

ISABELLA HILTY

# ENGCMP0520 FINAL PORTFOLIO



## Self Evaluation

My time in Writing and Design has been very educating. It has been especially rewarding for me to see my skills and comfort with using software such as InDesign and Photoshop grow over the length of the course.

The work I have done in this class has noticeably improved since the first assignment, demonstrating that not only have I gained knowledge from the material but I've also been able to put that knowledge to use in my designs. My favorite assignments from the semester that I think I did the best on were my long design and my non-angular ad design. I feel that in my long design I was able to execute the kind of minimal and geometric/abstract style really well that I was going for, and the images I found added to it in a great way that just made a really cohesive spread. The non-angular ad was one of the more colorful pieces I did and was outside of what I would normally think to create, but it came together so well it ended up being one of my favorites, and it encouraged me to continue to expand my comfort zone in my designs.

My participation and attendance were two areas I could have done much better in. While it is easy for me to think of feedback and changes I want to make for my own designs, I find it difficult to come up with the same for other people's. I think because everyone has such different styles and ways of doing things it sometimes feels nit-picky for me to say anything, because maybe my idea is just different than theirs, and although there are guidelines in place for what makes up a good design in the end it's all art so there technically is no right or wrong. Admittedly, there were a lot of times in class I almost spoke up but then someone said what I was thinking before me, so part of it is my timing too. Either way it is something I need to work on improving. That goes for attendance too, as this was the first semester in awhile that I had scheduled a class before 12pm and it turned into much more of a struggle for me than I had anticipated. Working on my sleep schedule is one of my goals for the summer since I was not able to turn it around this semester.

I would say that the effort I have put into this course overall would warrant a B grade.





AN  
INTRODUCTION TO  
**ASTROLOGY**  
FOR BEGINNERS

By Isabella Hilty

# GETTING STARTED



Astrology and your birth chart is all about you. It helps you reflect on your strengths, your weaknesses, and really any character trait you could think of. It is a powerful tool that aids you in gaining a deeper understanding of yourself.

Some people say they dislike astrology because it's not a "real" science, but we as humans have been studying the stars for a long time now. Everything in the universe boils down to just some small particles of energy. We're all just some energy, the planets are all just some energy, and although energy is never created or destroyed, it does move around from place to place.

So, who are we to say that the energy of something as massive as a planet that's just chilling somewhere out there in the giant inexplicable thing we call space, isn't affecting us in some manner?



In this work I will introduce you to the basic concepts of astrology and how to interpret your natal chart. If you are skeptical, give it a try and see! After all, you know yourself best so you'll be able to see right away how it works in real life.

Now, you've probably already gotten a taste of astrology from reading your horoscope in a magazine or online. These are based on your Sun sign, which is determined by the month and day you were born. The Sun sign is the essence of you, and is usually pretty accurate, but did you know you have a sign for each one of the planets, and not just the Sun?

For example, my Sun is in Gemini, but my Moon is in Cancer. Finding out what your placements are in each of the other planets gives you a much more in-depth look at yourself than just your Sun sign gives.

Even so, no one has figured out how astrology works the way it does in the four thousand or so years its been around, not even the Babylonians who invented it! There is no explanation. The only proof lies in the results, which, as they are not tangible, tend to be arguable as to whether or not they are "real." But I digress, as that is not what we are here to discuss.

If you've made it this far, I assume you are at least curious enough to find out the answer for yourself. So let's dive in.

