



A Guide to Checking the Daily Astro-Weather for Newcomers to Astrology

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1. Introduction

When most people think of astrology, they think of birth charts and what they mean for a person's whole life. But the planets are always in motion, and we are all in constant communication with the living sky. The chart is changing all the time, and the transits of the planets come and go differently in different places. Moreover, what those transits mean in the life of each person depends on where they fall in their own nativity.

A birth chart says a great deal about a person's destiny, but it's just one moment in time — pivotal though it is. Lives are full of pivotal moments, though, and the spans between them are still rich in detail. The daily motions of the planets tell us about what's happening now, for the individual and the collective.

For this reason, even for someone with no plans to learn the technical operations performed by professional astrologers, it's worth the time of anyone interested in the heavens to learn how to check the astrological weather. You can use it for planning and preparation, just like you would use a meteorological weather report, except the astrological weather report plays out in ways that are universal and intimately personal simultaneously.

2. The Chart, the Sky, and the Day

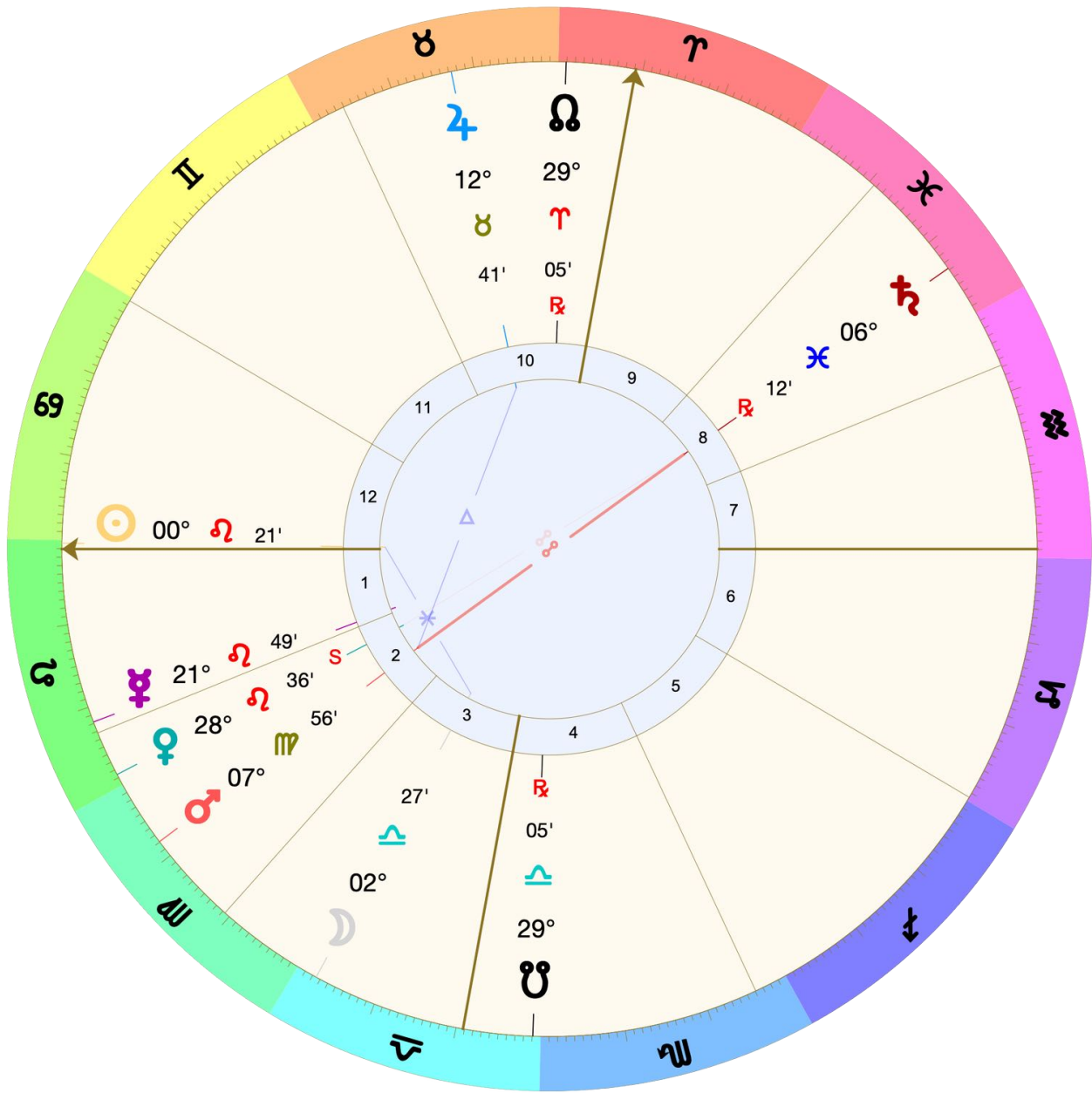
An astrological chart is a picture of the sky in a given location. It may seem abstract, disembodied, and two-dimensional at first, but nothing could be further from the truth. You can use an astrological chart to instantly orient yourself under your local sky day or night, and I encourage you to do so as often as you can. There is no quicker way to learn astrology than to get the daily motion of the sky into your bones by watching the chart.

The first thing to know about an astrological chart is that it is oriented around the cardinal directions, just like a surface map of the Earth. The local directions are shown in a chart by four critical points called **the angles**: the ascendant (AC), the midheaven or *medium coeli* (MC), the descendant (DC), and the angle of Earth or *imum coeli* (IC).

The trick is that, unlike a map of the ground, you're looking up at the sky, of course. The circle in an astrological chart is a map of the ecliptic, the band of sky inclined by about 23.4° from the equator where the plane of the solar system lies. Trace the arc of the Sun through the sky in a day; that's all I'm talking about. The signs of the zodiac are that circle of outer space divided into twelve 30° segments.

The space in the *local* sky depicted in the chart is also divided into 12 segments called "houses," defined by the angles, which are how the chart denotes the significations of the essential topics of life, the good, the bad, the ugly, and the sublime. There are different systems for house division. Many charts you will see just use the local space under each of the 12 zodiac signs as

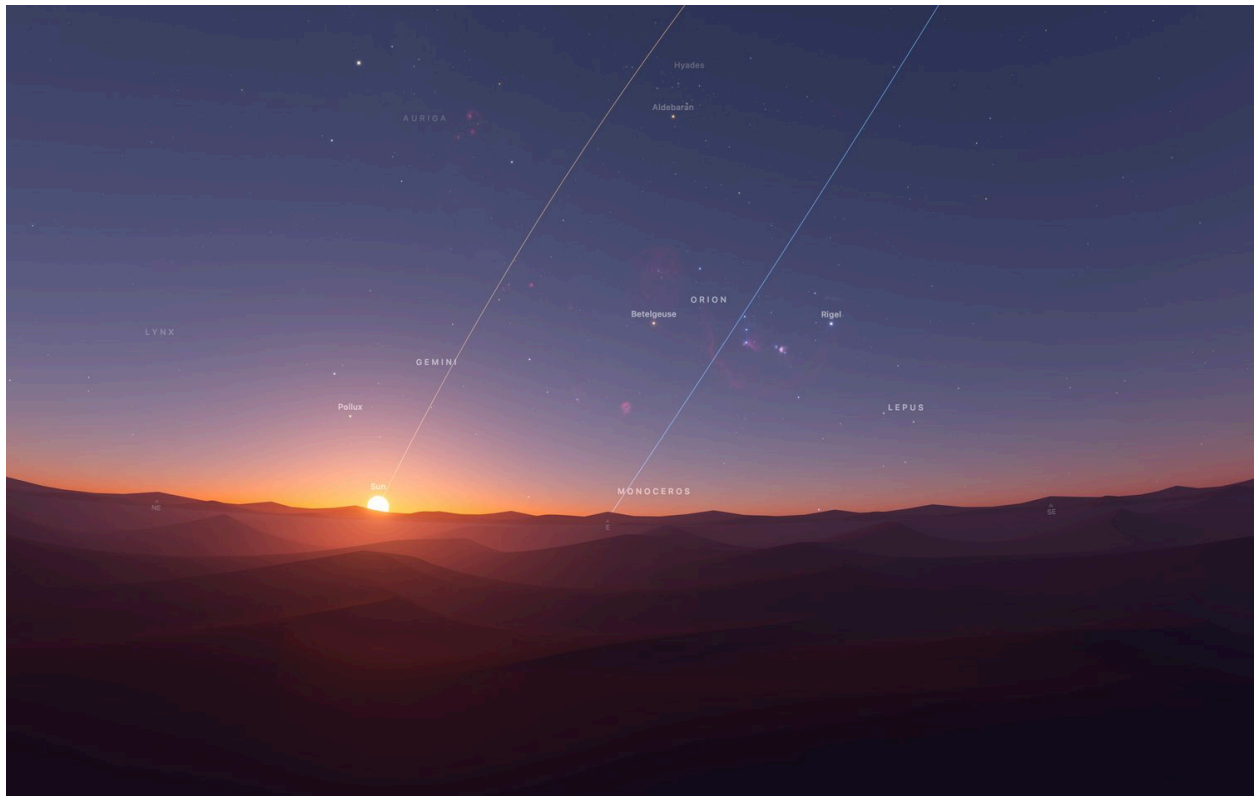
the houses. I do that sometimes, but usually I use a separate system of house divisions for reasons you can [read more about elsewhere](#). I will talk more about what houses *are* and *mean* later in this guide. For now, I'm just explaining why the charts you will see below look the way they do.



If you haven't already figured it out, an astrological chart shows the ecliptic both above and below the ground. In astrology, we care about the whole zodiac, what is rising and setting, what is culminating above our heads and below the ground, and where all the planets fall in that grand array.

So how do we orient ourselves to the sky where we are?

The first place to look is to the left.*



** (If you're in the northern hemisphere. For the southern hemisphere, mirror all of these directions; the left side of the chart is still east, but outside, you will orient with east to your right, and the midheaven is north.)*

The arrow on the left side of the chart is the ascendant, the precise degree of the zodiac that is rising over the eastern horizon. This point is not exactly due east; it wobbles around that point, but it's close enough. So if you want to use the chart to look at the sky, stand so that east is to your left.

That means you're facing south. The point due south in the local sky is the midheaven or *medium coeli* (MC). The MC is the highest point on the ecliptic in the sky before it starts heading down and toward the west. When the Sun is on the midheaven, it's solar noon, midday. When any point we care about is on the MC, we say it's "culminating."



In these astronomy screenshots, you'll see three great circles. The gray one that looks pretty vertical is the meridian, the circle projected due north and south. Its intersections with the ecliptic

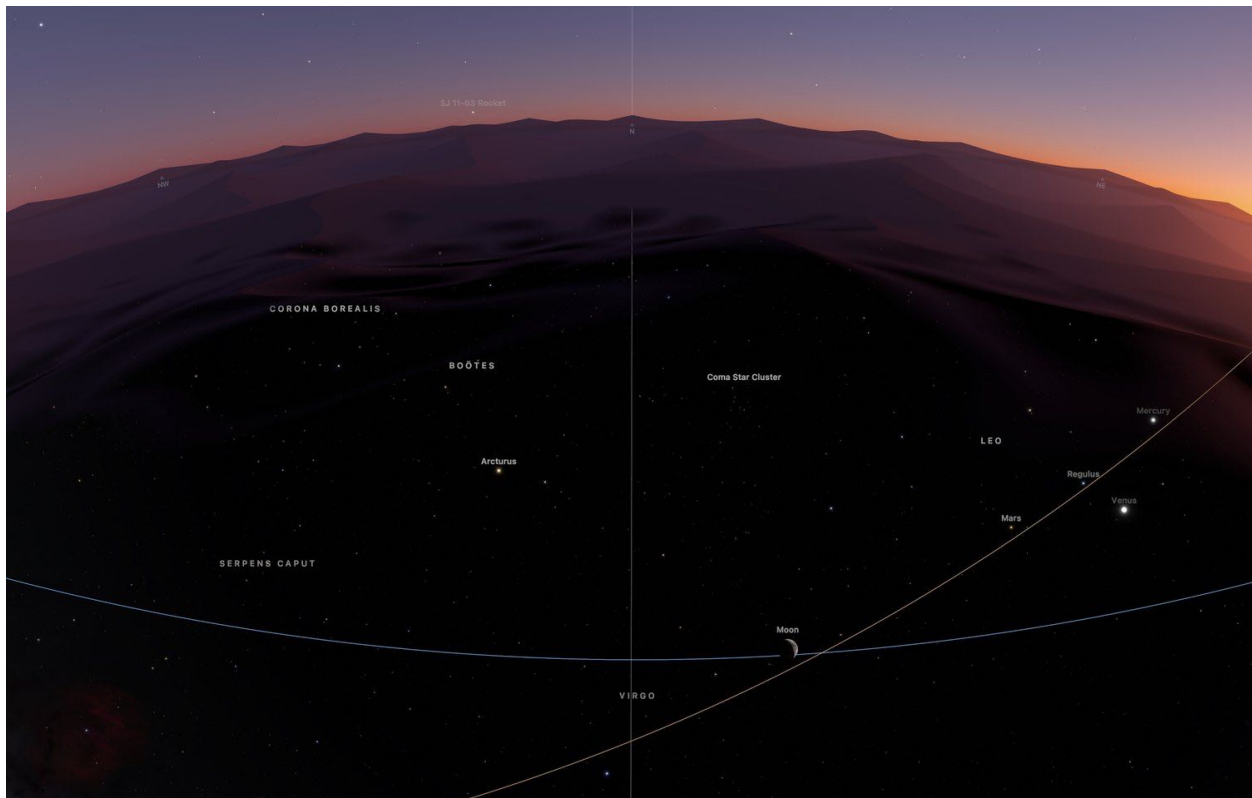
are the MC and IC. The blue one is the celestial equator, which is the circle projected out from Earth's equator, which shows you the axis of the Earth's rotation. The *orange* one is the ecliptic, the plane of the solar system, where the zodiac is and what the astrological chart is mapping. So to find the planets in the sky, look to that orange line.

(Also, if you're noticing that the constellations in the screenshots don't line up with the signs on the astrological chart, I urge you not to worry, but in case you are worrying anyway, here is something to help you feel better.)

The line on the right side of the chart is the descendant, the point of setting over the western horizon. Everything on the top half of the chart is in the sky; everything on the bottom half is below the ground.



The point 180° opposite the MC is the *imum coeli* (IC), which is due north, but more importantly it's *below you*. The IC is sometimes called the “angle of Earth;” a straight line down from the MC going through you and the entire planet below you would hit the IC. Put another way, your local IC is the current MC in the place exactly on the other side of the Earth from you.



So that's the place mapped by an astrological chart. The ecliptic — the zodiac — is a ring around the Earth, a thin band of sky where all the planets and the Sun travel all the time, and which the Moon zigzags across in its own plane — sometimes above the ecliptic, sometimes below. The astrological chart is a map of *that ring* showing where your local sky intersects it, which parts of it are visible there and which ones are not.

If you watch the chart over time, you'll notice that the MC/IC axis wobbles back and forth from left to right. That's because the Earth wobbles. The Earth rotates at the equator, but our axis of rotation is tilted away from the orbital plane of the solar system. That makes the ecliptic stretch and compress as it travels through the sky over a given point on the Earth's surface throughout the day.

So okay, you got me; an astrological chart isn't a literal, proportional map of the sky from Earth. It's more like a map of the ecliptic itself that is oriented to a particular Earth location with the angles of the local sky projected onto it. But now that you get that it's divided horizontally, with east on your left, west on your right, and high noon in the south on top, you know everything you need to know to look up from the chart at the sky and find the glittering travelers you're looking for — if they're up there tonight.

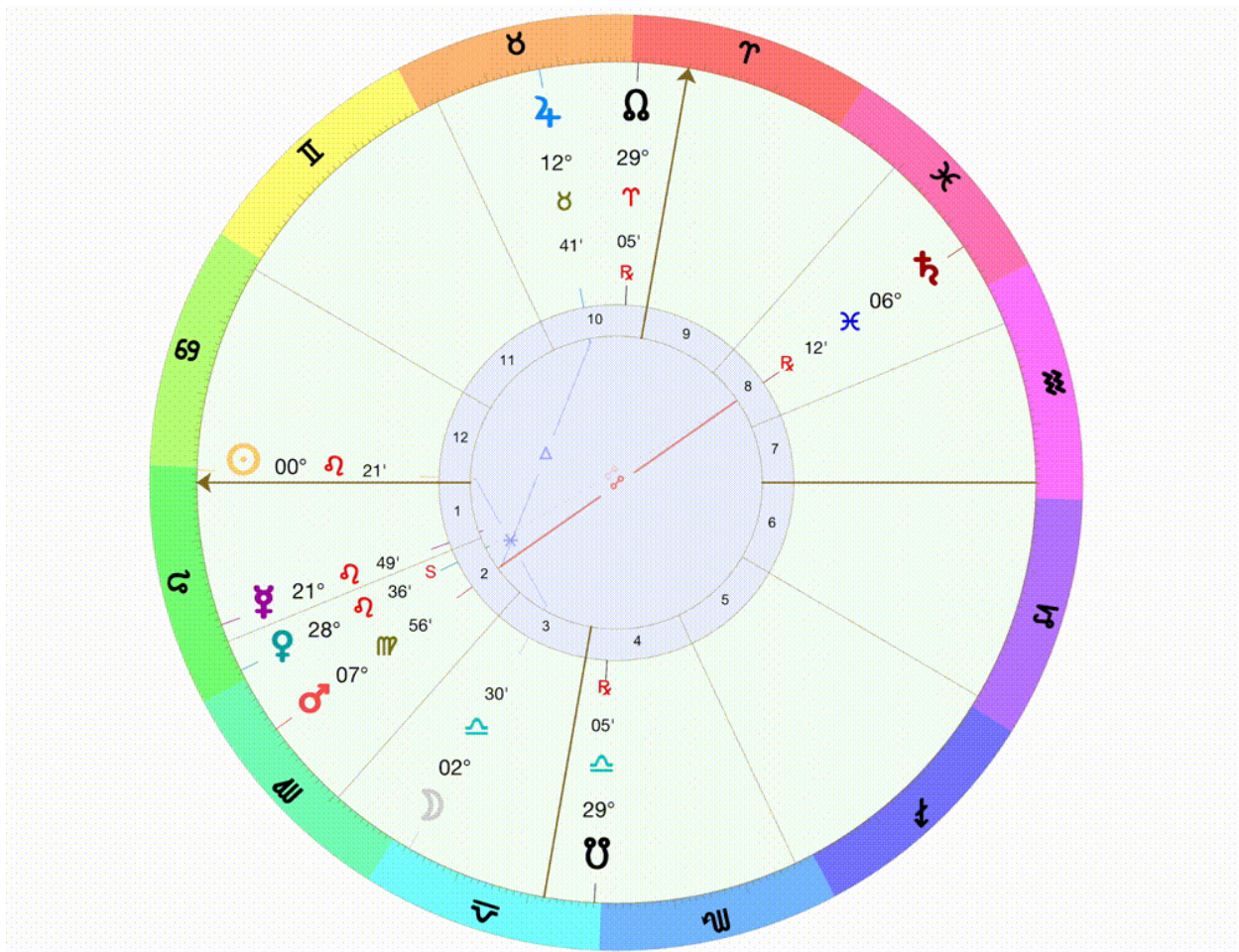
But there's a little more to understand about the chart, which is how it moves.

Primary and Secondary Motion

An astrological chart is as much a clock as it is a map. Our everyday definitions of units of time are really astronomical (or even downright astrological, as you'll see in [the section about planetary days](#)). In astrology, we care about those same units and cycles of time, as well as more most people aren't used to tracking — at least, not consciously.

But the observance of long and intricate planetary cycles is a whole hobby (or profession) unto itself; to track everyday astro weather, all we really need to add to our usual ways of timekeeping is a bit more detail.

Think of the chart as an inside-out clock. The ascendant is the fixed hand that tells you what time it is, and the wheel of the zodiac rotates through it clockwise, ticking off the degrees. This is the way an astrological chart shows the rotation of the Earth, which is known as **diurnal motion** or **primary motion**.



(view animation in browser)

In this [animation](#), you can watch the Sun rise in the east, culminate in the south, and set in the west over the course of the day whose chart at sunrise we saw above, with all the planets (and the lunar nodes, the Ω and Υ symbols) moving right along with it as the Earth revolves.

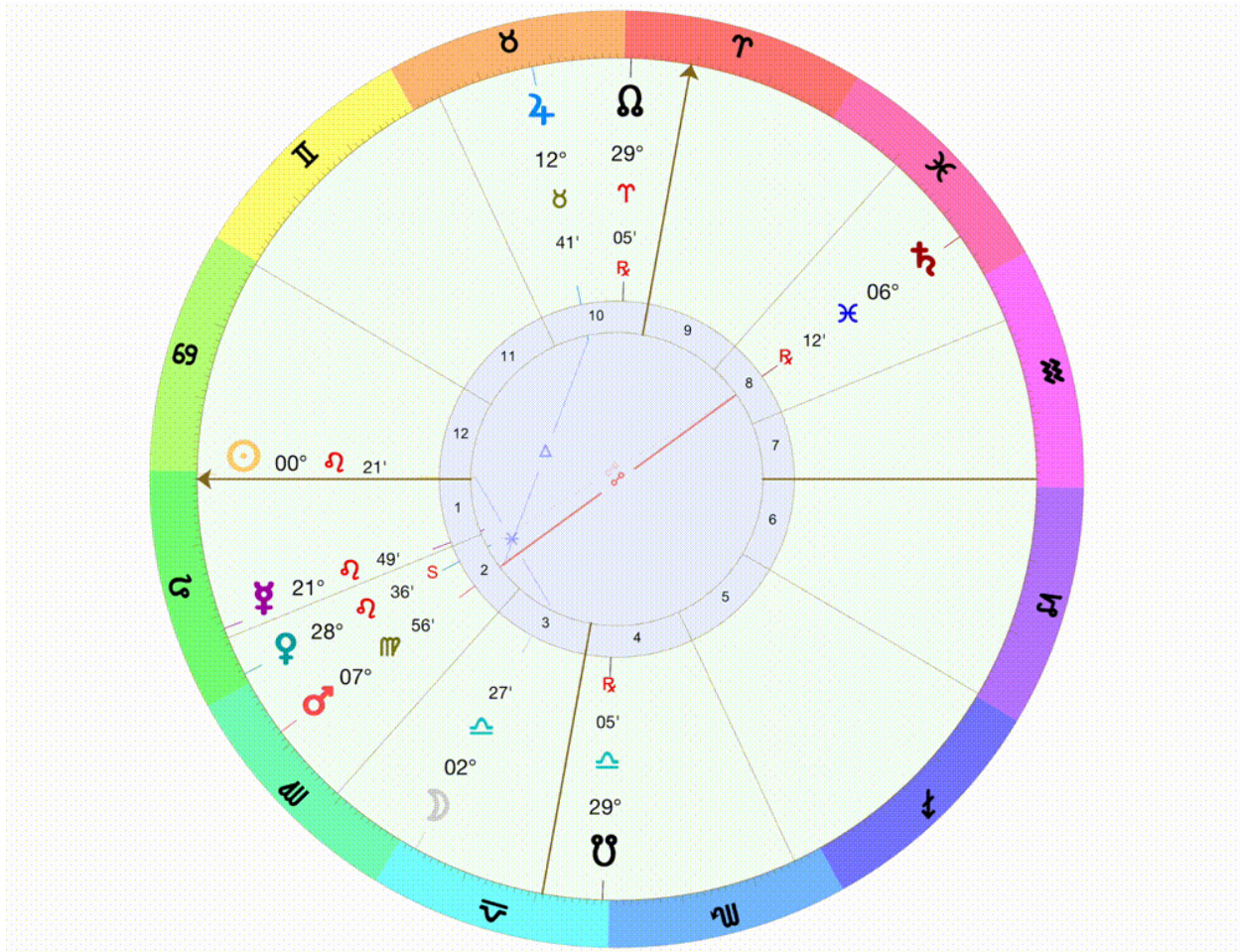
But there's a second kind of motion in an astrological chart which you can barely see over the course of a single day. But look at the Moon, which is by far the fastest body in the sky. Specifically, look at the numbers below her symbol. See how they're ticking upwards as the day goes on? That's because she's moving in her own orbit across the backdrop of outer space behind her. That backdrop is what the zodiac measures. So as a planet moves across the sky over the course of days rather than hours, its position in the zodiac ticks upwards, meaning it moves counter-clockwise through the chart.

This is called **secondary motion**.

The following [animation](#) is incrementing time by days rather than minutes; it starts at the same time of day at the same location as the chart above — 6:50 a.m., sunrise after the Leo ingress — and then advances by one day at a time over about six months. You'll still see the zodiac moving clockwise, but that's because the Sun is moving counter-clockwise through it by about 1° a day, and the Sun is moving slowly away from the horizon because it's getting later in the year, so sunrise is getting later.

Don't worry, the [very next section](#) will focus just on how the Sun, the year, and the zodiac work. All I'm showing you here is that

there are two kinds of motion in a chart: the zodiac moves across the sky over the course of one day, and the planets move through the zodiac over longer spans of time.



