

IM INTERVAL MAGIC

BILL IN LEMON

What They See

The magician shows a lemon, lime, and orange and asks a volunteer to eliminate two of them by giving them to members of the audience. He then asks the volunteer to put the remaining piece of fruit (i.e., the lemon) into a clear plastic bag and hold it for everyone to see throughout the performance. The magician then borrows a dollar bill from someone in the audience, writes down its serial number, and makes the bill disappear. To everyone's astonishment, the dollar is found rolled up inside the center of the lemon. The serial number on the bill matches the one the magician wrote down earlier.



What They Don't See

The magician forces the volunteer to choose the lemon using the *Magician's Choice* (see the separate section below). Unknown to the audience, the lemon is already prepared with the dollar bill rolled up inside of it. The borrowed bill, which the magician folds into eighths and places into a coin envelope, looks like it disappears because the envelope is secretly switched for one that contains a fake \$100 bill with "I owe you \$1" written on it.

What You Need

- Three one-dollar bills in good condition
- Lemon with pedicel (the little stem stump)
- Lime
- Orange
- Stack of 10 or so 2¼ x 3½" coin envelopes
- Small rubber band

- Fake \$100 bill or piece of green paper cut to the size of a dollar
- Bowl to hold lemon, lime, orange
- Rubber cement
- Pointed wooden candy-apple stick
- Clear plastic zipper bag
- Cheese spreader with serrated edge to cut lemon
- Pencil
- Ballpoint pen (black ink)
- Black Sharpie marker
- Scissors
- Pocketknife
- Napkins



What Skills Are Used

Showmanship is the most important skill used for Bill in Lemon. Throughout the entire performance, remain relaxed and confident to hold interest and to build up to the climax of the bill being inside the lemon. This confidence works well when using the *Magician's Choice* to force the lemon (see below).

What to Do

Preparation

1. Decide which dollar bill will end up in the lemon. With a ballpoint pen, write the bill's serial number on the back of one of the coin envelopes toward the bottom (Figure 1). We'll call this envelope the *regular* envelope.



Figure 1: Write bill's serial number on envelope

2. On a fake dollar bill (or a blank green piece of paper), write boldly and legibly with a Sharpie marker the following: "I OWE YOU \$1.00." Fold the fake bill into eighths with the writing inward (Figure 2) and put it deep inside the regular envelope (the envelope with the serial number you prepared in Step 1 above).



Figure 2: Write "I OWE YOU \$1.00" and fold

3. Get another envelope and use the scissors to carefully cut off the gummed flap just *below the open top edge*. To do this, cut in a *slightly curved* line from corner to corner. Don't cut off too much but just enough so when the envelope is put on top of a stack of open-flapped envelopes, the missing flap is not noticed (the flap on the *second* envelope from the top will look like the first envelope's flap). You can throw out the cut-off flap. We'll call the flapless envelope the *gimmicked* envelope (Figure 3). With a pencil, *lightly* write the same serial number as you did in Step 1 on the back of this gimmicked envelope in the same position and in the same style as you did on the regular envelope. The pencil writing will not be visible to the audience. During the routine, you'll use the ballpoint pen to trace over the penciled-in number. More on that later.



Figure 3: Cut off flap and discard

4. Get the 10 coin envelopes, open all the flaps, and put the envelopes in a squared stack, face up (seams side up). Place the regular envelope (the one you wrote the serial number on in Step 1) on top of the stack in the same direction as all the other envelopes so the serial number is uppermost. On top of that, place the gimmicked envelope (the one you cut the flap off of and the one that has the penciled-in serial number) in the same direction. Since that envelope doesn't have a flap, you'll notice the flap of the next envelope down looks as if it belongs to the top (flapless, gimmicked) envelope. Take a small rubber band and wrap it around the stack of envelopes (Figure 4).