# THE FOUR COMPONENTS

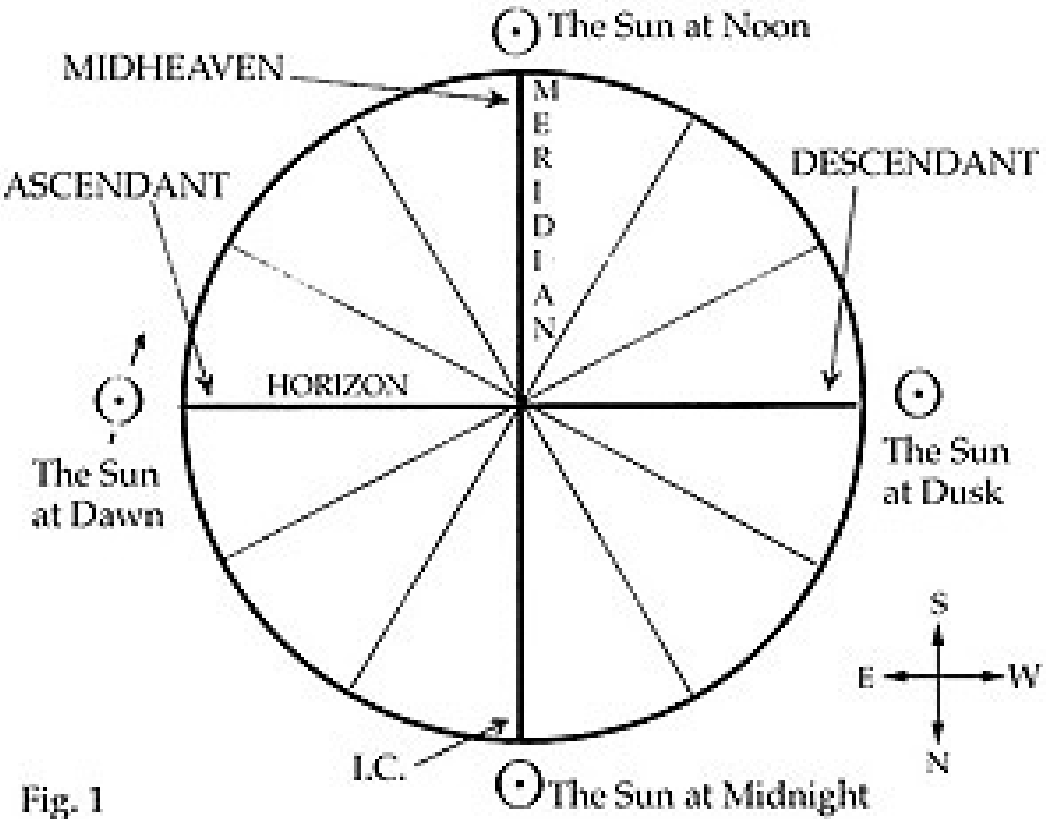
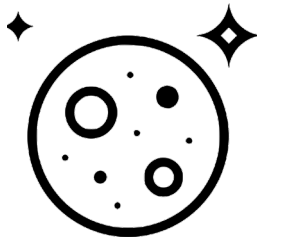


Fig. 1

The four essential components in a natal chart consist of the...

- 1. twelve signs of the zodiac
- 2. ten planets
- 3. twelve houses
- 4. aspects

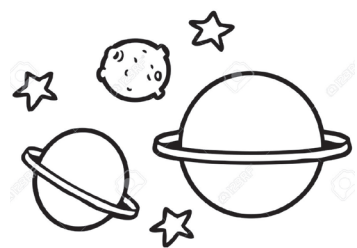
Most are already familiar with the twelve signs of the zodiac, which are also the names of the constellations. Each sign is 30 degrees of a 360 degree circle. Also note in the chart that the directions are reversed, with the south above and the north below, east at the left and west at the right. This is simply

because the Sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and the chart depicts the Sun's path as it appears from Earth (seen as the center point of the chart). Each of the 30 degree segments are divided into 60 minutes (60') and 60 seconds (60"). So one sign is equal to 30 degrees, one degree is equal to 60 minutes, and one minute is equal to 60 seconds.

The annual equinox or solstice that signals the start of each season coincides with the Sun's entrance into one of four signs: Aries (spring equinox), Cancer (summer solstice), Libra (autumn equinox), and Capricorn (winter solstice).



# THE TWELVE ZODIAC SIGNS



Each of the 12 signs are associated with certain characteristics that describe traits of someones personality. People who are born under the same sun sign, for example, share the same traits. The extent to which two people share these traits depends on the other influences in each of their own charts.

The nature of each sign is desccribed by their **element** and **modality**. The elements are water, earth, fire, and air. The modalities, or qualities, are cardinal, fixed, and mutable.

## Water Signs

*Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces*  
These signs are emotional and intuitive

## Cardinal Signs

*Aries, Cancer, Libra, Capricorn*  
These signs are self-starters

## Air Signs

*Gemini, Libra, Aquarius*  
These signs are intellectual and people-oriented

## Fixed Signs

*Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius*  
These signs are determined

## Earth Signs

*Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn*  
These signs are practical and realistic

## Mutable Signs

*Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, Pisces*  
These signs are easygoing

## Fire Signs

*Aries, Leo, Sagittarius*  
These signs are outgoing and action-oriented



# THE TEN PLANETS

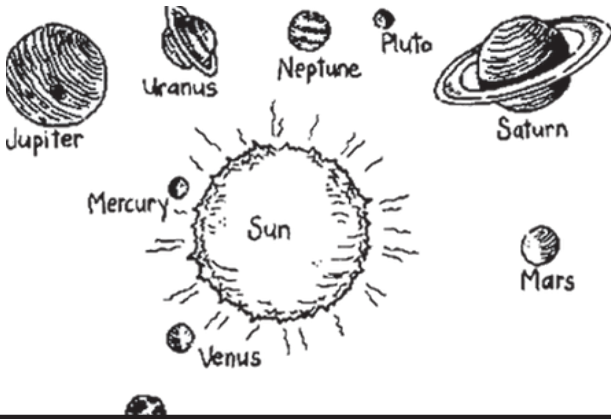


Each planet in your chart is in a sign, like your Sun is. The characteristic or energy of each planet is expressed according to the sign it's in.

