

LEARNING MADE EASY



3rd Edition

Astrology

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Explore the personality
traits of each sign

See how astrology influences
your personal relationships

Use astrology to discover
your creative potential

Rae Orion



Astrology

3rd Edition

by Rae Orion

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

Astrology For Dummies®, 3rd Edition

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Introduction

Astrology can change your life. It did mine. Astrology illuminates the secret corners of the self, expands your insight into yourself and others, deepens your compassion, clarifies the past, and even offers a glimpse into the possible future. Beyond that, as with all great areas of accumulated knowledge, astrology has the power to alter perception. Once you know something about it, you never see the world in the same way again.

Blessed with a vocabulary that is simultaneously objective and poetic, astrology stimulates your intellect and fuels your curiosity. As you absorb its principles, everyone you know becomes a mystery waiting to be solved. Even public personalities and figures from the past — Frida Kahlo, say, or Vincent Van Gogh — glow more vividly when viewed through an astrological lens. Most of all, astrology offers an unrivaled method of learning about yourself, not just as a person born under one sign or another but as someone with a never-before-seen assortment of qualities and abilities, someone whose individual essence reflects the cosmos.

Many people think that astrology divides all human beings into 12 groups. How wrong they are! Astrology teaches that all human beings are subject to universal needs and desires — and that every individual is entirely and splendidly unique.

About This Book

Astrology is an ancient and evolving system that has many dimensions and appears in many forms. Western astrology is not the same as Chinese astrology or Vedic astrology. This book is about Western astrology, but even within that, there are many subdivisions. Practitioners of mundane astrology calculate horoscopes for public events and consider the fate of nations. Electional astrologers specialize in choosing dates and times for occasions such as weddings, real estate purchases, or opening night at the theatre. Financial astrologers follow the market. Horary astrologers answer questions that address everything from concerns about relationships or health to the location of lost objects. In this book, I focus on *natal astrology*, the interpretation of a birth chart to gain insight into the personality, proclivities, talents, and tribulations of an individual.

I begin by introducing you to the major components of a birth chart and showing you how to get an accurate copy of your chart via the internet. After that, I tell you how to analyze your chart's most essential features, how to compare your chart with someone else's, and how to use astrology to improve your life. It may sound extravagant to claim that astrology helps you align yourself with the universe, but it's the simple truth.

I consider astrology a tool — an objective tool — for understanding yourself and others, confronting adversity, embracing opportunity, analyzing relationships, and making basic decisions. In *Astrology For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, I show you how to use that tool for your advantage.

As you leaf through these pages, there are a few conventions to be aware of:

- » You will notice various symbols strewn across each birth chart like a handful of precious stones. Those magical-looking symbols represent the signs, planets, and other components of an astrological chart. I consider them a fundamental part of astrology's charm, and I recommend that you learn them by heart. But you don't have to because I have provided a handy Cheat Sheet that identifies every symbol and gives you a thumbnail description of each. See the "Beyond the Book" section in this Introduction to find out more about the Cheat Sheet, including how to access it.

Using the Cheat Sheet, you can translate those symbols into a language you actually speak. So if you're mulling over a birth chart and you see something that looks like this:

♿28♊05℞

you'll be able to figure out in a flash that Mercury (♿) is in Aquarius (♊) at 28 degrees 05 minutes. And, yes, it's retrograde (℞). (For more on that loaded topic, see Chapter 18.)

- » In the text, whenever I refer to a planetary position, such as the one in the preceding example, I describe it as 28°05' Aquarius, spelling out the sign and using the international symbols for degree (°) and minute ('). In the actual charts — those round, mandala-like images scattered throughout this book — I omit those tiny indicators. Instead, the charts in this book announce their planetary positions with type: the degree number appears in a font that has been boldfaced, while the minutes are shown in a lighter, standard font. The symbol for the relevant sign of the zodiac is plunked down right in the middle, between the degree and the minutes, as follows: **28**♊05.
- » Another feature of *Astrology For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, is that you can dive in anywhere. As an author, I like to think that you'll begin in the beginning and read doggedly to the end. But I'm a realist. I know that when most people pick up astrology books, they head straight for their own Sun signs (or star signs,

as many people like to call them). I have written this book with that in mind. You can start anywhere, secure in the knowledge that if there's a fact from an earlier chapter that you absolutely must know, I will tell you. This book is filled with cross-references and reminders for just that purpose. You can jump in anywhere.

