



A Quick Guide to Traditional Astrology

reading the symbols and signs
according to the ancients



This guide is a quick reference for how to read the signs and symbols in an astrological chart.

If you're thinking about practicing astrology more seriously, I highly recommend studying the philosophical rationale behind the use of the symbols — the unique thing about Traditional Astrology is that the meanings of every symbol has deep and layered reasonings to back them up. Knowing these reasons will help you retain what you learn, and understand more deeply about what differentiates each symbol from the others!

“Learn the rules like a pro, so you can
break them like an artist.”

—Pablo Picasso

The Inner Planets:

These are the building blocks of a traditional astrology practice: as essential as the four elements. Together, their meaning structures the interpretations of the **signs**, **houses** and **aspects**.

☉ **The Sun:** purpose, values and ideals, philosophy, the eternal. Fathers and kings, fame and glory. Gold. Heroes and legends. The place where your purpose will shine through in this lifetime.

☾ **The Moon:** the body, mind and emotions. The fluctuation of the senses. Mothers and children, home and family. The many, the populace, the environment. The rise and fall of fortune. Silver. Memory and longing. The place that describes all those things that have made up your home.

☿ **Mercury:** the traveler, the messenger, communication and transportation. The coder: systems for analysis, how we think about and organize the world. All technology, advanced and primitive. Writing, mathematics and the meaning of symbols — including in astrology.

♀ **Venus:** goddess of love. Romance and friendships. Spouses, significant others, marriage, sex life, relationship patterns. Women and sisters. Fashion, jewelry, cosmetics, other adornments. Art, music and good food.

♂ **Mars:** god of war. Strife, cutting, aggression. Head and action, passion and desire. Sickness, injury, accidents. Surgery. Bravery, courage, willpower, sacrifice. The archetypically male. A bit like gasoline — great fuel for action but highly combustible. Not safe to drink.

♃ **Jupiter:** the greater benefic. Teachers, mentors and benefactors. Patrons and sugar daddies. Infrastructures and institutions. Unity, the Whole. Also priests and other religious leaders, faith, wisdom, and spirituality. Abundance and the generative power of

♄ **Saturn:** the greater malefic. Borders and responsibility. Oppression, repression, and depression. Father time: what sustains, and what expires. Maturity and endurance — the long game. Contemplation and meditation — the long view. Borders, limits, the gatekeeper that says what's allowed in and what stays out.



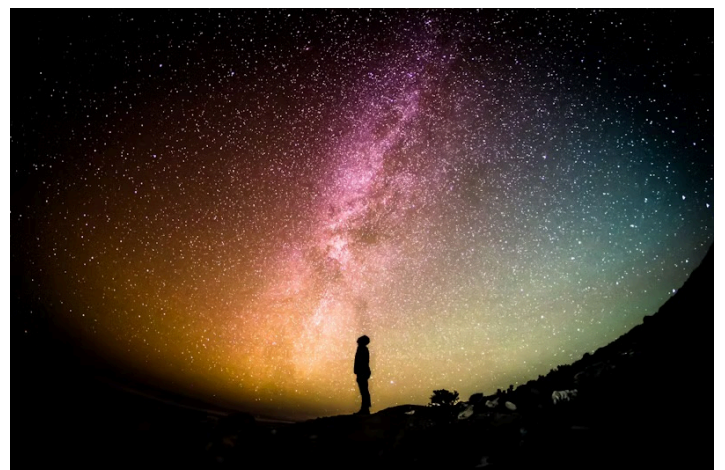
The Outer Planets:

These were discovered long after the foundations of traditional astrology were put into place, but they can still play a meaningful role in our practice. We might think of the outer planets as a powerful synthesis of the elements we saw in the inner planets, which demonstrate dramatic movements in our lives over time.

♅ **Uranus:** liberation, leaps in progress, spontaneous breakthroughs. Futurism. Electric and provocative, sometimes violent. Revolutions of all kinds: cultural revolutions like the scientific and industrial revolution, but also political revolutions such as the American and French revolutions.


♆ **Neptune:** the great ocean of being. Unification and Thich Nhat Han's "interbeing." On the dark side, assimilation and conformism, forced or by choice. Purification. Fogginess, confusion, delusion, but also enchantment and divine bliss.


