

Twelve Seasons: Signs of the Zodiac

Kristine Backes

December 2021

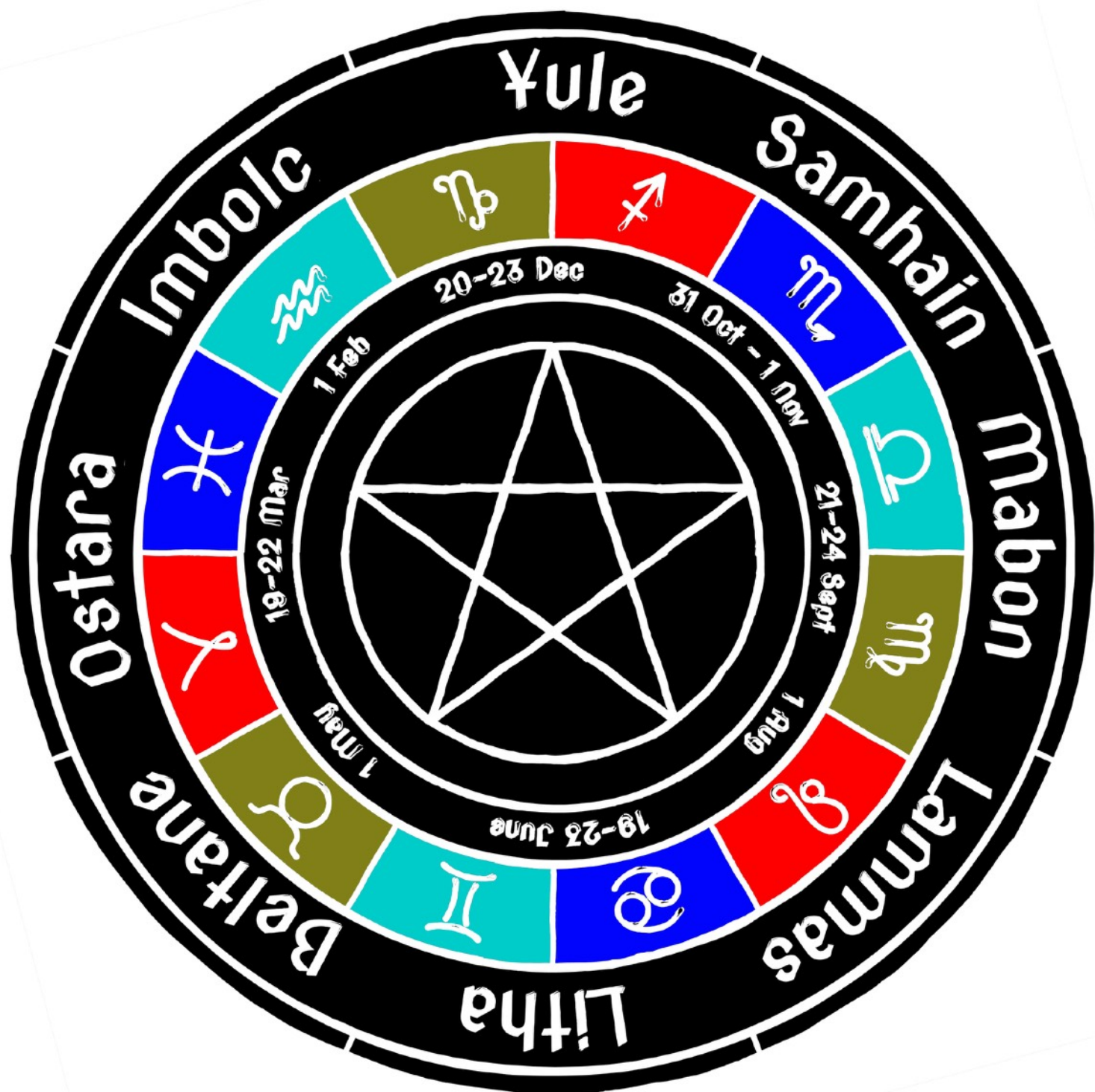


Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Quick Reference Table of the Zodiac Signs	4
The Wheel of the Zodiac	5
The Celtic Wheel of the Year with the Zodiac	6
Aries	8
Taurus	9
Gemini	10
Cancer	11
Leo	12
Virgo	13
Libra	14
Scorpio	15
Sagittarius	16
Capricorn	17
Aquarius	18
Pisces	19
Planetary Dignities	20
Table of the Houses	21
Signs of the Zodiac Worksheet	22
References and Resources	23

Introduction

The term Zodiac comes from a Greek word referring to the 'circle of animals' of the constellations. In tropical astrology, also known as 'Western' astrology, the signs derive their *meanings* from the constellations, but their *placement* is tied to the seasons of the year. The Spring Equinox in the northern hemisphere marks the 0 degree of Aries, the Summer Solstice determines the 0 degree of Cancer, etc..

The **signs** represent universal energy patterns through which the **planets** in the chart are expressed in the areas of life determined by the **houses**. The planets are the 'who', the actors in the play; the houses are the 'where', or the scene; and the signs are the 'how', or the costume and role.