(view animation in browser)

There's one catch: At various times in their orbital cycle relative to the Earth, other planets (but not the Sun or Moon) will appear to move backwards through the zodiac. If you look closely, you'll see Saturn doing that at the beginning of the second animation, then it reaches its station, stops, and starts going forward again. This is called **retrograde motion**, and we'll get to that later, too.

One last question about reading charts, though. What are those blue and red lines blinking on and off in the middle of the circle?

Aspects

Those lines show *aspects*, which are geometric relationships between planets or points across the circle of the zodiac. The word *aspect*, etymologically, means “to look at,” and that’s what an aspect really is: an angle at which two places across the sky can see each other.

The reasons we use the aspects we do are out of scope for this guide, as are the vast and intricate ways of delineating what they mean. What matters for the purposes of vibe-checking the astro-weather is that aspects show moments of harmony and dissonance in the music of the spheres when two planets are engaged in something. In other words, aspects are when *things happen*, astrologically.

You can divide up a circle of 360° all kinds of ways — and modern astrologers very much do — but there are only four traditional aspects:

- Sextile (∗): 60°, a nice aspect
- Square (□): 90°, an intense, friction-causing aspect
- Trine: (△): 120°, a very nice aspect
- Opposition: (♌): 180°, a challenging, tension-causing aspect

What you won't see in the middle circle there are conjunctions (♌), which is when two planets are at the same zodiacal degree. This isn't really an aspect, which is what we call two planets looking at each other from across the sky. A conjunction is more of a union in which two planets are physically together and combining significations. But conjunctions are also sort of aspects in that they are one of the five traditional astrological moments when something is happening between two bodies.

When two planets are in signs that have one of these geometric relationships with each other — i.e. signs that are two signs apart are *sextile to each other* — those planets are able to see each other, astrologically speaking. When planets are in the *same* sign, they are called *co-present*. Signs that are right next to each other or five signs apart *can't* see each other and are called *averse* or *inconjunct*. This matter of being able to see or not is very important for interpreting a chart.

A planet's aspect to a sign is also important. A planet that is trine to the sign of its own domicile is in the same triplicity (or element) as its home sign, and it can see its domicile clearly, so while it isn't at home, it is still much more supported than a planet who cannot see its home at all. A planet that is in *opposition* to its home can certainly see the place, but it is as far away from it as possible, in a place of the opposite nature, which can be a hard and lonely trip. Don't worry if you don't already know what the terms in this paragraph mean; I'll explain them completely in the next section. For now, the point is that planets have aspects to *places*, not just other planets, and these describe and affect their relationships to those places.

But the precise formation and separation of these angles between planets are the actual events, not just the planets seeing each other but actually doing something. When an aspect or conjunction is forming, it is *applying*. When the angle is exact, it has *perfected*. And the instant an aspect or conjunction perfects, it is now *separating* as the planets move away from that harmonious (or dissonant) geometric relationship.

This happens because the planets all move at different speeds, so the faster planet is the one doing the applying *to* and separating *from* the slower one. Learning these speeds is critical to understanding how the chart changes over time and anticipating what's going to happen. Again, we will get to that.

For now, though, let's pause briefly to celebrate the fact that you now know all of the fundamentals of how to read an astrological chart. Mazal tov!

Now it's time to learn about all the stuff that's *on* the chart.

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3. The Sun, the Year, and the Zodiac

If you only know about astrology from popular culture, you could be forgiven for believing astrology is entirely about the Sun.

Due to tragic degradations in the quality of transmission of astrological practice through several religiously and/or scientifically benighted periods of European history that unfortunately included domination of much of the world, a comically simplistic form of astrology became popular at the beginning of the modern media era that more or less only considered the zodiac sign the Sun was in. This resulted in the tragic “what’s your sign?” astrology with which most contemporary people in cultures subject to that religious/scientific European domination are familiar.

The main problem with this form of “astrology,” which is barely deserving of the name, is that the sign on the *ascendant* is vastly more important for determining the omen of an astrological chart than the sign the Sun is in, and so if you’re going to be reduced to a single “your sign,” it should really be your *rising sign*, not your Sun sign.

The reason why that is leads us to the second problem — and to the rest of this section — by way of a concept with which, thankfully, you are now familiar from the previous section. The ascendant changes by *primary motion*; all 12 signs cross the ascendant *every day*. So if we’re talking about birth charts, there are people born every day of the year who will have deeply interrelated charts and destinies — with some marked differences, of course, as the planets move around the sky.

That seems kind of obvious when you think about, you know, people. But it's even more obvious in contrast to the very stupid idea of delineating whole personalities by Sun sign, because that would mean everybody born in the same month has the same personality. That's because the Sun changes signs only about once every 30 days by *secondary motion* as the Earth orbits around it.

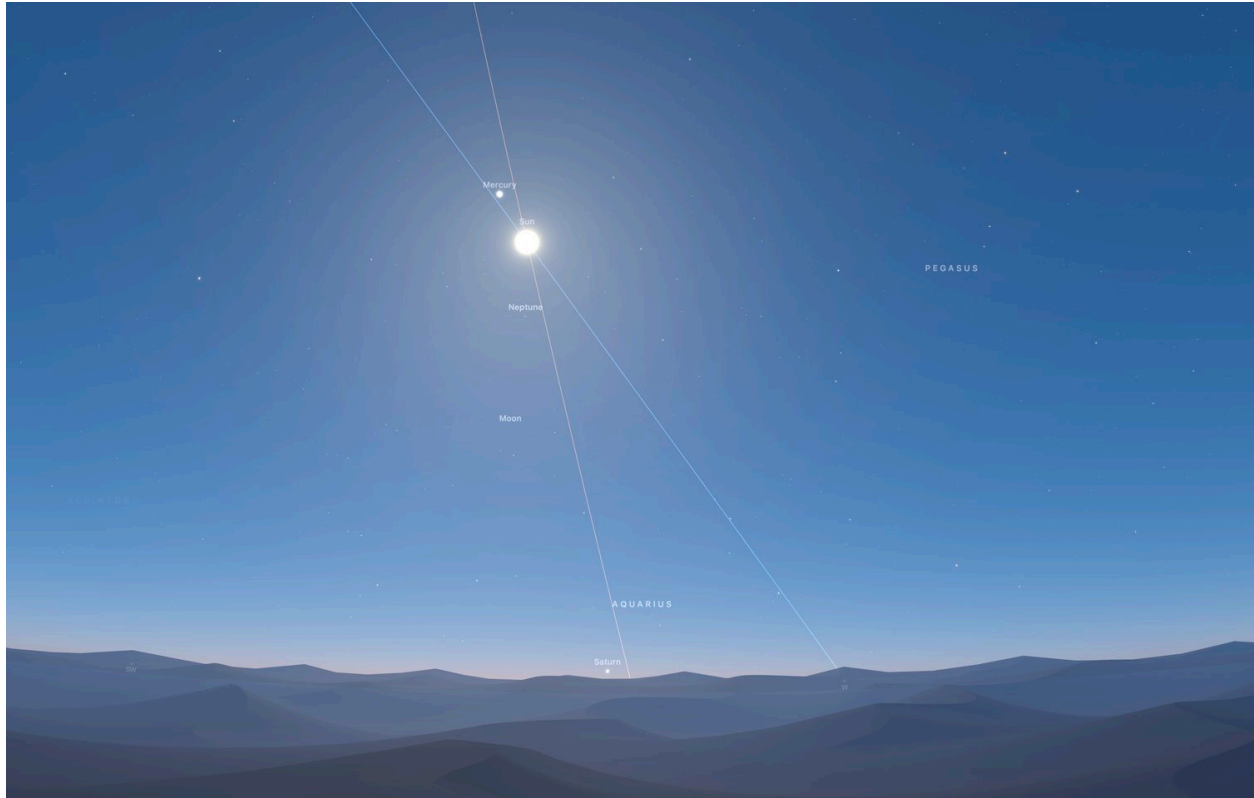
In fact, the zodiac itself is defined by the Sun (unless you're doing sidereal astrology, which I am not; if you must digress on this point, [you may do so here](#)). Have you ever noticed that 360° — a circle — is awfully close to 365, the number of days in a year? That's not a coincidence! This is the first of many times in this guide you will realize that what you thought of as "time" has really been astrology all along.

One degree of the circle of the zodiac is (a close approximation of) a measure of the Sun's apparent movement against the backdrop of outer space from one day to the next. That's what 1° is.

One very good question that follows from this would be, where does it start? Where is 0° ?

The answer — in tropical astrology, which is what traditional Mesopotamian/Hellenistic astrologers like me do — is at the exact moment of the Spring Equinox (in the northern hemisphere). Equinoxes are the two days in the year when the Earth's tilt causes the Sun to cross the equator going north or south. They are so called because those are the days when day and night are of equal length, because the Sun is precisely on the

axis of rotation. Equi-nox. (“Nox” is supposed to sound like “night” to you.) That happens at a precise moment, at which the Sun is at an exact ecliptic longitude (i.e. zodiacal degree), namely the point at which it crosses the equator:



That exact degree of ecliptic longitude is what is known to tropical astrologers as 00° Aries.

So on the Spring Equinox, the Sun enters the sign of Aries, and about 30 days later, it enters the sign of Taurus. Thus the Sun proceeds by secondary motion through all the signs of the zodiac in the course of one solar year, when the next Spring Equinox happens.

The Sun crosses the equator going the other way exactly halfway through the year, at the other equinox, which is the Fall Equinox

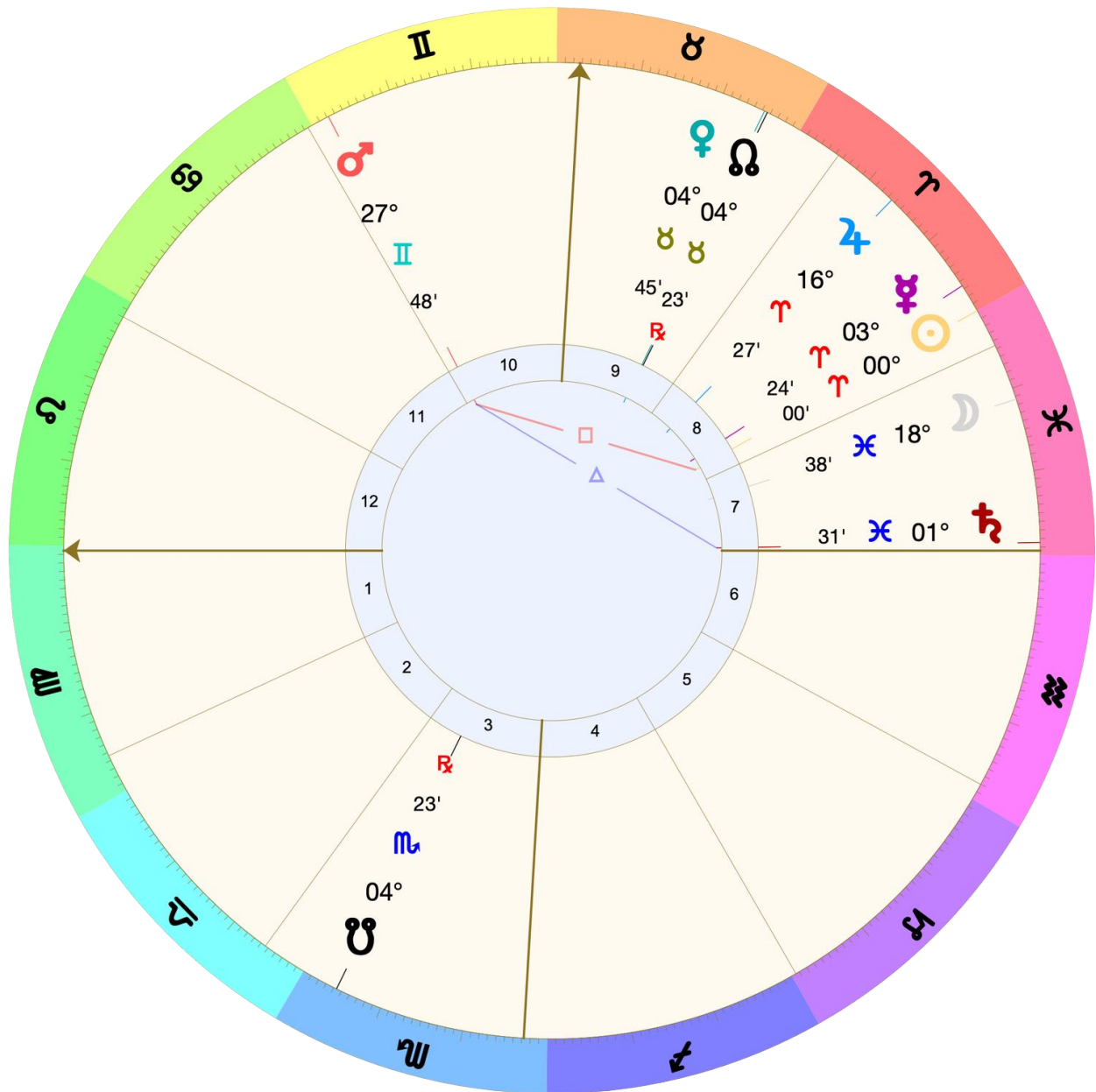


Chart of the Spring Equinox at the same location as the preceding sky image

in the northern hemisphere (and the Spring Equinox in the southern hemisphere. I know this is very concerning to you about how astrology could possibly work, but I assure you it does. Let's have a conversation about southern hemisphere astrology another time; there are answers). That point, 180° across the circle from 00° Aries, is 00° Libra.

Halfway between the equinoxes are the solstices, which are the points at which the Sun reaches its farthest north and south latitudes and thus cause the *longest* and *shortest* days in their respective hemispheres. In the northern hemisphere, the Summer Solstice happens when the Sun is at 00° Cancer, and the Winter Solstice is at 00° Capricorn.

So now we have divided the ecliptic into quarters, which you also know as *seasons*. (Again, northern hemisphere):

- **Spring:** Aries through Gemini
- **Summer:** Cancer through Virgo
- **Fall:** Libra through Sagittarius
- **Winter:** Capricorn through Pisces

Now, you might ask, why divide the seasons into thirds to get 12 signs? I'll give you two reasons. One is that the Moon — which gives us the word *month* — goes through... let's call it *twelve-ISH* cycles of conjunctions with the Sun in one solar year, so 12 is an idealized number of months created to integrate lunar time and solar time. This is a very good reason, and we'll talk more about it in the Moon section, but in terms of understanding the zodiac signs as places, there's a more abstract but cleaner way to understand the significance of 12.

Modality or Quadruplicity

You can think of each set of three signs as a *beginning* sign, a *middle* sign, and an *ending* sign of each season. This is the main

basis of the astrological concept of *modality* of signs, also called *quadruplicity* because there are four signs in each mode, one in each season.

The beginning sign is the *cardinal* or *movable* mode, the middle sign is the *fixed* mode, and the ending sign is the *mutable*, *common*, or *double-bodied* mode.

Cardinal signs — Aries ♈, Cancer ♋, Libra ♎, Capricorn ♑ — are the ones that initiate the season, and that's what this modality means. Cardinal signs are places of action, change, and dynamism.

Fixed signs — Taurus ♉, Leo ♌, Scorpio ♏, Aquarius ♒ — are the heart of the season, when it appears most stable and fully expressed as itself. These are the signs of endurance, constancy, and reliability (and resistance to change).

Mutable signs — Gemini ♊, Virgo ♍, Sagittarius ♐, Pisces ♓ — are the places where the current season begins to give way to the next, where the boundaries begin to dissolve and the difference is less clear. One day feels like fall, the next day feels like summer again. These signs are also called *double-bodied* because they can feel like being in two places at once.

Honestly, just combining the mode with the season — that is, the season it is (in the northern hemisphere) when the Sun is in that sign — gets you a lot of the way towards understanding the meaning of each sign. There are a few more principles that round them out, though.

Element or Triplicity

This is a quick one, I promise, because I'm not going to explain it very much. I'm just going to give you the symbolism and let you vibe on it.

The creation of all this intricate traditional astrology happened in a very syncretistic time. People from many different traditions were bringing every tool at their disposal to bear to figure out how this stuff worked because it seemed to work well with everything, which makes sense given that the sky is available everywhere on Earth and whatnot. One very helpful addition to the significations of signs was the inclusion of the four alchemical elements: fire, earth, air, and water.

The zodiac signs are assigned to these elements in that order. Aries is a fire sign, Taurus is an earth sign, Gemini is an air sign, Cancer is a water sign, Leo is a fire sign, and so on. The concept is usually called *triplicity* because there are three signs in each element, one from each modality.

Part of the reason trine aspects (120°, four signs apart) are so nice is that they are between signs of the same triplicity, meaning planets that are trine are not only in harmony with each other, they are in *environments* which are harmonious with each other.

If you combine the vibes of the element, the vibes of the modality, and the vibes of the season — e.g. Taurus is “fixed earth, the middle of spring” — now you are a great deal of the

way toward a basic but complete felt sense of what kind of place Taurus is.

But now we need to add in the planets, the travelers in those places, and what each place means for each planet.

Domicile Rulership

Another way signs can be understood, which still interacts quite nicely with the seasonal understanding, is through which planets are said to rule them. Signs should be understood as the *domiciles* of the seven traditional planets, which are the ones visible to the naked eye, including the Sun and Moon. The planets are said to *rule* the signs in which they have dignity by domicile, which means they are responsible for what happens there and bring the sign's significations with them wherever they go.

These assignments are the basis for the astrological concepts of *dignity* and *reception*.

Dignity is how well a planet's own nature is suited to the place it's in. A planet in its own domicile has a lot of dignity and can fully express itself. A planet in the place opposing its domicile is out of its element and can be seen as having little dignity. There are other kinds of dignity besides domicile, including triplicity. Planets belong to certain elements and not others according to their nature, so even a planet with no dignity by domicile can have some by being in a comfortable element. I'll list the planets' triplicities in the [planets section](#).

Reception uses the same scheme of dignities to determine how much a planet likes *other* planets from where it is, or how well a planet would do in a different place in the chart we are considering for whatever reason. A planet in Mars' domicile has good reception for Mars; it supports Mars because it is in a Mars-y place. A planet in Taurus — which opposes one of Mars' domiciles — doesn't have great reception for Mars, but it has better reception for Mars than a planet in Libra — opposing the other domicile of Mars — because Mars is part of the earth triplicity but not the air triplicity.

We're not going to get into the entire scheme of dignity and reception, but that's what they are and how they work.

Domicile rulership is the most significant part of this scheme, and it will also help us understand the nature of the signs themselves, so it's worth going into more.

Just for your copying and pasting convenience, here's the list:

Aries ♈: Mars ♂

Libra ♎: Venus ♀

Taurus ♉: Venus ♀

Scorpio ♏: Mars ♂

Gemini ♊: Mercury ☿

Sagittarius ♐: Jupiter ♃

Cancer ♋: Moon ☾

Capricorn ♑: Saturn ♄

Leo ♌: Sun ☼

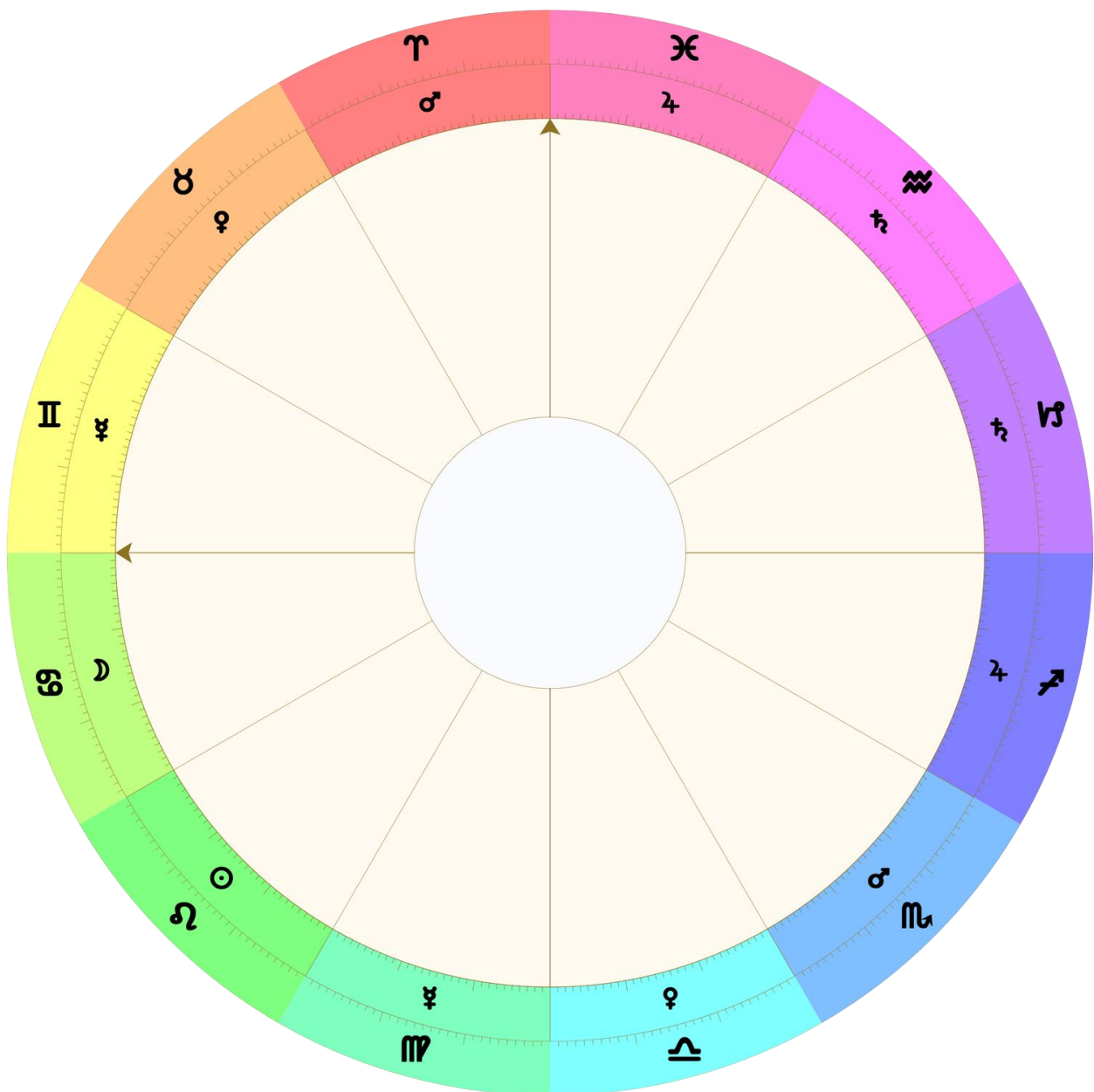
Aquarius ♒: Saturn ♄

Virgo ♍: Mercury ☿

Pisces ♓: Jupiter ♃

Please don't let it bother you that the Sun and Moon are considered "planets" for astrological purposes. "Planet" just

means wanderer, and the term originated here, okay? Besides, the Sun and Moon are still treated very differently, as you can see by virtue of them having their own entire sections of this guide. In fact, this concept of domicile right here will show you what makes the luminaries — as the Sun and Moon are called — special among planets. Perhaps you can see it by looking at the domicile scheme before I even bother to explain:



If you noticed that the luminaries — the Sun and Moon — rule the brightest, lightest part of the year, the height of summer, you aced the test. The Sun rules Leo, the hottest time of year. I know we haven't talked about the meanings of planets yet, and we will, but I want to plant the seeds of it in your mind here, while we're still just talking about the Sun and the cycle of the year.

If the Sun and Moon rule the lightest, hottest part of the year (*in, once again, the northern hemisphere — I'm just going to stop saying that now*), what do you suppose it means that Saturn rules both the signs opposite them, in the darkest, coldest part of the year?

I'll just let you marinate on that for now while I explain why the rest of the planets rule the signs they do.

The easiest way to understand it is to take the luminaries as the middle, and why wouldn't you do that? The Sun is the center of the solar system — it's the literal middle of all this stuff — and the Moon is just as special as the Sun because she's the other one that's big in the sky and casts light on the ground, and she's ours, and we love her.

Now if you go out from the luminary-ruled signs one sign at a time on either side, the next-farthest planet from the Sun rules both signs: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn.

This is a great rule of thumb for memorizing domicile rulerships. It hardly suffices as a way of getting to know these planets, which we'll do more of later. All I want to do here is make sure that all these layers of meaning are interacting for you: The solar year, the seasons, the modalities, and the planetary rulerships in

terms of their distance from the Sun. This is an amazing foundation for understanding what signs are as places and even who they are as beings, which is a critical component of understanding the astrological moment.

Now, I know at least half of you are still urgently wondering why the signs are named after constellations, given that those constellations are not in those signs. I'm not getting into that here except to offer this slight correction: Those constellations are not in those signs *anymore*, but they were a lot more lined up thousands of years ago when all this stuff was getting drawn up. Once again, if you want to get into the difference between tropical and sidereal zodiacs, what they have to do with constellations, and all of that business, I have [another article for you](#) that's way shorter than this one.

I have exactly one more concept to introduce in this section about the Sun's importance to overarching astrological frameworks; I will talk a little bit more about the Sun himself in the [planets section](#). But now that you understand both the way astrology describes a single day and the basic idea of planetary rulership that comes into play when you map out the whole sky, I can throw in the concept of sect.

