make a remark about counting from right to left. For some people this feels unusual (I'm guessing it has to do with the direction we read. Is that usually the direction we count in too? I'm not sure.) And if a couple people expressed that to me out loud, then it's quite possible a certain percentage felt that way but didn't say anything.

So, ideally, I wanted to start from the left. And I wanted to announce that from the beginning. The obvious idea is that if you count from *your* left of *their* left, you can always make it work. The problem became that I would say at the beginning, "And we'll use whatever number you say and count from left to right," and so on. But if you're sitting on the opposite side of the table from someone, and they're actually paying attention to you at this point, I found I had people saying, "My left or your left?" You see, they thought I was saying something of importance and they wanted to get the details correct.

Then I realized I could easily get away with switching sides of the table by just not starting the effect anywhere near the objects to be counted. And starting far away

can seem like a precautionary thing. Like, “I’m not going to come anywhere near the set-up.”

So, what you do is set up your five objects in a row, with the force object at the second position from the left. Now imagine a line that comes off from the end of that row of objects and continues across the room. You want to start the effect standing on the other side of the room, positioned so that imaginary line divides you from your spectator.



Once you know if (in the standard Quinta parlance) you have a left-start or right-start number, you will just orient yourself in the way that will match up with how you will count.

For example:

If the number is a “left side” start number, you would swivel yourself so you’re standing side-by-side with your participant. Then you’ll point in the air in front of you both and say, “Okay, sixteen. Remember I said we’d start with the leftmost

coin, that will be number one, then two, and so on, and we'll count back and forth to the number you chose." You'll move your finger along in the air, demonstrating the counting that's about to take place. You're both facing the same direction in a pretty natural way. Now you just gesture to the table and it makes sense to walk over to the table and face it in the same orientation you're in now.

If the number is a "right side" number. Just say, "Okay, fourteen," and start walking towards the table and orient yourself on the "right" side (your side) of the table. Wave your spectator along to stand side-by-side with you. This feels very natural. You're the one leading this demonstration, so it makes sense for you to walk over to the closest side of the table.

In both cases the physical actions will bring you to the side of the table that feels correct to the participant. In the "left side" one, it would be weird to cross over to the other side of the table once you're both facing the same direction. In the "right side" version, you take the most direct route to the table for yourself and your participant follows. Again, it would be more strange for you to walk over to that person's side.

One last thing I've tried is covering the objects with a cloth or something. That way, when you're describing how you're going to go over to the table and start counting the objects from left to right, they have no clue what orientation the objects are in (whether they're perpendicular or parallel to how each of you are standing). I like that because there's no way for them to get ahead of the situation. So they won't necessarily have a clear picture in their mind of the process to come, despite it feeling like you're being very explicit. "Over there on the table, under the cloth, are five pennies. We're going to go over to the table. *You* can remove the cloth and I won't touch anything. I'm just going to start at the left and count along the row of pennies, 1, 2, 3...."

Obviously you won't be able to set up the choice like this all the time. You might not have the room to establish distance between yourself and the objects to be

selected. You need a good 10 feet or so to make it make sense. But when I can do it like this, I almost always do.

### **Verbal Subterfuge**

This is a way of doing the “increase by one, decrease by one” for odd numbers, in a way that seems like you’ve mentioned this procedure before the number was even named.

Here’s what I say to them. First I introduce that we’re going to have one of five objects selected. Then I justify why we’re going to select it in the way we are. “If I just had you pick an object, you might think there is one object that everyone goes for. Or perhaps there’s a position in the row that everyone is drawn towards. Instead I’m going to have you pick any number between 1 and 100, and we’ll do something random with the number and use it to count along the objects. We’ll start with the object on the far left. That will be ‘one’ and we’ll count them—‘one, two, three’—back and forth until we get to your number. And whatever object is at your chosen number will be the one we’ll use.”

You probably won’t say “objects” so much, but that’s just because I don’t know what you’ll actually be using in your effect.

What we’re relying on here is the dual nature of the phrase: “we’ll do something random with the number.”

That can me, “We’ll do something random *to* the number.”

Or

“We’ll do something random *utilizing* the number.”

**If they name an even number.**

Then the meaning of the opening statement is “I’m going to have you pick any number between 1 and 100, and we’ll do something random with the number by using it to count along the objects.” In other words, you’re going to use their number to pick a random object. You don’t need to go back and reframe what you stated originally because it’s completely in line with the actions to come. Just go and do what you said.

**If they name an odd number.**

Then the meaning of the opening statement is “I’m going to have you pick any number between 1 and 100. And we’ll do something random with the number. [Period] And use it to count along the objects.”

In other words you’re going to do something random *to* the number and then use that figure to count along the objects.

That random action will be flipping a coin to decide if you’ll go up or down one number. I think this may be something Phill considered before but didn’t run with. In this context, though, it works perfectly.

So, let’s say they say 15.

“Fifteen? Okay, great. Now I mentioned we’re going to do something random with your number because when we’re done I don’t want you to say, ‘Oh, maybe *everybody* says 15.’ So take out a coin and flip it. If it lands heads up, we’ll go up one number. If it lands tails up we’ll go down one number. So we know there’s no way anyone could have predicted the number we’d end up on.”

They flip the coin and you proceed, e.g., “Okay, tails, so that means we’ll go down to 14. And I mentioned we’d use that number to count the objects from left to right and back and forth,” etc., etc.

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As I mentioned, these two techniques can be used together or separately.

Depending on the number they choose you should be able to set your physical orientation almost instantly, unless they choose an odd number that will change from a left-side to right-side count depending on if you go up or down one.

It may seem like a small thing to be able to tell them which side you're going to start from and how you're going to count. And I don't actually know how much it adds to the effect. But I've explained this idea to other Quinta users and, whether they think it's a significant development or not at first, I've found that almost everyone who implements one or both of these changes has a hard time going back because it feels so fair to be able to outline everything to come at the top of the effect.

Finally, one last idea. If you do a version that uses the bounce count, Phill recommends having an item to count along with. And in the Quinta manuscript he mentions a chess piece. For me, carrying around a chess piece has an air of intellectualism that I would want to avoid. "Ahhhh..., the chess match that is *life*, my dear boy!" Or something like that. And then you use the chess piece to *count* which may come off looking dumber because that's not how chess pieces are used.

Instead, I would recommend the humble game piece. It doesn't have the symbolic connotations of a chess piece (which, for me, is a good thing), and it's something that's naturally used to count out moves.

I lied, that wasn't "finally." This is. I haven't tried this myself, but let's say you eliminate the basic count instead of eliminating the bounce count, by always having them end up on an odd number. Then you could have a row of cards (for example) with a game piece on *both* ends. Let's say this is covered with a sheet of newspaper. Then instead of talking about "starting from the left," or whatever, you



could just pluck off the newspaper **and** the game piece on the side you *don't* want to start from in the same motion. (So they only see one game piece resting on one end card, as if that was the sole “starting” position.) We're getting far afield from a totally impromptu effect, but I can see some situations where it might be a viable option.

Thanks again to Phill for the fantastic technique he gave to the community.