

LEARN YOUR ASTROLOGICAL



A Glossary of Astrological Terms
by Donna Cunningham



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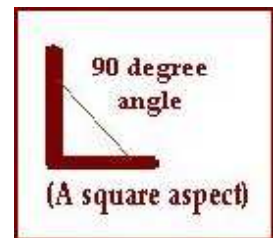
A GLOSSARY OF BASIC ASTROLOGICAL TERMS:
From An Astrological Guide to Self-Awareness
Moon Maven Publications, <http://www.moonmavenpublications.com>
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The brief definitions that follow are not meant to be comprehensive, but should quickly orient you to the basic meaning of the astrological terms you come across in your reading. We believe that no student should be left behind! If you're reading a text with advanced material, you may want to print these pages out and use them as a reminder when you come across a term that is not yet familiar to you. When one of the definitions contains underlined words, this indicates that there are also definitions for the underlined words. After the glossary are several tables to help in your studies.

For more in-depth explanations of concepts mentioned in this booklet, you might like Donna's ebook, *An Astrological Guide to Self-Awareness*. Meant for beginning to intermediate students of astrology, it includes chapter on each of the planets in the zodiac, the twelve houses, aspects, and transits. In its original, hard-copy form, it introduced several generations of students to the foundations of astrology and was translated into many foreign languages. The richly-illustrated 2014 edition has been updated for for easier access by the novice. It is available at: <http://www.moonmavenpublications.com>.

Ascendant: The zodiac sign on the cusp of the 1st house is called the Ascendant or Rising sign. This sign, determined by the precise time and place of birth, is one of the three most important factors in the chart, along with the Sun and Moon. It represents our outer personality, the characteristics people first remark on when meeting us. It also shows the mask we wear in social situations, which may or may not show our true nature. Our physical appearance often reflects the Ascendant rather than the Sun.

Aspects: The zodiac is a circle of 360°, and the angles formed between two planets in an astrological chart—like 30°, 60°, or 90°--are called aspects. The effect of an aspect is to blend the energies of the two planets together in a way that modifies the way they both function. The type of connection between the planets is determined by the nature of the angle. For instance, a square (90° angle) is generally a stressful aspect, while a trine (120° angle) is usually harmonious.



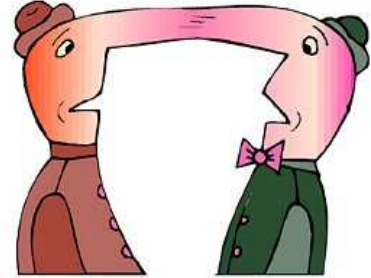
Astrological generations: People born during the time the outer planets Uranus, Neptune, or Pluto were in a particular sign are classed as an astrological generation. For instance, most of those born between 1956-72 have Pluto in the sign Virgo. They are called the Pluto in Virgo generation.

Astrological sub-generations: Within a particular astrological generation, there are often groups born with two or more of the outer planets in aspect to one another. For instance, many who belong to the Pluto in Virgo generation also have Uranus in Virgo close by, conjunct Pluto. I call that a sub-generation.

[Benefic planets, benefics](#): Venus and Jupiter are traditionally labeled benefics by astrologers, meaning that they are benign forces that bring good fortune our way, yet both have their ill effects when misused. (Also see [malefics](#).)

[Cardinal signs](#): The signs Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn. They are [square](#) or [opposite](#) one another and thus form challenging aspects.

[Conjunction, conjunct](#): A conjunction is formed when two planets stand within range of one another in the zodiac, anywhere from 0-10° apart. When planets are conjunct, their energies and functions are blended, as though they were one. This is a powerful [aspect](#), and when the Sun is conjunct another planet, that planet is very important. The person takes on some qualities of the sign the planet is associated with— with Mercury, for example, that sign would be Gemini.



[Cusp](#): The cusp of a house is the border between it and the adjoining house, e.g. between the end of the 2nd house and the beginning of the 3rd. The zodiac sign on the cusp of a house describes, in part, how you function in that area of life. For example, if you have Libra on the cusp of a house, you will show some Libra qualities in matters related to that house. The term cusp also refers to the dividing line between two zodiac signs, and so to hear that someone is born on the cusp of Aries and Taurus means that the Sun on their birthday was either in the last degrees of Aries or the first degrees of Taurus.