Sect

Sect is not really that hard to understand. The sect of a chart is determined by whether the Sun is in the sky or not — that is, whether it is a *day chart* or a *night chart*. Day and night are the two sects. The essential astrological difference between day and

night is whether the chart is more of the nature of the Sun (i.e. a day chart) or the Moon (a night chart).

It does get a little bit murky at twilight. Maybe a chart for 45 minutes before sunrise functions as a night chart if you're sleeping until 9:00 a.m. that day, but if you're already awake and headed to the airport, maybe it functions as a day chart already. But for the most part, the sect of the chart is a simple matter of where the Sun is at the time, and that is how days, nights, and hours are defined in terms of the planetary hour system we will cover later.

Besides the Sun and Moon, the other planets are all also of the nature of a sect, meaning each one is more at home either in the daytime or the nighttime (except Mercury; Mercury is a weirdo). I'll give you those assignments in the planets section.

Signs *also* are of the nature of one or the other sect, which is easier to remember because it alternates day-night-day-night and corresponds with their elements: fire and air signs are diurnal, earth and water signs are nocturnal. This means each planet who isn't a luminary rules one sign of *each* sect and thus is a little more aligned in one and a little more in contrast in the other, even though they're both "home." Astrology is a subtle art.

The luminaries each rule one sign. The Sun, whose section we have now completed, rules Leo, which is — you guessed it — a diurnal sign. The Sun is the luminary who rules the day sect. The ruling light of the day sect clarifies, highlights, explains, and simplifies, the way the Sun blots out the night sky during the day into a clear, simple field of blue. This is the nature of the *day*

sect. It's public. It's busy. It's expressive. It supports... you know, stuff you do in the daytime. Activity. Busyness. Presentation. Image. That's the part of astrology we've covered so far.

Now it's time to talk about the luminary of the night: The Moon.

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4. The Moon and the Months

The dominant mode of civilization on Earth at this time is quintessentially diurnal. We emit so much light and heat as a species that the seasons and sky known to the ancients would be almost unrecognizable to us now. Fortunately, the luminary who stands for the quiet, healing, reintegration, and awe of night is always at hand, closer and more familiar to us than anything else in the sky.

The Moon is unique among astrological travelers in many ways. While the others are oriented around the Sun, like Earth is, the Moon is oriented around us. But she is also very much in her own realm; her orbit is inclined 5.1° from the ecliptic, meaning she spends most of her time well above or below the zodiac as seen from the ground, crossing it at two opposing points called the lunar nodes (Ω and Υ), which are crucial astrological points in their own right. She is also by far the fastest traveler in the sky, so her phase and orbital cycle define one of the most noticeable rhythms of life on Earth, and her fast-moving aspects to the Sun and the rest of the planets translate the language of the solar system into the language of the Earth system. For that reason, the Moon can fundamentally be said to represent *us*.

She is often said to represent "the body" or "emotions," but that just sounds like the way a Sun Cult would describe parts of ourselves it experiences as foreign. Yes, of course the Moon rules those layers of experience, as they are essential to who and what we are. But that is a function of who she fully is: the light and the

timekeeper of the night, the one who defines the nocturnal half of the rhythm of life and brings the night into the day.

Where the Sun is precise, the Moon is obscure. The Sun hits its solstices and equinoxes right on schedule; the lunar months slip through the solar year so much that occasional leap months must be added to keep a functionally lunisolar calendar like the one my people use. The Sun marches along at almost exactly 1° per day; the Moon's zodiacal speed fluctuates wildly as she careens above and below the ecliptic and — separately — between her apogee and perigee, the points in her orbit at which she is farthest from Earth (and slowest) and closest to Earth (and fastest), respectively. But at the same time, the Moon reliably keeps time for us in her own way, which is intimately familiar to every being who can see her.



Lunar Phase

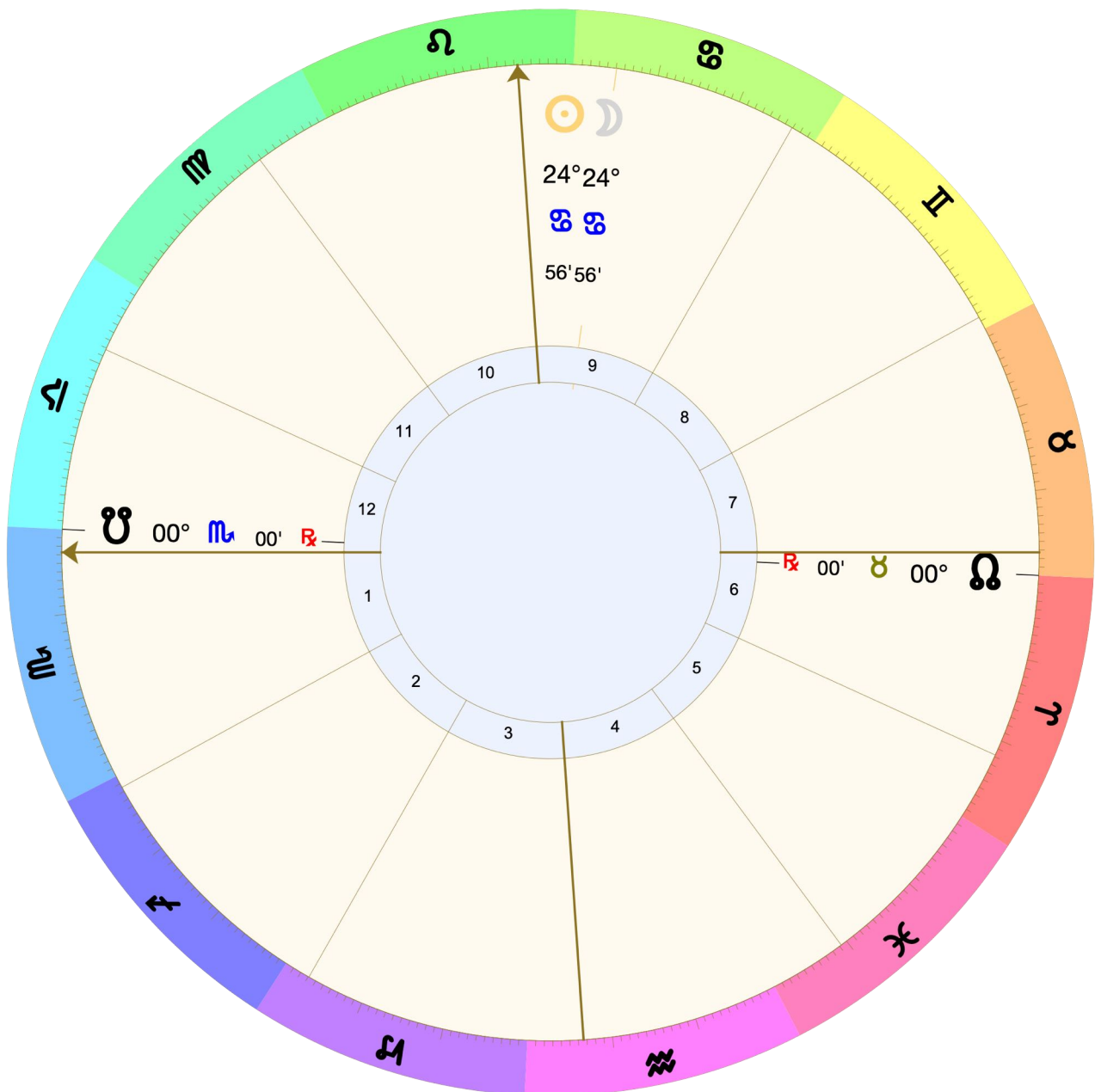
The Moon is the best demonstration of the astronomical concept of *phase*, which every planet (except the Sun) has. The Moon's phase is the most noticeable and understandable, though, so I'll present the concept at length here, and then I can just give brief descriptions of planetary phases in the planets section.

The phase of a planetary body is its cyclical relationship to the Sun. The Moon is the best demonstration of how this works because she's so fast and always goes the same apparent direction from Earth. She's about 13 times faster than the Sun, zodiacally speaking, and so she goes around the whole circle about once for every sign the Sun transits through, sometimes twice if the first one is early enough in the sign.

So there are two ways to measure the unit of time we relate to as a "month" astrologically. One is the 30 days it takes the Sun to cross a zodiac sign. The other is the 29-ish days it takes the Moon to go from conjunct the Sun, to her opening square (or "quarter" in Moon phase terms, each quarter also approximating the length of a week), her opposition ("Full Moon"), closing square, and back to the darkness of the conjunction.

A complete cycle of lunar phases is called a *lunation*. One lunation describes essentially the same amount of time as a "lunar month," but they shouldn't be taken as equivalent. Different cultures begin and end the calendrical or ritual lunar month at different points in the phase; for example, the first day of the Jewish month begins on the first night when the waxing

crescent can be seen, which can be a couple days after the lunation cycle begins, and this can cause confusion about what terms like "New Moon" refer to in a given conversation. So here we're talking about *lunations*, which begin and end at the precise moment of the Moon's zodiacal conjunction with the Sun, when she is completely invisible from Earth.



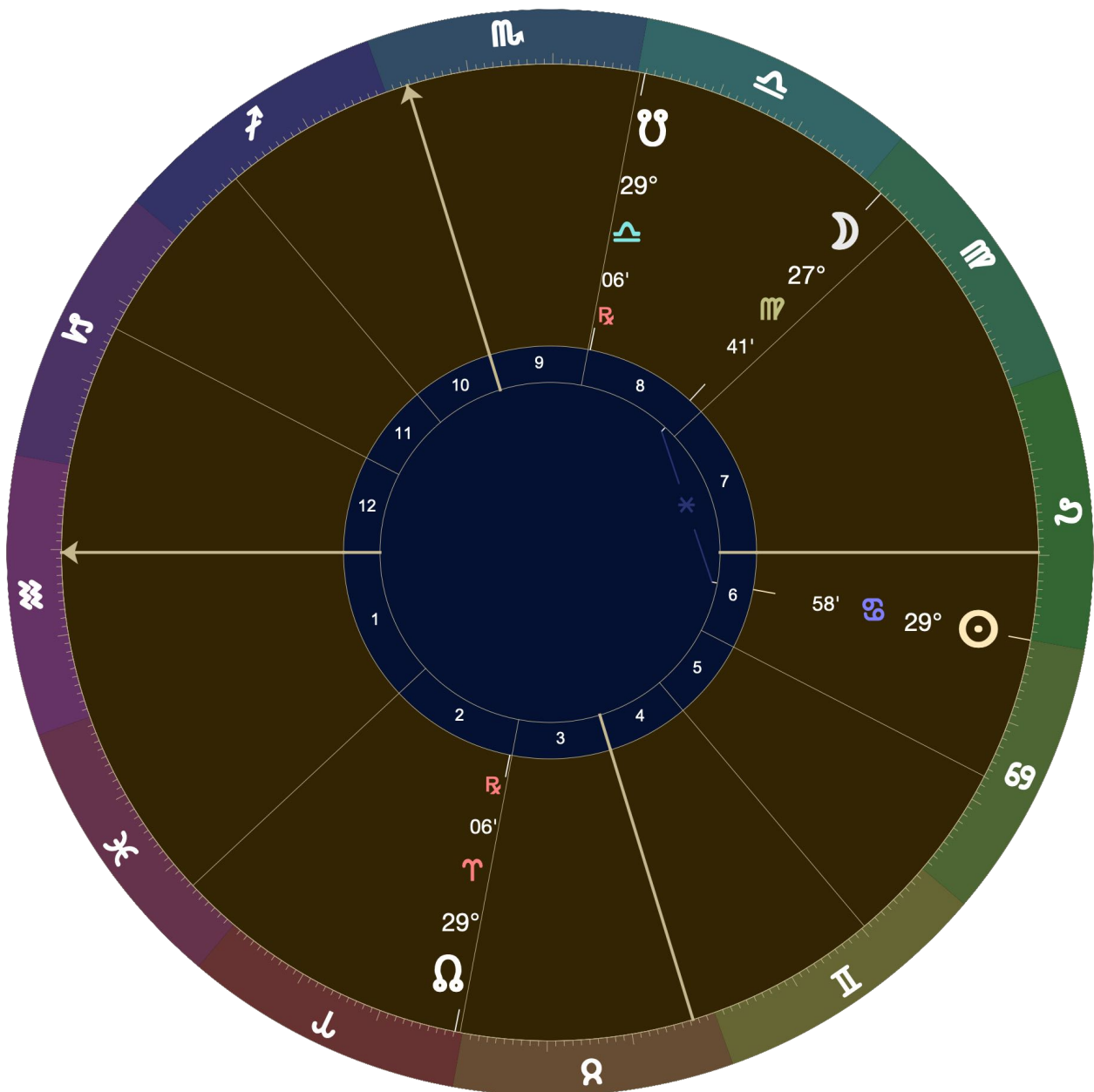


Same New Moon conjunction as shown in the preceding chart. I promise the Moon is in there. Look near the top about 2/3 of the way across.

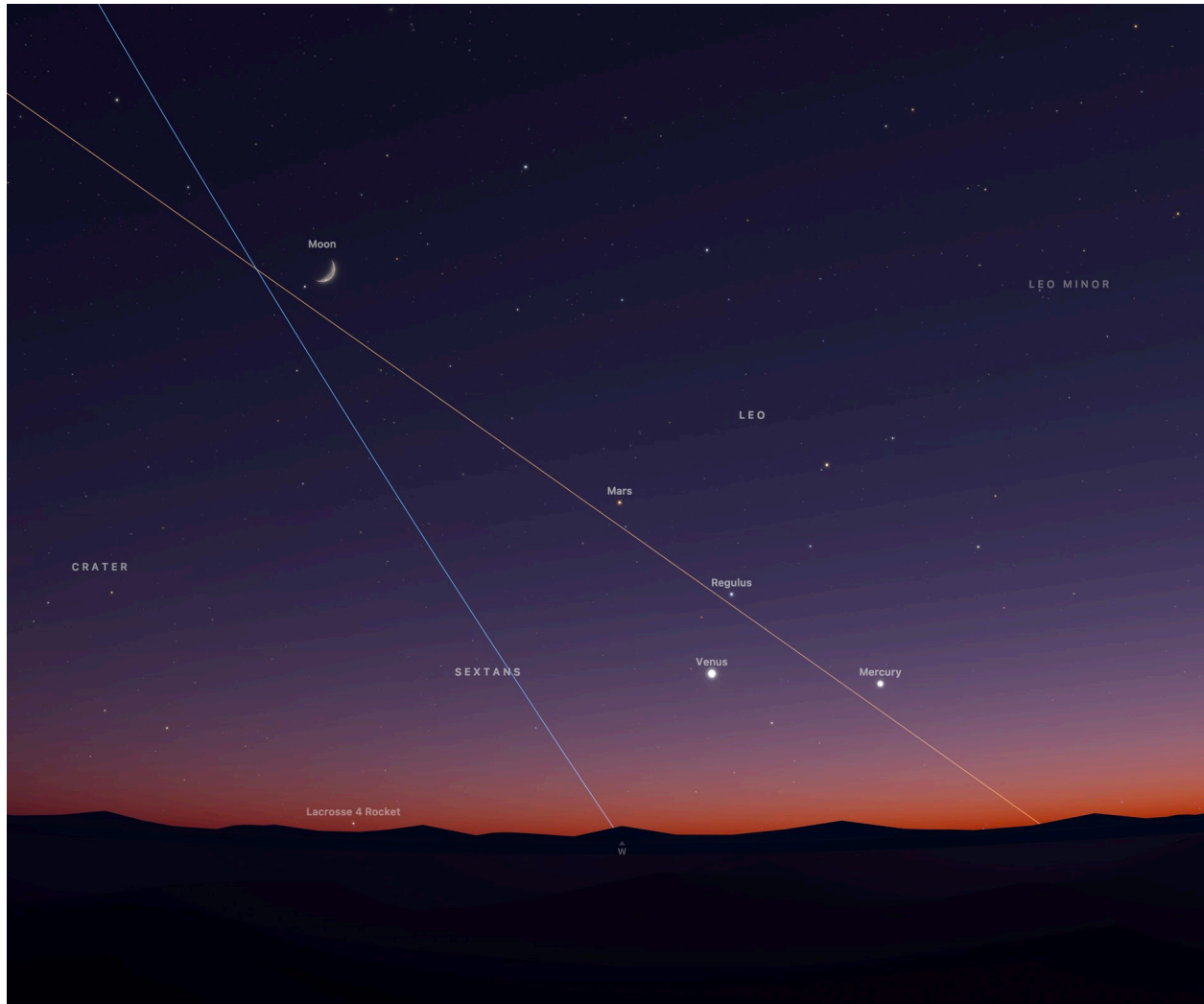
The Moon's conjunction with the Sun — the beginning of the lunation — is conventionally known as the "New Moon." Her opposition with the Sun — the midpoint of the lunation — is the "Full Moon." These critical points in the lunar cycle are both called a *syzygy*, an awesome word everyone should use more.

Because the Moon moves 12° or 13° per day to the Sun's 1° , every day of the lunation has its own phase with its own distinct and recognizable shape. One less commonly discussed implication of this is that the times of day at which the Moon is in the sky also change every day because the zodiacal distance between the Moon and Sun is changing so much.

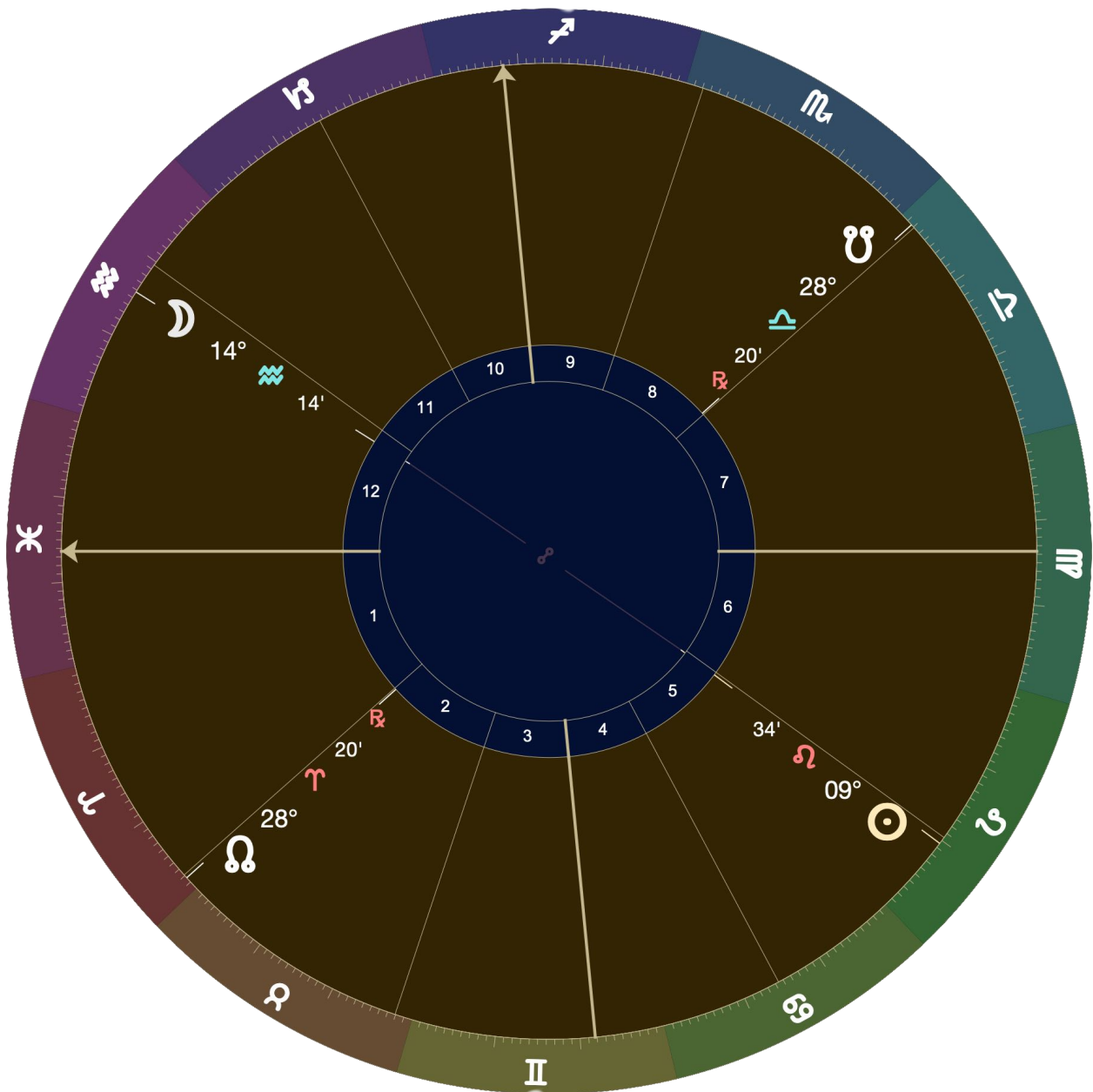
At the very beginning and end of the lunation, the Moon is totally invisible, as any planet within about 15° on either side of the Sun is. A couple days in, the waxing crescent peeks out after sunset and then soon sets as well. Each night, moonrise and moonset get a little later by about 50 minutes, and soon you can see the waxing Moon trailing behind the Sun through the sky during the day and ruling the night on her own in the west for more and more hours.

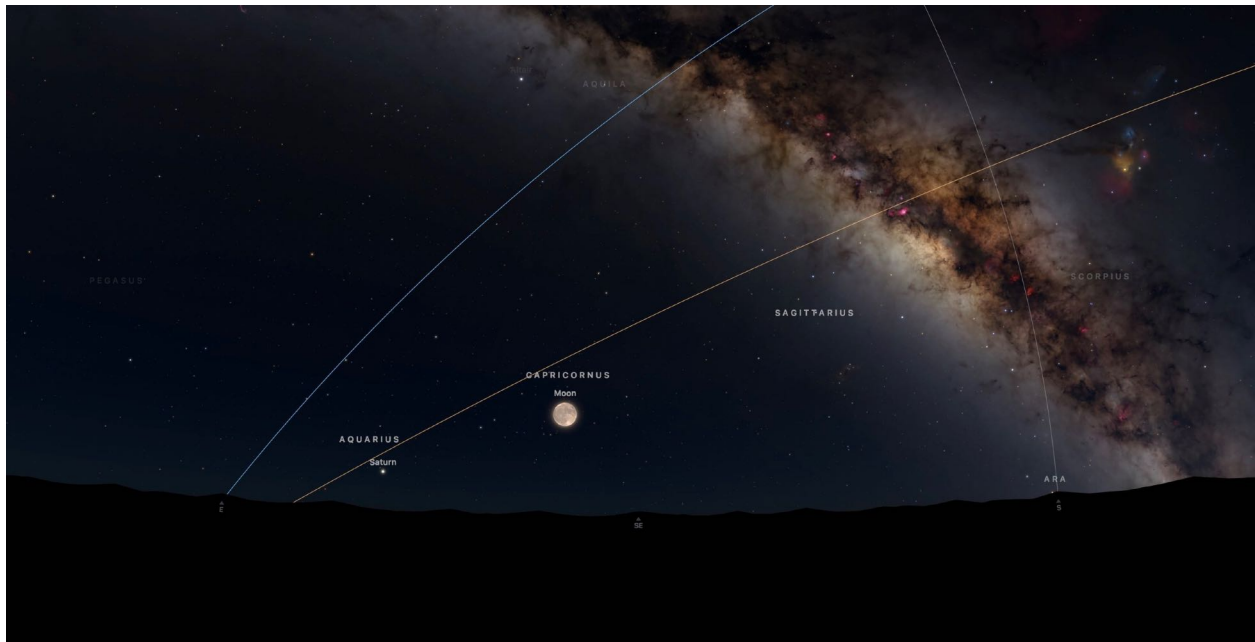


Each exact aspect between Moon and Sun can be seen as a significant waypoint through the lunation. By the opening sextile, there is a proper Moon in the night sky again.



The reason the Full Moon is so pivotal is that it's the moment of opposition between the Sun and Moon. They're in opposite signs, wanting and needing opposite things. This is also reflected in the diurnal motion of the chart; when the Full Moon is exact, the Moon rises when the Sun sets and sets when the Sun rises; the Full Moon is the point at which the luminaries are fully in their own sects.





After the opposition separates, the Moon's phase switches to the other side, making the exact same changes in shape and rising and setting times, this time in reverse. Now the Moon is on the morning side rather than the evening side, so she rises late at night and is still up in the west at sunrise. I am a waning Moon native, and I'm not sure if I'd say it's *because* of that, necessarily, but I always find these morning Moons the most beautiful.