Foolish Assumptions

Despite the title of this book, I assume that you're no fool. Whether you're an absolute beginner or a long-time devotee of the cosmic art, I assume that you have enough common sense to know that astrology offers understanding — not winning lottery numbers. It can help you become your most fulfilled self. It can even make predictions, and in the hands of highly skilled practitioners, those predictions can be spot-on. But despite its association with alchemy, divination, and the occult, astrology isn't magic.

I assume that you're intrigued by the perspective astrology offers and curious about how it might apply to you, and I take it for granted that you are especially interested in your own horoscope. Most of us are, and for good reason: investigating your own chart is edifying and revealing, making it perhaps the single most instructive step you can take while learning astrology. But scrutinizing your own chart is more than an exercise for novices. Even seasoned astrologers brood over their own charts. And when they hear of a newly discovered celestial body or an ancient technique that has been resuscitated after centuries of disuse, I guarantee that they try it out first with their own charts. Exploring your personal chart is the work of a lifetime.

I assume that you have easy access to the internet. Whether you get there by way of a laptop, a smart phone, a computer in a public library, or a device that has yet to be invented, internet access will enable you to create birth charts on the spot and to track the daily positions of the Sun, the Moon, and the planets.

Finally, I assume you know that astrology isn't about fate or predestination. It's about possibility and propensity, about making the most of your strengths, recognizing your shortcomings, understanding other people, and aligning yourself with the cosmos. When I was learning astrology, I was taught that “the stars impel; they do no compel.” Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626), father of the scientific method, put it this way: “There is no fatal necessity in the stars; but that they rather incline than compel.” Four centuries have passed since then, and it's still true.

Icons Used in This Book

Four icons sprinkled throughout this book serve as road signs. Here's what the icons mean:



REAL LIFE
EXAMPLE

In an ideal world, every planetary placement, aspect, and transit discussed in the text would be accompanied by an example from the life of a flesh-and-blood human being. In the real world, book space is limited, so I'm able to use comparatively few such examples. This icon highlights those examples. In most cases, real-life examples feature movie stars, musicians, writers, artists, politicians, and other well-known figures, past or present. From time to time, I write about people I know personally. In those instances, the names have been changed. The astrology remains the same.



REMEMBER

Certain facts and principles are essential to reading a birth chart. I discuss most of them in the early chapters. But when you need to recall a fact in order to understand a particular facet of a birth chart, I try to remind you, gently, using this icon.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

It's impossible to talk about astrology without coming smack up against astronomy and mathematics. Whenever I give a nuts-and-bolts scientific explanation of an astrological (or astronomical) phenomenon, I warn you upfront with this icon. Want to skip the explanation? Go ahead. Most of the time, you can ignore it and still be on track.



TIP

A paragraph marked with this icon may suggest an easier way of doing something. It may point you to a book, an app, or a podcast that covers material similar to that being discussed in the text. It may suggest a way to address a problem that could arise with a certain planetary configuration in a chart. Or it may tell you how to, say, seduce a Capricorn. Never let it be said that astrology isn't useful.

Beyond the Book

This book introduces you to the basics of astrology — and more. The Cheat Sheet, available online at www.dummies.com, provides a handy summary of the symbols and meanings of the signs, planets, houses, and aspects, along with a few nonessential components of your chart that might interest you. Take a look.

To get it, go to www.dummies.com and search for “Astrology For Dummies Cheat Sheet.”

Where to Go from Here

There is grandeur in astrology. Using a symbolic language that brims with mythology and metaphor, it speaks to the psyche and resonates with the soul. Yet it can also be down-to-earth and specific. It covers a lot of ground and benefits from an astonishing array of techniques and approaches. That's why, if you take it up, you could be studying astrology for the rest of your life. It's that interesting. It's that fun.