[Degrees](#): The zodiac is a circle divided into 360°, and many of the more technical facets of the astrological chart are based on these divisions. Each of the twelve signs contains 30°, and each degree is further divided into minutes (′) and seconds (″). Thus you may note that there is a planet in your chart at, say, 25° Aries 55′.

[Detriment](#): This is the sign in which a planet's inherent characteristics have the most difficulty being expressed freely. A planet is in detriment in the sign opposite the one it rules—e.g. Mars rules Aries, and so Mars is in detriment in Aries' opposite sign, Libra.

[Elements](#): Based on a medieval system, the zodiac signs are divided into four elements—fire, earth, air, and water. Fire and air work well together (air keeps a fire burning, and fire warms up cold air), but they do not complement water or earth. Water and earth complement each other—no crops would grow without both—but they do not blend so well with fire and air. The fire signs are Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius. The earth signs are Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn. The air signs are Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius. The water signs are Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces.

[Ephemeris](#): A reference book, calendar, or computer program that gives the daily positions of the planets in the solar system. An ephemeris is used to calculate birth charts as well as [transits](#).

[Exaltation](#): In a traditional method of evaluating the strength of planets in various zodiac

signs, *exaltation* is the sign where a planet is supposedly at its best, including Venus in the sign Pisces, Mars in the sign Capricorn, and the Moon in Taurus.

Fall: In a traditional system of rating the strengths of the planets, a planet is in its *fall* in the sign where it is supposedly at its weakest or worst—the sign opposite the one where it is [exalted](#). Since Venus is exalted in Pisces, it is in its fall in Virgo.

Fixed signs: The signs Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius are known as the fixed signs because they work hard to consolidate and preserve the things that matter to them. They can be inflexible and resist change, but without some fixity, we would be forever shifting.

Grand Cross: A rectangular formation consisting of at least four planets in [hard aspect](#) to one another—it involves both squares and oppositions between planets in the same sign type: [cardinal](#), [fixed](#), or [mutable](#). It is considered extremely difficult, especially when the [outer planets](#) are part of the picture.

Grand Trine: A Grand Trine is an equilateral triangle in the astrological chart made up of three planets about 120° from each other. It requires planets from all three of the signs in a particular element. For instance, a Grand Trine in air would include at least one planet in Gemini, one in Libra, and one in Aquarius. The Grand Trine is supposed to be an extremely fortunate combination.

Glyph: A shorthand symbol that astrologers use to represent a planet, sign, or aspect. An example is the glyph for Mars, shown here.



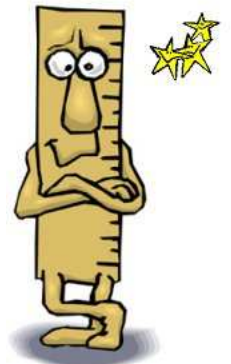
Hard aspect: When two planets are combined by angular relationships that are considered difficult, they are said to be in hard [aspect](#) to one another, meaning their energies are not in harmony. Usually these difficulties are created by tension between the two zodiac signs and [houses](#) involved in the aspect. Hard aspects include the [square](#), [quincunx](#), and [opposition](#). The [conjunction](#) may or may not be a hard aspect, depending on the planets involved.

House, Houses: The astrological chart is a circle divided into twelve pie-shaped wedges called houses. Each house represents a number of related areas of life (e.g. the 7th house represents marriage, business partnerships, and other committed relationships.)

House cusp: The cusp of a house is the border between it and the adjoining house, e.g. between the end of the 2nd house and the beginning of the 3rd. The zodiac sign on the cusp of a house describes, in part, how you function in that area of life.

House Position: The house of the chart where a given planet is placed; e.g. if Jupiter's [glyph](#) is found in the 2nd house, then that is its house position.

House Ruler: The ruler of a house is the planet that rules the sign on the cusp (beginning edge) of that house. If Neptune ruled the 10th house, this would mean that the sign Pisces, which Neptune rules, would be on the 10th house cusp, also



known as the Midheaven. With Leo on the 7th house cusp, the Sun is the ruler, so for more information about this particular 7th house, you would look at the sign and position of the Sun. The ruler of the 1st house (a.k.a. the [Ascendant](#)) is considered particularly important—in traditional astrology, it was called the Chart Ruler.

