

# How to Speak ASTROLOGY



A brief guide  
by Dana Gerhardt





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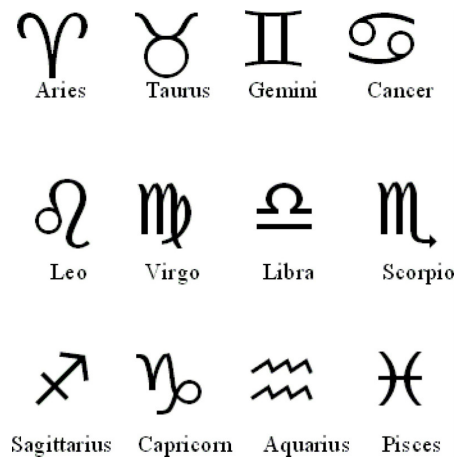
### STEP ONE:

Learn to translate the visual symbols of the chart into the appropriate words.

First, you need to be able to recognize the symbols for **the planets** (called “glyphs”)

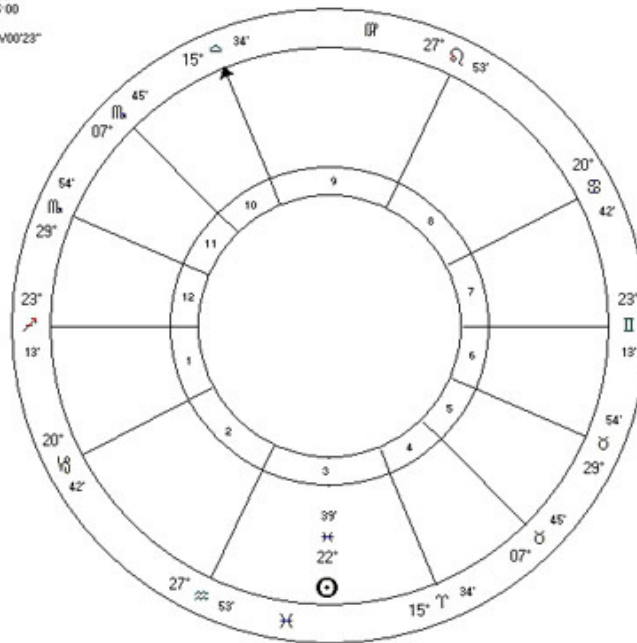


You also need to be able to recognize the symbols for the **twelve signs**.



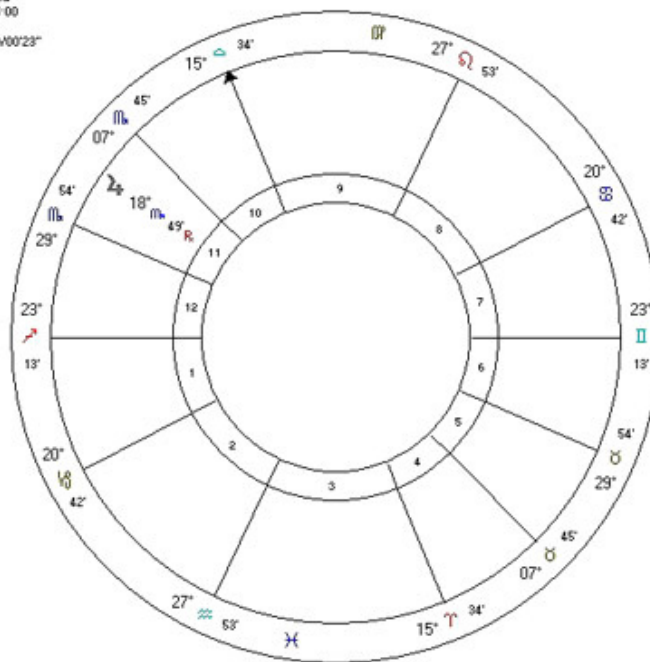
Now let's put these two together and look at an example in a chart (reduced to one factor for simplicity).