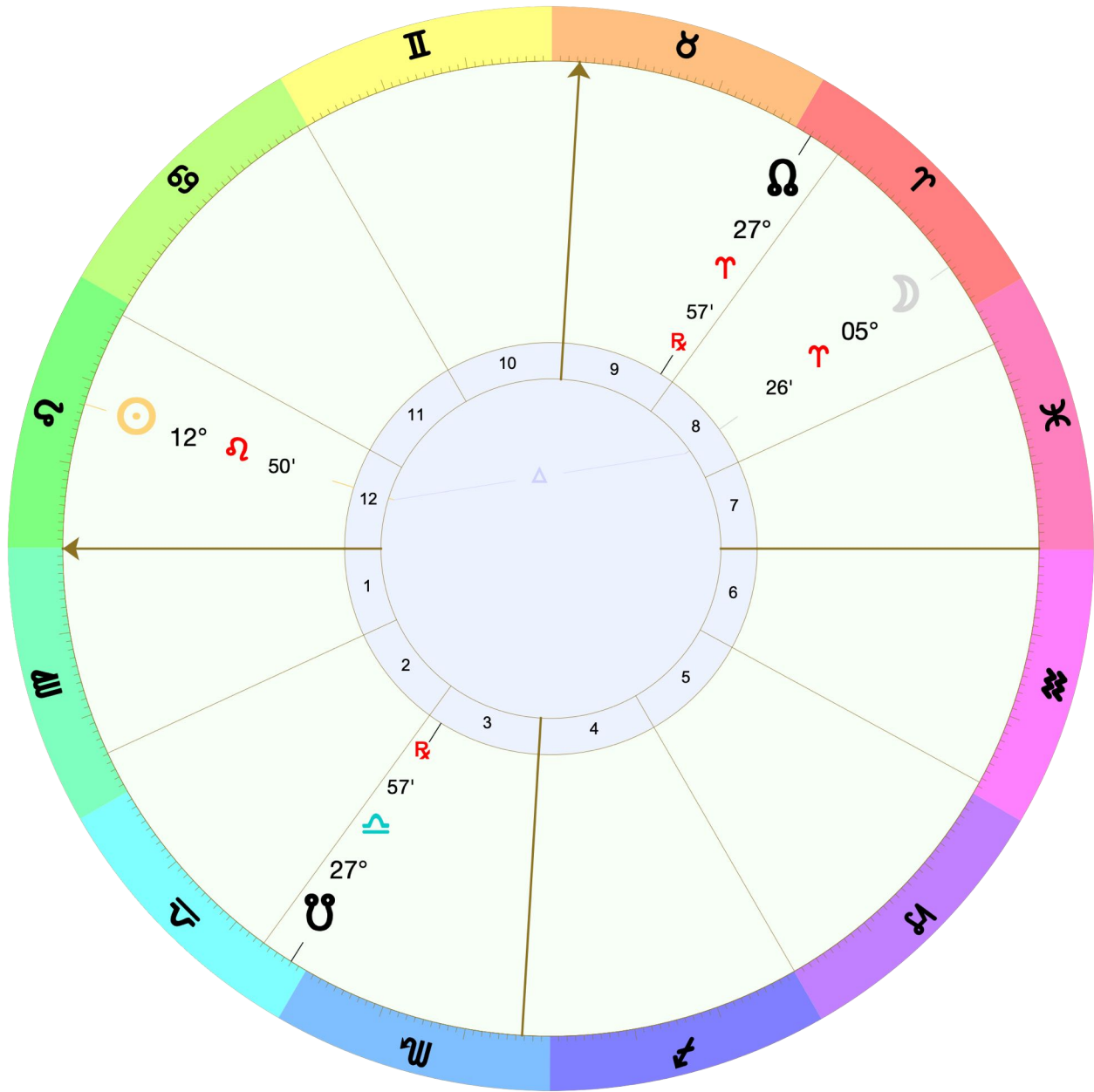


Chart for the waning gibbous Moon in the preceding sky image

A few days later, the waning crescent has disappeared behind the Sun's beams again, and a new lunation is about to begin.

What does it all *mean*, though? Don't overthink it. Phase is a lifecycle. The planet is born out from under the beams of the Sun and becomes visible but is tiny, weak in light, and still close to its

source. Then it grows, individuates, comes into its own. Then it squares off with the Sun, its first moment of asserting its independence. Then it reaches its full stature, power, and brightness, opposing the light from which it emanated. Then it begins to wane, recede, and return to where it came from, just like all living things do.

How the Moon's phase feels *is* what it means. Other planets have their phases, too, but since the Moon is of the nature of us, we can identify with this cycle without having to try. And we do. Think about how natural of a cycle a month is for us. Even our *biological* cycles observe this rhythm, let alone our cultural ones. You could do a lot worse for a beginner astrology practice than to *just* observe the Moon and Sun doing this monthly dance through the signs.

Moon Aspects With Other Planets

Of course, the Moon doesn't just aspect the Sun; she talks to everybody. This is part of why I keep using the word "familiar" to describe her; the Moon is familiar with Earth and the other planets. She's like the translator. In fact, the tradition uses the word "translation" to describe something she is more capable of than any other planet by virtue of her speed, which is connecting two slower-moving planets with each other.

Because the Moon moves so quickly — about 13° per day, an order of magnitude more than anybody else — she is making aspects almost constantly. The aspects the Moon makes over the course of a given day are a pretty good summary of what's

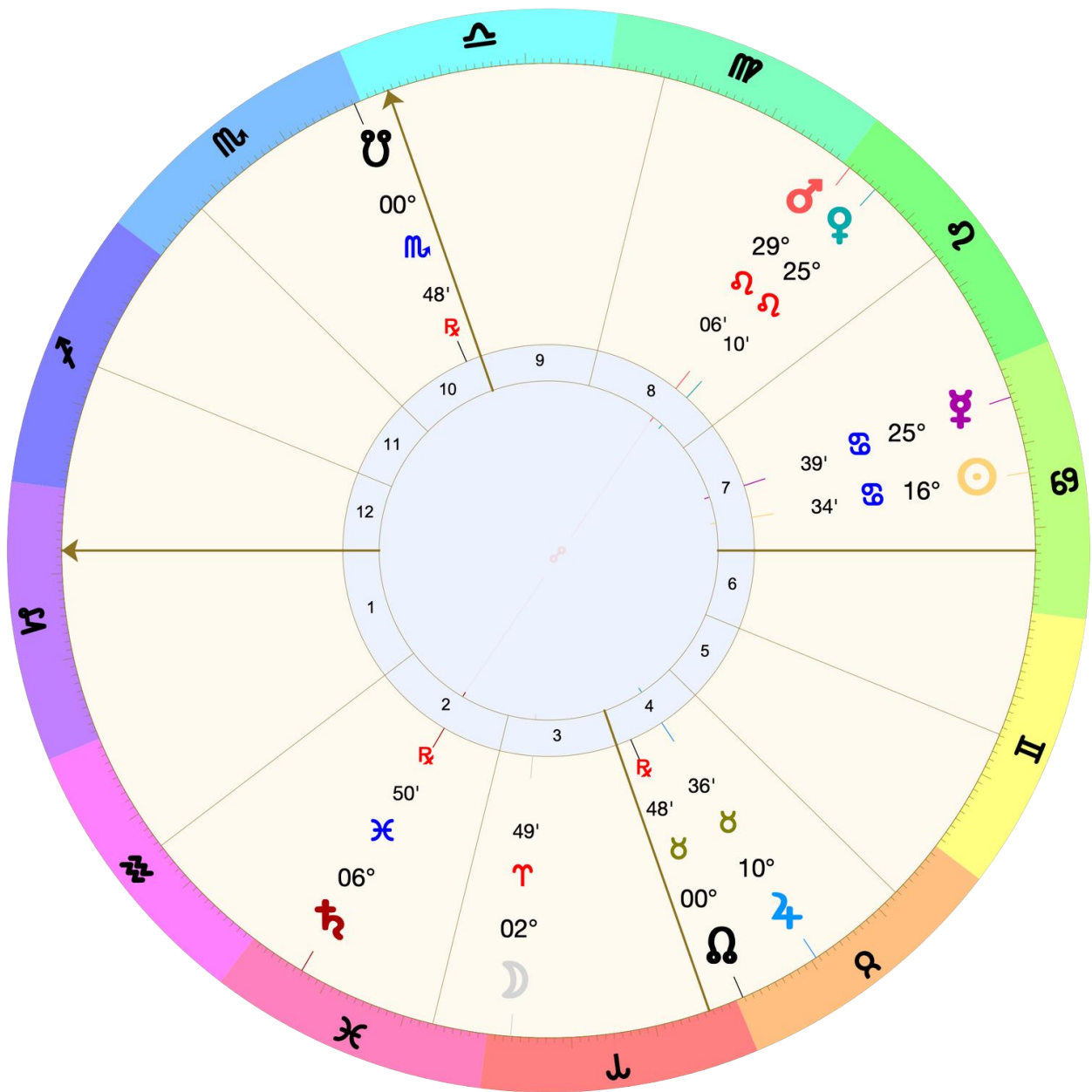
going to happen that day, especially when you also consider her phase and what that says about her condition.

It's more complicated than this, and we'll cover that when we get to houses, but basically, if the Moon is applying to Venus or Jupiter, the vibes are good. If she's applying to Mars or Saturn, perhaps not so good. This is one of the most important things to check when you're checking the astro-weather.

However, it's possible that she is not applying to *anything* at the moment — or at least not for a while. This is a condition called *void-of-course*. It's not necessarily *bad*, but if you understand applying aspects as "stuff happening," the Moon not applying any aspects is sure to feel like nothing is happening, or whatever you're doing isn't making any difference, or something like that. For example, in electional astrology, when you're choosing an auspicious time to take some action, a void-of-course Moon is not a great choice, because nothing much can come of the action.

There are many definitions of a void-of-course Moon in the tradition, some of which happen quite rarely, others of which happen all the time. I find it best to consider it a spectrum of conditions and not worry so much about whether the Moon *definitely is* or *definitely is not* void of course. However, I do have a favorite, laid out by my favorite lunar astrologer and dear friend, Shuly Rose. Shuly recommends defining a void-of-course Moon as when *the Moon makes no aspects within a full day's travel*. If you click the +1 day button on your chart software, and she still hasn't made an aspect yet, that is going to be a void-of-

course Moon day. If she is about to make an aspect, but she *has* been void of course all day, that will also color her experience.



Some definitions of VoC only apply within the Moon's current sign. I would say that the Moon changing signs is still something happening to *her* that must be considered, but if she's been going for 6°, changes signs, and still has 8° more to go before her

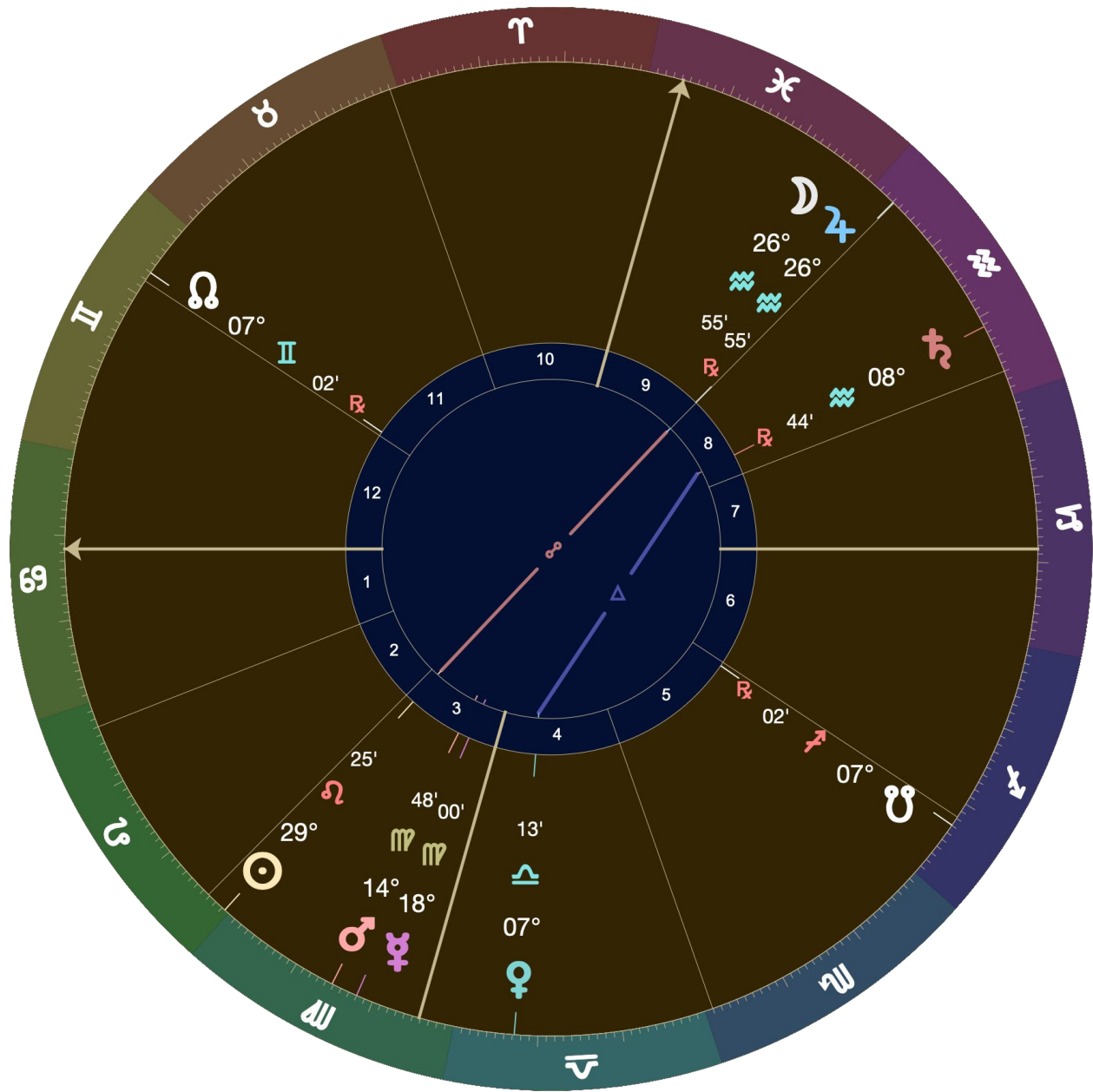
next aspect, that's still a void-of-course Moon to me in terms of events *happening*.

There's one last component we need for a complete basic understanding of the Moon's behavior, which is the *plane* of her orbit.

Lunar Nodes and Eclipses

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, the Moon's orbital plane is about 5.1° higher than the ecliptic. In fact, *all* the planets' orbits vary a *little* bit from the path of the Sun from our perspective, but not this much. The Moon's orbit is wacky enough that her zodiacal position doesn't give you the full picture; often when the Moon and another planet — including the Sun — are zodiacally conjunct, you'll actually see the Moon way *above* or *below* the other planet in the sky, though they are lined up vertically.

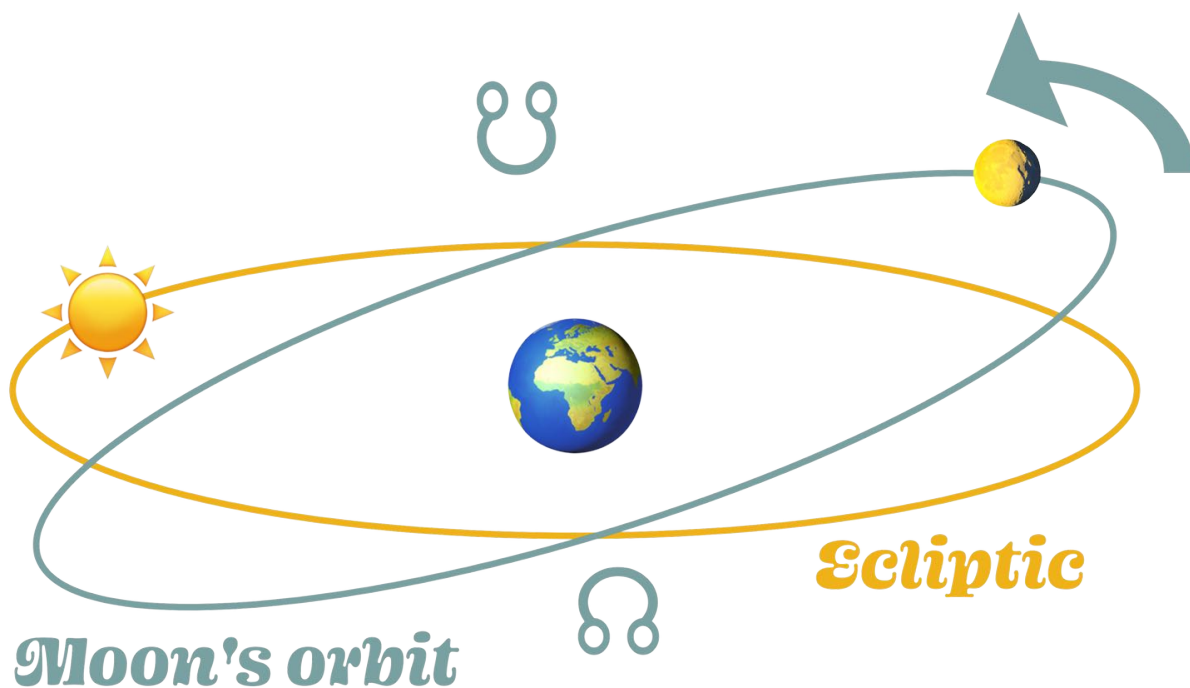




The chart above shows the Moon and Jupiter exactly conjunct along the ecliptic, but as you can see in the sky screenshot, the Moon is *lower* than Jupiter relative to the ecliptic (orange line). Intuitively, you might think a conjunction means two planets are in the same spot in the sky, lined straight up like in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, but this doesn't account for the variation in *latitude*, or inclination or declination "up" or "down" from the plane of the zodiac.

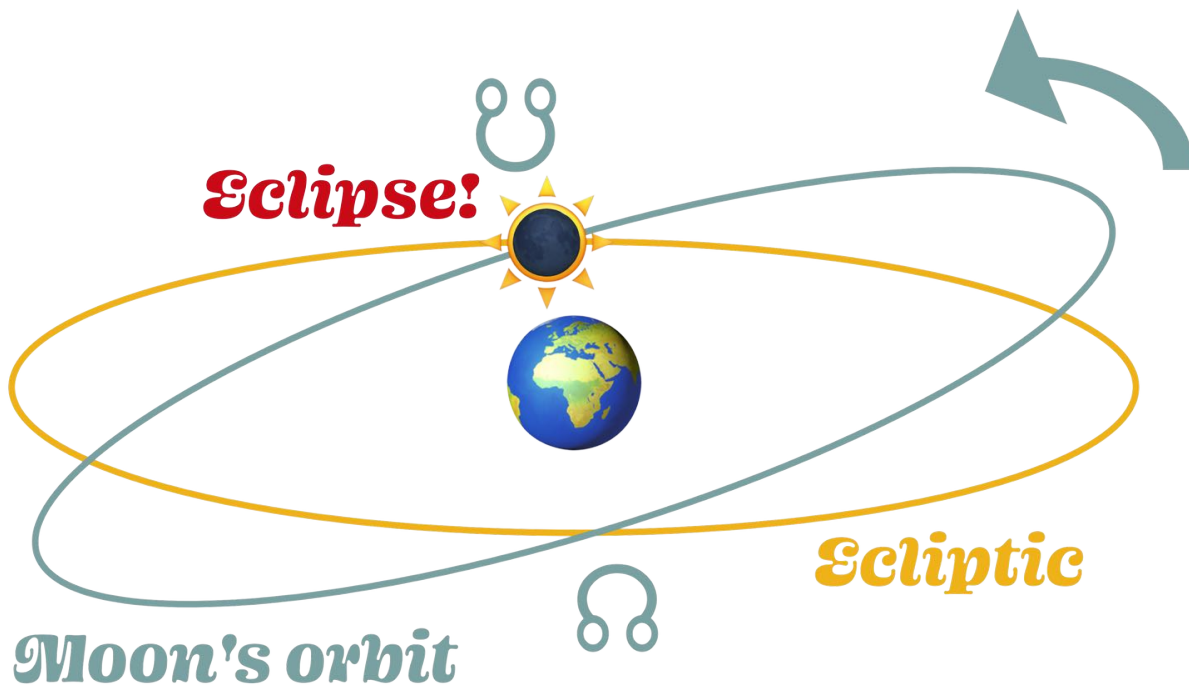
The way you can tell from the above chart that the Moon is “below” the ecliptic is that she is about halfway between the South Node (♁) and the North Node (♂). This means she is near the “lowest” — or farthest south — latitude in her course. A couple weeks from this moment, at the New Moon, she will be about as far “above” the Sun as she is “below” Jupiter in the above image.

The nodes are the points across the zodiac from each other at which the Moon’s orbit crosses the ecliptic. The symbols show you which direction she’s going. At the South Node, she’s crossing the ecliptic going down, so the symbol points down: ♁. At the North Node, she’s crossing going up, so the symbol points up: ♂. At the point exactly between the nodes, she is at her maximum up or down latitude. The points 90° between the nodes are called *the bendings*. The high one is the *north bending*, the low one is the *south bending*.



Okay, but why does any of this *matter*, though? Again, what does it *mean*?

Well, when the *Sun* is close to one or the other lunar node every six months or so, a pretty famously ominous thing begins to happen. When a syzygy occurs where the Moon is close enough to the same plane as the Sun, we get... **AN ECLIPSE!!!**



Eclipses are disorienting moments when the light is wrong because the luminary of the sect is temporarily in shadow. In a solar eclipse — which happens on a New Moon — the Moon blocks out the Sun, darkening the daytime. In a lunar eclipse — which happens on a Full Moon — the Earth's shadow covers the Moon, darkening the nighttime on the night of the month that is usually the brightest. I don't want to spend too long on how to interpret an eclipse as a single event, but I have [a video that goes a little deeper](#) on this.

What I want to cover here is how the nodes play into the ongoing astro-weather. The nodes revolve around the zodiac slowly (and in the retrograde direction, on average), taking a little under 19 years to go around and so changing signs every year and a half. That means there are always a few eclipse cycles in the same signs before a shift. The nodal axis represents a sort of eclipse wormhole across the zodiac. That part of the sky is getting *worked on* by eclipses. That means any planet on, aspecting, or ruling the nodes is involved in that work. The Moon herself goes through each node once a month, each time experiencing a slightly different phase until the Sun comes around and begins the next eclipse sequence. For this reason, the Moon on one of the nodes is a little bit of an ominous sign.

Is there a difference between the nodes? Yes, and you can use this as a shorthand for understanding what northern or southern latitude means for a planet (since all the planets also have *slightly* different planes and thus their own nodes).

The North Node (♊) is known as the "dragon's head" (also Rahu in Indian astrology) and the South Node (♋) is known as the "dragon's tail" (or Ketu in Indian astrology). I'll let you do your own study and gnosis on the deeper lore, but there is one basic signification I would like to convey, which does mirror the astronomy. Since the Moon is going "up" when she crosses the North Node, that point is said to have an *increasing* or *expansive* or *explosive* effect. Since she's going "down" when she crosses the South Node, that one is said to cause *decrease* or *contraction* or *implosion*. If you open the chart one morning, and Mars is on the North Node that day... wear a helmet.

Okay, that about covers the Earth, Sun, and Moon. Now it's time to get to know the rest of our planetary neighbors, siblings, parents, whoever they are.

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5. The Planets, Their Cycles, Their Speeds, and Their Dignities

Pretty amazing that we've made it this deep into an astrology guide without really talking about *planets*, isn't it? Well, that's because you understand so much about *the sky* now that you will have a much easier time getting to know them.

The planets, as we've established, are *wanderers*, and that implies that they are wandering *somewhere*, in an *environment*. Now that you are comfortable with the sky, it will be easier to understand who these wanderers are simply by observing how they wander through this place you know so well.

People use the zodiac to track all kinds of points nowadays — some of them planets and planet-like objects, others entirely theoretical or mathematically derived — and do astrology on all of them. That's all very cool, but here we're sticking to the seven travelers visible to the naked eye who have been known to astrologers from time immemorial. These planetary place-beings form our cosmic family. They're literally, physically related to us. We share a history of creation and cataclysm going back billions of years. We are all part of each other's sky.

There are a few core qualities of each planet that are necessary to understand them, especially in comparison to one another.

Nature, Temperament, Sect, and Dignity

The first is their essential nature. We've covered that the Sun and Moon are *luminaries* by nature, which is what distinguishes them from the five other planets that are actually — by modern astronomical definition — planets. The other planets — except Mercury, who swings both ways — are of either *benefic* or *malefic* nature. This does not mean they are *good* or *bad* in a simplistic way, but it does mean their tendency is to help or harm, respectively. That said, any planet can be a *functional* benefic or malefic — even a luminary — if they are in exceedingly good or poor dignity, or in a good or bad house, or making a harmonious or harsh aspect. But Venus and Jupiter are *naturally* benefic, and Mars and Saturn are *naturally* malefic.

Planets also have a *temperament*, which is more specific than their basic nature. These concepts come from Hellenistic traditions of medicine and alchemy, and they reflect the somewhat more complex "chemistry" — if you will — of planets than the simple elemental natures of signs. Mars and the Sun are hot and dry (*choleric*), the Moon is cold and wet (*phlegmatic*), Jupiter and Venus are warm and moist (*sanguine*) though Venus is slightly cooler and wetter, and Saturn and Mercury are cold and dry (*melancholic*). It's too complicated to get into how temperament works specifically — we're not doing technical medical or weather astrology here — but it's good to know these alchemical qualities of the individual planets, because you will certainly notice them showing up in quite literal ways.

Other core qualities of planets are ones we have already covered to some extent. Each planet (again, except Mercury, who is flexi) is of the nature of one or the other *sect*, meaning they find fuller expression in a chart of their preferred time of day or night.

Each planet has two *domiciles* — except the luminaries, which have one each — which are the signs in which they are at home and most powerful.