So where should you begin? Chapter 1 covers the basics. Chapter 2 tells you how to get a copy of your birth chart. Once you are in possession of that essential document, you're ready to immerse yourself in the most fascinating study of human beings ever invented. I suggest that you begin by turning to Chapters 4 through 7 to read about your Sun sign and, secondarily, the signs of a few other people you know. After that, you might turn to Chapters 8, 9, and 10 to read about your Moon and your planets; to Chapter 11 to find out about your rising sign; and to Chapter 12 to read about the houses that your planets occupy. Or maybe you'd rather go directly to Chapter 15 to see how your sign is likely to hit it off with, say, Taurus. That's okay too.

Ultimately, you may end up wandering through the pages of this book in no particular order. That's not my recommendation. As far as I'm concerned, the chapters are numbered for a reason. But there's nothing wrong with hopping around. Whatever approach you take, I hope that you will rejoice in — and benefit from — the wisdom of the stars.

1

Mapping Your Place in the Cosmos

IN THIS PART . . .

Grasp the basics of astrology and see what's included in a horoscope.

Find out how to obtain your birth chart to use as a reference throughout the book.

Ramble through a brief history of astrology's ups, downs, and changing influence over the centuries.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Picturing the solar system
- » Rambling through the zodiac
- » Classifying the signs by polarity, modality, and element
- » Contemplating the Sun, the Moon, and the planets
- » Introducing the rulers of each sign
- » Determining planetary dignities
- » Discovering the Ascendant
- » Wandering through the houses

Chapter **1**

An Astrological Overview: The Horoscope in Brief

Legend has it that Sir Isaac Newton, one of the greatest scientific geniuses of all time, may have been interested in astrology. Newton had a complex, wide-ranging mind. In addition to inventing calculus, formulating the laws of motion, and discovering the universal law of gravity, he wrote Biblical commentary and speculated about possible dates for the end of the world (all, by the way, in our current century). He experimented with the alchemical quest to turn ordinary metals into gold and may have suffered from mercury poisoning as a result. And he was interested in astrology, claiming that a book he read on the subject while a student at Cambridge University had ignited his interest in science. When his friend Edmund Halley, after whom the comet is named, made a disparaging remark about astrology, Newton, a conservative Capricorn, shot right back, “Sir, I have studied the subject. You have not.” Or so the story goes.

Like every other astrologer, I like to think that story might be true. After all, astrology has faded in and out of fashion, but it has never lacked followers. Twenty-five hundred years ago, Babylonian astrologers were casting individual horoscopes. The Romans consulted astrologers regularly. Emperor Augustus visited an astrologer in 44 BCE, the year Julius Caesar was assassinated, and the orator Cicero, who spoke vehemently against astrology, numbered several well-known practitioners among his friends. In the eighth century, Charlemagne studied astrology under the auspices of an English monk. Catherine de Medici consulted Nostradamus, Queen Elizabeth I sought counsel from the astrologer John Dee, and other astrologers advised Richard the Lion-heart, Napoleon, George Washington, J. P. Morgan, and Ronald Reagan. Yet in all that time, no one has provided a satisfying explanation of why astrology works. Over the centuries, proponents of the ancient art have suggested that gravity must be the motor of astrology . . . or electromagnetism . . . or the metaphysical “law of correspondences.” Carl G. Jung summarized that view when he wrote, “We are born at a given moment, in a given place, and like vintage years of wine, we have the qualities of the year and of the season in which we are born.”

I don’t know why astrology works any more than Sir Isaac did. I do know that the pattern the planets made when you were born — your birth chart or horoscope — describes your abilities, your challenges, and your potential. It doesn’t predict your fate, though it does make some fates more easily achievable than others. The exact shape of your destiny, I believe, is up to you.

In this chapter, I give you an overview of the main components of an astrological chart: the planets, the signs, and the houses. You might think of it this way:

- » The planets represent drives, needs, and basic energies.
- » The signs represent the ways those forces express themselves.
- » And the houses represent areas of life such as career, partnership, sex, money, and health.

Looking at the Starry Sky

Picture, if you will, our solar system. In the middle is the Sun, our star. Spinning around it are the Earth and other planets along with countless asteroids, planets, comets, and a few lonely spacecraft. Their orbits surround the Sun roughly

the way the grooves on a vinyl record album encircle the label in the center. (Although, to be clear, the orbits are not perfectly circular, and the solar system, unlike the record, is not perfectly flat.)

