

INTRODUCTION

A natal chart is a blueprint of your life, a celestial snapshot taken at the precise moment you were born that reflects the patterns, tendencies, and themes woven into your personal story. Although your birth chart does reflect elements of fate, fate is not fixed. It can be softened or redirected using the tools you have been given, and when a pattern in your chart manifests once, it does not mean it must repeat endlessly. However, the more often a particular pattern is lived out in the same way, the more firmly it becomes woven into your life story. This guide is a warm introduction to understanding how to begin reading your own birth chart and to gently support you in working with, rather than against, the more challenging patterns that may appear.

Before working through this guide, you will need a copy of your natal chart. A free chart can be generated online using websites such as Astro-Seek. To generate your chart, you will need your date of birth, exact time of birth, and place of birth. For house division, I personally use the Regiomontanus house system, as this is the method through which I was taught astrology and it aligns with the historical era and techniques used in this guide. Readers may use any house system they are familiar with, as the core principles discussed here remain applicable.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHART WHEEL

The natal chart is drawn as a circular wheel divided into twelve sections, each called a house, and each house represents a different area of your life. The first house cusp is your Ascendant, and it sets the tone for the entire chart. From that point, the wheel unfolds counterclockwise through the twelve houses, moving through themes such as home and family, relationships and love, career and public life, travel, education, friendships, finances, and more. Each house contains a zodiac sign, which adds further qualities to how that area of life is expressed. The house a planet falls into shows the part of life where that planet's influence is expressed. Reading the chart begins with understanding that it is not random, but a structured map, with each house, the planets placed within it, and the planet that rules it all offering insight into specific parts of your lived experience.

UNDERSTANDING THE CORE COMPONENTS OF YOUR CHART

A. THE ZODIAC

The zodiac is made up of twelve signs, each reflecting a different way of expressing personality, behaviour, and tendencies. These signs are grouped into four elements, Fire, Earth, Air, and Water, and three modalities, Cardinal, Fixed, and Mutable, which describe broad approaches to life. While the sign a planet occupies gives insight into how that planet performs within a house, or its condition according to traditional astrology, this guide does not explore those details in depth. While the signs add important nuance, my approach places greater emphasis on the relationships between the planets. That said, the signs add nuance to the houses and planets, showing how certain traits may be expressed. The most important sign in your chart is the Ascendant, also called the Rising Sign, which is the sign on the cusp of the first house. The ruler of that sign, which I call the Chart Ruler, becomes the planet that most strongly signifies

you within your chart. Understanding this connection is essential before moving on to planets, houses, or aspects.

THE TWELVE SIGNS AND THEIR RULING PLANETS

-  Aries –  Mars
-  Taurus –  Venus
-  Gemini –  Mercury
-  Cancer –  Moon
-  Leo –  Sun
-  Virgo –  Mercury
-  Libra –  Venus
-  Scorpio –  Mars
-  Sagittarius –  Jupiter
-  Capricorn –  Saturn
-  Aquarius –  Saturn
-  Pisces –  Jupiter

Knowing the ruler of your Ascendant helps you identify the Chart Ruler, the planet that most strongly signifies you in your chart and forms the foundation of chart interpretation.

B. THE PLANETS

The planets in your natal chart represent different parts of your character, showing how you think, feel, act, and grow, particularly through the houses they occupy. Each planet may also represent specific people or roles in your life. ☉ The Sun often represents father figures or men, ☾ the Moon reflects the mother and the feminine influence, and ☿ Mercury can signify children or youthful qualities. Traditionally, planets are classified as benefic, malefic, or neutral. Benefics such as ♃ Jupiter and ♀ Venus tend to bring supportive qualities, while malefics such as ♄ Saturn and ♂ Mars bring challenge, effort, and life lessons. ☿ Mercury is neutral and takes on the qualities of planets it strongly aspects. ☉ The Sun represents masculine symbolism and ☾ the Moon feminine symbolism, influencing both personality and lived expression.

PERSONAL (TRADITIONAL) PLANETS – CHALDEAN ORDER

- ♄ Saturn – life lessons, responsibility, structure (malefic)
- ♃ Jupiter – growth, abundance, higher learning (benefic)
- ♂ Mars – drive, ambition, motivation (malefic)
- ☉ Sun – individuality, ego, core self; men or father figures (masculine)
- ♀ Venus – relationships, affection, values, expression (benefic)

- ☿ Mercury – intellect, communication, thought processes, children or youthfulness (neutral)
- ☾ Moon – emotions, instincts, inner life; the mother (feminine)

OUTER (MODERN) PLANETS

- ♆ Neptune – dreams, imagination, illusion, confusion
- ♅ Uranus – sudden change, disruption, innovation
- ♇ Pluto – extremes, intensity, transformation

Although the outer planets have positive qualities, I consider them malefic in practice, as they frequently bring disruption or difficulty when strongly placed or in aspect to personal planets. Observing how planets relate to one another through aspects is essential for understanding how patterns manifest in life.

C. THE HOUSES

The twelve houses divide the chart into areas of life. The house a planet falls into shows where its influence is expressed.

- First House / Ascendant – personality, early environment, physical body, mental body, soul
- Second House – money, finances, material possessions
- Third House – early education, siblings, communication
- Fourth House / IC – home, family roots, father or paternal influence
- Fifth House – pleasure, creativity, children
- Sixth House – stress, health, work
- Seventh House / Descendant – long-term relationships and partnerships
- Eighth House – anxiety, debt, death, partner's money
- Ninth House – higher education, philosophy, travel
- Tenth House / Midheaven – vocation, career, public life
- Eleventh House – friends, hopes, dreams, aspirations
- Twelfth House – hidden patterns, self-sabotage, hidden enemies

D. THE ANGLES

The four angles are powerful points in the chart.

- First House / Ascendant – the self and life approach
- Fourth House / IC – foundation, family, home
- Seventh House / Descendant – long-term relationships
- Tenth House / Midheaven – career, reputation, public direction

Planets on angles carry greater weight and visibility.

E. PLANETARY RELATIONSHIPS AND ASPECTS

Aspects describe how planets interact. Soft aspects such as trines and sextiles indicate ease and harmony. Hard aspects such as squares, oppositions, semi-squares, sesquiquadrates, and quincunxes create tension and are the aspects through which concrete events occur. Hard aspects are not negative; they are how life actually happens. Repeating aspects describe repeating patterns.

GETTING STARTED: A SIMPLE GUIDE

Identify your Ascendant sign.

Identify your Chart Ruler.

Observe aspects to the Ascendant and Chart Ruler.

Note planets in the first house.

These steps form the foundation of chart interpretation.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

This guide is an introduction to understanding your natal chart. Deeper study reveals how planetary placements, house emphasis, and aspects interact across different areas of life. I have created additional downloadable guides exploring love, money, career, and life lessons in more depth. Use this guide as a starting point, explore your own chart, and continue discovering the patterns that shape your life.

To explore your chart, you may use free birth chart generators such as Astro-Seek. I use the Regiomontanus house system.