**Diane**  
**Natal Chart**  
Mar 14 1923, Wed  
1:30 am EST -5:00  
New York, NY  
40°N42°51" 074°W00°23"  
Geocentric  
Tropical  
Koch  
True Node  
Rating: B



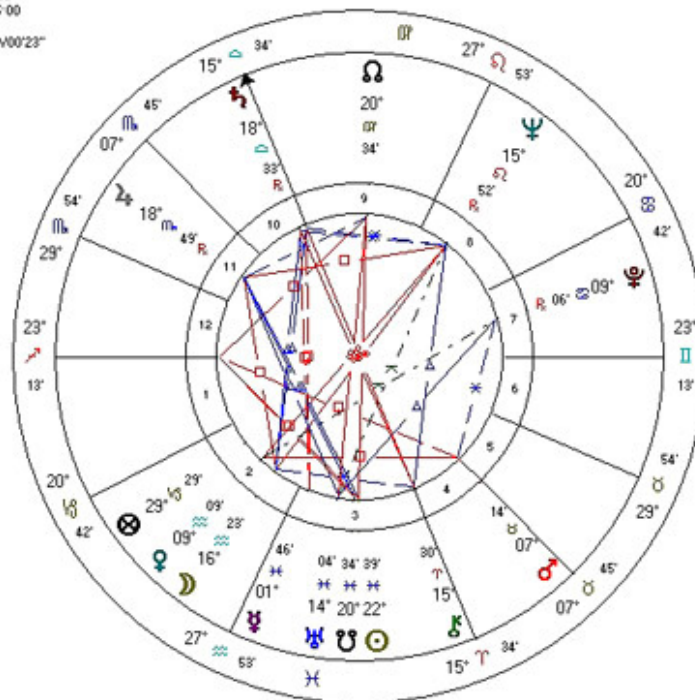
The word translation of the above picture is "The Sun is in Pisces in the 3<sup>rd</sup> House."  
Here's another:

**Diane**  
**Natal Chart**  
Mar 14 1923, Wed  
1:30 am EST -5:00  
New York, NY  
40°N42°51" 074°W00°23"  
Geocentric  
Tropical  
Koch  
True Node  
Rating: B



This picture says "Jupiter is in Scorpio" in the 11<sup>th</sup> house." Of course charts are filled with planets and signs, so the image you're interpreting looks more like this:

**Diane**  
**Natal Chart**  
 Mar 14 1923, Wed  
 1:30 am EST +5:00  
 New York, NY  
 40°N42'S1° 074°W00'23"  
 Geocentric  
 Tropical  
 Koch  
 True Node  
 Rating: 8



How does one begin to look at this picture? Imagine this circle is a clock. You start reading at the “9:00 o’clock” position—in the middle of the left half of the circle. In the chart above, that’s 23 degrees of Sagittarius—which represents the cusp of the First House. It’s also known as the **Ascendant** or **Rising Sign**, which among other things, indicates the personality traits that were easiest to express as a child. It’s the mask we first learned to wear around other people and may continue to wear for our whole life. A Sagittarius mask says that Diane is likely cheerful, easygoing, and/or adventurous and athletic.

That’s what we do with the chart—we translate the symbols into concepts. We learn about Diane and her life from these pictures. But it starts with being able to translate the symbols into the appropriate words. See if you can do this with Diane’s full chart. Let’s go in order of the houses:

