We often ask the subject to spell the word QUEEN for his moves. This keeps the chess theme and it is always possible to reach an unmarked square with five moves. This will assure that the subject always lands on his starting letter.

The magician could always change the effect by writing down a letter choice and putting it in an envelope. Now knowing on which sources DIPLOMAT or BRUNCHES the subject started on, he can maneuver to force the subject to land on the letter in the envelope.

Our methods of letting the subject choose a letter that we can determine at the start is by using four playing cards with the words LIMP, TOAD, CURB, and HENS written on the faces. These cards are mixed face down and the subject chooses one. The cards’ backs are marked so that we can determine the word. We then introduce four more cards: an ace, a deuce, a trey and a four and the subject places one of these face up and uses that number to choose that numbered letter in his word to start on. Of course the magician will know it too.

This type of magic effect has a long history and is usually done on a 3x3 grid. Martin Gardner’s article “The 3-by-3 Matrix” in the book Martin Gardner Presents, 1993, Kaufman and Greenberg, summarizes much of the history starting with his own version in Scientific American (August, 1960). In 1962 Gene Gordon marketed Hal Newton variations and in 1972, Lou Tannen’s Magic Shop sold Tony Spina’s “Room for Doubt” effect on nine castle rooms. Other notable versions include Robert Neale’s “The Two Guns”, 1973 and Max Maven’s article in Games (September 1973). Gardner reports that “in 1990 David Copperfield made effective use of the trick on one of his TV spectaculars. I am told that Max Maven provided help on the presentation. . .”.

Daniel W. Galef
McGill University

Montreal, QC
danielgalef@gmail.com

Always Be a Generous Doner,
or,
That’s a Wrap!

Only a pretentious, pedantic, and didactic zero would ever call a gyro a gyro; but only an ignorant, uneducated, and culturally-narcissistic tyro would ever call a gyro a gyro.