For example, the planet of Mercury is associated with communication in any form. Someone with their Mercury in Leo would be likely to be more pf a dynamic speaker, while someone with their Mercury in Libra would be likely to have the ability to comfort others and put them at ease, and so on for each sign and planet combination.

Each of the planets also has a sign that the planet "rules," basically meaning the sign and planet are very compatible with each other and have similar meanings or characteristics. This is called **ruledship**.

Mercury and Venus each have 2 rulers, as there are 12 signs but only 10 planets. Before the outer planets were discovered, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn used to rule 2 signs as well, shown in parantheses. These are called their traditional rulers. Some astrologists use both traditional and modern rulers when reading charts, but it is up to you which you choose to use.



Planet	Rulership
☉ Sun	♌ Leo
☾ Moon	♋ Cancer
☿ Mercury	♊ Gemini ♍ Virgo
♀ Venus	♉ Taurus ♎ Libra
♂ Mars	♈ Aries (♏, Scorpio)
♃ Jupiter	♐ Sagittarius (♓ Pisces)
♄ Saturn	♑ Capricorn (♒ Aquarius)
♅ Uranus	♒ Aquarius
♆ Neptune	♓ Pisces
♇ Pluto	♏, Scorpio

# THE TWELVE HOUSES



The 12 houses are the numbers listed 1-12 on the innermost circle of the chart shown on the right and on page 3. Each house is associated with a specific area or areas of life, such as career, travel, money, and so on. Also shown on page 3 are each of the four angular house cusps, known as **the angles**. The angles symbolize important areas of life that could be a major focus for people.

These include:

- 1. the Ascendant (first house cusp)
- 2. the Descendant (seventh house cusp)
- 3. the Midheaven, or MC (tenth house cusp)
- 4. the *Imum Coeli*, or IC (fourth house cusp)

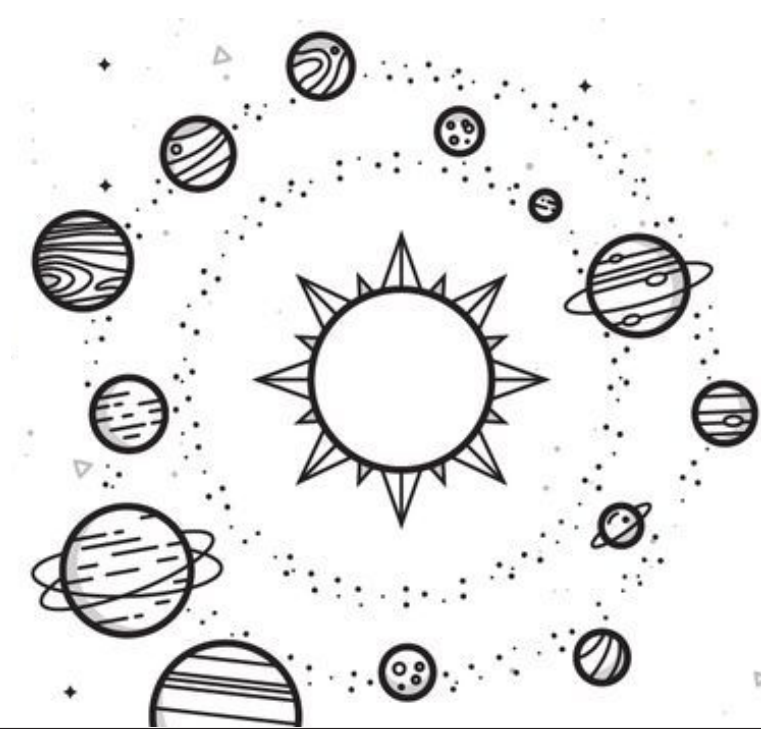
The Ascendant represents you as an individual, and is often the first impression you make on others, or the face you show

the world. It may sound similar to what the Sun represents, but the Sun is more internal whereas the Ascendant is the external, outward manifestation of your personality.

The Descendant, the point opposite the Ascendant, represents close relationships. This could be romantic partners, business partners, or long term friends. It's how you interact with others, and the qualities you look for in people.

The Midheaven or MC signifies everything having to do with your career. It can tell you about what you want to be known for, what makes you feel important, etc.

The *Imum Coeli* or IC, the point opposite the MC, has to do with home and family, your physical home environment, and your roots.



(The 12 houses and the areas they represent are shown above)



# ASPECTS



Aspects are where things can get a little complicated, but are pretty straightforward once you get the hang of it. Aspects are just angles, like 90 degrees or 120 degrees. They connect the energy of two or more planets, and are vital to getting the most accurate readings from charts as they inform you on how the planets are all interacting together.

So, for example if two of your placements have conflicting traits associated with them, you can look at the aspects to see which one might overpower the other. The more exact the degree is, the stronger that aspect is, but it still counts as one if two planets are within a couple degrees of forming that aspect.

