

Astrology basics



Astrologer calculating planetary positions with an astrolabe. Illustration from Annulus Astronomicus by Bonetus de Latis, c. 1493.

Astrology basics

The foremost tool of astrology is the horoscope, a chart of planetary and other celestial positions at a certain time, as seen from a certain place. Where there is a time and a place, a horoscope chart can be made.

The most common one nowadays is the birth chart, or nativity, based on the time and place of a person's birth. But horoscopes can be made for other things as well – countries, companies, projects, as long as a time and place can be established.

There are four components of a horoscope:

- 1 The planets and astrological points
- 2 The 12 Zodiac signs
- 3 The 12 Houses
- 4 The aspects

Western astrology is clear on the Zodiac signs and Houses, but astrologers differ on how many planets and aspects (angles) to include in the horoscope. Still, there is consensus on which ones are the most important.

Now, the four components above each give the answer to a particular question, regarding events and characteristics in the life of the person whose horoscope chart is studied. These are the four answers that the components give:

- 1 Planets and astrological points show *what* to expect.
- 2 Zodiac signs show *how* to expect it.
- 3 Houses show *where* to expect it.
- 4 Aspects show *why* to expect it.

More about this is explained in the chapters about these components. Observe that the only active forces in the horoscope are the planets and astrological points. The other components just describe, locate and explain these forces.

Geocentric

In the horoscope chart, the above components are marked at their respective positions, as seen at the time and place of the horoscope in question. The perspective is *geocentric*, i.e. as seen from Earth – although in reality the planetary movements are *heliocentric*, orbiting around the sun. What matters in astrology is how the sky looks from our viewpoint.

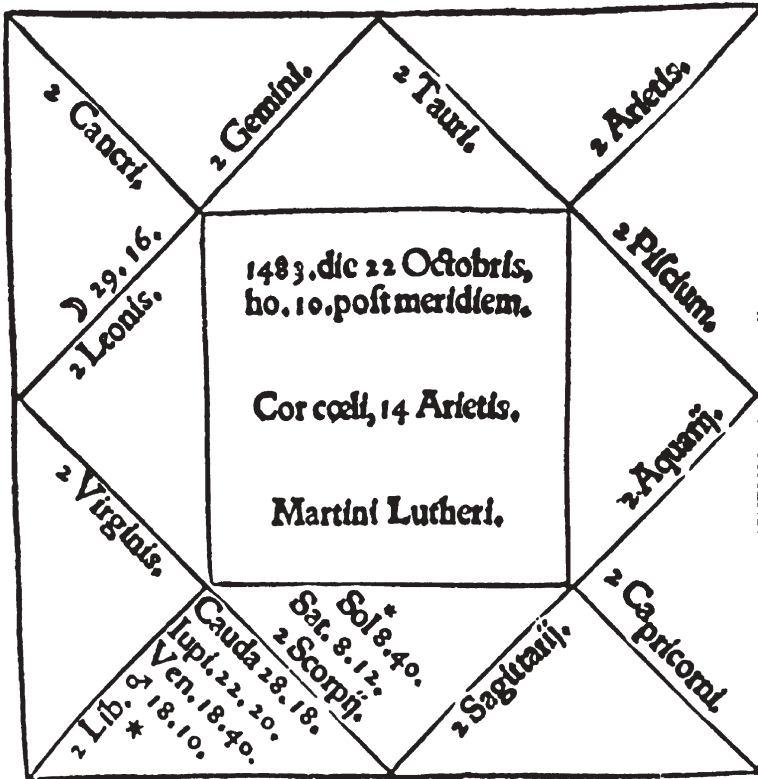
Charts

There are many ways to design a chart. In old Greece as well as the rest of Europe up until recent times, the most common way of drawing the horoscope chart was the so-called envelope design, where each triangle of the figure represented an astrological House. See the horoscope of Martin Luther on the next page.

Nowadays, the circular horoscope chart is used by all astrologers. In it, the outer circle marks the Zodiac, where each of the twelve Zodiac signs is 30° of the total 360° circle. They are placed in a counter-clock order. Inside of that circle, the positions of the planets are marked. Also, there is the twelve part division of the astrological Houses. The aspects between planets are marked with straight lines between them.

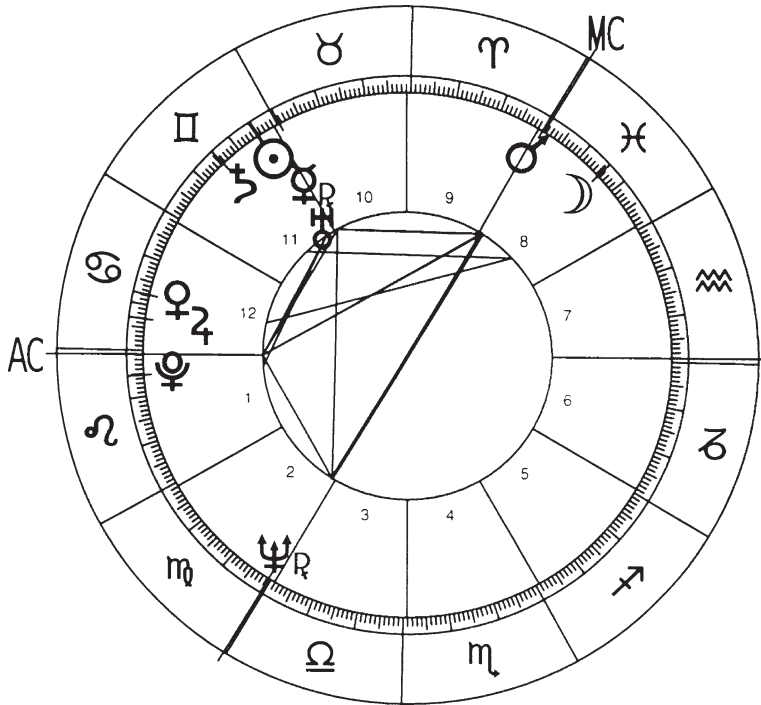
See the modern style circular horoscope chart on the next page.

The Ascendant (AC), the *Rising point* in the east, should be at the left side of the horoscope, and Medium Coeli (MC) somewhere on the top half of the horoscope. That means the horoscope's east is to the left, its west to the right, its south



The horoscope chart of Martin Luther (1483-1546), made with the enevlope design that was the standard in the Renaissance. Each triangle represents a House, with the cusp of the 1st House (the Ascendant) to the right, marked as 2° Virgo (Virginis). The planets are placed in the Houses they occupy, with notes on their degree in the Zodiac sign. The Equal House system is used.

is up and its north is down. The horizon is represented by a line from the Ascendant to the Descendant at the opposite side of the horoscope. So, what can actually be seen of the sky at the time and place of the horoscope is only what is above that line.



A circular horoscope chart, which is used by all modern astrologers, although with some differences in design. The place of birth is in the middle of the circle, and the horizon is the line of the Ascendant to the cusp of the 7th House. The lines in the innermost circle mark the aspects.

Reading

In astrology, the components above are interpreted in a combined way. A planet, its Zodiac sign, its House and aspects – they are all brought together in the search for the specific meaning in the horoscope. That is not an easy task, and astrologers may come to different conclusions – although they agree on most of the basics.