

# UP THROUGH

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## UP THROUGH

**Primary Disciplinary Field(s):** Parapsychology, Experimental Psychology (Testing Methods)

### 1. Core Definition

The **Up Through** procedure represents a specialized and rigorously controlled methodological approach utilized within the field of parapsychology to investigate claims of clairvoyance, a form of extrasensory perception (ESP). This method is distinctively designed to eliminate potential confounding variables, particularly those associated with direct observation or precognition, ensuring that any successful results point specifically toward the purported ability to perceive objects or events hidden from the physical senses. At its essence, the test involves a subject attempting to determine the sequence of a sealed or otherwise obscured deck of cards.

Central to the Up Through test is the requirement that the subject attempts to name the cards in a specific, non-standard sequence. Whereas most standard card-calling tests proceed sequentially from the top card downwards, the Up Through method reverses this expected order. The participant is required to state the order of the cards in a stacked, stationary deck starting from the card at the very bottom and proceeding sequentially upward to the card resting on the top of the stack. This specific procedural constraint is crucial for the conceptual validity of the test, as it requires the subject to access non-sensory information in a manner that defies typical expectations of physical interaction with the deck.

The utilization of a stacked deck of **Zener cards**--standardized cards featuring five distinct geometric symbols (star, circle, cross, square, and waves)--is standard practice in this methodology. By employing a known, statistically quantifiable set of targets, researchers can establish clear baseline probabilities for chance success. The Up Through designation refers directly to the directional movement of the psychic perception being tested, forcing the alleged clairvoyant ability to penetrate multiple layers of physical material (the cards themselves) starting from the base of the physical stack, thereby creating a highly challenging scenario for demonstrating genuine ESP.

### 2. Context: Testing for Clairvoyance

Clairvoyance, defined as the ability to gain information about an object, person, location, or physical event through means other than the known human senses, demands testing protocols that rigorously exclude sensory leakage or the possibility of inferential reasoning. The Up Through test was developed specifically to isolate this faculty from other forms of ESP, such as **telepathy** (mind-to-mind communication) or **precognition** (seeing the future). In a pure clairvoyance test setting, there is no sender (as in telepathy) and the target sequence is fixed and pre-determined,

thereby minimizing the chance of precognitively predicting a sequence that has yet to be physically handled or recorded.

In standard, less-controlled clairvoyance tests, a subject might call a card that is about to be turned over. If the card is called correctly, the result could theoretically be attributed to either true clairvoyance (perceiving the hidden card) or precognition (predicting which card the experimenter will expose next). The Up Through test sidesteps this ambiguity by using a deck that remains sealed and untouched throughout the entire calling process. The sequence is fixed and the subject must penetrate the entire physical barrier of the stack to name the cards in the prescribed bottom-to-top order, thus targeting only the ability to perceive matter hidden from sight.

The inherent difficulty of the Up Through method serves as a strong control mechanism. The stringent requirement to name the sequence starting from the bottom card adds a layer of complexity that is intentionally punitive to chance guessing. Statistically, the likelihood of a high success rate is identical to any random calling method (1 in 5 chance per card, or 1 in 3,125,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for a 25-card deck called perfectly), but psychologically, the bottom-to-top instruction introduces a procedural hurdle that challenges the typical linearity of card handling and perception, potentially inhibiting non-genuine cognitive strategies.

### 3. Etymology and Methodology

The term **Up Through** is purely descriptive of the process required of the subject. It signifies the directional attempt to psychically 'read' the deck, moving against gravity and the typical human handling of stacked materials. This nomenclature contrasts implicitly with the more common "down through" or "top-down" methodologies where cards are called in the order they are typically dealt or exposed.

Methodologically, the Up Through test requires painstaking preparation to ensure the sequence of the stacked deck is genuinely unknown to all parties, including the experimenter, until the completion of the trial. The deck is typically pre-shuffled mechanically or using a computerized random number generator, stacked, sealed in an opaque envelope or container, and placed on a surface before the subject begins calling. The integrity of the physical stacking and sealing process is paramount, as any sensory leakage--even subtle differences in card thickness or alignment--could compromise the validity of the results.

The precise protocol dictates that the participant provides a list of twenty-five calls (assuming a standard Zener deck) corresponding to the sequence from the base card upwards. Once the subject has submitted their complete list of calls, the deck is then opened and the actual physical order of the cards is recorded and compared against the subject's predictions. The matching must be exact in both symbol and position (e.g., the subject's first call must match the bottom-most

card).

#### 4. Procedural Mechanics of the Up Through Test

The following steps detail the typical standardized protocol utilized when conducting the Up Through test:

**Preparation of Targets:** A standard deck of 25 Zener cards is randomized, usually via mechanical or computational shuffling, ensuring a statistically sound distribution of the five symbols.