- Sagittarius Ascendant (1<sup>st</sup> House)
- Part of Fortune in Capricorn in the 2<sup>nd</sup> House
- Venus in Aquarius in the 2<sup>nd</sup> House
- Moon in Aquarius in the 2<sup>nd</sup> House
- Mercury in Pisces in the 3<sup>rd</sup> House
- Uranus in Pisces in the 3<sup>rd</sup> House
- The South Node in Pisces in the 3<sup>rd</sup> House
- The Sun in Pisces in the 3<sup>rd</sup> House
- Chiron in Aries on the cusp between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Houses
- Mars in Taurus on the cusp between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> houses
- Pluto in Cancer in the 7<sup>th</sup> House (This is the relationship house—planets here suggest the experience and/or qualities we consciously or unconsciously attract in our partners.)
- Neptune in Leo in the 8<sup>th</sup> House
- The North Node in Virgo in the 9<sup>th</sup> House

- Saturn in Libra in the 10<sup>th</sup> house. (Notice that it's also conjunct the **Midheaven**—the line with the up-pointing arrow, which indicates career and public reputation.)
- Jupiter is in Scorpio in the 11<sup>th</sup> house.

You'll also notice that there are numbers and signs at the beginning and end of each house. The numbers indicate **the degrees that begin and end each house**. If you'd like to study the movements of planets through your chart, the degrees help you to follow their progress from one house to another.

Let's try to find a (theoretical) Aquarius New Moon in Diane's chart. Her 3<sup>rd</sup> house begins with 27 degrees of Aquarius. Yet the New Moon occurs at 5 Aquarius. This means that it lights up Diane's 2<sup>nd</sup> house, making this a good time to launch new initiatives in 2<sup>nd</sup> house matters—money, self esteem, talents. If the New Moon occurred at 28 Aquarius, then it would plant a seed in her 3<sup>rd</sup> house, emphasizing learning and communication.

What if Diane wants to know which area of life is lucky for her this year? A good place to start would be to find out which house lucky Jupiter is currently transiting. We've already seen that her natal Jupiter is in Scorpio in the 11<sup>th</sup> house. But let's say that when Diane asked this question, Jupiter (in the sky) was at 11 degrees of Taurus. Which house in her chart was blessed by transiting Jupiter at that time? Answer: the 5<sup>th</sup> house. Make sense?

For further practice looking at signs, planets, and houses, perform a similar inventory using your own chart. If you don't have a copy of your chart, visit Astrodienst's website ([www.astro.com](http://www.astro.com)). Here's the page to input the data to create your own chart: <http://www.astro.com/cgi/ade.cgi>.

Start by listing the positions of the planets in their signs and houses. Note where the houses begin and end. Then find the current positions of the planets and note where they fall in your chart.



## STEP TWO:

Once you're comfortable with the visual horoscope, get a feel for the basic natures of signs, planets, and houses.

**The planets are the actors—or living archetypes.** They bring the action—within us—and outside of us. Then can either bless us or conjure difficulties. The heart of chart interpretation is learning what the archetypes are doing and what they want from us today.

Each planet has a basic and universal nature. That every chart has a Venus says we all have the potential to love. But how we love and what we love—that will differ according to the sign and house each planet (or luminary) is in.

**The planet's sign is like the costume the actor wears, but more—it influences gestures and interests of the planet too.** It is how this archetype is personalized—how my Saturn differs from yours. In Diane's chart, the Sun, which represents the basic Self, is in Pisces. Her Sun likes to shine in a Pisces way—which means at her core, she is a magical, romantic, artistic, spiritual, or possibly deceptive individual.

The planets are also given a location—they occupy a particular house of the horoscope. There are **twelve houses** in a birth chart. Each represents a particular area of life. The houses add important details to the picture. They **indicate where a planet likes to direct its energy**—where it hangs out, the kinds of things it's interested in, what it loves to do.



### STEP THREE:

Put it all together.

Using the appropriate keywords for each sign, planet, and house, **you can construct meaningful sentences about a person.** Here's what we could say about Diane:

*With her Pisces Sun in the 3<sup>rd</sup> House of Learning and Communication, Diane, at her core, is someone who wants to communicate with others in a magical way.*

And that's what she is indeed most known for. We've been looking at the chart of **Diane Arbus**, a renowned 20<sup>th</sup> century photographer.