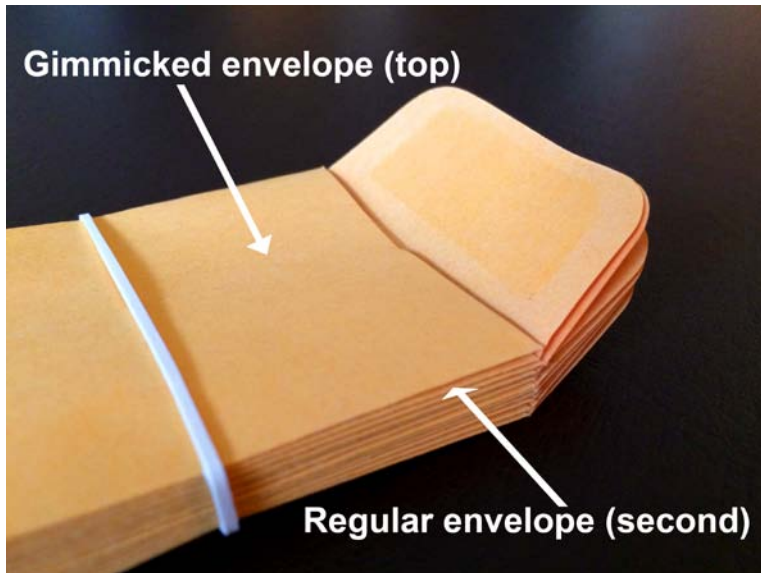


Figure 4: Position of two prepared envelopes

5. Get the lemon. With the pocketknife, carefully remove the pedicel (the little hard green/brown stem stump or “cap”) and set it aside; don’t throw it away (Figure 5).

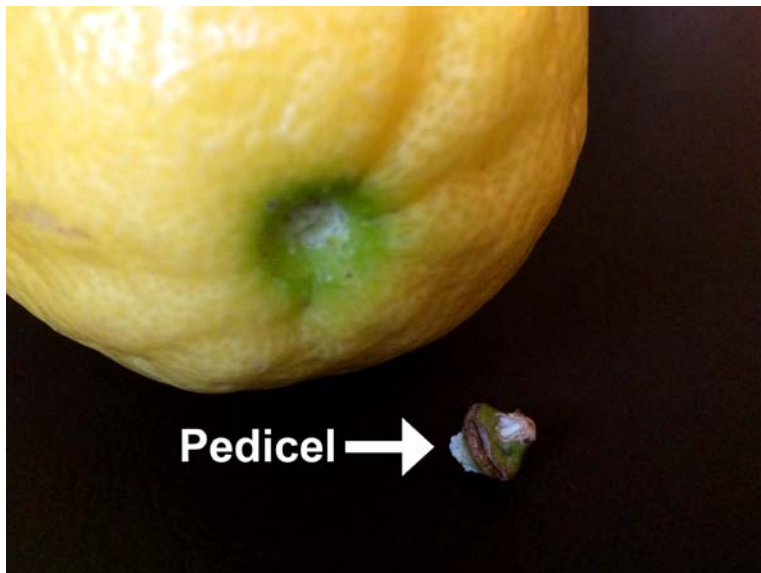


Figure 5: Remove pedicel (small stem stump)

6. Poke a caramel-apple stick (a thin, wooden, pointed stick) or a *thin* pen or pencil deep into the lemon lengthwise starting at the point where you removed the stem. Be sure not to push the stick all the way through the lemon; stop just short of the other end (Figure 6). Pull out the stick.

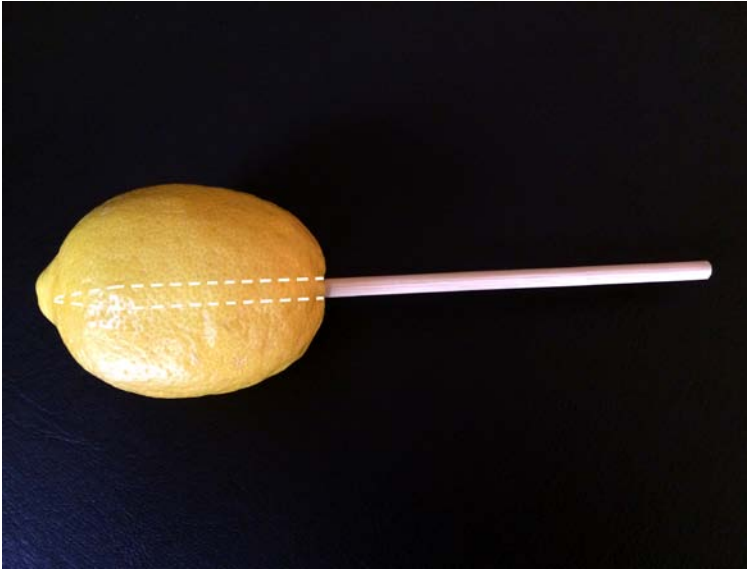
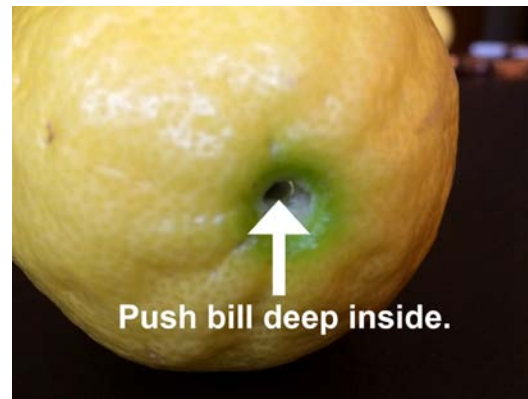