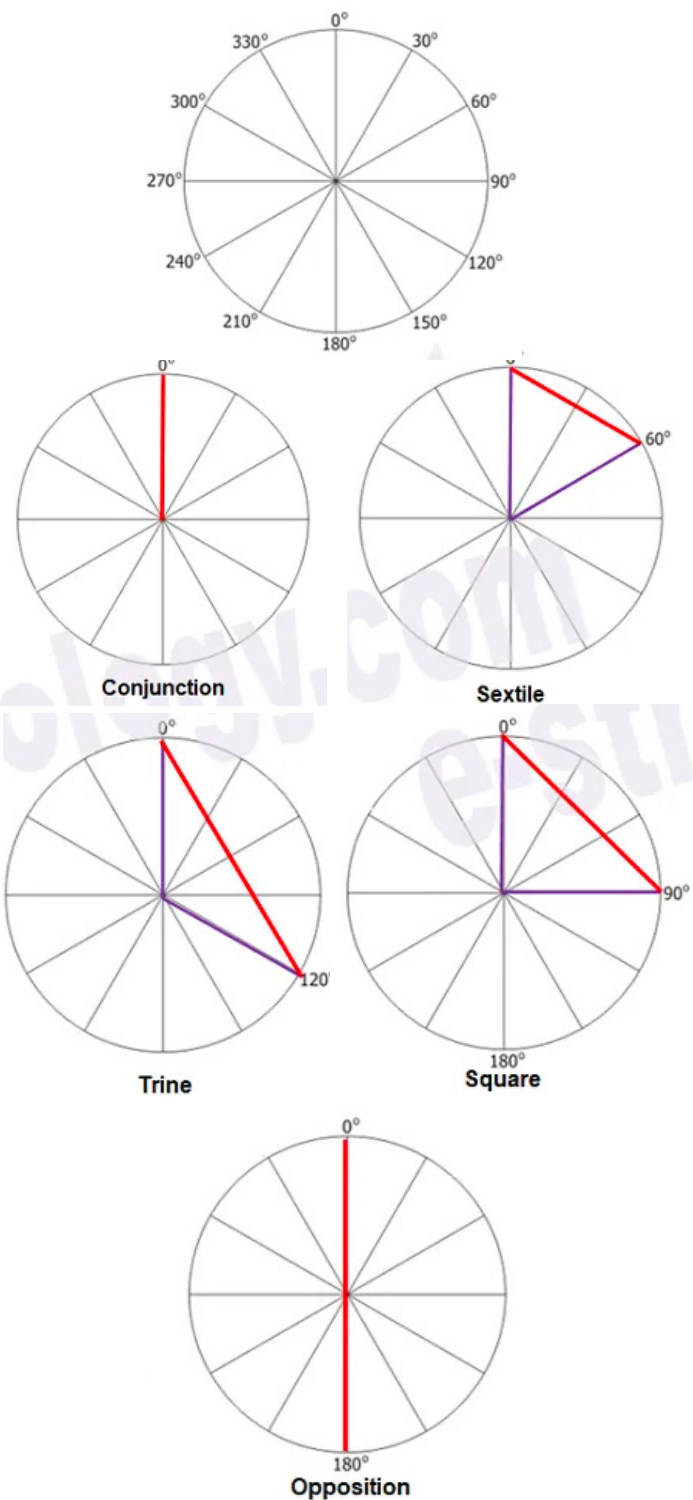
The first is a **conjunction**. If two planets are conjunct they are separated by ~0 degrees. This represents intensity and focus.

The **sextile** aspect is when two planets are ~60 degrees from one another. This represents opportunity.