### STEP FOUR:

Practice.

Get the charts for friends and family members and start interpreting. At this point, you're not making predictions. **You're investigating.** You're using the keywords as starting points to make a connection between charts and the real people they symbolize.

Let's say your husband's chart shows a "Mars in Aquarius in the 2<sup>nd</sup> House." First, look up the keywords for "Mars," "Aquarius," and "2<sup>nd</sup> House." Then start putting all those concepts together in a sentence. It might sound something like "My husband has a detached and scientific (Aquarius) drive (Mars) to make money (2<sup>nd</sup> house)."

Is this sentence true about your husband? If it's not, then go back to the archetypes and reconstruct the sentence so that it does say something true. Perhaps more true would be "My husband is a surgeon—he earns his money (2<sup>nd</sup> house) by cutting into people (Mars) in a detached but compassionate way (Aquarius)." Or maybe what's true is "My husband likes to take risks (Mars) with the money (2<sup>nd</sup> house) he earns from computer programming (Aquarius)."

You see, this is where the art comes in! The archetypes of sign, planet, and house are broad and supple enough to describe all of life. **We need to stretch our imaginations into their various possibilities in order to catch the archetypes authentically at work.** What's the value of this? Once we've identified the proper archetypes involved in any particular situation, then we can make the proper offerings, ie, do things the gods will like. Once we gain their favor, that's when magic happens!

But it starts with memorizing keywords and practicing with the people you know. If you're a beginner, be kind and patient with yourself. It may take a while to feel like it makes any sense. But stick with it. When the glyphs on the page start to explain what you feel and what's happening in your life, you've got the connection!

Go to the Appendix for a list of keywords for signs, planets, and houses to get you started.



## STEP FIVE:

Consider the relationships between your planets.

After you've gotten comfortable with the basic language of signs, planets, and houses, you're ready to go deeper—into **the real action of the chart**. What horoscopes have pictured for thousands of years is the simple truth that there are many (sometimes conflicting) voices in our hearts and heads. We have a riot of selves inside. The planets around your chart are a picture of how this crew is assembled. They may be bunched together or all over the chart. Just visually take them in, as though you were viewing children on a playground. Is there a gang in a particular corner of the chart? Are one or more planets hanging out in a quadrant all alone?

Proximity is meaningful (for one, it says that when you get a transit to the first of these planets, more will soon follow). But there's another way that astrologers can tell whether your inner selves are working in harmony or discord. We do this by looking at "aspects" between your planets. Flowing aspects, like trines and sextiles, indicate an easy harmony between the archetypes.

Are Mars and Saturn trine in your chart? These two approached each other on the first day of kindergarten and felt an immediate rapport. Hard aspects, like squares and oppositions, indicate an inherent friction. Are Mars and Saturn square? Likely on their first day of school, one tripped the other with its foot. Is Venus opposite Pluto? Pluto can be scary to child—he's Lord of the Underworld, after all. Maybe your Venus got so tormented by Pluto in third grade, she's hidden herself ever since.

Aspects are the drama of the chart. They indicate the play of forces inside you—and the gifts at your disposal. When planets are connected by aspect, their power and influence increase. They could be dysfunctional and brawling in the hallway, but they will get noticed. The less conscious you are of your own psychology—the more likely the archetypal plotlines you get are limiting and repetitive. In other words, you're sabotaged by your archetypes over and over again. **The more conscious you become of these potent energies—the more creative you can be with your internal forces.** You can improve the plots of your drama. Instead of worrying about the future, you can create it.

This is one the greatest values of astrology. You can use it to direct your life into the directions you desire. You can learn how to take planets in friction and get them to work as a team. I consider this my primary work as an astrologer. I introduce my clients to their particular cast of characters, then I help them to convert the troublemakers into heroes. We discover the best ways to support inhibited planets so that their dreams can finally come true. Such transformations represent the highest and most magical use of this art.