♇ **Pluto:** god of the underworld, uncovering the deep. Power as the upward movement of shakti. Riches as the uncovering of buried treasure. The unconscious made conscious. Volcanoes and eruptions, purges and surges of catharsis.





The Signs:


These are the temples of the gods, the places where they express their true natures.


 **Aries:** the **tropical, masculine, fiery** domicile of **Mars**; Venus's place of exile. Exalts (lifts up) the Sun, depresses Saturn. **Qualities:** youthfulness, willpower, new beginnings. Desire, impulse to act, hotheadedness. Individualism, selfishness and independence.


 **Taurus:** the **fixed, feminine, earthy** domicile of **Venus**; Mar's place of exile. Exalts the Moon. **Qualities:** sensuality, fertility, stability. Stubborn, bullheaded. Beautiful, peaceful, sleepy, laid-back.


 **Gemini:** the **double-bodied, masculine, airy** domicile of **Mercury**; Jupiter's place of exile. **Qualities:** social and chatty, analytical and associative. Multiplicitous, scattered, far-reaching, and fast. Chaos magic.


 **Cancer:** the **tropical, feminine, watery** domicile of the **Moon**; exile to Saturn. Exalts Jupiter, depresses Mars. **Qualities:** nurturing, mothering, fertile. Soft on the inside, hard exterior. Takes things under its wing. Generous and protective.


 **Leo:** the **fixed, masculine, fiery** domicile of the **Sun**. **Qualities:** charismatic, passionate, highly visible. Courage, authenticity, heroism, heart-centeredness. Legacies and things that fade or decline with time.


 **Virgo:** the **double-bodied, feminine, earthy** domicile of **Mercury**; Jupiter's place of exile. Exalts Mercury, depresses Venus. **Qualities:** sacrifice, sovereignty, purity. Right relationship, perfect order, clean data/the facts. Preservation of the harvest. Ceremonial magic.


 **Libra:** the **tropical, masculine, airy** domicile of **Venus**; exile to Mars. Exalts Saturn, depresses the Sun. **Qualities:** balance of all kinds — social harmony, aesthetic harmony, ecological balance. Justice, the law. Conscientious: etiquette, consideration of others, compromise.

 **Scorpio:** the **fixed, feminine, watery** domicile of **Mars**; exile to Venus. Depresses the Moon. **Qualities:** deep, dark, fertile. Compost magic: the place where death and decay feeds life.

 **Sagittarius:** the **double-bodied, masculine, fiery** domicile of **Jupiter**; Mercury's place of exile. **Qualities:** exuberant, bold, adventurous. Half-man, half-horse: where human and animal nature meet. Big-hearted, wise, rowdy.

 **Capricorn:** the **tropical, feminine, earthy** domicile of **Saturn**, exile to the **Moon**. Exalts Mars, depresses Jupiter. **Qualities:** disciplined, meticulous, persevering. Mastery and devotion. Brass tacks, tough love. Can be hard-hearted.

 **Aquarius:** the **fixed, masculine, airy** domicile of **Saturn**; the Sun's place of exile. **Qualities:** High-minded, abstract, distant, alien, isolated. Cool-headed, analytical. Knowledge of the past, vision for the future. The collective view.

 **Pisces:** the **double-bodied, feminine, watery** domicile of **Jupiter**; exile of Mercury. Exalts Venus, depresses Mercury. **Qualities:** unboundaried, deeply feeling, infinitely yearning. Existential bliss and despair. Sinners and saints, requiem and redemption. Dreams, intuition, and other psychic phenomena.



Important Concepts:

The Modalities: Tropical (a.k.a “cardinal”), Fixed and Double-Bodied (a.k.a. mutable)

These express the qualities of the signs within a seasonal framework. Tropical signs mark the beginning of a new season and express a changing nature, fixed signs take place in the middle of a season and express stability or an unchanging nature, and double-bodied signs mark the end of the season and so have elements of both — they start off with the fixed nature of the current season, but end with the breath of the season that follows.