Figure 6: Poke deep hole with thin wooden stick

7. Get the dollar bill you want to put into the lemon (the one whose serial number you wrote down). Roll it up as tightly as you can and push it completely into the lemon (Figures 7 and 7a). Be careful not to bend the bill when you're doing this. You don't need to twist the bill when inserting it. Just firmly push it in until you can't see it.



Figures 7 and 7a: Push rolled bill deep into lemon and glue stem back on

8. Use the rubber cement to glue the pedicel (stem/cap) back onto the lemon. You want it to be glued firmly in place, so the best way to do that is to coat both surfaces with the rubber cement first, let the glue dry, and then position the pedicel so it completely covers the hole you made. You also can use plastic-model glue, but it takes two hours to dry.
9. Place the lemon, lime, and orange into a bowl large enough to hold all three but small enough so the tops of the fruits are visible to the audience. Place the bowl, the stack of envelopes, the ballpoint pen, the cheese spreader, and the plastic zipper bag on your table. Place two semi-new one-dollar bills and a couple of napkins into your pocket. You're now ready to perform!

Performance

1. Invite a volunteer from the audience to join you onstage.
2. Force the prepared lemon using the *Magician's Choice* (see the separate section on that below) and have the volunteer give the lime and orange to two different people in the audience. Make sure they're responsible people who won't play with the fruit during your performance or throw it at you.
3. Ask the volunteer to put the lemon into the clear bag, zip it closed, and hold it so everyone can see it.
4. Borrow a one-dollar bill from someone in the audience. Say something like, "Make sure the bill is not too beat up. This is a class act, after all." You say this because you want the borrowed bill to be in about the same condition as the one rolled up inside the lemon. (In the unlikely event someone in the audience doesn't have a dollar bill to lend to you, pull one from your pocket and clearly show it to everyone.)
5. As you point to the lemon in the bag, joke to the person you borrowed the bill from, "If anything bad happens to your dollar bill, it's okay because you get to keep this beautiful lemon!"
6. Clip the borrowed dollar bill between the index and middle fingers of your left hand so your other fingers are free to hold the envelopes in that hand. Pick up the ballpoint pen and rubber-banded stack of envelopes face up, with the seam side toward you (Figure 8). Write the serial number on the lower part of the top (gimmicked) envelope by tracing over the number you penciled in earlier, but don't tell the audience what you're writing. Say, "I'm going to write something down, and you'll see what it is in a moment."



Figure 8: Position before you trace serial number

7. Hold on to the bill but put down the stack of envelopes and pen. Fold the dollar bill in eighths as follows, using crisp folds: first in half lengthwise, then in half again the same way, then up or down to complete the fold so it's in a little rectangle that matches the size of the fake dollar bill in the regular envelope.
8. Pick up the stack of envelopes. Holding the stack in your left hand seams side up toward the audience, insert the folded bill into the uppermost (flapless gimmicked) envelope with your right hand, but let the bill stick out of the open top about halfway, pausing for a moment or two so the audience clearly sees it (Figure 9). *Slowly* push the bill deep into the envelope so everyone can clearly see it go in. As you do this, be sure the audience doesn't see that there is no flap on that top envelope.



Figure 9: Push bill into top (flapless) envelope

9. While the audience is still looking at that side of the envelope, with your right thumb and index finger, pinch the uppermost gummed flap (the one that looks as if it belongs to the gimmicked envelope). Start turning that side of the stack of envelopes away from the audience just as you start pulling the flap straight up and sliding that envelope completely out of the stack (Figure 10). The timing here is important. It must look exactly as if you removed the top envelope, so be sure to turn the stack away from the audience's view *just before* you pull up on the flap. The illusion is perfect. Casually toss the stack of envelopes on your table with the smooth side up or just place it into your pocket.