But there's always a starting point. First **you need to investigate the inherent dispositions** of the characters in your life drama. How are your planets wired? This will tell you about certain default psychological settings—and experiences you seem to keep having.

So, how do you see this in a chart? As with signs, planets, and houses, you need to translate the visual symbols into the proper words. In the Appendix, you'll find a table of the five major aspects used by centuries of astrologers. Below that are some definitions. Once you're familiar with these five aspects, see if you can find them in your natal chart.

Aspects are usually depicted in one of two ways: as a grid or as lines within the center of the chart. Below is a chart I just calculated. Hopefully by now you're a little more familiar with the wheel, so you can see some things about the moment in which I'm writing this. For one thing, you can tell whether it's day or night just by looking at the chart (and I don't mean by looking at the time in the data line). When the Sun glyph is above the



horizon (that means it appears in any of the houses from 12 through 7), then it's daytime. When the Sun glyph appears in houses 1 through 6, it's nighttime. The Sun is below the horizon.

But back to our investigation of aspects. Somewhere as I write, a child is being born and this chart shows the archetypal patterns which with this child will contend and create. You will see in her aspect grid some symbols that I didn't list in the Appendix. These are "minor" aspects and something you can explore later.

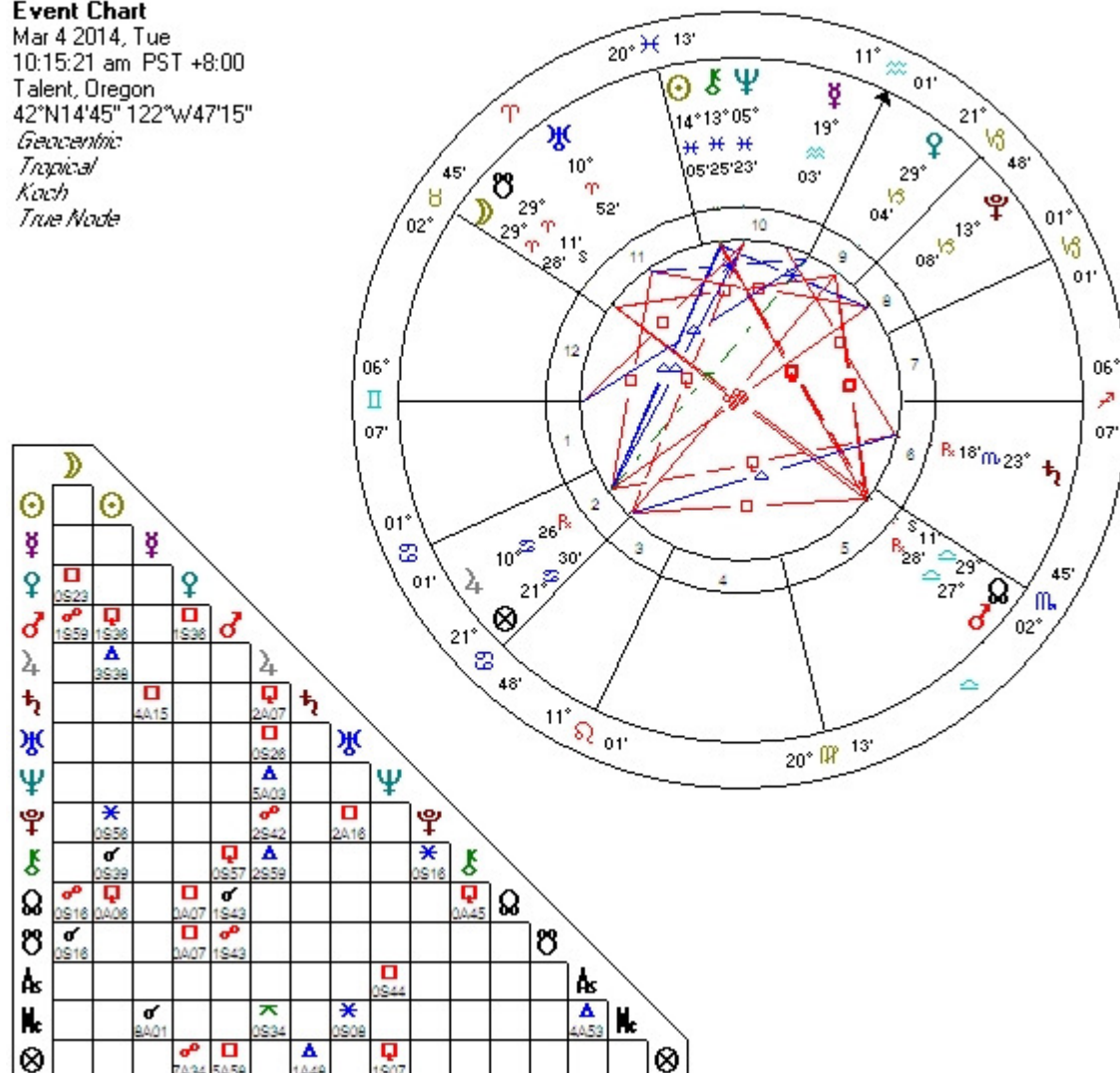
Something you'll also meet later is the concept of "orbs." This describes how close the planets are in degree. The closer the planets' respective degrees, the stronger the force between them. An 18 degree Taurus Sun opposite an 18 degree Saturn in Scorpio is a "tight" orb. If the Sun were at 28 degrees Taurus, its opposition to Saturn would be considered "wide." I have noticed that even wide orb ed aspects can indicate potent life dilemmas—but this is an area of debate among practicing astrologers.