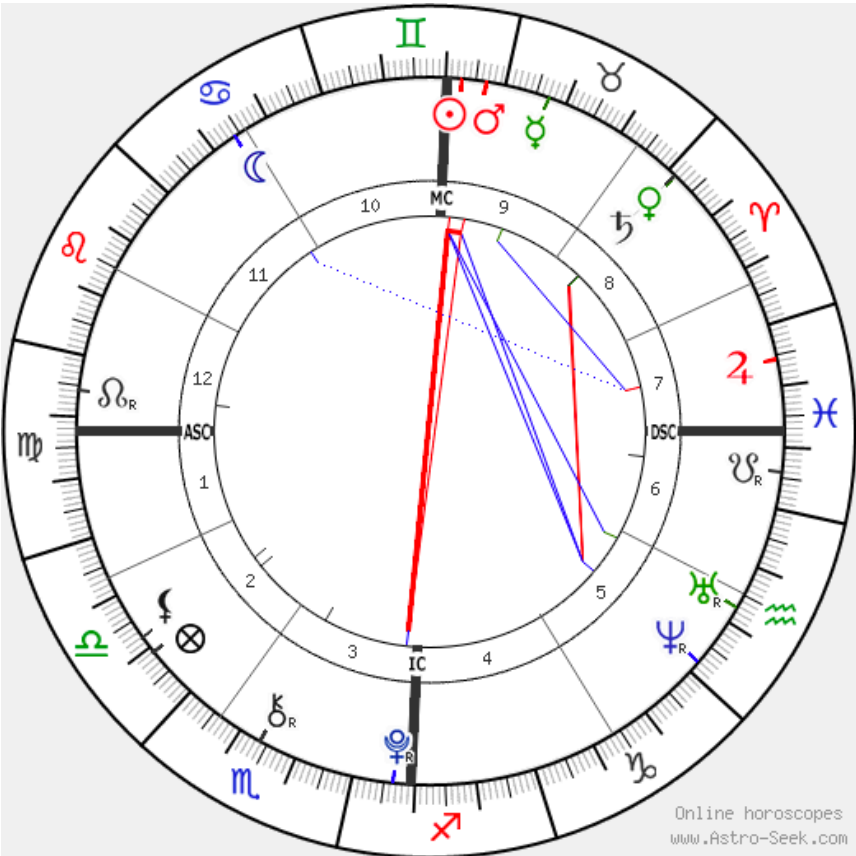
A **trine** aspect is when two planets are ~120 degrees from one another and represents luck or ease.

If two planets are **square** one another, they are ~90 degrees apart, and this signifies some obstacle or action.

Lastly, an **opposition** is when two planets are opposite each other, or ~180 degrees apart. This represents separation or polarity.



# INTERPRETING YOUR CHART



Sun	7°11' 9
Moon	15°56' 11
Mercury	22°50' 9
Venus	28°32' 8
Mars	3°14' 9
Jupiter	24°14' 7
Saturn	28°48' 8
Uranus	12°41' 5 R
Neptune	2°00' 5 R
Pluto	6°40' 3 R

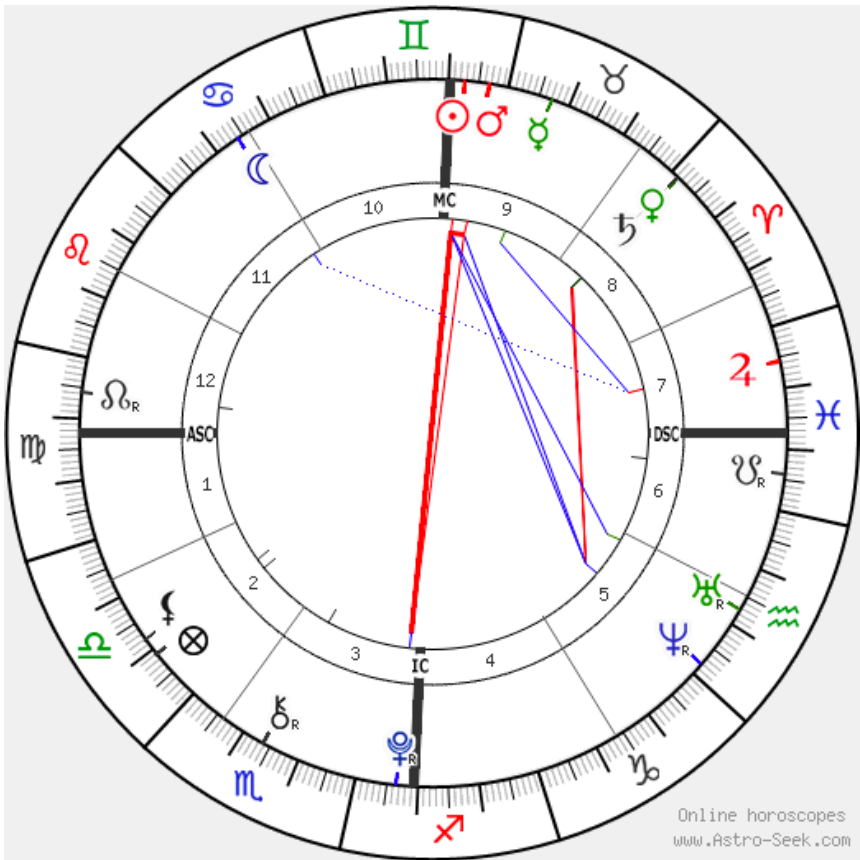
Lastly let us finally practice actually interpreting a natal chart, using mine as an example, as seen above. While it is possible to make them by hand, it is extremely tedious and so it is recommended to let a computer generate yours from one of the many resources available online. The computer can do it much faster, and much more accurately. The site I used for mine is found at astro-seek.com.

To get an accurate chart, you must know your date of birth, the place you were born, and the time you were born as well. This is very important as placements such as your Ascendant change around every ~2 hours.

You will also need these sites or a book to look up the specific meanings for the placements of each of your planets, as it would take many pages of text to be able to put them all in here.