The idea that the planets orbit the Sun, drilled into most of us in childhood, would have astonished ancient stargazers. They never doubted that the Sun, the Moon, and the planets revolved around the Earth. And although we know better, thinking so didn't make them stupid. The Moon does revolve around the Earth — they weren't wrong there — and the Sun certainly looks as if it does. It appears to rise in the east and set in the west, and it always travels along a narrow ribbon of sky that surrounds the Earth like a giant hoop. That pathway is called the *ecliptic*. It maps the annual journey of the Sun.



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Following are the most important facts about the ecliptic:

- » The ecliptic represents the apparent path of the Sun around the Earth — apparent because, in reality, the Sun doesn't spin around the Earth at all. It just looks that way. The Moon and the planets seem to travel a similar path, wandering a little to the north and a little to the south of the Sun but basically following the same route.
- » Like a circle, the ecliptic has 360 degrees. Those 360 degrees, divided into a dozen equal sections, comprise the signs of the zodiac. The first 30 degrees — one-twelfth of the whole — are given to Aries, the next 30 degrees belong to Taurus, and so on. Each sign receives the same amount of space.
- » The stars, which are scattered like dust along the ecliptic, form the constellations of the zodiac. They are the background, a sort of celestial wallpaper against which the Sun, the Moon, and the planets move.



REMEMBER

Here comes the confusing part: The signs of the zodiac and the constellations that share their names are not the same. The signs are geometric divisions of the ecliptic, each one covering 30 degrees, each one precisely the same size. In contrast, the constellations vary in size from sprawling Virgo, the second largest constellation in the sky, to Capricorn, a faint collection of stars less than one third the size of Virgo. Although the signs of the zodiac take their names from the constellations, the signs and the stars have nothing to do with one another. I explain this sorry state of affairs in the nearby sidebar titled “The signs, the constellations, and the precession of the equinoxes.”

THE SIGNS, THE CONSTELLATIONS, AND THE PRECESSION OF THE EQUINOXES

Thousands of years ago, when the Babylonians were establishing the principles of astrology, the constellations and the signs of the zodiac were roughly in alignment. On the *vernal equinox* (the first day of spring), the Sun was “in” the constellation Aries. That is, if you could observe the Sun and the stars simultaneously, you’d see the Sun amidst the stars of the Ram. In those happy days, known as the Age of Aries, the signs and the constellations more or less coincided.

Alas, this is no longer the case. On the vernal equinox today, the Sun appears amidst the (dim) stars of Pisces the Fish — a very different kettle indeed. The reason for this shift is that the Earth is not a perfect sphere. It’s fatter around the middle, and its mass is distributed unequally. So it wobbles on its axis, which traces a circle in space like the spindle of a spinning top. As the Earth revolves around the Sun, the axis gradually shifts its orientation. Over the years, the constellations seem to slip backwards, a phenomenon first identified by the Greek astronomer Hipparchus in the second century BCE. The amount of slippage over a lifetime is minuscule — about one degree every 72 years — but over generations it adds up. Every equinox takes place slightly earlier in the zodiac than the one before. This process is called the *precession of the equinoxes*. It explains why the vernal equinox, which used to occur in the constellation Aries, now technically takes place in Pisces. It also explains why the signs and the constellations are no longer aligned.

One of these days, the equinox will slip back even further, to the constellation of the Water Bearer, and the Age of Aquarius will officially begin. Astrologers differ as to when that will happen because it depends on how you measure the constellations. If only they were neater! If only they were the same size! Instead, they bump into each other and overlap, and their boundaries are a matter of opinion. Do you use the artificial, right-angled, patchwork-like borders assigned to each constellation by the International Astronomical Union in 1930? Or do you look to the ecliptic, which has been artificially divided into 12 equal sections, one per sign? A Belgian astronomer, using the IAU measurements, suggests that the Age of Aquarius will begin in 2597. Another Belgian, writing in February 1890, announced that the Age of Aquarius would begin the very next month. 1844 has been nominated, along with 1962, 2012, and 3573. I cast with my vote with the English astronomer Nicholas Campion, who believes that the Age of Aquarius will begin — or has begun — between 1447 and 3596. Sounds right to me.