For now, let's just stick with the basics. Back to the theoretical baby girl born on March 4. What aspects between her planets do you see?

### Transits Mar 4 2014

#### Event Chart

Mar 4 2014, Tue  
10:15:21 am PST +8:00  
Talent, Oregon  
42°N14'45" 122°W47'15"  
*Geocentric*  
*Tropical*  
*Koch*  
*True Node*



An important “high stakes” aspect in this chart is the Moon/Mars opposition. Did you find it?

The Moon represents our emotional nature and Mars our warrior and protector. When these two are in opposition, there may be tension and arguments in the home along with a feeling of being under threat or in danger. This opposition is also conjunct the Nodes of the Moon. Can you see that? Find it in both the grid and on the chart. This conjunction suggests that the emotional patterns embedded in the opposition were likely dragged in from an earlier life—in other words, there’s some karma to work through. Doing so will bring a major leap forward for this child’s soul. A Moon/Mars opposition could make this girl a fighter—someone quick to defend others or volatile and quick to attack. Which way do you think she might go?

Consider the Pisces Sun and Gemini Ascendant. How might these details add to the picture? Pisces is usually compassionate and Gemini easygoing and sociable—but then again, both signs can be devious.

Well, you see now, this is how it starts... the journey through anyone’s chart. There’s a lot of wondering. But first, there’s noticing. Notice what’s going on. Then start to think about how that might work. Recognize that there are many ways to express these various combinations. **You can’t entirely say who someone is just from staring at a chart—you need to know a little about how the person is currently working with their archetypes.**

Astrology is a sacred art available to all of us. But we should be careful about how we use it. The ways of the archetypes are varied, mysterious and profound. We should always be humble in their presence. We should strive to serve these gods and goddesses well. We should aim to have plenty of fun with them too.



## The Appendix

## KEYWORDS

### **PLANETS**

**Sun:** Our vitality and magnetism; self-identity, ego.

Roles: The Self, the Hero, the Performer, the King.

**Moon:** Intuition, emotion, nurture.

Roles: The Mother, the High Priestess, the Child.

**Mercury:** Mind; physical dexterity and mental agility.

Roles: The Thinker, the Communicator, the Student, the Trickster, the Merchant, the Thief.