Assuming you are now looking at your chart as I look at mine, we can begin to interpret our birth charts. You can see I was born around midday in May, as my Sun sign is at the middle top in the Gemini segment of the chart. The chart to the right tells you the planet and what sign it is in, the degree placement of it, and what house it is situated in. The four house cusps are shown in the graph as well with the thick lines.

# INTERPRETING YOUR CHART



<a href="#">Sun</a>	7°11'	9	
<a href="#">Moon</a>	15°56'	11	
<a href="#">Mercury</a>	22°50'	9	
<a href="#">Venus</a>	28°32'	8	
<a href="#">Mars</a>	3°14'	9	
<a href="#">Jupiter</a>	24°14'	7	
<a href="#">Saturn</a>	28°48'	8	
<a href="#">Uranus</a>	12°41'	5	R
<a href="#">Neptune</a>	2°00'	5	R
<a href="#">Pluto</a>	6°40'	3	R

The **R** symbol next to a planet means that that planet was in **retrograde** at the time of your birth. Retrograde means backwards motion - the planets are not actually moving backwards but it appears that way when viewing them from Earth. After the retrograde period is done planets will remain stationary and then continue moving forward. The energy from retrograde planets are lack some of their outward expression and are instead more internalized.

In my chart you can see I have an affinity for air signs. This signifies that I'm more likely to be a people-person, and excel at

things having to do with thought or communication. I also have a good deal of mutable signs meaning I'm probably more easy-going than most.

As I said, I won't be adding what every placement for every sign means since they are pretty much a set definition anyways, that you will want to research for yourself. Instead I will walk you through interpreting the current transit of planets with your chart so you can learn to forecast your own horoscopes. The aspects within your own chart have important meanings too, but these are much easier to find than it is to

# INTERPRETING YOUR CHART



find out how to connect your own chart with the current transits. In fact, most of the chart generators will tell you the meaning of your chart's aspects when you create your chart.

To find the current positions of the planets, you can use the same website I gave for generating the chart, or simply look up on the internet, "current planet transits." On the right is a chart of the positions of the planets as of me writing this right now.

There is a trick to finding aspects using the positions along with the element, modality, and gender of the signs. Looking at the chart, every sign beside each other is a different gender meaning it goes back and forth. I like to start with Aries since it begins with A, so Aries is masculine and both signs on either side of it are feminine, and the signs beside both of those are masculine, and so on.

The goal is to look for planets whose current position is similar to one of the planet's in your natal chart, within 1-2 degrees. For example, say your Sun was placed in Leo at 9 degrees, and transiting Mars is at 9 degrees in Aquarius.

The trick is to look at both signs. If they are the *same sign*, then it's a *conjunction*. If they have the *same element* then they're forming a *trine*. If they're the *same gender but with different elements* they are *sextile*. If they are the *same modality and same gender* they are in *opposition*. If they are the *same modality but different genders* they are forming a

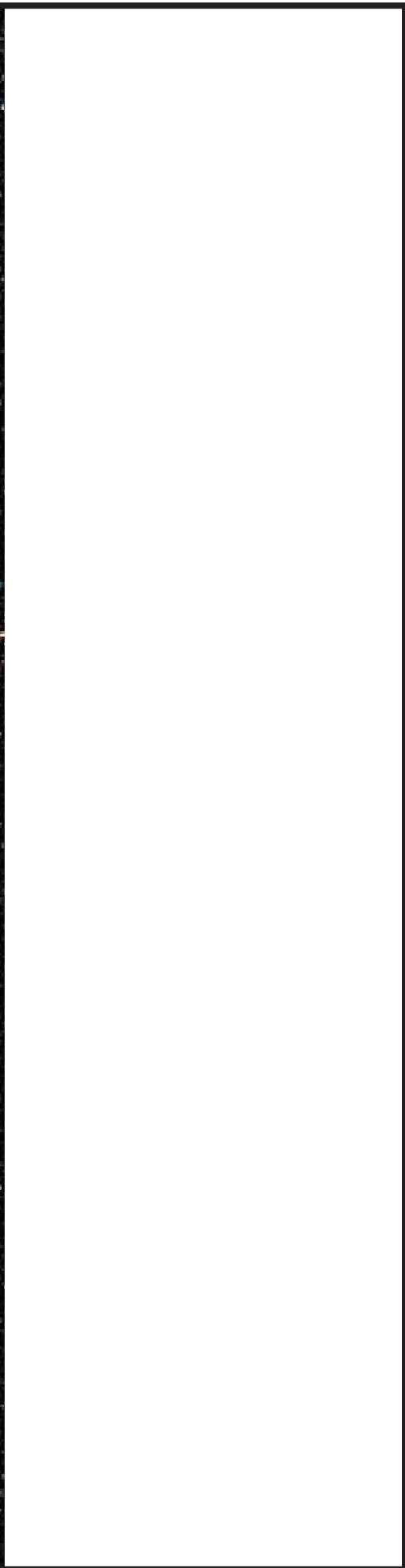
<a href="#">Sun</a> :	14°16'	Tau
<a href="#">Moon</a> :	29°48'	Vir
<a href="#">Mercury</a> :	13°32'	Tau
<a href="#">Venus</a> :	20°20'	Gem
<a href="#">Mars</a> :	23°53'	Aqu
<a href="#">Jupiter</a> :	27°04'	Cap
<a href="#">Saturn</a> :	1°55'	Aqu
<a href="#">Uranus</a> :	7°02'	Tau
<a href="#">Neptune</a> :	20°18'	Pis
<a href="#">Pluto</a> :	24°58'	Cap R