Each planet also has a sign of *exaltation*, where they are more of an honored guest than a host, which certainly *can* be quite good, but it also comes with some pressure to live up to such lofty expectations.

Each planet co-rules one or more *triplicities* (or elements), where they have the use of their natural resources to do their business.

And each planet also rejoices in one of the 12 houses, which we are still yet to talk about, but for now I'll say that these are the places the planets reach every day by *primary motion*, and they determine what *topics* are signified by the sign and planets that fall there every couple hours or so. Planets rejoice in the houses of topics that are most related to their core natures.

There are other forms of planetary dignity as well, but I have to draw the line somewhere. The decans (or faces) are 10° segments — i.e. thirds of signs — with their own rulerships and esoteric significations, and the terms (or bounds) are irregular divisions of signs into five zones ruled by one of the five non-luminary planets as well. I promise you'll get to these things, and my friend and electional teacher, Kira Ryberg, has written

luminous guides to essential dignity in general and the bounds unto themselves. But I'm going to stick to the fundamentals here, and I promise you will learn to layer on more tools in due time.

Speed, Phase, and Retrogradation

Finally, each planet has its own astronomically defined qualities that are also deeply descriptive of their personalities.

The most important, as I have mentioned, is *speed*, meaning the amount of zodiac they cover in a day. This is something you *have* to get deep into your bones in order to do astrology. This is how you look at a static chart and know *what's happening*, what has *just happened*, and what is *about to happen*. It's how you know how a chart moves. So every planet's average, maximum, and minimum speed will be given below.

Speed is related to other astronomical factors governing the ways the planets move, specifically their *synodic cycle*, which is another way of referring to the cycle of phase we covered in the Moon section. The synodic cycle is how a planet (including the Moon) behaves between conjunctions with the Sun. Below I give the length of each planet's *synodic period*, which is the amount of time it takes to return to the exact same point in its cycle.

The synodic cycle is — as we have already seen with the Moon — what determines whether the planet is rising ahead of or behind the Sun and how it is illuminated from the point of view of Earth. This works differently for different planets depending on where in the solar system they are.

Mercury and Venus are known as *inferior* planets because their orbits are inside of Earth's orbit. From our point of view, this means they will always be pretty close to the Sun on one side or the other. Mercury never gets more than one sign away from the Sun, Venus never more than a sign and a half.

Well, *then what happens?*

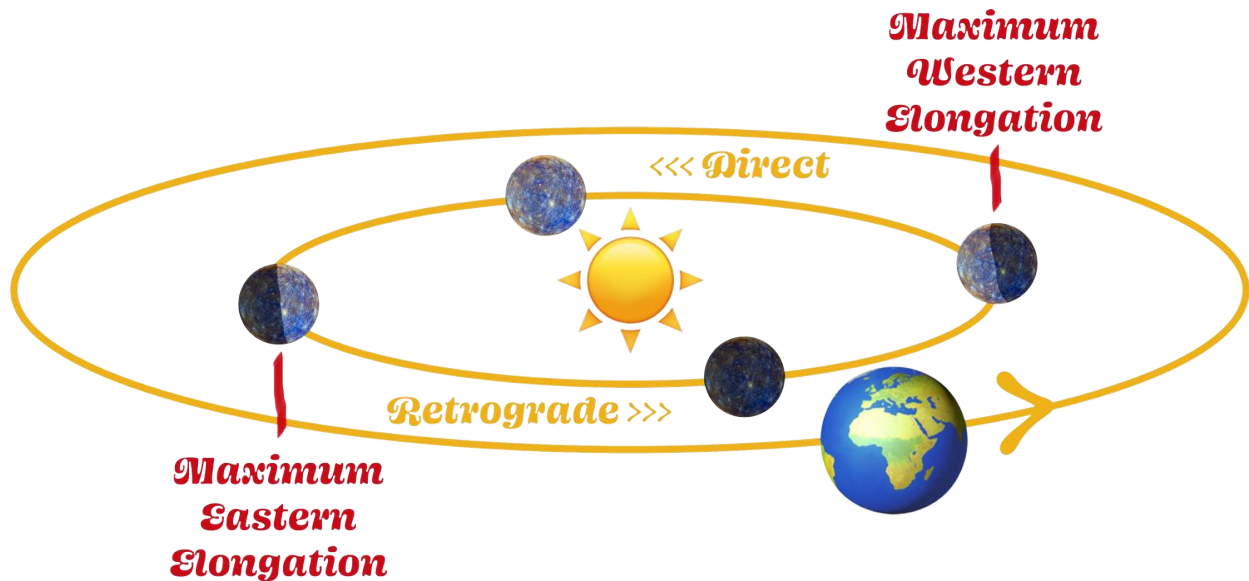
I bet you already know the answer: they turn *retrograde*.

Here's what that actually means:

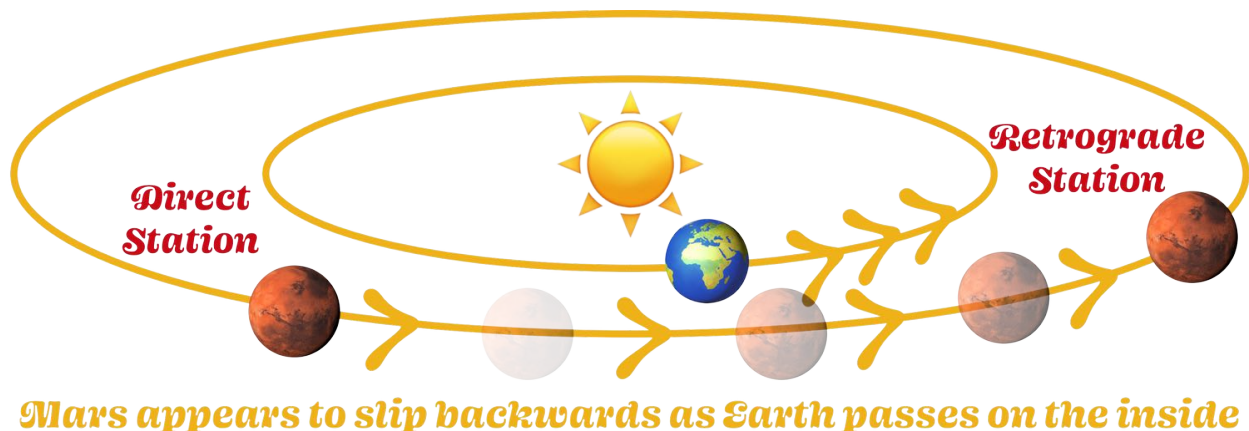
When Mercury or Venus is on the far side of the Sun from us, they move *faster* than the Sun through the zodiac, because they're going the opposite direction from us, like two cars in opposite lanes. They pass the Sun on the opposite side from us — like a Full Moon, only we can't see them because the Sun is blaring in between us — and continue traveling eastward (from our perspective), becoming *evening stars*, meaning they rise after the Sun and are up later in the west. Eventually, they reach their *maximum eastern elongation*, the point at which they are farthest past the Sun from our point of view, which means they are lit like the equivalent of a first-quarter Moon in our sky. This is also their *brightest* point, because they're farthest from the overpowering rays of the Sun, and they're coming closer to us.

Then they appear to slow down, stop, and then head back *towards* the Sun, for now they have rounded the corner and are on the *same* side of the Sun as we are, but since we're farther out, they appear to be slipping backwards against the backdrop of space behind them. Then they cross the Sun — the equivalent of a New Moon — and move westward, becoming *morning stars*,

meaning they rise *before* the Sun and can be seen in the east before dawn. Then they reach their *maximum western elongation*, round the corner again, and pick up speed heading back around the far side.



What about the *superior planets* — Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn — the planets with orbits *outside* of ours? Those have retrograde phases, too, but they work differently because those planets can go all the way around us. Superior planets go retrograde as they get behind us, and our speed takes us past them, so they slip away in the sky as though in the rear-view mirror.



There. Now you know what retrogrades *actually* are, if not what they actually *mean*. What they mean is that the planet is lower in energy, retracing its steps to places it has recently been, revisiting those themes and events. A retrograde is probably not the best time to engage in new ventures or take bold steps in areas signified by that planet, because that's not what it's doing. It could be a *great* time to engage in review, reconsider something, edit rather than write, things that are *similar to what the planet is doing*. Retrograde does not mean "messed up!"

We can't be done talking about synodic cycles until we cover one special feature of conjunction with the Sun. The Sun — as you may have noticed in the daytime — is rather bright, and it has a way of making it impossible to see things in the night sky when it's up. This blast of light is actually measured astrologically, and it is an affliction to planets that are caught in it. It's called being "under the beams," and it extends 15° on either side of the Sun. Planets who are under the beams are literally harder to see, and this describes the significations of it fairly well. They are weakened, obscured. When they're getting closer to the Sun, it's getting worse. Closer than 8.5° and the condition is worsened and called "combustion." A combust planet is severely debilitated, and it is not visible from Earth at all until it comes out the other side.

However, for one brief flash as the conjunction perfects, a planet is "in the heart of the Sun," or "cazimi," and rather than harmed, that planet is lifted upon the Sun's throne and empowered. This condition is exceedingly brief. Some say it applies when the planet is within the same degree as the Sun, but I like the much smaller definition of 17.5 arc minutes, which is the apparent size

of the Sun's disk in Earth's sky. Unless the planet is *perfectly* aligned with the Sun, it is combust. But when the conjunction is separating, the planet's condition improves as it becomes more visible, and it is completely free of affliction when the Sun is over 15° away.

Some — including me — hold that a planet in its own domicile or exaltation is protected from combustion by its dignity, which is known as being in its "chariot."

The Planets Themselves

These are the attributes each planet has, but they also have their unique significations, the things that make them who they are. These can be expounded upon endlessly, and even then it's no substitute for getting to know them personally over time and watching how their movements correspond to the events of your life. But I will cover a few of each planet's natural significations, just enough for you to ensure you're talking to the right one.

The traditional planets in astrology form a harmonic sequence known as the Chaldean order. This order is used in various places in astrology — one of which we'll cover next — to describe the planets' influence in terms of their speed as their defining characteristic. The Chaldean order lists the planets by their zodiacal speed from slowest to fastest:

1. Saturn ♄
2. Jupiter ♃
3. Mars ♂
4. Sun ☉
5. Venus ♀
6. Mercury ☿
7. Moon ☾

I will briefly characterize each planet here, going in Chaldean order, in terms of the characteristics I feel it is most helpful to know in advance. I want these to form a sort of personality profile for the planets that, as you watch them wander the sky, helps you recognize them as beings and understand what they're saying about the unfolding of your story down here on Earth.

Saturn ♄

Nature: Malefic

Sect: Day

Domicile: Capricorn and Aquarius

Exaltation: Libra

Triplicity: Fire and Air

Temperament: Cold and Dry
(Melancholic)

Joy: 12th house

Orbital period: 29.5 years

Average speed: 00°02'01" per day

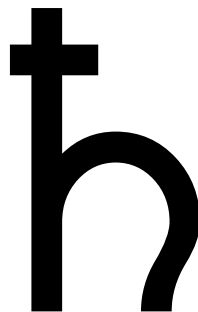
Highest speed: 00°08'48" per day

Lowest speed: -00°05'30" per day

Length of retrograde: 138 days

Synodic period: 378 days

Saturn is the boundary — the outermost sphere. The edge of the cosmos. He is death and endings and crumbling and decay, but that is because he is Structure itself. He is timing, planning, duty, authority, commitment, and endurance. He is the civilizing force. Agriculture. Material. Institutions. All of these things have their hardships, and Saturn is those as well.



Jupiter ♃

Nature: Benefic

Sect: Day

Domicile: Sagittarius and Pisces

Exaltation: Cancer

Triplicity: Fire and Air

Temperament: Warm and Moist
(Sanguine)

Joy: 11th house

Orbital period: 11.9 years

Average speed: 00°04'59" per day

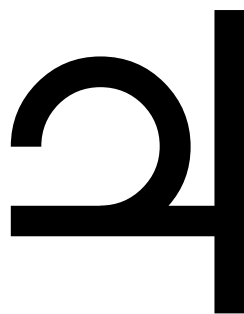
Highest speed: 00°15'40" per day

Lowest speed: -00°05'30" per day

Length of retrograde: 121 days

Synodic period: 399 days

Jupiter is faith, curiosity, and awe. He is outgoing and joyous, giving and supportive. He rules growth and expansion and exploration. Wealth, religion, law, and education are his purview. He is favorable to life and the bringer of rain. When in poor condition, he is excess, greed, and overabundance, but he is also the remedy for these: Jupiter is temperance, self-possession, care, and healing.



Mars ♂

Nature: Malefic

Sect: Night

Domicile: Aries and Scorpio

Exaltation: Capricorn

Triplicity: Earth and Water

Temperament: Hot and Dry
(Choleric)

Joy: 6th house

Orbital period: 1.9 years

Average speed: 00°31'27" per day

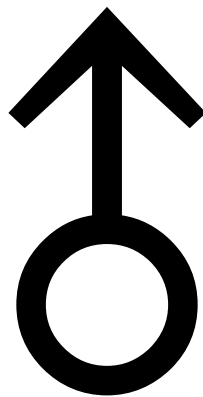
Highest speed: 00°52'00" per day

Lowest speed: -00°26'12" per day

Length of retrograde: 72 days

Synodic period: 780 days

Mars takes actions and makes moves. He cuts and clears and blasts his way through. He is war, but he is not just the sword; he is the strategic genius. Mars is impulsive, though. Easily provoked. In his slow mode, he is deliberate yet merciless, but in his quick mode, he is indiscriminate and destructive. Injury is his gift. The way to deal with Mars is not to resist him — it is to channel him.



Sun ☉

Nature: Luminary

Sect: Day

Domicile: Leo

Exaltation: Aries

Triplicity: Fire

Temperament: Hot and Dry
(Choleric)

Joy: 9th house

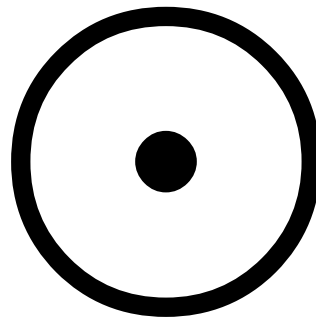
Zodiacal period: 365.25 days

Average speed: 00°59'08" per day

Highest speed: 01°03'00" per day

Lowest speed: 00°57'10" per day

The Sun is the center. He emits the way and truth of life. He clarifies what is obscure and simplifies that which is complex. He overwhelms all other lights in the sky. He draws the line and creates the path, and the others follow. He symbolizes all of life each day, being born, rising up, achieving prominence, retiring, descending, and dying. Then he is gone, and all life lies resting in darkness until the cycle begins again.



Venus ♀

Nature: Benefic

Sect: Night

Domicile: Taurus and Libra

Exaltation: Pisces

Triplicity: Earth and Water

Temperament: Warm and Moist
(Sanguine)

Joy: 5th house

Orbital period: 225 days

Average speed: 01°12'00" per day

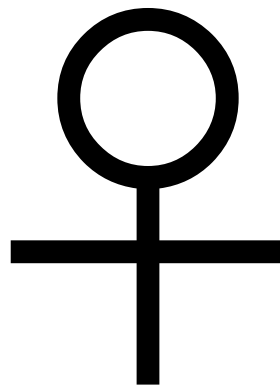
Highest speed: 01°22'00" per day

Lowest speed: -00°41'12" per day

Length of retrograde: 41 days

Synodic period: 584 days

Venus is our sister. She loves us so much. She is so bright and so close. She kisses us goodnight and good morning. She is delight and beauty. She is relationship. She is the real form of power — the power of connection, without which nothing can last, nothing can be built, nothing can live. Venus holds everything together, the interwoven web, the matrix from whom we all draw our living breath.



Mercury ♿

Nature: Swings both ways

Sect: Whatever's clever

Domicile: Gemini and Virgo

Exaltation: Virgo

Triplicity: Air

Temperament: Cold and Dry
(Melancholic)

Joy: 1st house

Orbital period: 88 days

Average speed: 01°23'00" per day

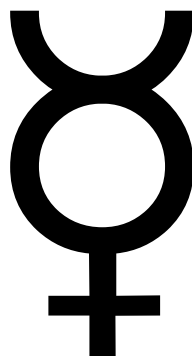
Highest speed: 02°25'00" per day

Lowest speed: -01°30'00" per day

Length of retrograde: ~21 days

Synodic period: 116 days

Mercury is busy. They are constantly back and forth. This is the way they are. It's also the way many other things are. Messages, commerce, information, intelligence. Mercury is endlessly adaptable. Fitting in anywhere. The world runs on Mercury. Mercury runs faster than any planet. You can count on that. Just don't count on only that. Mercury will always surprise you. They might even do it twice.



Moon ☾

Nature: Luminary

Sect: Night

Domicile: Cancer

Exaltation: Taurus

Triplicity: Earth and Water

Temperament: Cold and Wet
(Phlegmatic)

Joy: 3rd house

Orbital period: 27.32 days

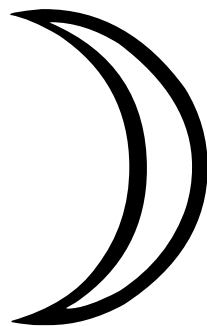
Synodic period: 29.53 days

Average speed: 00°59'08" per day

Highest speed: 16°30'00" per day

Lowest speed: 11°45'36" per day

The Moon is life. She is part of our body. She breathes, and the waters course around the world. She looks up at the stars and speaks to them, and they speak to her, and she speaks to us. We hear her all the time. We see her much of the time, but sometimes she is not there. She teaches us to rely on our ways of life and know she will come back for us.



*How long have you spent reading this guide so far?
A long time, huh? Yeah, I feel you. Please consider:*

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- donating to support my work

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Thank you — again — for reading.

6. Planetary Days and Hours

Before we put it all together and start reading charts, I want to add in an ancient and very simple layer of planetary timekeeping that can serve as a mini astro-weather check all on its own, even though it only connects to the daily motion of the Sun and no other planets.

Before you stop me and say, "תַּעֲלָמוֹת, I love you, but this guide is very long, and I only have time for learning actual astrology," what if I told you that *you were already using this system*, so you might as well get good at it?

Yes, that's right. You were taught and have been using astrological ritual timekeeping methods since you were a child. The people who taught it to you probably didn't know that, but don't worry. You already have the core of it memorized.

Watch: Sun Day, Mo(o)n Day, *mumble, mumble*, Satur(n) Day.

Okay, it's less convincing in English because it switches from Roman names to Norse ones on Tuesday for some reason.

Let's try it in Spanish. Martes (Mars ♂). Miércoles (Mercury ☿). Jueves (Jupiter ♃). Viernes (Venus ♀).

See? The days of the week *you already use* are ruled by the seven traditional planets!

1. Sun Day (Sunday)
2. Moon Day (Monday)
3. Mars Day (Tuesday)
4. Mercury Day (Wednesday)
5. Jupiter Day (Thursday)
6. Venus Day (Friday)
7. Saturn Day (Saturday)

Yes, it has gotten sort of jumbled culturally, but that's because the system is so ancient that cultures *we* think of as ancient forgot where it came from! But now we know exactly where it came from. It came from the Chaldean order.

No, those planets are not in the order we just learned, but once you understand how the Chaldean order produces the weekdays used the world over, you will never be the same.

To begin with, a trippy seven-pointed star diagram. Recall the Chaldean order of planetary speed: Saturn, Jupiter Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon. Now, let's inscribe it in a circle, connect the dots in the order of the days of the week, and see how that turns out:



Okay, so that's extremely satisfying in an explanation-free woo-woo way, but this geometry does actually describe a sensible use of the Chaldean order.

The system we're learning here is not really a system of days at all but a system of *hours*. Specifically, they're *solar hours*, which are not the mechanical, evenly spaced units on clocks as we know them. There are, however, 24 of them. You may have

wondered where all the 12 and 24 stuff in conventional timekeeping came from. At this point, would it shock you to know that it comes from the same Mesopotamian cosmic symbolism by which the zodiac — which is to say the year — is divided into months? Twelve is just one of those Deep Numbers, and wherever it is used in everyday conventions, it is worth suspecting some ancient Babylonian astrological gnosis is behind it.

A solar hour is the even division of the amount of daylight on a given day in a given place into 12. That is, you take the amount of time between sunrise and sunset, and every twelfth of that is one hour. The first hour begins at the moment of sunrise. The stroke of the seventh hour is when the Sun hits the MC: solar noon. Midday. The twelfth hour ends at the moment of sunset.

You also divide the night hours into 12. On an equinox, the day and night hours are of equal length, since the *day* and *night* are of equal length, because that's what an equinox is, remember? But on either side of an equinox, depending whether you're heading for summer or winter, the days become longer or shorter than the nights, respectively, and thus the *hours* also become longer/shorter day by day until you get to the solstice. That's the day on which the difference in length between day and night hours is most extreme, and then it starts heading back toward the next equinox.

This way of keeping time by solar hours is quite sensible and has been used by many cultures. It might seem crazy to you to have hours be different lengths every day, but let me ask you this: Is that more crazy than having the Sun set at 4:30 p.m. in the

winter? Using solar hours, you're able to time your activity by how much light (or darkness) you have at that time of year. Daily Jewish rituals are timed this way.

For astrological purposes, though, the hours are not just numbered. They are assigned planetary rulers in the Chaldean order, starting with sunrise on Sun Day. The ruler of the *day* is the ruler of the *first hour*, i.e. sunrise. So the second hour of Sun Day is Venus Hour, third is Mercury Hour, fourth is Moon Hour, fifth is Saturn Hour, and so on. Not all contemporary practitioners do this for some reason, but you can also give rulership of the *night* to the ruler of the hour after *sunset*. So Sunday night is Jupiter Night, Monday night is Venus Night.

I know it seems impossible to memorize, but I have a trick for you. There are seven planets, right? And there are 12 hours in a day or night. So that means you're two planets shy of a complete repeat of the cycle in a day or night. That fact produces the following rule of thumb:

Ruler of the ***next*** day/night: **go back 2**

Ruler of the ***previous*** day/night: **go ahead 2**

So if it's Saturn Day, who is the night ruler? Go two planets back in the order: Moon, Mercury. Mercury Night is Saturday night.

If it's Mars Night, who was the day ruler? Go two planets *ahead* in the order: Sun, Venus. Mars rules the night on Venus Day, Friday.

This trick, plus the order of the days of the week, which I assume you memorized when you were like five years old, will take care of you when you're away from your devices, but for your extreme convenience, I will provide you a table:

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Su	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁
Mo	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉
Tu	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾
We	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂
Th	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃
Fr	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄
Sa	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀
Night	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Su	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃
Mo	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄
Tu	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀
We	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁
Th	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉
Fr	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾
Sa	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂	☉	♀	♃	☾	♁	♄	♂

Rulers of the planetary hours

Once again, I am asking, what is this *for*?

As you have hopefully gathered, planetary days and hours do not actually correspond to live configurations of the planets in the sky; they simply describe each day in terms of these

fundamental cosmic rhythms of 7 and 12. The Chaldean order is like an energy signature that rises and drops back down cyclically like a sawtooth wave, which underlies all the dynamics and geometries of the traditional planets. This order has been used for millennia to keep *ritual time*. It's a way of planning intentional acts that are aligned with the planetary nature of their timing.

So for example, Mars Day is a suitable day for Mars-like activities. If you have some task hanging over your head that you need to finally jump in and start, planning it for a Mars Day is a good way to support it. If that task is writing a letter, it would be even more supportive if you planned it for Mercury Hour, the fourth or eleventh hour of Mars Day. Then you could send it in Moon Hour.

Are you an ancient Mesopotamian civilization looking to host a weekly religiously-mandated day of rest? Please allow me to introduce you to Saturn Day.

Wondering why the week starts on Sun Day? Well, who do you reckon created the planets in the first place?

Here's the big astro-magical secret the ancients want you to know, but your boss doesn't: Monday night is Venus Night, the secret hottest date night of the week.

In short, planetary hour and day/night rulers are the simplest way to align your activities with planetary energies without having to keep track of a full-blown astrological chart; all you need is the Sun. There are great smartphone and smartwatch apps you can use to actually tell time using planetary hours; I keep them right on my watch. The essential dignity table in a good astrological

chart program will list the planetary day and hour ruler of the displayed chart because certain astrological techniques take that into account.

That is, while you don't *have* to check the actual astro-weather to use planetary hours, you certainly can use them together. I do. When the hour ruler and the live chart situation *do* align — say with Jupiter on the MC during Jupiter Hour — that's a powerful moment to be aware of.

Planetary hours — as well as the above-mentioned Jewish ritual uses for solar hours — are the reason I use the Placidus house system as part of my chosen system of house significations. Placidus divides the chart of the moment into houses that correspond to the position where the Sun will be when the solar hour changes. Every house cusp is two hours, and so the hour changes each time the Sun moves through a half-house.

Yes, I know. I keep talking about houses, and you don't know what those are yet. Okay. It's time for the last piece of the puzzle before we put it all together.

There's a lot of astrology, isn't there? Yeah, what's crazy is, this is just the fundamental stuff. I assure you there's a lot more to it. Consider:

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Thank you for reading even more.

7. The Houses

You know the word “horoscope”? Yeah, I hate to break it to you, but it’s very likely that every single time you’ve encountered that word, someone was using it wrong.