In short, there is no agreement except on this one point: Eventually, the equinox point will cycle backwards through the zodiac, all the way to Aries. That process takes about 25,800 years and is known as the Great Year. Our current Great Year began around 2000 BCE. Around the year 23800, the next one will begin. The vernal equinox will return to Aries. The constellations and the divisions of the ecliptic will align, and astrologers will be able to skip this entire explanation. Meanwhile, the constellations and the signs of the zodiac are not the same.

Skeptics who attack astrology — and for some reason, these wary souls can be amazingly hostile — often point to the changing position of the constellations and the precession of the equinoxes as proof that astrology is bogus. The truth is that astrologers are well aware of this phenomenon. In western astrology, the constellations are signposts or symbols. What matters is the division of the ecliptic. The stars, glorious though they are, have nothing to do with your sign.

For that reason, I avoid the term “star sign.” It’s an enchanting phrase, and I wish I could use it in good conscience. I don’t because it misrepresents astrology as it is usually practiced. I prefer the accuracy and simplicity of “Sun sign,” and that is the phrase I use in this book.

Identifying the Signs of the Zodiac

There are twelve signs in the wheel of the zodiac, each one named after a constellation, each with its own style and substance. Together they weave a narrative of human life, a progression that goes something like this:

- » **Aries** initiates the cycle with a rush of activity. Like the Big Bang, it kicks everything into motion. It is the sign of action.
- » **Taurus** calms and consolidates that ferocious energy, bringing it down to earth in a tangible form and into the body. Taurus is the sign of the senses.
- » **Gemini** activates the mind, stimulates curiosity, and forges connections through communication. It is the sign of language.
- » **Cancer** turns inward, bringing feelings into consciousness, cultivating the idea of home and family, and seeking security. It is the sign of emotion.
- » **Leo** celebrates, dramatizes, and creates. It is the sign of self-expression.
- » **Virgo** organizes, evaluates, develops techniques, and attends to details. It is the sign of analysis.
- » **Libra** reaches beyond itself, striving for balance through interaction with others and through the power of ideas. It is the sign of relationship.
- » **Scorpio** investigates the mysteries of human nature, diving deep into the inner world and the hidden self. It is the sign of transformation.
- » **Sagittarius** pursues independence, adventure, education, and the wisdom of philosophy or religion. It is the sign of the seeker.
- » **Capricorn** elevates purpose, shoulders responsibility, and creates civilization. It is the sign of structure.

- » **Aquarius** seeks liberation, focuses on society, and simultaneously supports individuality. It is the sign of community.
- » **Pisces** embodies compassion and the spiritual side of life. It is the sign of dreams and the imagination. It also oversees chaos, out of which will arise the creative fire of Aries. And so the cycle will begin anew.

OPHIUCHUS AND THE 13TH SIGN

It happens every few years, as reliable as the force of gravity: Someone announces that there are 13 constellations in the zodiac, not 12. Uproar ensues.

This folly became a story in 1970, when a book called *Astrology 14* by Steven Schmidt argued that two large constellations — Cetus the Whale, and Ophiuchus the Serpent Bearer — lie along the band of the ecliptic and therefore the zodiac should be expanded to include them. The book received enormous publicity, including a write-up in *Time* magazine, and the idea caught on, although not entirely. Cetus, which barely grazes the ecliptic, never inspired much of a following. But Ophiuchus, a large constellation squeezed in between Scorpius and Sagittarius, did.

Since then, books advocating for the addition of Ophiuchus as the 13th sign have appeared with thudding regularity. In 1995, British astrologer Walter Berg published *The 13 Signs of the Zodiac*, which sold respectably in the United Kingdom but became a giant bestseller when it was translated into Japanese and published there. In 2011, the story flared up again when the Minnesota Planetarium Society announced that the constellations had moved. Ophiuchus was now part of zodiac, they said, and astrologers ought to sit up and pay attention. The BBC reported the findings. Fox news reported the findings. Even *Time*, which first publicized the story in 1970, weighed in. Their article began, “The cosmic news broke without warning.”