*square* with one another. And finally, if they have nothing in common, there is probably no aspect. There are a few uncommon possibilities it could be but we will not cover those in this introduction.

Leo is masculine, fixed, and a fire type sign and Aquarius is masculine, fixed, and an air sign. They have the same gender and the same modality, so transiting Mars is forming an opposition aspect to your Sun. You then can look up the meaning of transiting Mars opposite natal Sun. In this case, this aspect generally predicts some test of strength, meaning this will either be a time of triumph or a time of defeat depending on your actions.

You can see how this enables you to give yourself a much more in-depth horoscope than if you simply tried going off of your Sun sign like most websites or magazines do.





# **Video games are not to blame for violent behavior, and can actually provide many cognitive benefits**

Isabella Hilty    ENGCOMP0520



**Since their creation, video games have steadily increased in their popularity and today exist as one of the most mainstream forms of entertainment.**

According to studies, the average US household owns at least one dedicated gaming console. Video games are often demonized in the media yet nearly all accusations made towards them are not backed by any actual scientific evidence. Many of these claims are targeted towards violent video games in particular.

Despite this, an increasing number of studies have been showing that there are many positive effects associated with playing video games - both nonviolent and violent ones.

## Playing video games has shown a notable trace of improved cognitive functions that can help in everyday life

One study showed that individuals who play more fast-paced, action-oriented games were able to make choices up to 25% faster than others while not losing any accuracy, showing an increase in these player's critical thinking skills. Through brain imaging researchers were able to discover that the brain networks that control attention are much more efficient in people that play a lot of action games.

In fact, people who regularly play video games can focus on over six things at once without getting confused, whilst someone who does not regularly play can only focus on about four.

By studying positive effects of video games such as these, scientists can work to make games designed to exercise certain cognitive functions in the people who play them. This could help in education, in recovery for rehabilitation patients, and in improving some disabilities.

Scientists have to overcome the difficulty of making these video games as equally as desirable as the ones sold purely for entertainment purposes, however this would be a big help as it is a much more fun type of treatment - especially for younger patients.

For example, one such study showed that action games can improve adults' ability to distinguish between different shades of grey better, which is helpful in activities such as driving at night. Knowing this, scientists are able to work on a game that could potentially retrain the brain for individuals with poor eyesight and allow them to see better.

Even now there have already been video games designed to help people with pain management, diabetes treatment, and even the prevention of asthma attacks in people with asthma.

Video games have been shown to enhance social



skills and creativity as well, and more importantly, they have been shown to greatly help individuals relieve stress, anxiety, and depression. Video games break the pattern of a player's state of stress, giving their brain a mental break.

They are used as a remarkable distraction, with the ability to shift the brain's focus from an activity that is demanding to one that is relaxing instead.

At times such as now, they serve as an escape from the chaos going on in the world. They allow people to feel some sense of control and empowerment during times when it feels as if all control is lost, or when they feel powerless to everything happening around them.

## Violence in video games mainly affects people already predisposed to violent behavior

One psychologist, Christopher J. Ferguson, related violent video games to peanut butter:

**" They are harmless for the vast majority of kids but are harmful to a small minority. In this case, those with pre-existing personality or mental-health problems. "**

It wouldn't make sense for stores to ban peanut butter because it harms people, when the

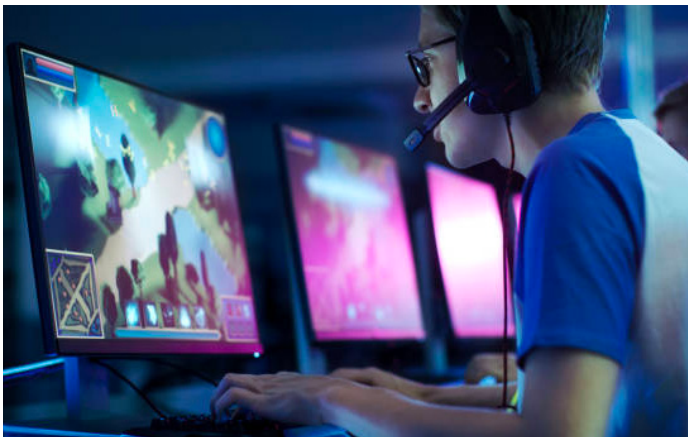


only people who are harmed by it are those with pre-existing allergies. The same goes for video games. In order to find this out, psychologist Patrick Markey held an experiment to find some combination of traits that contributed to someone being more prone to being affected by the violence in video games, and affected more adversely than others.