A “horoscope” is not a vague prediction of the vibes for each person’s Sun sign. We’ve covered why that is. The Greek word *horoskopos* actually means “hour-marker.” But it doesn’t refer to the solar hours we just discussed, either. It refers to the *ascendant*.

You know where the ascendant is. Now it’s time to talk about *what* the ascendant is. And pretty quickly, you’re going to go, “Ohhhhhh, THAT’S where תַּעֲלָמוֹת has been hiding the rest of astrology for this entire guide!”

Houses are the place in astrology from which we get *topics*. They take the wheel of the day as the circle of life, with each of life’s chapters defined by its place in the sky and its relation to the other places. This is probably the most ancient form of divination on the sky — simply treating what’s rising as the omen of what’s coming, what’s setting as the omen of what’s leaving, what’s culminating as what’s dominating the situation, and so on.

The ascendant is the *hour-marker* because it shows *what’s rising*. The patch of sky that is rising where you are right now is the essence of the omen of what is arising in this moment. The ascendant is “now.” Specifically, it’s *your local perspective* on the *cosmic now*. And that is what houses are all about: local perspective.

As we've covered, a new zodiac sign rises about every couple of hours. In fact, they're not all the same — some are longer, some are shorter, the spring/summer signs rise straight and the fall/winter signs rise crooked — and I wish we lived in a world where the differences in ascensional times were part of a guide to the fundamentals of reading an astrological chart, but we don't. I have begun to suspect that it's the entire key to how astrology works, but whatever. In this guide, we're just going with "a new sign rises every couple-ish hours."

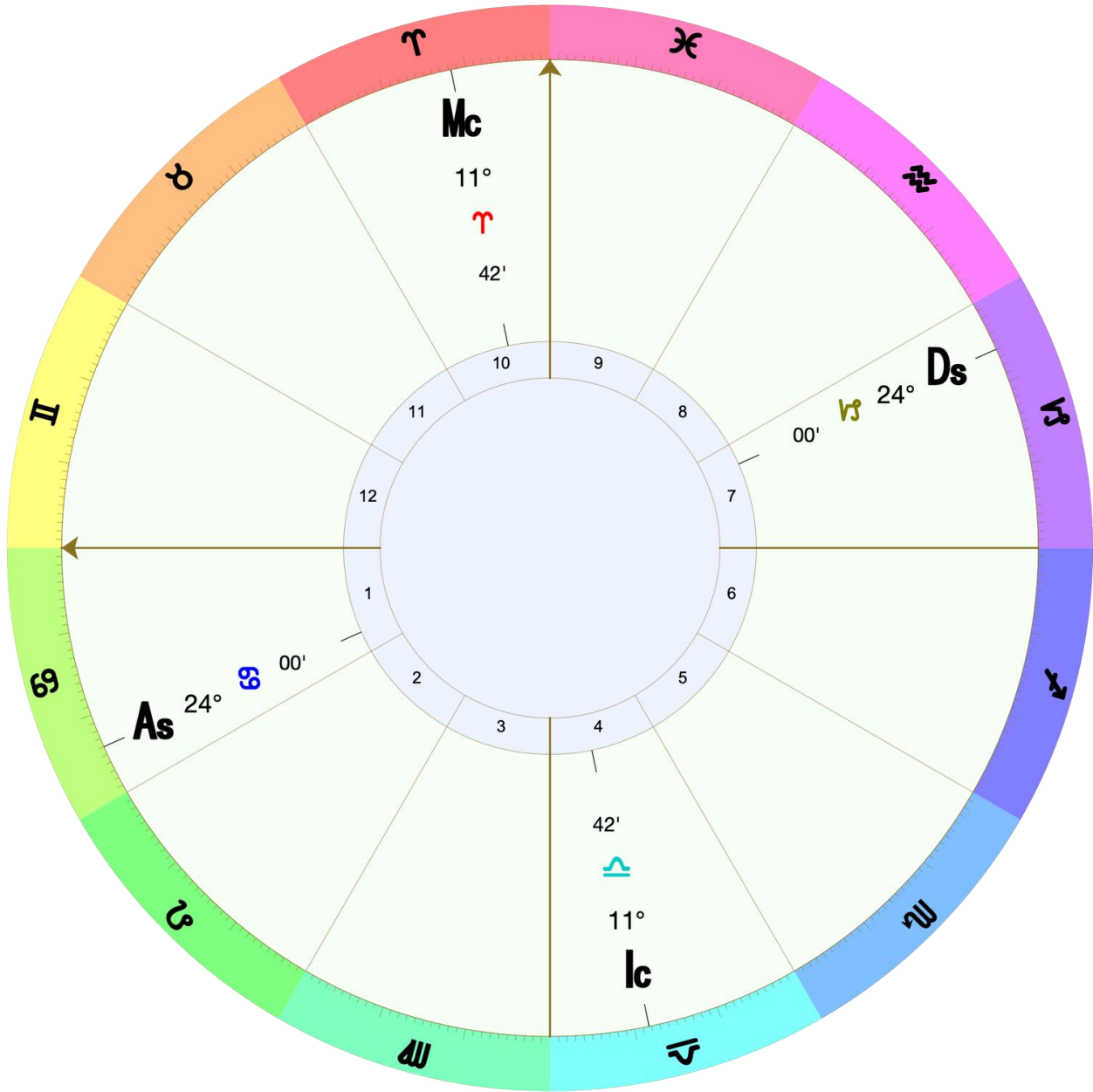
The sign on the ascendant shows us the nature of *now* in a location, and so every other sign can be described *in relation to now*. That is how the houses are numbered: in order of their rising. The 1st house is rising now. The 2nd house is rising next. The 3rd after that, and so forth.

Systems of House Division

The conceptual difference between signs and houses is simple. Signs are "up there." They divide the ecliptic — a region of outer space — into 12. Houses are "down here." They divide *the sky in a given place on Earth* into 12.

The traditional way to do that is also simple, as it had to be when calculating things was a pain in the ass. You simply *use the signs as houses*, which you do by considering the sign the ascendant is in to be the 1st house and going around from there.

Chris Brennan and the other scholars and translators who revived this traditional technique — which was missed in the texts for a long time because it was apparently too obvious even to be explained in any detail — have settled on the name “whole-sign houses” (WSH) for this system.



Whole-sign houses (WSH)

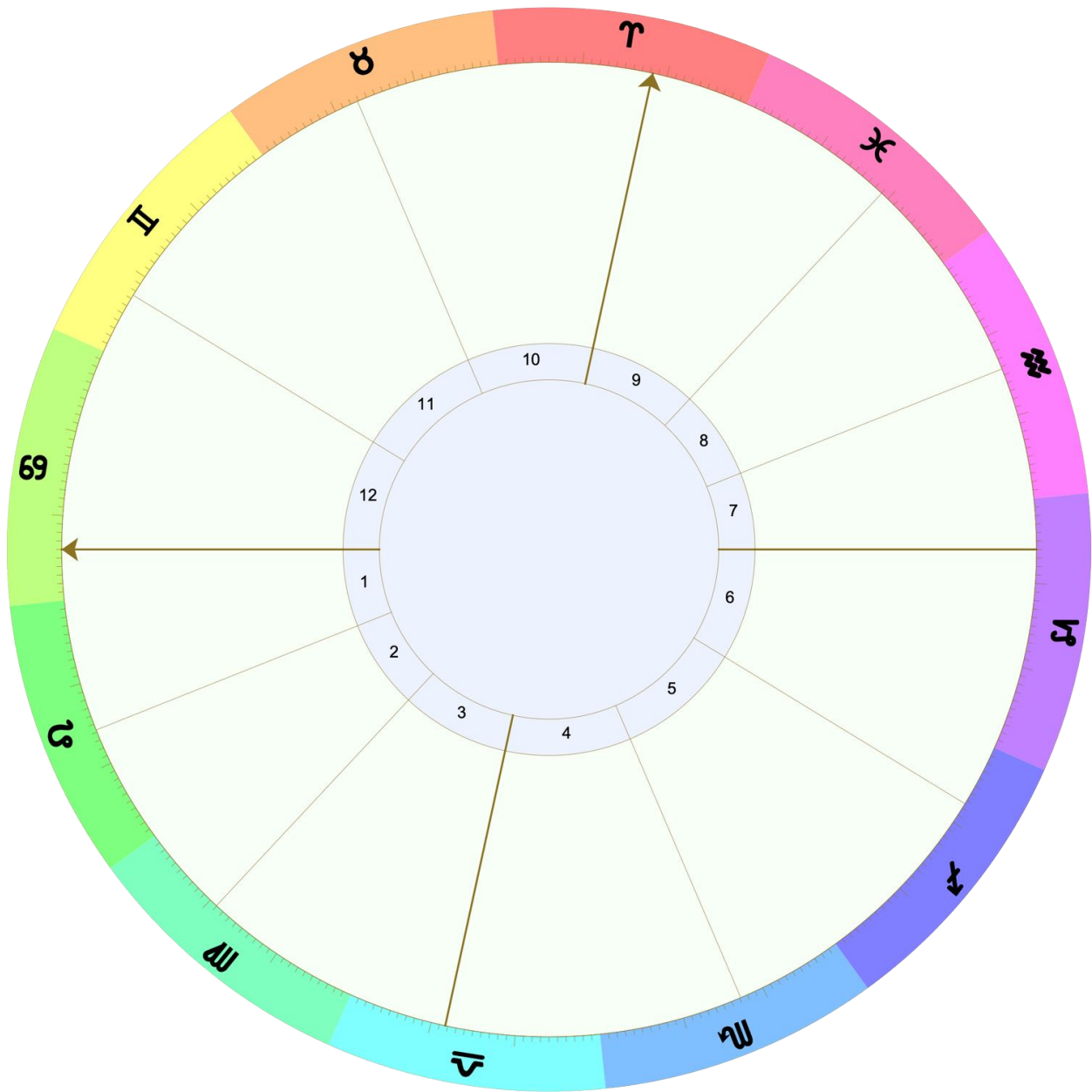
The interesting feature of whole-sign houses is that it treats the angles as free-floating points that move through the signs. The whole wheel goes *ka-chunk* to the next sign over when the ascendant changes signs.

This does complicate one thing: If you recall the diurnal motion animation from the chart section, the MC/IC axis wobbles back and forth between signs throughout the day. As you'll see below, the 10th and 4th houses are the places where those angles' significations make the most sense topically. If you're using whole-sign houses, this means you can have the MC in the 9th or 11th houses — or even the 8th and 12th at extreme latitudes. This is okay, as it turns out; you simply mix the topics together, so a chart with a 9th-house MC means the culminating, dominant, most visible thing is of more of a 9th-house nature than a 10th-house nature. (*I promise I will tell you what those natures are. Let me just finish explaining what houses are first.*)

This is probably why more complicated forms of house division were invented later, though, once the math was more feasible.

The overarching term for most of these is *quadrant house systems*, because they are methods of house division that *start* the 1st, 4th, 7th, and 10th houses at the angles — dividing the chart into quadrants, and then dividing *those* by three to get 12 houses.

This chart is for the exact same time and place as the whole-sign chart above, but instead of showing the angles as free-floating points, it displays them as the beginnings (or "cusps") of houses.



Placidus houses

As the MC/IC axis wobbles back and forth, the houses on either side grow and shrink to accommodate them.

There are many, many, many rationales one can use for exactly how to create those divisions, but they can mostly be organized into two categories: *space-based* systems — ones that draw the

house cusps to incorporate particular regions of 3D space — and *time-based* systems — ones that divide the sky by how long those sections of the ecliptic will take to go from point A to point B in local space.

So — you and every astrologer ever, regardless of their level of experience or how many times they've thought about this, are surely wondering — how do you know which system of house division to use?

I have alluded and linked several times to [a blog post I wrote](#) in which I attempt to settle controversies about different systems of house division. If you are too perplexed to go on, go read it. I will simply explain my own approach here, and then I will move on following that approach, because everything I will say about houses will be adaptable to however you decide to approach it yourself.

I use *both* whole-sign *and* quadrant houses.

I use whole-sign houses whenever I am considering *the planets' point of view*, because whole-sign houses divide the local sky from “*up there*,” i.e. from the domiciles of the planets on the ecliptic. So it depends what I am using a chart *for*. When I am looking at a natal chart — and thus considering the omen of a person's whole life — or when I am choosing an election, which is a sort of natal chart for a momentous action, I use whole-sign houses.

When I am considering a chart of the moment and what it means for the local observer — including for [horary questions](#) — I use the [Placidus](#) system of quadrant houses, so I almost always

leave my software set to that. However, I make sure to use chart designs that still make it easy to count whole-sign houses, because even if I am primarily considering what an omen means to the observer in local spacetime, the planets' point of view is always still worth considering.

Why Placidus over any other quadrant system? Because as I mentioned in the [planetary hours section](#), it corresponds with the diurnal timekeeping system I use ritually, so it allows me to employ astrological charts in my spiritual practice and in a way that is resonant with my ancestral practices.

Is that a good reason for *you* to use Placidus? No. But it is the *kind* of reason I believe one *must* have for using any house system or systems. The way to do astrology that works is to use tools that you can use soundly and with integrity. That is the way — the *only* way — to produce meaningful results. But how each practitioner does that depends on who they are.

Understanding the Houses

How houses are interpreted will, more or less, not depend on what house system you're using. One obvious exception has already been mentioned, in that whole-sign houses allow the possibility of the MC and IC to be displaced — or "remote" — in houses other than the 4th and 10th, which are the houses that most closely share their significations. I will briefly cover that distinction in the sections on those two houses. For the most part, though, we can just consider the houses and their significations on their own in ways that will apply no matter how you divide them.

As I began by saying, the significations of the houses are grounded in diurnal motion, the cycle of day and night as a microcosm of all cycles, of life itself. It's more complex than that, but that is where it begins: by rising into being, growing and individuating, separating, becoming more visible, more prominent, achieving things, reflecting upon things, sensing their endings, making preparations for what comes after, then setting, dying, returning, and sinking below into the karmic depths, reintegrating, regenerating, re-germinating, and beginning again.

If you already know the houses, you should be able to locate them all somewhere in that story, starting in the 1st, going into the 12th, up into the 11th, culminating at the 10th, and back down and around again. I know it's confusing that the numbers go backwards; remember that they're numbered *in the order that they rise*, which means the stuff in the 2nd house *rises* after the stuff in the 1st house, and the stuff in the 12th house *already* rose and so is the *last* to rise *next*.

To expand upon the motions from which these places draw their significations, let's add a few more layers onto the microcosmic circle of life.

Hemispheres and Quadrants

The easiest layer to add onto the diurnal story is what it means to be *rising*, *setting*, or *underground*, if you will.

First, as we have covered in so many ways, a moment arises in the east. The hemisphere above the ground is where *public, diurnal, external* topics play out.

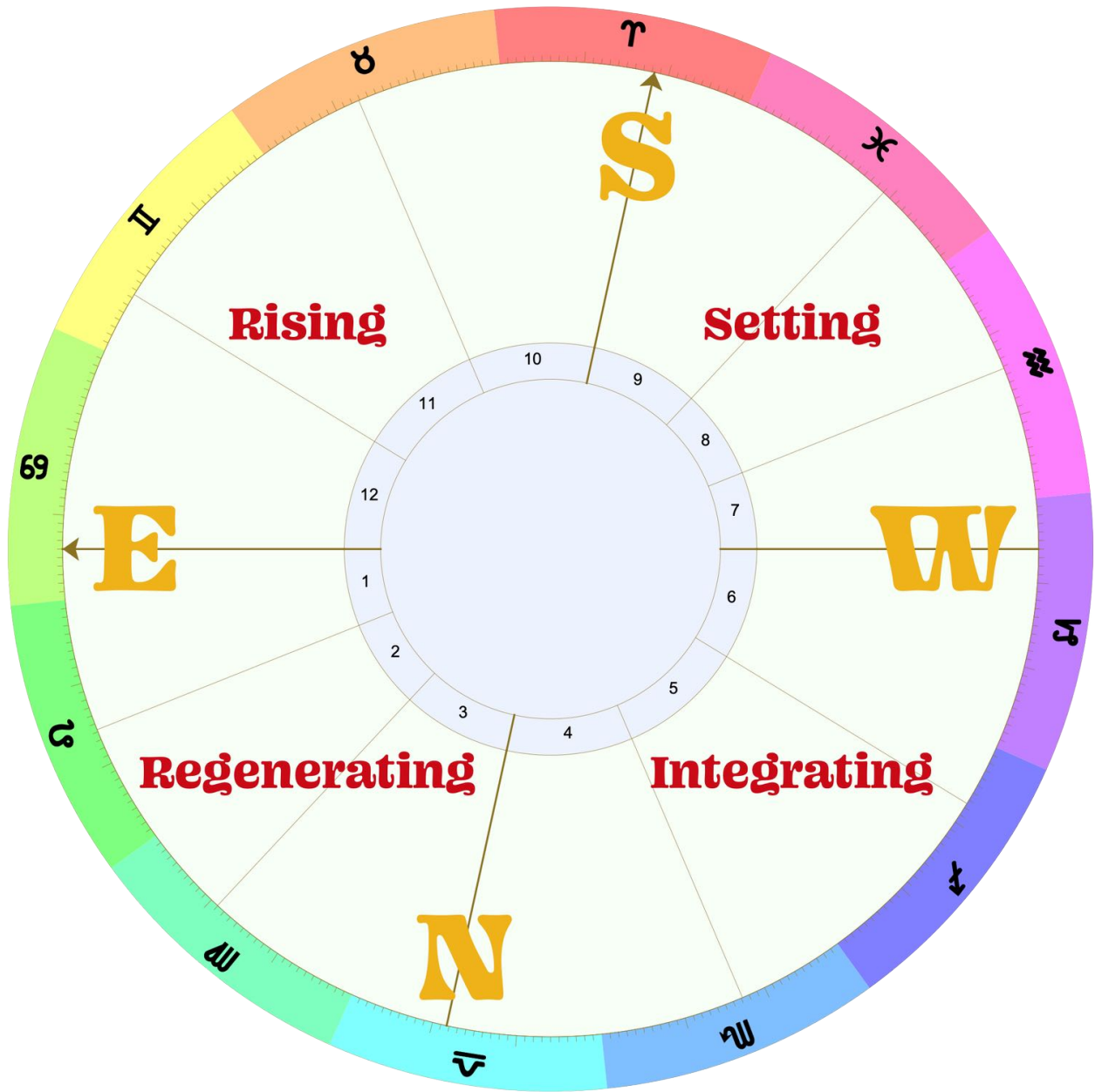
The houses from the ascendant to the midheaven cover the quadrant of sky from east to south, and they are going upwards, gaining in clarity, visibility, and independence.

The houses from the midheaven to the descendant are the quadrant from south to west, and they are going down, losing time and agency, becoming more and more concerned with what comes after.

Then comes the moment of setting in the west. Disappearing. Going under the Earth. The hemisphere below the ground is where *private, nocturnal, internal* topics play out.

The houses from the descendant to the IC reach from west to north, and they are a process of decomposition, bringing what has happened above in and metabolizing it, grounding it, laying it to rest.

The houses from the IC to the ascendant go from north to east, and that's where the process of regeneration and preparation take place. Then, in the 1st house, another omen is born.



Hemispheres and quadrants

Angularity

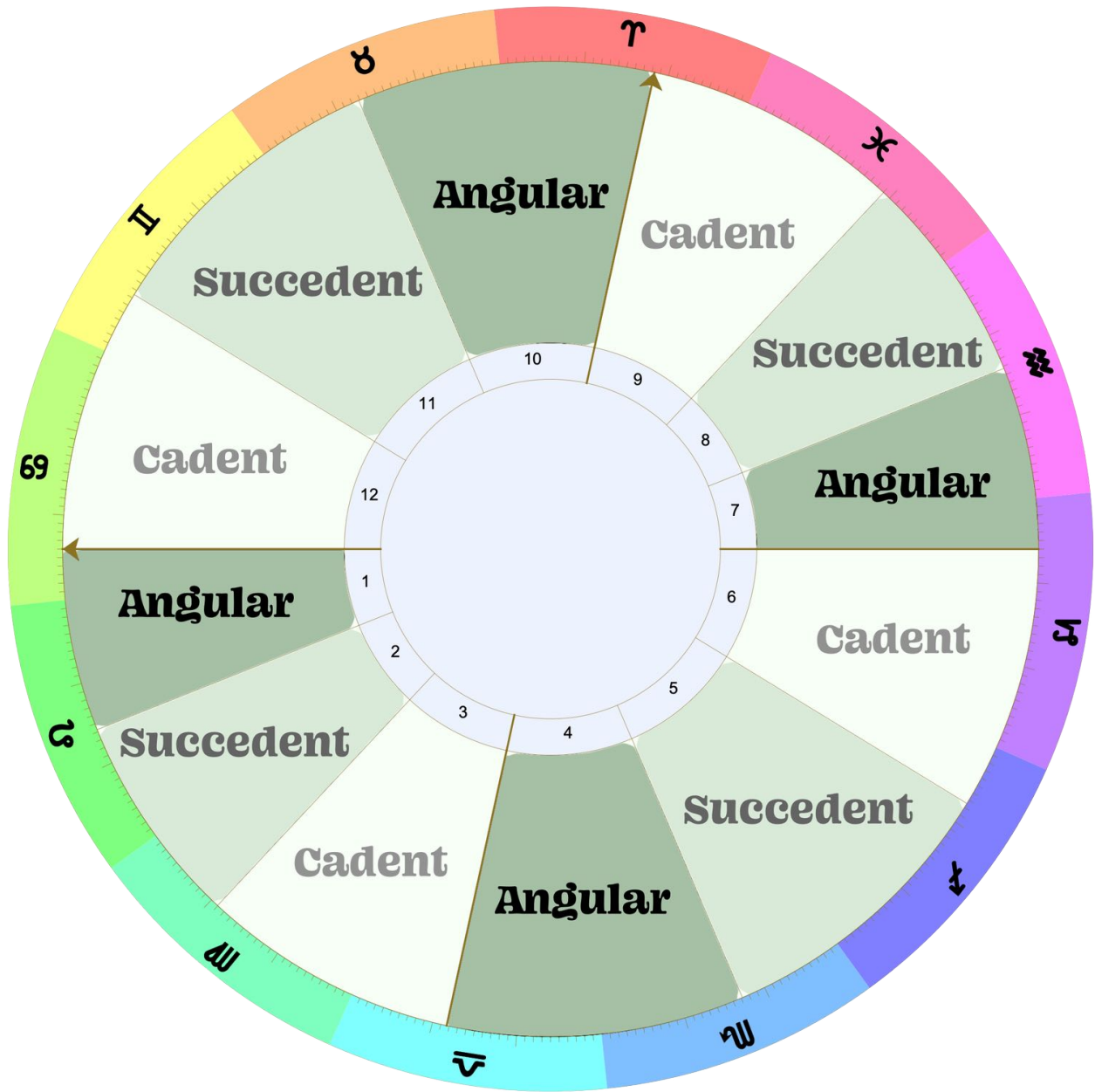
The next layer complicates this picture somewhat by adding an element of *energy* or *dynamism* to houses.

The angles of the local sky are all climactic. When a planet is applying to an angle, it is activated by the local sky. Its significations dominate the moment there. The way in which they do so differ depending on the angle, but the energetic principle is the same: The houses on the angles are the most *active* places in the chart. Those houses — the 1st, 4th, 7th, and 10th — are the *angular houses*. These are also sometimes called the *stakes* of the chart, which works both in the sense of “the pegs that hold down the tent” and “what’s at stake here.”

By contrast, the houses *falling* from the angles are the *least* active places in the chart. A planet there has *passed* its moment in the local sky, and it is now subject to other influences and significant of more passive topics. Those houses — the 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th — are the *cadent houses*.

In between are places of gathering and regrouping and pivoting, no longer falling, not quite ready to rise. Those houses — the 2nd, 5th, 8th, and 11th — are the *succedent houses*.

Combine these variable levels of activity with the overarching diurnal story, and you will begin to see how each of the 12 houses takes on unique topical significance.