The Genders

Also yin (fem.) and yang (masc.) or nocturnal (fem.) and diurnal (masc.). Masculine signs are more active, dynamic and classically intellectual than feminine signs, which are more process-oriented, receptive and body-wise than masculine signs. The Moon, being the archetypal feminine, has her temple in a feminine sign (Cancer) while the Sun as the archetypal masculine has his in a masculine sign (Leo). All the other inner planets each have a feminine and masculine domicile, expressing different aspects of their nature.

The Elements

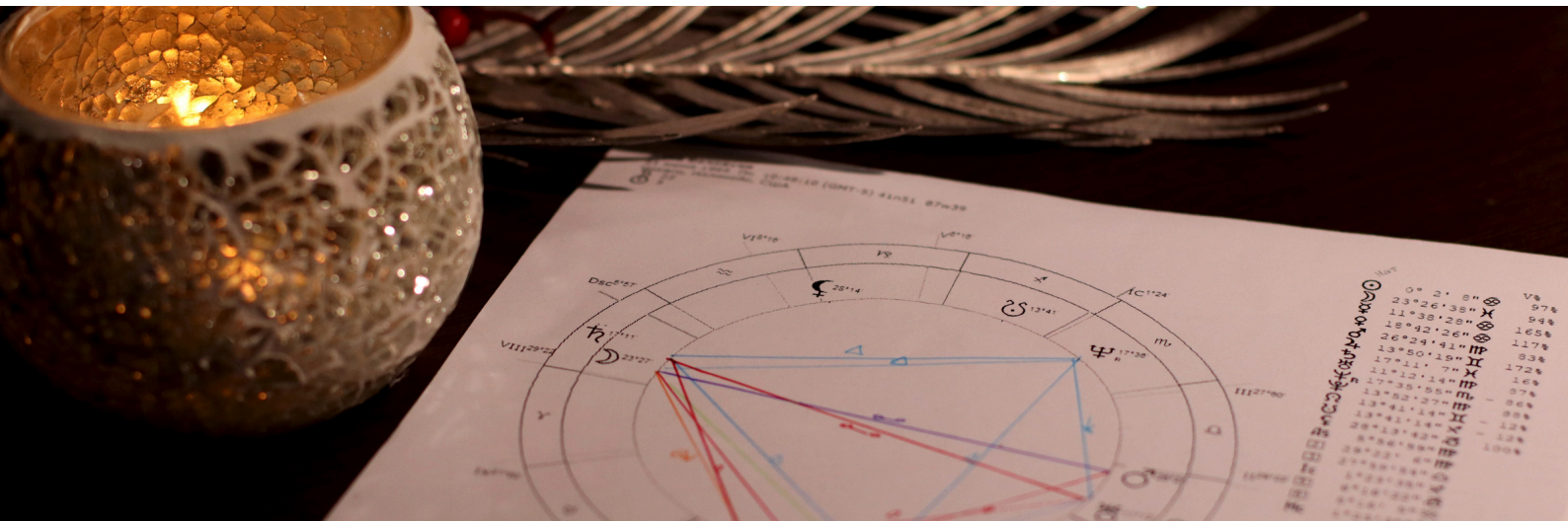
Fire, earth, air and water. Fire signs are bold, fun and charismatic but can suck the air out of a room; earth signs are grounded, practical and stable or stubborn; air signs are intellectual, associative, and cool-headed but might come off as aloof; water signs are emotionally deep, nurturing and fertile, but can be emotionally intense.



Exaltation and Depression vs. Domicile and Exile

A planet's **domicile** is its home sign, a place where it is comfortable and well-resourced. The Sun and Moon each only have one domicile, while the remaining inner planets have two each. In a traditional framework, the outer planets are not given domiciles (which means they don't have exiles, exaltation, or depression either). A planet's **exile** is found in the sign(s) opposite their domicile(s). This is where they are furthest from home; they are uncomfortable and under-resources. Each planet has one place of **exaltation**, where they are celebrated. Here the planet's powers are well-received and expanded by the qualities of the sign. Each planet also has one place of **depression**, found in the sign opposite their exaltation. Here they are treated poorly and in essential conflict with the qualities of the sign.

It can be easy to confuse domicile/exile and exaltation/depression — here's one way to differentiate them: it is said that a planet in its place of exaltation or depression seems better or worse than it really is, while a planet in domicile or exile really has it as good or as bad as it seems.



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