**Venus:** Our capacity for pleasure, receptivity, creativity, and social connection. Also indicates our relationships, self esteem, and financial abundance.

Roles: The Lover, the Seductress, the Artist.

**Mars:** Desire, initiative, anger.

Roles: The Protector, the Athlete, the Warrior.

**Jupiter:** Luck, opportunity, expansion, higher learning, religion.

Roles: The Scholar, the Gypsy, the Traveler, the Monk, the Professor.

**Saturn:** Hard work, commitment, focus, inadequacy, leadership, suffering, loss.

Roles: The Task Master, the Grim Reaper, the Wise Old Man, the Builder, the Cynic, the Boss.

**Uranus:** Change, breakthroughs, upsets, discoveries.

Roles: The Revolutionary, the Humanitarian, the Visionary, the Snob.

**Neptune:** Imagination, spirituality, idealism, addictions, deception, compassion.

Roles: The Artist, the Romantic, the Guru, the Addict, the Martyr, the Victim.

**Pluto:** Transformation, power, psychological dynamics, helplessness.

Roles: The Terrorist, the Detective, the Psychotherapist, the Dictator, shady people.



## **SIGNS**

**Aries:** Pioneering, competitive, selfish, impatient, courageous, reckless, independent, dynamic, domineering, "Me first!"

**Taurus:** Patient, stable, lazy, dependable, practical, sensual, stubborn, artistic, possessive, greedy, gentle, loyal.

**Gemini:** Intelligent, curious, adaptable, quick-witted, restless, clever, scatterbrained, lacking follow-through.

**Cancer:** Nourishing, intuitive, protective, moody, sensitive, maternal, domestic, childish, cautious, creative.

**Leo:** Proud, dignified, vain, expressive, romantic, generous, childish, overbearing, self-assured, creative.

**Virgo:** Perfection-seeking, practical, methodical, petty, critical, studious, discriminating, cautious, never satisfied.

**Libra:** Charming, sociable, peace-loving, refined, diplomatic, artistic, indecisive, apathetic, easily deterred.

**Scorpio:** Passionate, secretive, penetrating, resourceful, suspicious, manipulative, jealous, sarcastic, intolerant, determined, aware.

**Sagittarius:** Freedom-loving, philosophical, optimistic, enthusiastic, careless, impatient, talkative, a know-it-all, broadminded, athletic, honest.

**Capricorn:** Serious, responsible, practical, hardworking, stubborn, brooding, inhibited, status-conscious, domineering, unforgiving.

**Aquarius:** Progressive, individualistic, unpredictable, cold, intellectual, artistic, eccentric, shy, impersonal, scientific.

**Pisces:** Compassionate, intuitive, ungrounded, romantic, impractical, self-sacrificing, seductive, musical, artistic.

## **HOUSES**

**First House:** Personality, physical body, beginnings. Includes the Ascendant and rules physical appearance, the image you project to others, your general outlook on life, how you start things; may describe your role in your family system, often guides your first impression of immediate environment.

**Second House:** Money and personal finances, sense of self-worth and basic values, personal possessions, talents.

**Third House:** Communication, thoughts, language skills like writing and speaking, early schooling, siblings and neighbors, short trips, coming and going around town.

**Fourth House:** Your home, psychological foundations and roots, family, parents, domestic life, instinctive behavior, ancestry, your connection with the past, sense of security, domestic life, real estate. conditions at the end of life.

**Fifth House:** Children, creativity, romance; pleasure, entertainment, self-expression; all forms of "play", speculation, gambling, and attitude towards taking risks; hobbies, attitude towards romance, lovers as opposed to partners, attitude towards having fun.

**Sixth House:** Work and job (as opposed to career), daily life, attitude towards service and coworkers, helpfulness, pets, attitude towards routine and organization, how you refine and perfect your skills.