Angular dynamics of the houses

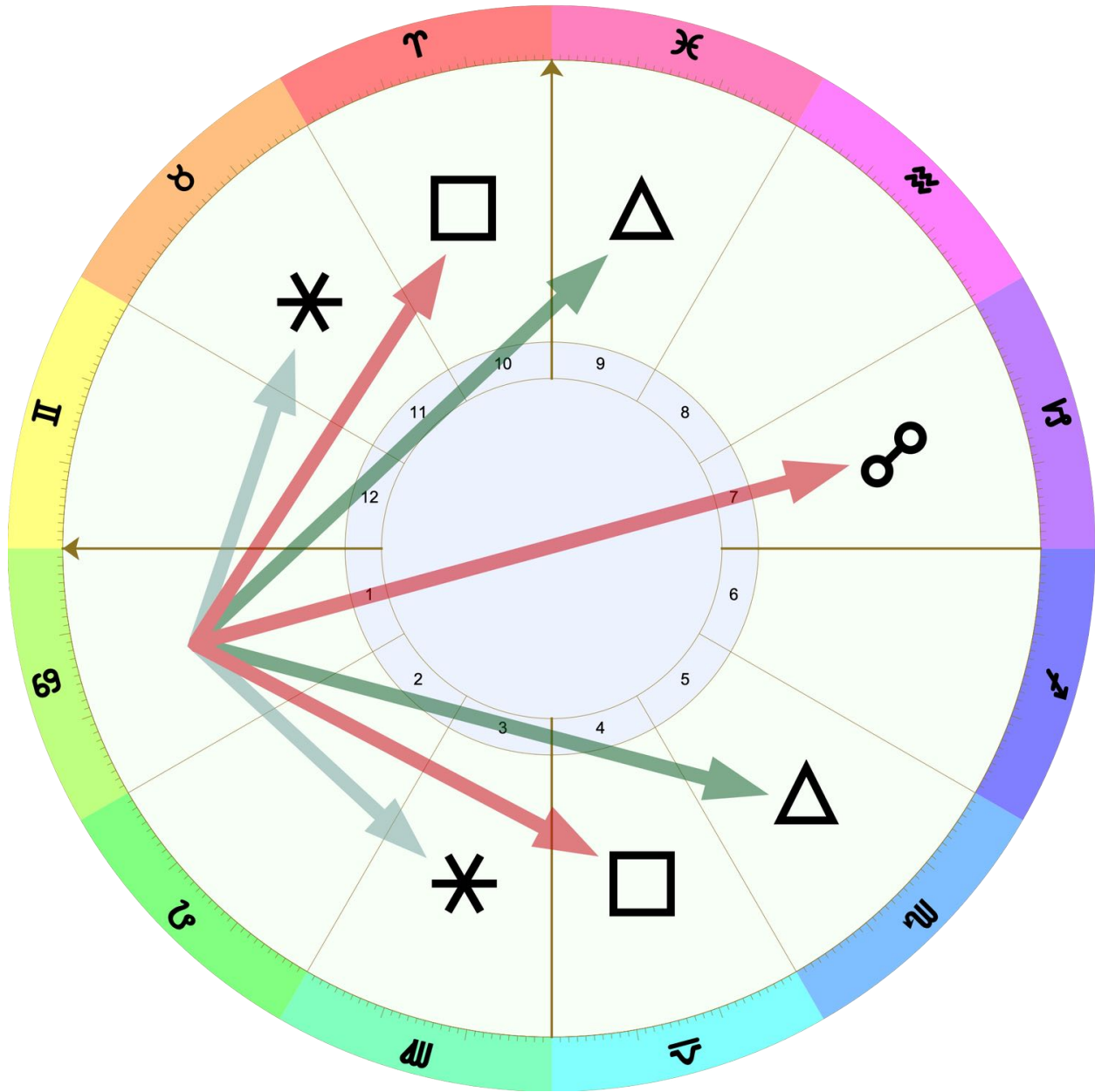
Aspects to the Ascendant

There is still one more spatial interpretive layer to add on, and for this one I will switch my chart diagram to whole-sign houses because it will make more sense visually that way.

While angularity determines a house's dynamism, there is another factor affecting its *quality*, which is its aspect to the ascendant. As we have covered, the ascendant is the *horoskopus*, the "hour-marker." It is the essence of the omen of the moment. So a place (as houses are sometimes called) is more helpful in the moment if it has a good aspect to the ascendant — if it can see the place according to the exact same principle of aspects we covered when looking at the basics of reading a chart.

Accordingly, the houses *without* an aspect to the ascendant are not as good. But this is where combining these layers starts to matter a great deal. The 2nd house is averse to the ascendant, but it's succedent. Not so bad. The 12th house is averse to the ascendant, *and it's cadent*. That's a rather yucky place indeed.

Among the houses with aspects to the ascendant, the quality of the aspect also makes a difference. The *harmonious* places are trine to the ascendant. The *supportive* places are sextile. And the other angular houses are square and opposite, meaning there is some *friction* and *tension* in those relationships, because they are between the most powerful places.



Aspects of the houses to the ascendant

Aspect to the ascendant is the primary aspectual relationship from which houses draw their significations, but it's also well worth considering each house's aspects to each other house. There's no need to belabor it here, as we covered the basic idea of places aspecting one another in the [chart chapter](#), but when you're considering what a house signifies, don't consider it on its

own. Consider it in relationship to the places next to it, to the places in harmonious and dissonant aspect with it, to the places that *can't* see it, to the *other* angles than the ascendant, and what those relationships could draw out about that place's own meaning.

The foundation for understanding the houses is now built. I will cover them one at a time, as I did with the planets, providing succinct lists of significations after listing these underlying qualities house by house. Seven of the houses also have the distinction of being the joy of one of the planets, which I also briefly mentioned in the planets section, and which I included in the vital statistics of each planet. Here, you can revisit those significations in the other direction, letting a planet who rejoices in a house lend its nature to that house's significations.

The heading for each house links to my blog topics on that house, so you can browse chart write-ups that hinge upon interpretations of that house. This will let you go much deeper into how a given house shows up in a real chart than I am able to cover here. The headings also give the typical translations of the houses' Greek names, which are good mysteries to contemplate alongside the listed significations.

1st House – Helm

Angular, on the ascendant, joy of Mercury ☿

The 1st house is the self. It is the one who is arising to meet the moment. The one who will take the journey. The one who will encounter the others. The condition of the 1st house describes

the appearance, the identity, and the body of whoever or whatever is here. It is the place of potential, where the most possibilities are, which is why Mercury rejoices there, imagining what could become of this opportunity.

2nd House – Gate of Hades

Succedent, averse to the ascendant

The 2nd house is what supports the 1st. It is the place of the resources and materials that will be called upon next to support the needs of the moment as it goes on. The topics of money, finance, possessions, and belongings can be found here.

3rd House – Goddess

Cadent, sextile the ascendant, joy of the Moon ☽

The 3rd house is the place of the familiar, siblings and neighbors, the neighborhood, communication, the skills, crafts, and ways that sustain everyday life. Embodied spiritual practice. Writing and reflecting. Educating children in the ways of the world. This is the joy of the Moon, at once luminously holy and absolutely ordinary.

4th House – Subterranean

Angular, square the ascendant

The 4th is the inmost place. The home. The ancestors. The underworld. This is the symbolic place of the IC, the "Angle of Earth," and thus it literally represents the ground one walks upon — and, after death, the ground one lies within.

In a chart using whole-sign houses, when the IC is remote from the 4th, it merges these significations of home with the topics of the house in which the IC falls. If the IC is in the 3rd, it describes being at home in motion, amongst the people. "It takes a village." If the IC is in the 5th, it describes a home that is always changing, being created and recreated, growing as a family, making up new ways instead of sticking to the traditional ones. The 4th and its ruler would still describe the overall condition of the topic of home, land, and ancestry.

5th House – Good Fortune

Succedent, trine the ascendant, joy of Venus ♀

The 5th is the place of creation, where the seed germinates, a most harmonious, hidden, intimate place. This is the place of children, and the procreation of children, and the procreation of metaphorical children: beloved creative and imaginative works. Fun, art, pleasure itself are here. Of course, it is the joy of Venus.

6th House – Bad Fortune

Cadent, averse to the ascendant, joy of Mars ♂

The 6th is a shock. An injury. A collision with the ground. It is the grind, the place of toil and labor, injury and pain, illness. It is the joy of Mars. It signifies servitude, subordinates and laborers, as well as pets and small animals dependent on their masters.

7th House – Setting

Angular, opposite the ascendant

The 7th is the place of the other. The counterpart. When the Sun sets here, it rises on the other side of the world. It is a place of endings for one that are beginnings for another. A handoff. An exchange. It is the place of the spouse or romantic partner, the business partner, the customer, but also the opponent, the enemy. Who the other is to the self depends on many things.

8th House – Idle

Succedent, averse to the ascendant

The 8th is the beginning of the end. Preparations for endings. Questions of legacy and inheritance. Debts. Matters that must be settled. In the same way the 2nd supports the 1st, the 8th supports the 7th, and thus the 8th can be seen as the other's resources, the partner's money, which is still connected to owing and settling up. Let's not beat around the bush: While the 4th is

the place of lying at rest, and the 7th is the place of ending, the 8th is the place where the world of the living confronts the reality of death.

9th House – God

Cadent, trine the ascendant, joy of the Sun ☺

The 9th is the place of awesome contemplation. One step down from the top of the sky, here is where reflection and prayer occur. It is the place of wisdom and higher learning, devotion to things greater than oneself. It is where the Sun rejoices. Religion, the academy, and divination are denoted here. Note its opposition to the occult and intimate 3rd, though; the opulently reverent, sacred 9th is the counterpart to the quietly luminous, mundane 3rd.

10th House – Midheaven

Angular, square the ascendant

The 10th is the most visible place. A planet on the midheaven dominates the chart of the moment. They are in the seat of power. They are the one to whom petitions can be directed. They are the powers that be, the state, the company, the boss, the official position. The 10th house of the nativity represents the native's career, reputation, and public image. It is also the place of the mother, whose role could be said to be that native's very life.

In a chart using whole-sign houses, when the MC is remote from the 10th, it merges these significations of power and visibility with the topics of the house in which the MC falls. In a natal chart, the MC can describe the native's particular role, as opposed to the general 10th-house topic of career, so a native with a 9th-house MC might make a good a clergy member or academic, and one with an 11th house MC might be a natural social media influencer or networker and connector of people, though the 10th and its ruler would still describe their trajectory and success overall.

11th House – Good Spirit

Succedent, sextile the ascendant, joy of Jupiter ♃

The 11th is the place of friends and supporters, both human and divine. It is the joy of Jupiter, a place of hope and aspiration and belief in the goodness and rightness of actions. While 3rd-house friends are the people intimately known to you, 11th-house friends are the wider circle of associates, contacts, and acquaintances. The 11th is not just the place of worldly relationships, though; it is the place from which divine guardians watch over and reach out to mortals.

12th House – Bad Spirit

Cadent, averse to the ascendant, joy of Saturn ♄

The 12th is the marginal place. Sometimes it is hard for students of astrology to understand why the place just past the ascendant

could be considered such a bad house, when it is the place where planets rise into view. Perhaps it can be understood as a defenseless and incomprehensible place, like infancy. Perhaps it can be understood in diurnal terms; as the Sun begins to heat the Earth and wipe away the dawn, the enormity and difficulty of what is ahead makes itself felt. This also relates to its quality as the joy of Saturn — the inexorable march of time, the relentless initiation of another cycle.

The 12th is the very place of this kind of rumination, inwardness, contemplation, having a lot of time on one's hands. It signifies prisons of the mind and prisons of stone. It is the place of "hidden enemies" and large animals. It is reality itself as a construct.

House Rulership and Significators

So how do houses actually function in a chart? Where, when, and how are these topics applied to derive meaning from the astro-weather?

The first and most obvious function of houses is that the planets in the chart are *in them*. The planets manifest their natures and significations through the topics of the house they are in. If Mercury is in the 3rd house, you might get an interesting email. If Venus is on the midheaven, you might see a beautiful view. If the Moon is in the 9th, you might hear God's voice whispering in the trees.

But as we covered in the [zodiac chapter](#), the significance of a patch of sky does not emanate from the ground you're standing

on or depend solely on your own point of view. It is an interaction between your local place and your celestial place. The planets are not rising, culminating, and setting alone in the sky overhead; they are traveling through their *own* celestial houses (*now you see why "houses" and "domiciles" are given different English words*). The signs of the zodiac — the temples of the planets on the ecliptic — *also* travel through the local houses each day, and just as their planetary ruler holds sway over the planets in the sign, they rule the sign's *current house in the chart* as well.

(In a chart with whole-sign houses, the ruler of the house is simply the ruler of the sign. In a chart with quadrant houses, the planet ruling the sign where the cusp of the house is drawn is the ruler of the house, though a planet in that house but in a different sign is still under the sway of its sign ruler.)

The crucial technique unlocked by house rulership is that the planet ruling a house becomes its *significator*. The planetary ruler of a house takes on the significations of those house topics *itself* and expresses them through whatever house that *planet* is in. If that planet is making aspects with other planets, that signifies an event that is not just an interaction between those planets' own natures but between *the house topics those planets signify*.

And this is how we tie it all together and start checking the astro-weather.

You are almost done. I'm impressed with you. If you're impressed with me, please consider:

- hiring me for astrology

taalumot.space/astrology/shop

- donating to support my work

taalumot.space/donate

Thank you once more for reading. You're on the home stretch now.

8. Interpreting Moment and Transit Charts

This is probably the chapter you were looking for when you got here, so forgive me for putting it off so long. I feel pretty good about this foundation, though. Not only am I going to be able to explain to you how to interpret a chart in a single chapter now, but you're going to have a much shorter trip from here to practicing any astrological specialty, should that be a path you choose.

I suppose I was sneaking in a particular definition of — or standard for — what we mean when we say “astro-weather.” Really, I was taking the phrase seriously, perhaps more seriously than many people do when they say, “Man, what is the astro-weather today? The vibes are so off.” That feels like a *basically* good question to me, but not if it's dismissive. Not if it's a way of waving away local experience and simplifying it into some thought-terminating astrological shorthand.

When I say “the astro-weather,” I'm talking about palpable, physical, environmental conditions in which I am living, using astrology for forecasting as though it's an extension of *meteorology*. Astro-weather as in “the weather.” Conditions one must *live through*. And predicting it is a baseline skill for planning, preparing, and living life.

Before getting into how to *interpret* the astro-weather, I wanted to make sure it was clear that astro-weather is an immense and complex *physical system* that requires complex tools to assess

its current condition. It *doesn't* simplify a situation, but it does *clarify* it when we have well-founded tools and practices with which to understand it. Now that we have those tools in place, I can rely on them to give you a demonstration of the practices that doesn't require stopping to explain what I'm doing, so you can understand what *living with astrology* feels like.

Naturally, I will demonstrate this over the course of a day.

Morning

Let's transport ourselves to sunrise on the day of the Leo ingress, Sunday, July 23, 2023, at a location in the eastern United States.

It's going to be a hot one in the northern hemisphere. We don't even have to check the *regular* weather to determine that. But checking the weather is a pretty natural move upon waking up, so let's have a look at the chart at the top of the next page.

According to this chart, what's going on today? There aren't any applying aspects, so it might look like a pretty humdrum day at a glance, but there are actually some big shifts going on.

It's Sun Hour of Sun Day, the Sun just entered domicile in Leo, and the Moon's waxing sextile with the Sun happened right at the ingress. The Sun just left the Moon's domicile and gained dignity in his own, the Moon went into the Sun's fall (that is, the sign opposite the Sun's exaltation in Aries), this happened nearly *simultaneously*, and they *bumped into each other* when it happened.

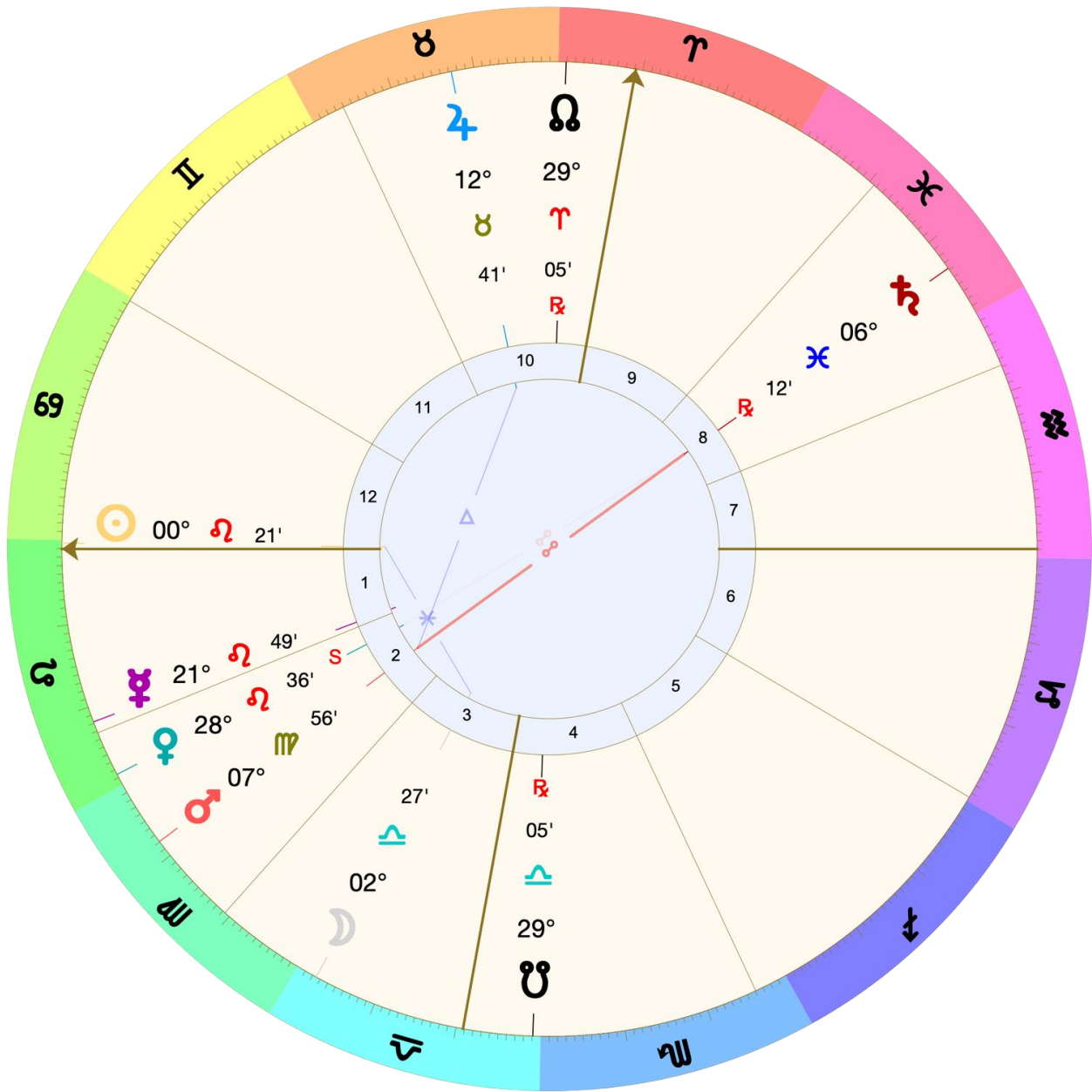


Chart for sunrise on the day of the Leo ingress

This looks like a separation to me, a parting of ways. The Sun is turning away from the Moon and toward himself. The Moon is making her first waxing aspect coming into her own and doing so when going into the fall of the Sun, and now she's void of course, all on her own.

So that's *one* story, and it's pretty juicy, especially right now at sunrise, with Leo and the Sun on the ascendant.

There's much more going on with this Moon, though. The nodes have only recently entered Libra and Aries (they're at 29°05' and moving in their usual retrograde direction), so the Moon is about to cross the ecliptic going "down." And Venus, the ruler of that sign — and of the IC at our location — is in Leo with the Sun, *almost* sextile the South Node she is now ruling, but she is not going to make it. That red "S" next to Venus indicates that she is stationing retrograde, about to head back toward the Sun. By the time the Moon makes the sextile with her ruler, Venus, the Moon will be drained by the South Node, and Venus will not have gotten there to make it okay. Such drama!

There's also a slowly separating Mars/Saturn opposition, which is always fun. Just kidding, it's like the most tense single aspect I can think of. The whole time a Mars/Saturn opposition is setting up and separating — which takes a few days, because Mars and Saturn are slow — they just go around and around the sky taking turns being the one out of sect and mad. Right now, at sunrise, Saturn is chilling out, and Mars is heating up.

And this is all without looking into house topics. On that front, every one of the players we have mentioned is involved in a high-stakes way here at sunrise except the lonely void Moon, as she is already cadent from the IC.

The Sun, coming into his own power, rules the ascendant; this is us waking up in the morning.

Mars rules the MC from down in the second house. That could be productive, except he has no aspect to the angle he rules, and plus Saturn is up there with his arms crossed, retrograde in the 8th house and ruling the descendant — do not pass go.

Frustrating!

And as we saw, Venus — stopped in her tracks — rules the IC, the place of home and land and lineage. The draining South Node is applying to it. This looks like a lot to deal with on a Sun Day!

In fact, with this much to carry, I wouldn't be surprised if we woke up this morning remembering some weird dreams. For the sake of the exercise, let's say we did. Now that we've digested how much is going on in the chart upon waking up, let's have a look at how it was going in the middle of the night and see if that sheds light on those weird dreams.

Midnight

In our location on this date, solar midnight was at about 1:45 a.m. This chart is actually also for a Sun Hour, but when the Sun crosses the IC it becomes Venus Hour. The Sun's ingress into Leo had already happened by this time of night, but the Moon was still in Virgo; the sextile was close to perfect, but there was not yet an aspect by sign. With Taurus rising, Venus ruled the ascendant at this time, so the transition from Sun Hour to Venus Hour as the newly domiciled Sun crossed the IC was a big moment, and the Moon's ingress into Libra — into Venus' domicile — happened only about 10 minutes later, during that Venus Hour. And Jupiter is in Taurus, too, and so in the 1st house by whole sign for all of this.

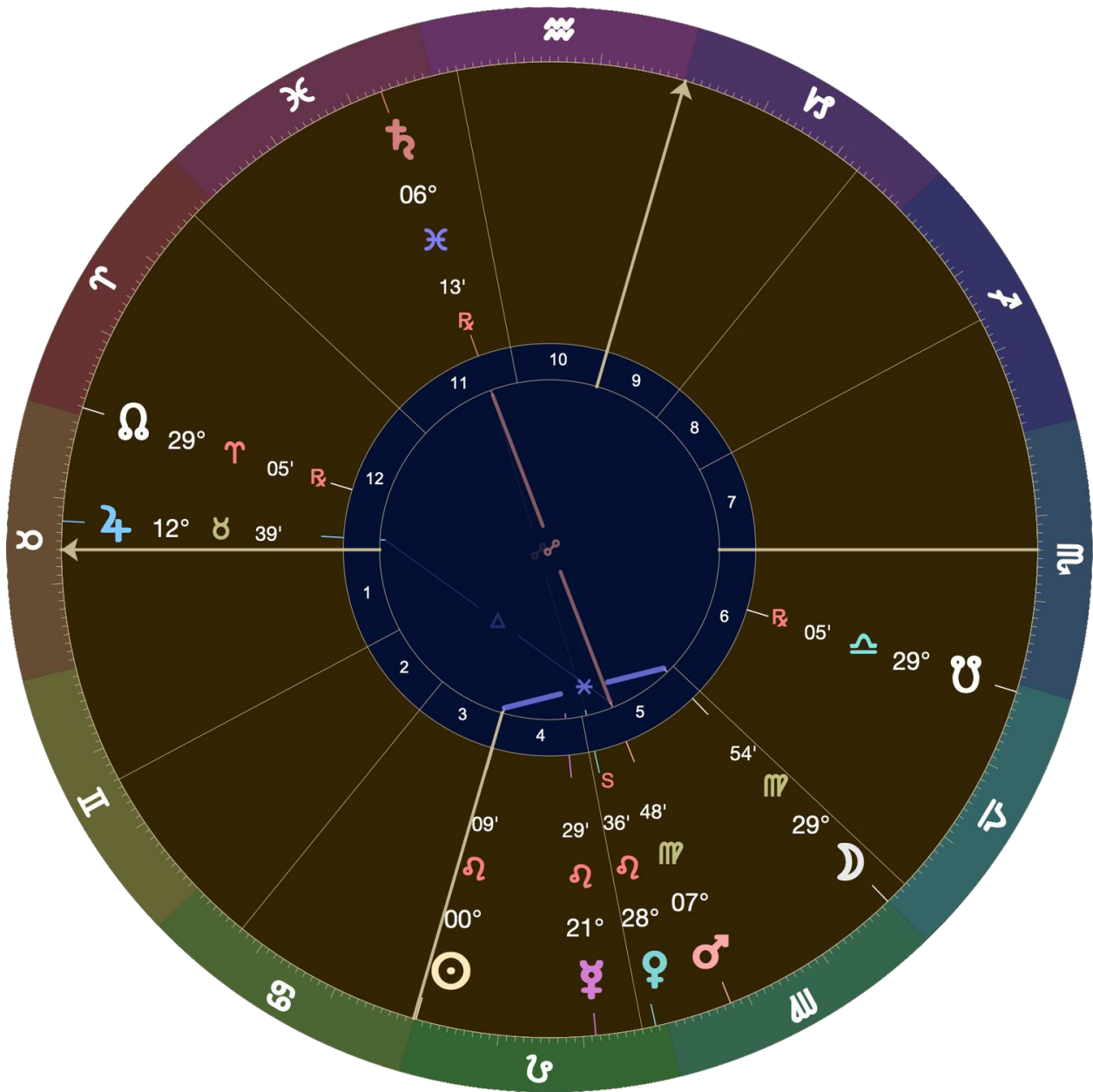


Chart for midnight on the day of the Leo ingress

Venus, who is stationed retrograde at the end of the Sun's sign, has a lot on her plate here without a lot of capacity.

And Saturn, ruling the MC, the only planet up in the sky all night, slowly moving retrograde through Venus' sign of exaltation, is just up there like, "Yep. That's real. Nothing can be done about it.

Face it. It's all too much." Just as the Sun has come roaring into Leo, still opposing Saturn's place but with far more strength, to say, "Did somebody call for... TOO MUCH!?"

So I'll go out on a limb and say, stress dreams about trying to do too much, being pulled in too many directions. Not the kind of dreams you want to wake up from on a Sunday morning.