[Impersonal Planets](#): The outermost planets in the solar system are Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. They move so slowly through the signs that they are a signature of the various [astrological generations](#). They are also referred to as [outer planets](#).

[Inconjunct](#): (150° or five signs apart) This aspect—also known as the quincunx—usually involves two signs that are absolutely at odds with each other and therefore are difficult to reconcile. There is no natural connection between the two signs by [element](#) or by the cardinal/fixed/mutable division of signs.

[Inner planets](#): The innermost planets in our solar system—the Sun, Mercury, Venus, the Moon, Mars, and Jupiter. They move more rapidly than the [outer planets](#) Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, and so their positions in the chart define what makes us individuals. Saturn is at a pivotal position, between the inner and outer planets, and takes almost 29 years to move through all twelve signs.

[Major configuration](#): A triangular formation involving three or more planets in aspect to one another. Depending on the nature of these aspects

[Mercurial people](#) include not only those with Gemini Sun, Moon, or Ascendant, but also those with many aspects to Mercury in their charts or with several planets in the 3rd house of the chart, the house of communication.

[Midheaven](#): The cusp of the 10th house, the career point at the top of the chart, among the most powerful points in the horoscope. It is determined by the precise time and place of birth and changes by a degree every four minutes, and is so sensitive that transits to that point can correlate with profound changes in our career and status in the world. Both the sign on the Midheaven and any planets that aspect that point are powerful career indicators.

[Multiple conjunction](#): When three or more planets are close together, whether they fall into the same sign or house or not, their energies are blended into a powerful whole. While the [orb](#) for a conjunction between two planets is usually 8-10°, a multiple conjunction can be strung together over a wide range, so long as each planet is conjunct the adjoining one.

[Mutable signs](#): Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius and Pisces are called mutable, in that they are flexible and have diverse interests, so their focus changes often. They adapt more easily to new situations and demands, and yet they can lack perseverance.

[Mutual reception](#): This occurs when two planets are in the signs [ruled](#) by each other. For example, from 2003-2010, Neptune—the ruler of Pisces—is in Aquarius, which is ruled by Uranus, at the same time that Uranus is in Pisces.

[Neptunians](#): This group includes those with Pisces or the 12th house strongly emphasized in their birth charts because the Sun, Moon, or several planets falls in either Pisces or the 12th house. Also included are people with Neptune aspecting the Sun, Moon, Ascendant, Midheaven or several planets.

[Opposition](#): (180° or six signs apart, plus or minus 8°.) This can be an aspect of conflict, since two very opposite sets of needs and desires are involved, like Libra's desire for relatedness and Aries need for self-development. However, signs opposite each other are compatible in two ways: they are in complementary elements and operate in the same modality (a cardinal sign is opposite another cardinal sign, and so on). When expressed properly, opposite signs complement and fulfill each other.



[Outer planets](#): The outermost planets in the solar system are Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. They move so slowly through the signs that they are a signature of the various [astrological generations](#). They are also referred to as [impersonal planets](#).

[Out-of-sign aspects](#): When a planet is at the very beginning or the very end of a sign, it may form an aspect that is easy to overlook to a planet at the beginning or end of another sign. For instance, Mercury at 2° of the water sign, Pisces forms out-of sign [trine](#) to Neptune at 27° of the air sign, Libra. Despite the change of signs, Mercury is only 5° past the exact trine to Neptune—that is, within the standard 5° [orb](#) for a trine. Since the trine would usually be between two signs of the same [element](#) there is a mixed influence, more difficult to integrate and understand.

[Personal signs](#): According to a system Richard Idemon taught, the first four signs—Aries through Cancer— are called the personal signs, meaning that the people who have these signs strong in their charts tend to be absorbed in matters related to the self. Also see [social](#) and [universal signs](#).

[Plutonians](#): These include people with several planets in Scorpio, a number of planets in the related 8th house of the birth chart, many aspects to natal Pluto, or Pluto near the [Ascendant](#), [Midheaven](#), or aspecting the Sun or Moon.

[Progressions](#): Refers to how the planetary positions unfolded in the days and weeks after birth. In one simple form of progression, called Day for a Year, the positions of the planets on the tenth day after birth correspond to the conditions in your life at age ten. We will not be dealing with progressions because I don't often use them.

