

Mathematics and Magic Encyclopedia Article

Mathematics and Magic

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Mathematics and Magic

Mathematical applications so permeate the many spheres of human interest that they are often easily overlooked. Occultists, for example, have been keen utilizers of mathematics right down the millennia. Astrology, numerology and sacred **geometry** all utilize mathematics; indeed, practitioners of these and similar pursuits were the discoverers of some of the fundamental mathematical thought that we still follow today. **Pythagoras** (580? B.C to 500? B.C.), for example, was as much interested in magic and the occult as he was geometry--if not more so.

Modern magicians use math, too. Illusionists who perform for entertainment make use of a variety of calculations; everything from the fixing of angles of line-of-sight, for large-scale stage illusions; to mathematical elimination computed mentally in scores of card tricks. Some of the most familiar magic tricks we've seen, like the lady cut in half and variations on the levitation trick, are dependent upon applied geometry.

Math and magic have been working together for so long that their relationship has become nearly invisible; the magicians themselves forget that they are part mathematician. But like so many challenges of intellect that humankind has taken on throughout history, magic can only build upon what has been learned before. And since an awareness of mathematics has been one of the most ancient of human experiences, it cannot but effect nearly every other.