So let's end the dream sequence and cut back to the morning. We're going to need some support today, some way to make it a connected and meaningful Sunday, to integrate these feelings of loneliness and burden and make the most of it. Let's look ahead at the day (at the top of the next page) and see if it gets better.

Midday

While it doesn't magically get all better, the chart at midday does provide support as all this stuff continues to come up.

This chart has echoes of the midnight chart because that stationed Venus rules the ascendant again. It's not a good 1st house; let's not paper over it. The South Node is on the ascendant, and the void-of-course Moon is far past the angle, almost at the end of the 12th quadrant house. This stuff is really getting to us now.

But Venus, the ascendant ruler, is in the 10th with the dignified Sun on the MC, and Mercury — who has been with Venus in fairly good condition this whole time — can now do their thing in this angular house while signifying some supportive topics. Mercury rules the 11th house of friends, for one thing, but also the

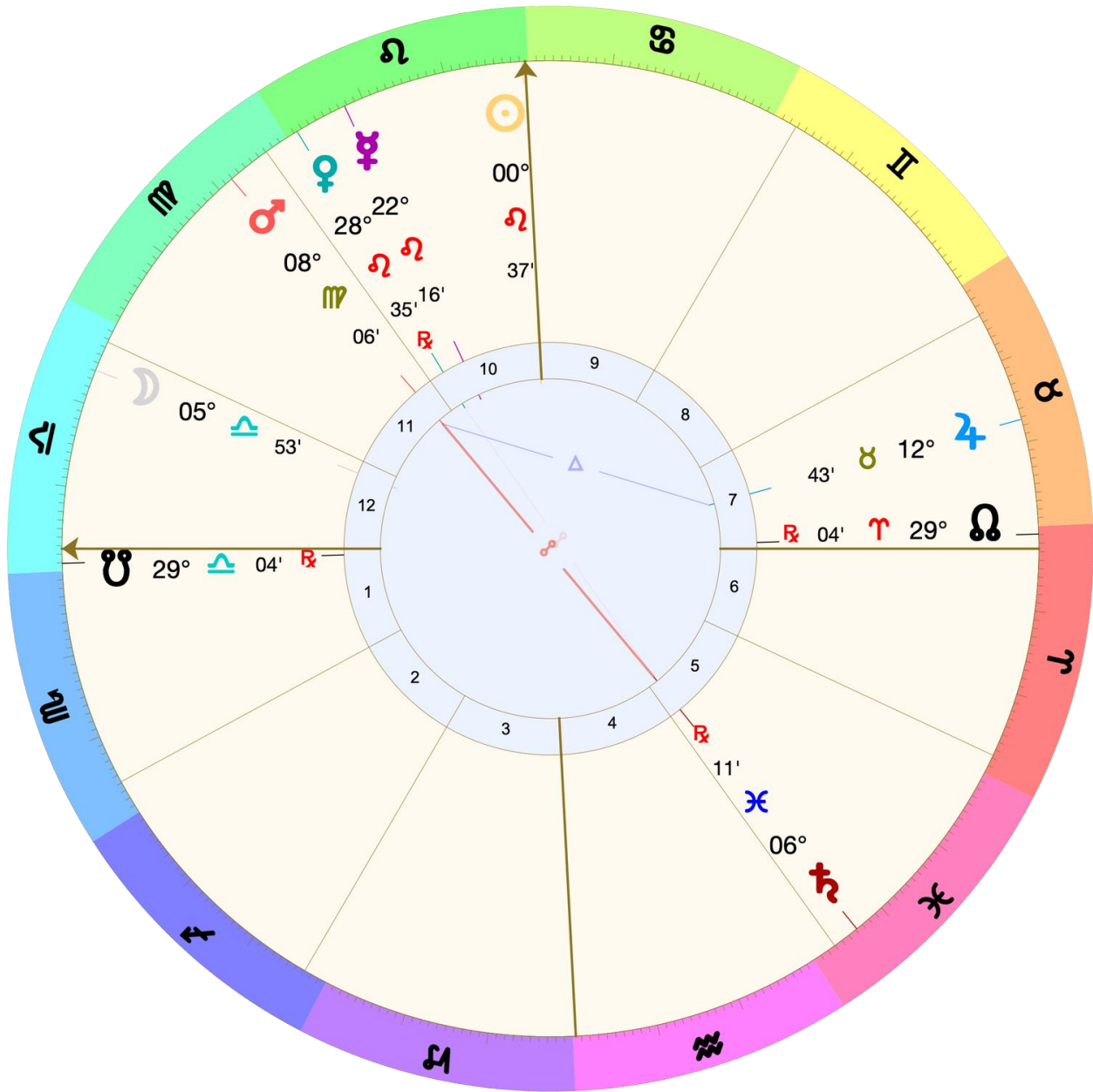


Chart for noon on the day of the Leo ingress

9th house of wisdom by quadrant and the 8th house of other people's resources by whole sign, a pretty rich combination here. Moreover, the draining South Node in the 1st means the expanding North Node is in the 7th house of the other, and who is there in the 7th quadrant house but Jupiter, the big benefic of the sect, showing favor to Venus from her domicile of Taurus.

This would be a perfect time to call a friend and talk it out!

This is about as realistic a demonstration as I could hope for of checking the astro-weather and use it to get through a given day. I picked the Leo ingress as the date to use throughout this guide not because I found it when searching for an example, but just because of weird spiritual impulses to do so. Honestly, as I began to implement this chapter, I worried it wasn't going to work, but it's a perfect example.

You don't get to pick what day it is. You can't make the day better by getting out of the Earth car and pushing the planets into position. The chart is the chart, and this chart is — let's be real — rather uncomfortable. But what you do about that is, you look for opportunities to enact manifestations of the chart that help you, and you let that *become your experience of it*. The traditional term for this kind of active engagement with astrology is "remediation," but I would just call it *showing up to life*. Letting your fate befall you powerlessly is an option. But rising to meet it — *showing your fate what it means* — is, too. Astrology is the right tool for that job.

Let's see how things turn out at the end of the day.

Sunset

As a Leo Sun sets for the first time this year, it's a quiet but brilliant evening. Mercury, Venus, and Mars are gleaming together around the royal star Regulus in the constellation Leo. The Moon is well beyond her sextile now and hanging in the sky as a healthy crescent. But she is deep in the void, and Saturn rules

the ascendant and is next to rise. It's time to lay these matters to rest. Tomorrow is another day, and though today was hard to carry, we faced it with a lion's heart.

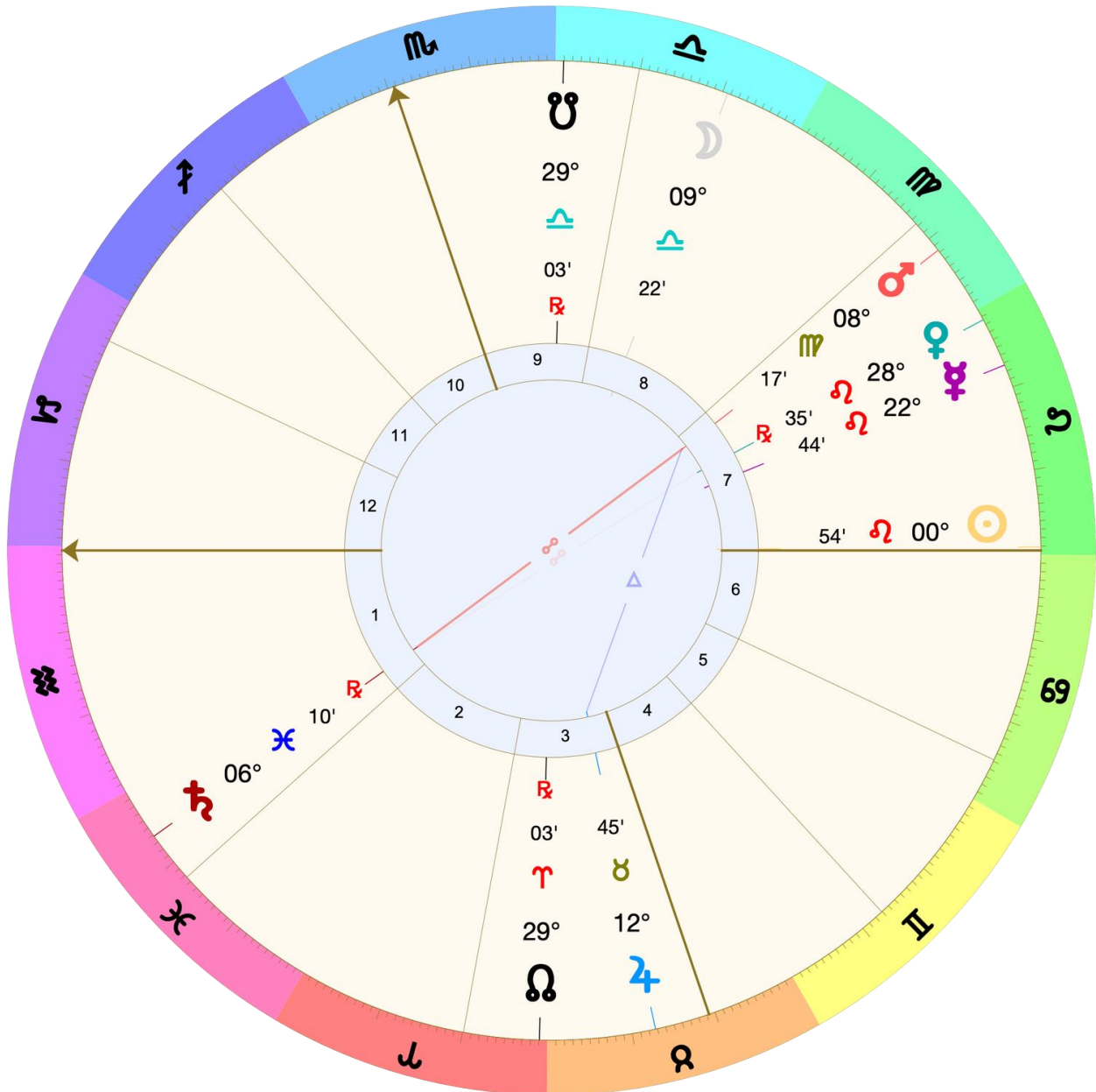


Chart for sunset on the day of the Leo ingress



Okay, so that was pretty cool, right? But be honest — did it seem a little bit... vague? Fuzzy? Weirdly general? Did you wish it had a little more personalization and detail? Would you have liked to see it predict specifically what would happen that day, instead of just being more or less all vibes?

Well, don't worry.

This is the very end of the guide, and you have learned how to read an astrological chart to check the weather, and that's amazing, and you should go soak in a mountain spring and think about all this for a while. However, I would like to at least introduce you to the *idea* of transits, which are the way the chart of a moment expresses and interacts with the chart of *literally anyone or anything else* and shows us *exactly* how that moment

in that location will turn out for that person, place, event, business, whatever the root chart is for.

Just to be clear — as though you can't already tell — this is rather complicated, and that's what astrologers are for. I will show you how to do it for yourself in the most basic way possible. But if you want to **REALLY KNOW** what a moment is going to mean for you, that's when you find a natal astrologer you can trust.

But just to give you a sense, let's look at this same day's chart as transits to a person's nativity and see what happens for them *personally* that day.

Transits to a Root Chart

In the introduction, I framed this whole guide with the principle that astrological charts are not static; they depict a sky that is moving all the time. The astro-weather is dynamically changing from moment to moment. The chart of right now shows the present. And yes, spiritual teachers the world over will tell us the present moment is all that really exists, or really matters, or what-have-you. But they don't mean that in some simplistic way where the past and future don't matter. That teaching reveals something far more intense about the nature of time-bound experience, which is that *all times are actually present at all times*.

We — the observer — stand in our own relativistic center of spacetime, knitting moments together, bringing in all our pasts and all our futures, and making the part of reality that expresses ourselves. That might sound grandiose, but it's a totally ordinary

description. That's what every action you take does: it expresses who you are right now into reality.

What this means astrologically is that every chart is still "happening" from its own perspective.

From the perspective of "right now," where some number of us are alive on one planet together, our perspective includes agreement about where our planet is in the solar system right now, and where the other planets are, as well as where each other is and how the local sky looks a little different for each of us where we are. That's the chart of the moment.

But from the perspective of "our lives," and where they begin and end, what they mean, and what will happen along the way, that's an utterly different collection of moments. Even though many of them happened simultaneously, they manifested in different ways and meant different things. Getting into how and why that works could take us in so many directions beyond a guide to the basics of astrology, but there's one fundamental astrological principle that can keep us on track: One can understand the uniqueness of how a reality like a human life plays out by understanding the uniqueness of how and where it *began*.

Yes, we are at last talking about birth charts. Many people reading this may have believed astrology consisted *entirely* of birth charts when they began reading. Hopefully they see by now why I didn't really talk about them until the end. We needed to understand *moments* first. But in order to understand what's happening to *something in particular* using the chart of the

moment, we need to understand how that moment expresses the moment at which *that thing became a thing*.

The chart for a moment of origin describes an incredible situation: You were born. You married your beloved. You founded your company. You had some transformative experience. These are all “births” of a kind. But *then what happened?* Every moment since that origin has developed and changed whatever was born there and then. The way the sky has changed since then mirrors, describes, *is identically related* to that unfolding. And so comparing the chart for a particular moment to the chart for another moment reveals something about that unfolding. Comparing the chart for right now to the chart for your birth reveals how the moment of right now expresses the moment that set you on the path to this moment.

And that’s what transits are: descriptions of the differences between one sky and another and — from a linear temporal perspective of beings who are alive — how a moment of origin plays out in the future.

How Transit Charts Work

This is where all that topical material about houses will really assert itself. The principle of transit charts is that the symbolic vocabulary of the root chart can be treated as fixed — because that’s the moment we’re investigating — and the same places and points express their root meanings wherever they are in the transit chart.

That means the natal — or “radix” (root) — 5th house will still represent 5th-house topics for the native in the transit chart. Any planet currently transiting the part of sky on the 5th in the root chart will affect 5th-house matters for the native.

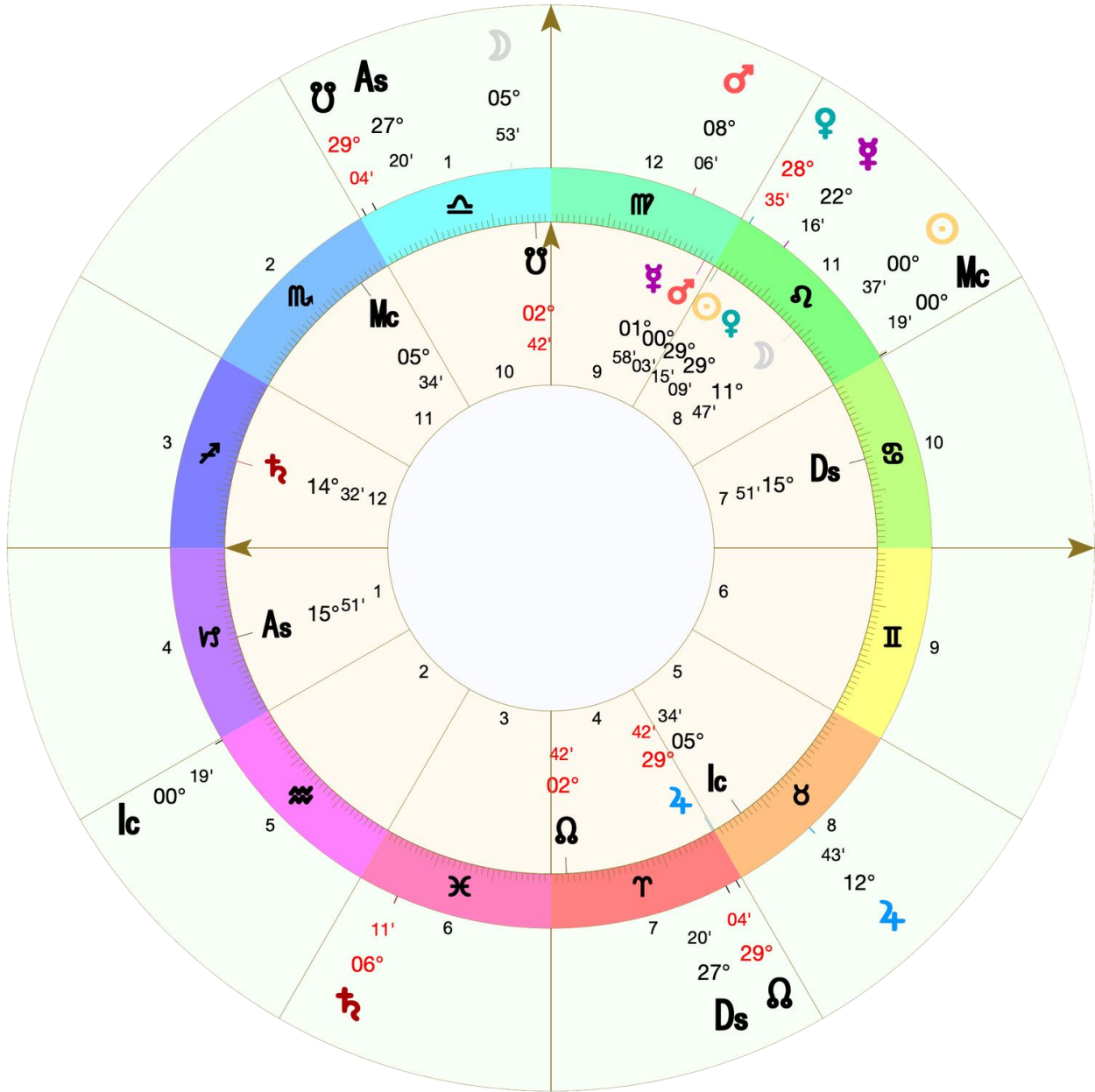
Likewise, the signifiers of the natal houses will carry their natal significations to wherever they are in the transit chart. This is especially important for the natal ascendant ruler — the “chart ruler,” as it is often called in this context — which can always be taken to represent the native (or business, or marriage, or whatever the root chart is the origin of) as an individual. There are also other time-based techniques highlighting other planets as particularly significant at different times in the native’s life, but those go beyond the scope of what we can cover here. But even in periods where the planet is not activated by some advanced timing technique for which you should consider hiring an astrologer, the ruler of the natal 10th house can signify the native’s career (for example) in the transit chart, and its position and condition in the transit chart will tell them how that topic is going for them at that time.

The thing with timing techniques is, the native may be in a period of life where career matters are the most significant thing going on, or in one where it’s just in the background, and that will determine how much to emphasize that transit relative to the others. So we’re still not going to be able to get *breathtakingly* precise in this guide. But you’ll see how much of a difference transits alone make for precision, compared to just checking the local mundane weather.

Interpreting transits can get tricky when you start to think about the houses of the *transit* chart too much, at the expense of the houses in the root chart. You can get lost trying to morph the natal topic into the transit topic all over the place. I suggest thinking about how transits are always moving, and root charts — for this purpose — are not.

The radix 5th is the 5th house in *every* transit chart for that native. The *transit* 5th changes every two-ish hours after the time of the root chart, everywhere, forever. Yes, the transit 5th will express whatever it represents in the root chart as a 5th-house matter *right now, relative to the situation for which the transit chart is cast*, but it won't be an expression of how 5th-house stuff shows up *throughout the native's entire life*, necessarily. That's shown by the *radix* 5th, its ruler, and any planets transiting *that* place right now. For the most part — except for the Moon and any very close aspects or sign changes — those don't really change in one day. So I'm only going to show one example transit chart using the midday chart from above, and you can imagine how those transits would play out over the course of the whole day.

So let's go back to that midday moment above, where these feelings of burden and separation were coming to a head, and we saw an opportunity to communicate with a wise friend about it, only now let's look at it as transits to someone's birth chart. The easiest way to do that is with a chart called a "biwheel," which puts the root chart in the center and plots the points of the transit chart around the outside. I will use whole-sign houses for clarity.



Biwheel chart showing the transits for noon on the day of the Leo ingress (outside wheel) to a person's natal chart (inside wheel)

Now we're considering what the midday chart means for this person born with the Sun in the *last* degree of Leo, the Moon also in Leo, and Capricorn rising. The transit 10th house, where all those issues of the day were coming to light, becomes the radix 8th house, and it is a very busy house in the nativity as well.

Transiting Venus returned almost to its natal place but stopped *just* short to go retrograde in this sign all summer, just as the Sun returned there as well. It's *also* a 9th-house Mars return for the native.

We can say for sure that some lifelong stuff came up for this person on this day, and what we learn from the transits is that *other people's stuff* (8th house) features heavily.

What else can we get more specific about?

That transiting Mars/Saturn opposition looks pretty involved because the native is Saturn-ruled (Capricorn rising), and transiting Saturn has just faced off in an opposition with Mars pretty close to where Mars was when the native was born. This suggests a long-held tension. In terms of natal topics, it's between informal, familiar, intimate 3rd-house matters and lofty, philosophical, vast 9th-house matters, but the transits are activating more of the root chart than that.

Mars rules the transiting descendant, and both that descendant and the North Node are *right on* Jupiter's position in the nativity, which is an interesting parallel to Jupiter in the (quadrant) 7th (whole-sign 8th) in the transit chart.

When looking at the midday chart by itself, I took that Jupiter as a wholesome presence, a sign that engaging with someone else (7th) would be of benefit (Venus-ruled Jupiter). But looking at it as an expression of this natal *Mars*-ruled Jupiter during the native's Mars return — *and* the return of the North Node into Mars-ruled Aries — this conversation looks a lot more *explosive*. But Aries is also the native's 4th house, and they have the IC

remote in the 5th, in Taurus, where transit Jupiter is about to make the trine with the native's ascendant. This is a person who is familiar with passionate intensity in their most intimate areas of life, and they can *handle* it. So though this conversation may be intense and emotional — rather than placid and relaxing, as it may have appeared from the transit chart alone — it still looks *supportive* to the native.

But what is it *about*? This is the part where delineating the transits alone has felt the most vague, and yet where detail would be the most appreciated. Yes, the transits indicate overload and isolation, but *what is causing* it? From what is the native isolated? With what is the native burdened?

This chart, with the packed natal 8th house aligned with the packed transit 10th — the most visible place — is the perfect time to ask this. Look to the transit ascendant to see what the nature of the omen is. It's in Libra, with the South Node right on it, having recently returned to the same sign it was in when the native was born. The transiting Moon has just crossed over the natal South Node today. What's weighing on this native's heart are natal *10th-house* matters: career, role, visibility, being seen. Their place in the world. With the South Node in their 10th and their natal MC remote in the 11th — a house busy with relationships and networks — this 8th-house Leo Sun wants to be seen by others so badly and has a hard time feeling like they're seen enough. The ruler of their 10th — *and* their 5th-house IC, where Jupiter is now — is Venus — who was *cazimi with that Leo Sun* when they were born! — and who just approached that glorious place of this person being seen and

loved at the moment of their birth... and stopped. And turned around.

Yes, I think an emotional conversation with someone close to this person (Jupiter, natal 3rd house ruler, natally in the 4th, in the 5th near the natal IC by transit) is warranted. Someone Jovial, faithful, big-hearted, who can handle them (Saturn, natal ascendant ruler, is in Jupiter's domicile by transit). Perhaps it's a specific Jupiter-ruled person they know, or even one to whom they are married (Jupiter is exalted in Cancer, the natal 7th house signifying the spouse, transit Jupiter is nearly sextile the natal descendant).

See how much more specific it gets? And I haven't even told you that this native is now in the final month of a 12th house profection year from the ascendant — the final year of the 12-year cycle of annual profections — the ruler of which for this native is Jupiter.

But we're going to stop here. You get the picture. Astrology is unfathomable, but for each layer of depth you can reach, enormous fields of insight are revealed. I hope you feel empowered to walk into those fields yourself now. And if you need more guidance, this is the role for which astrologers have been tapped by the Divine. That's what we're here for.

9. Further Resources

The entire time I've been writing this guide, I've been taking note of the places where I've gone, "Ah, can't go into that. That digression will open up a whole 'nother guide's worth of digressions." Here I have collected guides by friends and colleagues to those very topics, so that you are empowered to dive more deeply into them.

[Astrology and True Will: Dancing With the Body of God](#)

Hawk

[Sadalsuud's Guide to Reading Your Own Natal Chart](#)

Sadalsuud

[How to Read a Horoscope](#)

Daniel Norman

[What is "The Big Three" in Astrology?](#)

Kira Ryberg

[The Chart Ruler: Unlocking the Key to Your Birth Chart](#)

Kira Ryberg

[Essential Dignity and Debility in Astrology](#)

Kira Ryberg

[Signs and Constellations Are Not the Same Thing!](#)

Eric Purdue

[How Personal Is This Retrograde?](#)

Diana Rose Harper

[Intro to Profecctions](#)

Jo O'Neill

Want an entire other guide to every aspect of doing astrology for yourself from a different perspective for people coming from different places and prioritizing different things?

The Baby Astro Guidebook

Kira Ryberg

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Endless gratitude to my lineage teachers whose guidance and technique took me from an admirer of astronomy to a practitioner of astrology: Hawk, Adam Elenbaas, and Kira Ryberg.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to Jane Miller of Ecdysis Bodywork for prompting me to write this.



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