**Stacking and Sealing:** The cards are stacked precisely and placed into an opaque container or sealed envelope. The sequence of the cards remains unknown to the subject and, ideally, to the experimenter during the calling phase.

**Instruction:** The subject is explicitly instructed that they must name the cards sequentially, starting with the card that is at the very **bottom** of the physical stack and proceeding upwards until the card at the **top** is named.

**The Calling Phase:** The subject records their 25 responses in the bottom-to-top order. No feedback or correction is permitted during this phase.

**Verification:** Only after the list is complete is the sealed container opened. The actual order of the cards is recorded, starting with the bottom card, and compared meticulously against the subject's list of calls.

**Scoring:** The final score is the total number of hits (correct symbol and correct position), which is then compared against the expected mean chance score (typically 5 hits per 25 trials).

#### 5. Statistical Basis and Scoring

Like all quantitative parapsychological experiments utilizing Zener cards, the Up Through test relies on fundamental probability theory to assess performance. The expectation under the null hypothesis (that no ESP is present) is that the subject's scores will hover around the mean chance expectation (MCE) of 5 correct hits out of 25 trials. Since there are five possible symbols, the probability of guessing any single card correctly is  $1/5$ , or 20%.

To demonstrate statistically significant evidence of clairvoyance, a subject must achieve a scoring rate that exceeds the MCE by a margin large enough to render the result highly unlikely to have occurred by random chance alone (typically  $p < 0.05$ ). Researchers employ standard statistical methods, such as the binomial distribution or z-scores, to determine if the observed deviation from the mean is meaningful. Because the sequence is pre-determined and fixed, the statistical analysis is straightforward, focusing purely on the correspondence between the submitted list and the physical reality of the stack.

However, the quote provided in the source content--"The up through test delivered substantially failing results"--suggests a typical outcome in parapsychological studies where, despite rigorous

controls, subjects generally fail to score above the chance level. This outcome reinforces the skepticism surrounding the reproducibility and validity of clairvoyant claims under experimental conditions. A "substantially failing result" indicates that scores were either at or below the expected mean chance expectation, providing no evidence to support the hypothesis that the subject possessed clairvoyant abilities capable of perceiving the hidden, stacked sequence.

## 6. Significance in Parapsychology

The importance of the Up Through methodology lies primarily in its contribution to methodological rigor within experimental parapsychology. Procedures like this reflect a concerted effort by researchers, particularly those affiliated with early institutions like Duke University's Parapsychology Laboratory under J.B. Rhine, to develop test conditions that were maximally controlled against fraud, sensory cues, and statistical artifacts. By demanding a specific, unusual directional reading (bottom-to-top), researchers attempted to eliminate habitual guessing patterns or common test-taking strategies that might otherwise inflate scores.

The Up Through test serves as a benchmark for testing the specificity of psychic claims. If a subject claims to be clairvoyant, the ability should theoretically function regardless of the orientation or sealing of the target material. The failure of subjects to perform well on this specific test, compared to potentially higher scores achieved on less stringent tests (where ambiguities between clairvoyance, telepathy, or precognition exist), often forces parapsychologists to refine their models regarding how ESP might operate, suggesting perhaps that these abilities are far more fragile or specific than initially hypothesized.

Ultimately, while the Up Through procedure has yielded few positive findings that withstand skeptical scrutiny, its legacy is foundational to the development of robust protocols in the field. It exemplifies the methodological arms race between those attempting to prove ESP and those demanding increasingly stricter controls to account for all possible normal explanations for anomalous results.

## 7. Criticisms and Methodological Limitations

Despite its intention as a high-control procedure, the Up Through test, like all card-calling methods, is subject to inherent criticisms both statistical and methodological. The primary statistical critique centers on the file drawer problem, where only trials yielding positive results might be published, leading to a biased view of overall efficacy. However, for a test like Up Through, where results tend toward the null hypothesis, the criticism shifts toward the potential for experimental error or lack of motivational factors.

Methodological limitations often involve the risk of subtle sensory leakage or experimenter bias, despite the use of sealing methods. For instance, if the experimenter knows the precise order of

the stack, even if the stack is sealed, subtle unconscious cues conveyed through tone of voice or body language could potentially influence the subject (the **experimenter effect**). While stringent double-blind procedures are intended to counteract this, the absolute control required for a truly pure clairvoyance test remains extremely difficult to guarantee in practice.

Furthermore, critics argue that the highly artificial and restrictive nature of the Up Through test may itself suppress any genuine psychic ability, assuming such an ability exists. The stress of attempting an unusual, difficult task, coupled with the sterile laboratory environment, might inhibit the spontaneous or intuitive processes often associated with purported ESP experiences outside of the lab. Therefore, while methodologically sound in its controls against cheating, some argue it may not be ecologically valid for measuring the phenomenon it seeks to confirm.

### Further Reading

[Parapsychology \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[Clairvoyance \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[Zener Cards \(Wikipedia\)](#)

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