The three traits he chose to focus on were:

1. **high neuroticism** (i.e. easily upset, angry, depressed, emotional)
2. **low agreeableness** (i.e. little concern for others, indifferent to others feelings)
3. **low conscientiousness** (i.e. breaks rules, has trouble keeping promises, acts without thinking)

The results of the study strongly coincided with his predictions and backed up the argument that it is the simultaneous combination of these personality traits that give a powerful predictor as to how affected an individual will be by the violence in video games.



This finding gives us an alternate view as to what actually causes the negative effects that are being linked to video games. They are often blamed for decreases in school performance, obesity in kids and teens, and even video game "addiction," but the fact is that the games should not be held liable if the person playing them has their own issues to begin with.

If someone spends all day, everyday, playing video games then surely they will see a decline in health and responsibility in what needs done around them (like schoolwork or chores), but there exists a multitude of other forms of entertainment which could just as easily be indulged in (like TV or the internet).



## There is even a possibility that violent behavior from video games has nothing to do with the violent content itself

Another study, the first to look at players' psychological experience with video games rather than solely the content of them, suggested that rather than a video game's violent content causing aggression it instead comes from the players own feelings of frustration and failure while playing.

The results showed that players felt agitated and more aggressive when playing *both* violent and nonviolent video games due to a failure to master a game and/or its controls, rather than due to actual violence in the game.

This study was significant as it showed that games which do not even contain violence can cause more aggression than those that do, simply because they are poorly designed or too difficult for the average player. This implies that perhaps game developers should pay more attention to the actual mechanics of the games they create, as well as adding in multiple levels of difficulty for players to choose between.

## **So... what do we make of it all?**

In conclusion, video games are something that impacts many peoples' lives and, like everything in life, there are both positive and negative effects to that.

The degree of the negative influences they could have typically depends on that specific person's personality traits and other factors, such as the amount of time they spend playing. In reasonable doses, however, video games (yes, even violent ones) are not proven to cause any notable negative impacts on people that couldn't already be gained from other types of media.

In contrast, many video games are proving to be quite beneficial to the people who play them and their brain.

Video games are one of the most popular forms of media today and do not seem to be going anywhere soon, so all we can do is continue to study them for our own benefit, and to watch how they develop over time.





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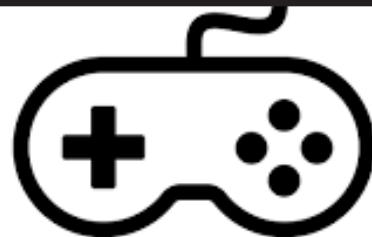
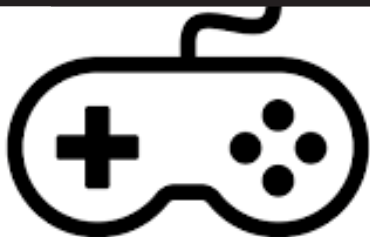
# MARIOKART PARTY



FRIDAY **FEBRUARY 7**  
9:00PM

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FRIENDS. PIZZA PROVIDED.



# Isabella Hilty

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## EDUCATION

BS Computer Science and Studio Arts minor, University of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, PA.  
Expected graduation 12/2020.

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## COURSEWORK

### • 2016 - 2017

INTRODUCTION TO  
COMPUTER PROGRAMMING

DISCRETE STRUCTURES  
FOR COMPUTER SCIENCE

INTERMEDIATE PROGRAMMING  
USING JAVA

### • 2017 - 2018

DATA STRUCTURES

COMPUTER ORGANIZATION  
& ASSEMBLY LANGUAGE

### • 2018 - 2019

INTRODUCTION TO  
SYSTEMS SOFTWARE

WEBSITE DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES FOR  
WEB APPLICATIONS \*

### • 2019 - 2020

ALGORITHM IMPLEMENTATION

SOFTWARE QUALITY ASSURANCE

INTRODUCTION TO  
OPERATING SYSTEMS

SOFTWARE DESIGN METHODOLOGY \*\*

## NOTABLE PROJECTS

### PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES FOR WEB APPLICATIONS \*

Worked with a team on a semester-long project to design and implement a web application using Python, HTML/CSS, and Cloud Datastore through Google App Engine.  
Our project, voted 2nd favorite in the class, can be found at [liminal.appspot.com](http://liminal.appspot.com)

### SOFTWARE DESIGN METHODOLOGY \*\*

Worked with a partner over the course of the semester to construct a mobile voting app using Java and Android Studio

## SKILLS

Java

HTML/CSS

Javascript

Python C