[Quincunx](#): (150° or five signs apart) This aspect—also known as the inconjunct—usually involves two signs that are absolutely at odds with each other and therefore are difficult to reconcile. There is no natural connection between the two signs by [element](#) or by the cardinal/fixed/mutable division of signs.

Retrograde: occurs at various times of the year in the orbits all of the planets in the solar system--excluding the sun and moon. In these periods, which can last several months for the slower-moving outer planets, the planet appears to be moving backward from the point of view of the earth. This illusion occurs because while they are on the opposite side of the sun from the earth, they appear to be moving in the opposite direction from us.

Rising Sign: The zodiac sign on the cusp of the first house is called the Ascendant or Rising sign. This sign, determined by the precise time and place of birth, is one of the three most important factors in the chart, along with the Sun and Moon. It represents our outer personality, the characteristics people first remark on when meeting us. It also shows the mask we wear in social situations, which may or may not show our true nature. Our physical appearance often reflects the Ascendant rather than the Sun.

Rule, ruler, rulership: Each of the twelve signs has a ruler—that is a planet that is most like the energies, urges, and needs of that sign. For Aries, that planet is Mars, for Gemini, it is Mercury, for Sagittarius, it is Jupiter, and so on. See the table that follows the glossary for a complete list. In order to fully understand the expression in your chart of a sign or house, look at the condition of its ruler. (See [house ruler](#).)



Saturn return: These significant eras in our lives occur each time Saturn completes an orbit around the Sun from where it was when we were born. Since Saturn takes around 29 years to complete that orbit, these eras occur when we are between 28-30 years old (the first Saturn Return) and 56-8 years old (the second Saturn Return). These Returns are considered significant milestones in maturity.

Saturnian: These are people with important planets like the Sun, Moon, Ascendant or several planets in Capricorn or in the associated 10th house. They also include those with Saturn on the Ascendant or Midheaven, aspecting their Sun or Moon, or with numerous planets forming aspects to Saturn.

Sextile: (60° or two signs apart.) Complementary elements are usually involved in the sextile—water with earth and fire with air. Planets in sextile, then, can complement or enhance each other in some ways, each one filling in something the other lacks.

Social signs: According to a system Richard Idemon taught, the second four signs—Leo, Virgo, Libra, and Scorpio—are considered primarily social in their functioning, meaning that people who have it strong in their chart are absorbed by relationship issues. See also [personal](#) and [universal](#) signs.

Square: A square is formed when two planets are 90° apart in the zodiac—three signs apart, plus or minus 5-6°. For instance, a planet in Cancer could be square to planets in Aries or Libra, the two signs that are 90° apart. Squares represent two urges or needs in a head-on

conflict. Squares are the energizing forces within a person—the needs that drive them on. The needs and desires of the two planets clash, and the individual must work to reconcile them.

Stellium: A stellium is a combination of four or more planets placed within a narrow range of the zodiac, within the same sign and/or house. This makes the planets involved act in concert with one another, becoming a very powerful influence. The influence is strongest if they are also conjunct.

Transits, transiting: This refers to the current positions of the planets in the solar system and what aspects they form with the planets in your natal chart. You would discover your transits by consulting a reference book called an [ephemeris](#) that gives these positions on a daily basis or by ordering a computerized printout of your personal transits.

Trine: (120° or four signs apart, plus or minus 5°.) Planets in a trine aspect are usually in the same element—e.g., from water sign to water sign or from air sign to air sign. Since they have many similar traits, needs, tastes, preferences, and abilities, the two planets enhance each other and do not create resistance or friction. They work together cooperatively for the same or similar ends.

T-square: A triangular formation consisting of at least three planets. Two of the planets are [opposite](#) one another, while a third forms [squares](#) to both ends of the opposition. An example would be Pluto in Cancer, Saturn in Capricorn, and Uranus in Aries, a signature of the mid-1930s depression era. Tensions between the needs and desires of the planets, signs, and houses involved are difficult to resolve, and so the person is often rather driven, but often highly productive. A t-square usually involves planets in the same sign type—[cardinal](#), [fixed](#), or [mutable](#).