For the zillionth time, astrologers responded. They acknowledged that due to the precession of the equinoxes, the constellations have shifted (a fact I discuss on a previous page). It’s not news to astrologers.

Nor does it matter, because in western astrology, the signs are determined by the Sun’s position on the ecliptic, not by the stars. On the vernal equinox, when day and night are roughly equal, the Sun enters the portion of the ecliptic known as Aries and the astrological year begins. The other signs follow, 30 degrees at a time. The stars and constellations do not determine sign.

So might you be an Ophiuchan? In a word, no. Not in this world.



REMEMBER

The sign that the Sun occupied at the instant of your birth is the most basic astrological fact about you. It defines your ego, motivations, and approach to life. But the Sun isn't the only planet, and your Sun sign isn't your only sign. (For astrological purposes, both luminaries — the Sun and the Moon — are called planets. Do yourself a favor and don't use this terminology when talking to astronomers.) Mercury, Venus, the Moon, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto represent distinct types of energy, each of which expresses itself in the style of the sign it happens to occupy. When you look at your chart, you will see that not every sign has a planet within its borders. Nonetheless, every sign is in your chart somewhere. The entire zodiac resides within each of us.



REMEMBER

Astrologically speaking, your Sun sign is the most essential fact about you. To determine your sign, use Table 1-1. But remember that the dates vary slightly from year to year. That's because a circle has 360 degrees, with each sign allotted precisely 30 degrees. But a year has 365 days, not counting leap years. Thanks to that inconvenient difference, the signs don't divide into days as neatly as one might wish, and minor variations pop up regularly. Take the first day of Cancer the Crab. Usually it's June 21. But in 2012, 2016, and occasional other years, it was June 20. The bottom line? If you were born on the first or final day of any sign — that is, if you were born “on the cusp” — I advise caution. Before you don that Sagittarian sweatshirt or invest in that Scorpio tattoo, get an accurate copy of your natal chart and check your Sun sign.

TABLE 1-1 **The Sun Signs**

| Sign | Dates | Symbol |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------|
| Aries the Ram | March 20–April 18 | ♈ |
| Taurus the Bull | April 19–May 20 | ♉ |
| Gemini the Twins | May 21–June 20 | ♊ |
| Cancer the Crab | June 21–July 22 | ♋ |
| Leo the Lion | July 23–August 22 | ♌ |
| Virgo the Virgin | August 23–September 22 | ♍ |
| Libra the Scales | September 23–October 22 | ♎ |
| Scorpio the Scorpion | October 23–November 21 | ♏ |
| Sagittarius the Archer | November 22–December 21 | ♐ |

(continued)

TABLE 1-1 *(continued)*

| Sign | Dates | Symbol |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------|
| Capricorn the Goat | December 22–January 19 | ♑ |
| Aquarius the Water Bearer | January 20–February 18 | ♒ |
| Pisces the Fish | February 19–March 19 | ♓ |

Understanding the Sun Signs

Like any truly satisfying system, astrology classifies and interprets its basic components in a number of ways. The twelve signs can be split into two groups, each of which is associated with a positive or negative *polarity*. They can be organized into three groups, each of which has been assigned a quality or *modality* — cardinal, fixed, or mutable. Most famously, they can be divided into four groups, each of which is associated with an *element*: fire, earth, air, or water.

Polarity: Dividing the zodiac by two

Beginning with Aries, six *positive* or *masculine* signs alternate with six *negative* or *feminine* signs. The sexist language, I regret to say, is traditional. Many astrologers use the terms yin and yang instead. Call them what you will, both qualities are part of every individual's chart. The meanings are as follows:

- » **Positive or yang** signs — Aries, Gemini, Leo, Libra, Sagittarius, and Aquarius — are more extroverted, objective, assertive, feisty, energetic, and determined.
- » **Negative or yin** signs — Taurus, Cancer, Virgo, Scorpio, Capricorn, and Pisces — are more introverted, subjective, receptive, reflective, open, and nurturing.

Modality: Dividing the zodiac by three

The zodiac can also be divided into three groups, each with its own way of interacting with the world, its own mode of operation or *modality*. The three modalities — cardinal, fixed, and mutable — occur in a repeating sequence: first a cardinal sign, then a fixed sign, then a mutable sign.