Figure 10: Pull second envelope up and out

- 10.** At this point, the audience thinks you just removed the top envelope with the borrowed dollar bill inside. Instead, you removed the second envelope from the top—the envelope that has the fake “I owe you” bill inside. Hand the envelope you just removed to the person in the audience you borrowed the bill from and ask him to hold it up to the light so he can see the silhouette of the fake bill inside. He’ll think it’s the bill he lent to you earlier.
- 11.** Ask the volunteer, “Would you be impressed if I could make the borrowed dollar bill inside that envelope disappear, travel invisibly through the air, and land inside the plastic bag right in front of the lemon?” The volunteer will say yes. Pause, then say, “So would I.” This line gets a little laugh. Continue, “But it’s true. It’s going to disappear from the envelope in three seconds! One! Two! Three!” Say to the person who’s holding the envelope, “Hold the envelope up to the light! Is the dollar bill gone? No? Well that’s okay. Do me a favor and tear off the top edge of the envelope so you can look inside. Is anything in there? Yes? Take it out. A \$100-dollar bill! Wow! Looks like you made some money! Unfold it and read aloud what’s written on it.” He reads it: “I owe you.” You continue, “Hold it up for everyone to see, and hang on to that envelope because we’ll need it in a minute.”
- 12.** “So as you can see, the dollar bill has disappeared, traveled invisibly through the air, and landed inside the bag in front of the lemon!” you say as you look at the bag and gesture toward it. Pretend to suddenly notice that the dollar bill is not there. “Wait! That doesn’t make any sense!” Pause for a moment, then say, “Wait a second. I think I know what happened. The magic was stronger than I thought it would be. Amy [or whatever your onstage volunteer’s name is], please slowly remove the lemon from the bag and hand it to me.” As you say that, pick up the cheese spreader and slowly take the lemon from the

volunteer, keeping it in the audience's site the whole time. "Watch!" you say.

13. With a sawing action, slowly start to cut the lemon in half, but saw only halfway because you don't want to cut the dollar bill in half (Figure 11). When the spreader blade reaches the bill, keep putting pressure on the spreader as you rotate the lemon and continue to cut it in half. When finished cutting, *slowly* pull both lemon halves apart to reveal the rolled-up dollar bill inside (Figure 12). The bill will be sticking out of one of the halves; discard the other half in the bowl and hold the other half high for all to see. This is an amazing moment, so pause and look directly at the bill for drama. You might even want to walk into the audience to show a few people. If you do that, don't take too long, and be sure no one removes the dollar bill from the lemon.



Figure 11: Cut lemon in half around bill



Figure 12: Show bill in lemon

14. Walk over to the person in the audience who's still holding the envelope. Say to him, "What do you see?" He'll say he sees the rolled bill inside the lemon. "Slowly pull out the bill," you say. He pulls it out. "Unroll it. Now, remember me writing something on the envelope earlier? You'll notice it's a series of numbers: A serial number! Please read it loudly so everyone can hear as you compare it to the serial number on the bill you just removed from the lemon." He reads it aloud. "Does it match?" you ask. He says it does. Reach into your pocket, remove a napkin and one of the new dollar bills, and hand them to him as you say, "Here, I'll take the wet dollar bill. You can have this dry one. Give my two volunteers a round of applause for helping!"

Magician's Choice

The *Magician's Choice* is a classic method of forcing one of several objects on a volunteer. In the Bill in Lemon routine, you will use the *Magician's Choice* to force the prepared lemon. Follow the steps below, and the end result will always be that the volunteer onstage will be left with the lemon while the lime and orange are discarded and given to people in the audience.

1. Have the orange, lemon, and lime on the table. It doesn't really matter what order they're in, but I usually have the lemon in the center.
2. As you gesture with both hands, say to the volunteer, "Pick up two of these pieces of fruit..." Depending on which two they pick up, follow up with **one** of the following:
 - **If she picks up the lime and orange**, *immediately* say, "...and give them to different people in the audience. We won't need them."
 - **If she picks up the lemon and another piece of fruit**, *immediately* say, "...and hand one of those to me." Depending on which one she hands to you, follow up with **one** of the following:
 - **If she hands you the lemon**, immediately say, "Great! We no longer need the lime and the orange, so why don't you give those to two people in the audience to keep as souvenirs?"
 - **If she hands you the other piece of fruit (lime or orange)**, *immediately* say, "Great! Hang on to the lemon; we no longer need the lime and the orange," then quickly pick up the other piece of fruit from the table (lime or orange), walk into the audience, and give the lime and orange to two different people.