Universal signs: According to a system taught by Richard Idemon, the final four signs of the zodiac—Sagittarius through Pisces—are absorbed by collective or universal issues. Also see [personal](#) and [social](#) signs.




Uranians: These are people with Uranus strongly featured in their birth charts. Uranus is strong when it is on the Ascendant, Midheaven, in aspect to the Sun or Moon or several planets, or if the sign Aquarius is prominent in the chart because the Sun, Moon, Ascendant or several planets fall into that sign or the 11th house of the chart.

Yod: A [major configuration](#) also called an Eye of God or Finger of Fate, this triangular configuration consists of two planets that are [sextile](#) (60°) one another plus a planet that forms [quincunxes](#) (150° aspects) to both of them. The planet forming the quincunxes is considered extremely difficult to integrate and yet becomes a major dynamic in the person's life.

CHEAT SHEET OF ASTROLOGICAL ASPECTS

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 **Conjunction:** A conjunction is formed when two planets stand close together in the zodiac, say within a range of 0-8 degrees. In most cases planets in conjunction are also in the same house and sign, and so they operate in a similar manner (same sign) and are focused on the same area of life (same house). They are blended together in a way that makes them lose their separateness.

Sextile: (60° or two signs apart.) Complementary elements are usually involved in the sextile—water with earth and fire with air. Planets in sextile, then, can complement or enhance each other in some ways, each one filling in something the other lacks.



Signs that are Sextile to one Another:

Aries: Gemini, Aquarius	Libra: Leo, Sagittarius
Taurus: Cancer, Pisces	Scorpio: Virgo, Capricorn
Gemini: Aries, Leo	Sagittarius: Libra, Aquarius
Cancer: Taurus, Virgo	Capricorn: Scorpio, Pisces
Leo: Gemini, Libra	Aquarius: Sagittarius, Aries
Virgo: Cancer, Scorpio	Pisces: Capricorn, Taurus

Square: (90° or three signs apart.) Squares represent two urges or needs in a head-on conflict. Squares are the energizing forces within a person—the needs that drive them on.



Signs that are Square to one Another:

Aries: Cancer, Capricorn	Libra: Cancer, Capricorn
Taurus: Leo, Aquarius	Scorpio: Leo, Aquarius
Gemini: Virgo, Pisces	Sagittarius: Virgo, Pisces
Cancer: Aries, Libra	Capricorn: Aries, Libra
Leo: Taurus, Scorpio	Aquarius: Taurus, Scorpio
Virgo: Gemini, Sagittarius	Pisces: Gemini, Sagittarius

Trine: (120° or four signs apart.) Planets in a trine are usually in the same element—e.g., from water sign to water sign or from air sign to air sign. Since they have many similar traits, needs, tastes, preferences, and abilities, the two planets enhance each other and do not create resistance or friction. They work together cooperatively for the same ends.



Signs that Are Trine to one Another:

Fire signs: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius
Earth signs: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
Air signs: Gemini, Libra, Aquarius
Water signs: Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces

The quincunx (150° or five signs apart) The aspect usually involves two signs that are absolutely at odds with each other and therefore are difficult to reconcile. There is no natural connection between the signs. Signs that are Quincunx one



Another:

Aries: Virgo, Scorpio	Libra: Pisces, Taurus
Taurus: Libra, Sagittarius	Scorpio: Aries, Gemini
Gemini: Scorpio, Capricorn	Sagittarius: Taurus, Cancer
Cancer: Sagittarius, Aquarius	Capricorn: Gemini, Leo
Leo: Capricorn, Pisces	Aquarius: Cancer, Virgo
Virgo: Aquarius, Aries	Pisces: Leo, Libra

Opposition: (180° or six signs apart.) Signs opposite each other are compatible in two ways: they are in complementary elements and operate in the same modality (cardinal is opposite cardinal and so on). When used properly, opposite signs complement and fulfill each other.



Signs that are Opposite one Another:

Aries and Libra, cardinal fire and cardinal air
Taurus and Scorpio, fixed earth and fixed water
Gemini and Sagittarius, mutable air and mutable fire
Cancer and Capricorn, cardinal water and cardinal earth
Leo and Aquarius, fixed fire and fixed air
Virgo and Pisces, mutable earth and mutable water.