**Seventh House:** Partnerships, one-to-one relationships, marriage, the first marriage, the "significant other", business partnerships, competitors, open enemies, lawyers, mediators, counselors, contracts, negotiations, agreements. clients/the public.

**Eighth House:** Transformations and crisis, your ability to meet and rebound from crisis and change, sexuality; sex, death and rebirth, rituals and personal growth, your partner's resources, addictions, psychology, other people's money, taxes, divorce/alimony, inheritance.

**Ninth House:** Attitude toward expanding horizons, religious beliefs and personal philosophy, higher education, long-distance travel, morals, foreign languages and cultures, personal truths, publishing, commerce, advertising, your sense of adventure.

**Tenth House:** Career and profession, your contribution to society, social status, public reputation, material success, how you carve out a public identity for yourself; attitude toward authority figures, parents, caregivers, bosses, governments, attitude towards responsibility, desire for achievement.

**Eleventh House:** Friends, groups, organizations; hopes, wishes, aspirations, personal goals; your philanthropic attitude, concern for the collective, humanity; like tenth, can bring recognition and honors for fulfilling hopes and dreams.

**Twelfth House:** What's hidden beneath the surface, karmic dustbin, limiting childhood/past-life messages, self-undoing, hidden enemies, hidden weaknesses, dreams, secret affairs, lost items, hospitals and prisons, hidden strengths, spiritual studies and soul growth.

## ASPECTS

| Name        | Symbol | Degrees |
|-------------|--------|---------|
| CONJUNCTION | ♌      | 0°      |
| OPPOSITION  | ♌♍     | 180°    |
| SQUARE      | □      | 90°     |
| TRINE       | △      | 120°    |
| SEXTILE     | ✕      | 60°     |

**Conjunctions** indicate planets in proximity. This is usually a favorable situation as the two can balance and strengthen each other (as in the cliché “two heads are better than one”). Planets in conjunction can be wonderful co-conspirators. But sometimes one planet bullies the other into submission; bringing the hidden planet into the light becomes an important project. If you have conjunctions in your chart, do the archetypes make beautiful music together? Or do they weigh each other down?

**Oppositions** indicate just what their name suggests. These planets wear shoes that are pointed in opposite directions. When it comes to life decisions, there's often a tug of war between them. Before we come to understand our oppositions, we tend to meet them in the outer world as conflict with other people. Once we recognize that these people are the “stand-ins” for our inner dilemma (we want two different things!), the outer battles tend to decrease. The trick with oppositions is figuring out how to harmonize these energies. Their mystical connection makes them important to each other.

**Squares** represent tension and struggle—but this can be a very creative energy. Old fogey astrology says that with squares you're doomed. This may have been true in times and cultures when people couldn't rise too far above their material circumstances, when being born on the wrong side of the tracks meant your life would be a constant struggle. But modern astrologers have noticed that today squares tend to appear in the charts of many successful people. That's because the dynamic friction between planets in square can be motivating. Because their tension is hard to ignore, squares can help us to achieve and grow.

**Trines** are the sweetest aspect. Everybody loves to see planets in trine because that means ease. We don't like struggle. We want ease! But easy isn't always better. Planets in trine can sometimes collaborate in a way that gets us into trouble. Mostly, however, they help us



to easily do certain things that others find hard. They indicate our gifts. Unfortunately, most of us tend to value more highly what we've earned through effort and difficulty, so our trines are often neglected. I do believe that trines *are* the reward for hard work—just not work you've done in this lifetime. So, soul-wise, you deserve them and should use them well if you aren't already doing so.

**Sextiles** are also nice. Two planets in sextile have compatible styles. These archetypes can work well together. But just as with trines, they're easy to ignore. This is the friend who you always have fun with, but never think to call when you're bored. As with your trines, you should check out your planets in sextile and see if you're putting them to good use. Find a project they'll both enjoy.

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this MoonCircles eBook!



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