3. At this point, no matter how things play out above, the lime and the orange will always be eliminated and given to someone in the audience, leaving the lemon on the table, in your hand, or in the volunteer's hand. In any of those cases, say, "You've eliminated the lime and the orange, leaving the lemon."
4. Pick up the lemon and put it inside the clear bag, zip it closed, and hand it to the volunteer. Say, "Now, hold up the bag so everyone can see inside." Continue with the Bill in Lemon as instructed above.

Clarification

Do you see how the *Magician's Choice* works? No matter what happens, the volunteer always ends up with the lemon. The most important thing to keep in mind while performing the *Magician's Choice* is that you have to respond confidently and *immediately* after each of the volunteer's choices so she and the rest of the audience think the process of elimination you're using is logical. Any hesitation or doubt will create suspicion. So the moment you know which piece(s) of fruit they choose, respond immediately with your next instruction.

Examples of Five Possible Scenarios:

<p>Scenario 1: She picks up the lime and the orange.</p>	<p>"Pick up two of these pieces of fruit [she picks up the lime and the orange] and give them to different people in the audience to keep as souvenirs. We won't need them. [She walks into the audience and gives someone the lime and the orange.] You've eliminated the lime and the orange, leaving the lemon." [You put the lemon into the bag and hand it to the volunteer.]</p>
<p>Scenario 2: She picks up the lemon and lime, then hands you the lemon.</p>	<p>"Pick up two of these pieces of fruit [she picks up the lemon and the lime] and hand one of them to me [she hands you the lemon]. Great! We no longer need the lime and the orange, so why don't you give those to two people in the audience to keep as souvenirs?" [She walks into the audience and gives someone the lime and the orange.] You've eliminated the lime and the orange, leaving the lemon." [You put the lemon into the bag and hand it to the volunteer.]</p>
<p>Scenario 3: She picks up the lemon and lime, then hands you the lime.</p>	<p>"Pick up two of these pieces of fruit [she picks up the lemon and the lime] and hand one of them to me [she hands you the lime]. Great! Hang on to the lemon; we no longer need the lime and the orange. I'll give them to two lucky people in the audience." [You walk into the audience and give someone the lime and the orange.] You've eliminated the lime and the orange, leaving the lemon." [You put the lemon into the bag and hand it to the volunteer.]</p>
<p>Scenario 4: She picks up the lemon and orange, then hands you the</p>	<p>"Pick up two of these pieces of fruit [she picks up the lemon and the orange] and hand one of them to me [she hands you the lemon]. Great! We no longer need the lime and the orange, so why don't you give those to two people in the audience to keep as souvenirs?" [She walks into the audience and gives someone the lime and the orange.] You've eliminated the lime and the</p>

lemon.	orange, leaving the lemon.” [You put the lemon into the bag and hand it to the volunteer.]
Scenario 5: She picks up the lemon and orange, then hands you the orange.	“Pick up two of these pieces of fruit [she picks up the lemon and the orange] and hand one of those to me [she hands you the orange]. Great! Hang on to the lemon; we no longer need the lime and the orange. I’ll give them to two lucky people in the audience.” [You walk into the audience and give someone the lime and the orange.] You’ve eliminated the lime and the orange, leaving the lemon.” [You put the lemon into the bag and hand it to the volunteer.]

Alternate Idea

Instead of using the envelopes, you could simply borrow a dollar bill, write the serial number on a large pad (tracing over the penciled numbers as you did in Step 6 of the *Performance* instructions above), burn the actual borrowed bill with a lighter, reveal that the bill has “magically” traveled to the lemon, and have the person in the audience read the serial number off the dollar bill as you show the number you wrote on the pad earlier. If you choose to use this alternate idea, make sure you’re allowed to use a lighter in the venue where you perform.

Credit

The Bill in Lemon, first published in 1909 in *The Art of Magic*, by T. Nelson Downs (1867–1938), pp. 315–317, was popularized by Emil Jarrow (1875–1959), a vaudeville performer who made it a feature of his act. Since then, magicians have performed many versions of the effect. The one described here is designed for beginning magicians because there are no difficult sleight-of-hand moves to master. This version is published in *Mark Wilson’s Complete Course in Magic*, pp. 230–234; however, I’ve added a few original bits.



If you have any questions, please contact Tom Interval at tom@intervalmagic.com. You can download a digital copy (PDF) of these instructions by typing the following link into your Internet browser: http://www.intervalmagic.com/docs/handout_billinlemon.pdf.