The twelve signs are categorized into several, overlapping groups.

- ◆ Signs alternate by *polarity*, either outward/active/'masculine' or inward/receptive/'feminine'.
- ◆ The *triplicities* categorize the signs as four groups of three according to **elements**: fire, earth, air and water.

Fire signs are active, warming, radiating, penetrating (masculine)

Earth signs are stable, grounding, building (feminine)

Air signs are sensing, perceiving, expressing, relating (masculine)

Water signs are flowing, connecting, feeling, nurturing (feminine)

- ◆ The *quadruplicities* are three groups of four **modalities**: cardinal, fixed and mutable.

Cardinal signs are active, dynamic and initiate a new season

Fixed signs are stable, solidifying, and mark the heart of the season

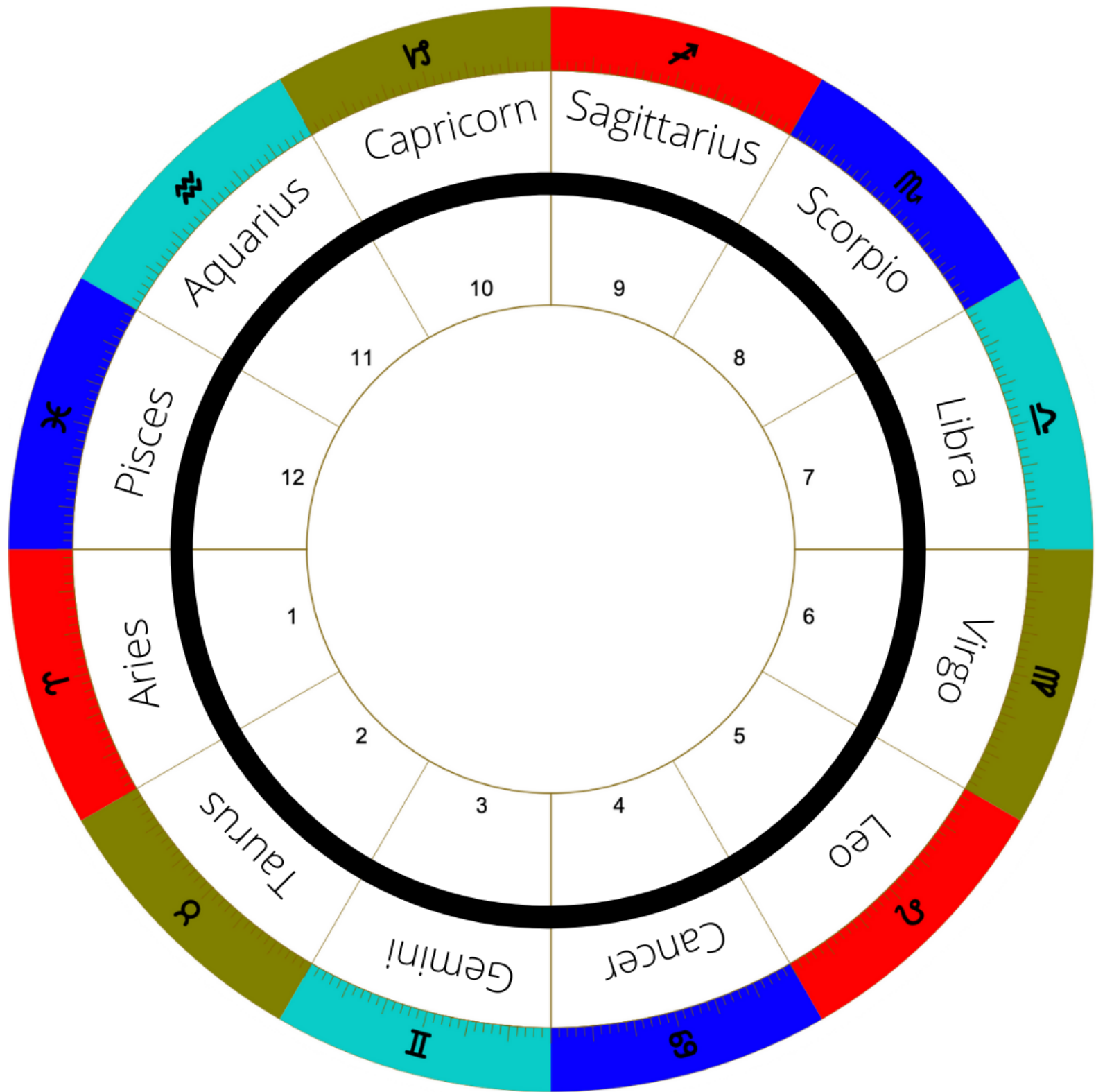
Mutable signs are changeable and adaptable, and mark the transition to the next season

Elements/Modes	Cardinal	Fixed	Mutable
Fire	Aries	Leo	Sagittarius
Earth	Capricorn	Taurus	Virgo
Air	Libra	Aquarius	Gemini
Water	Cancer	Scorpio	Pisces

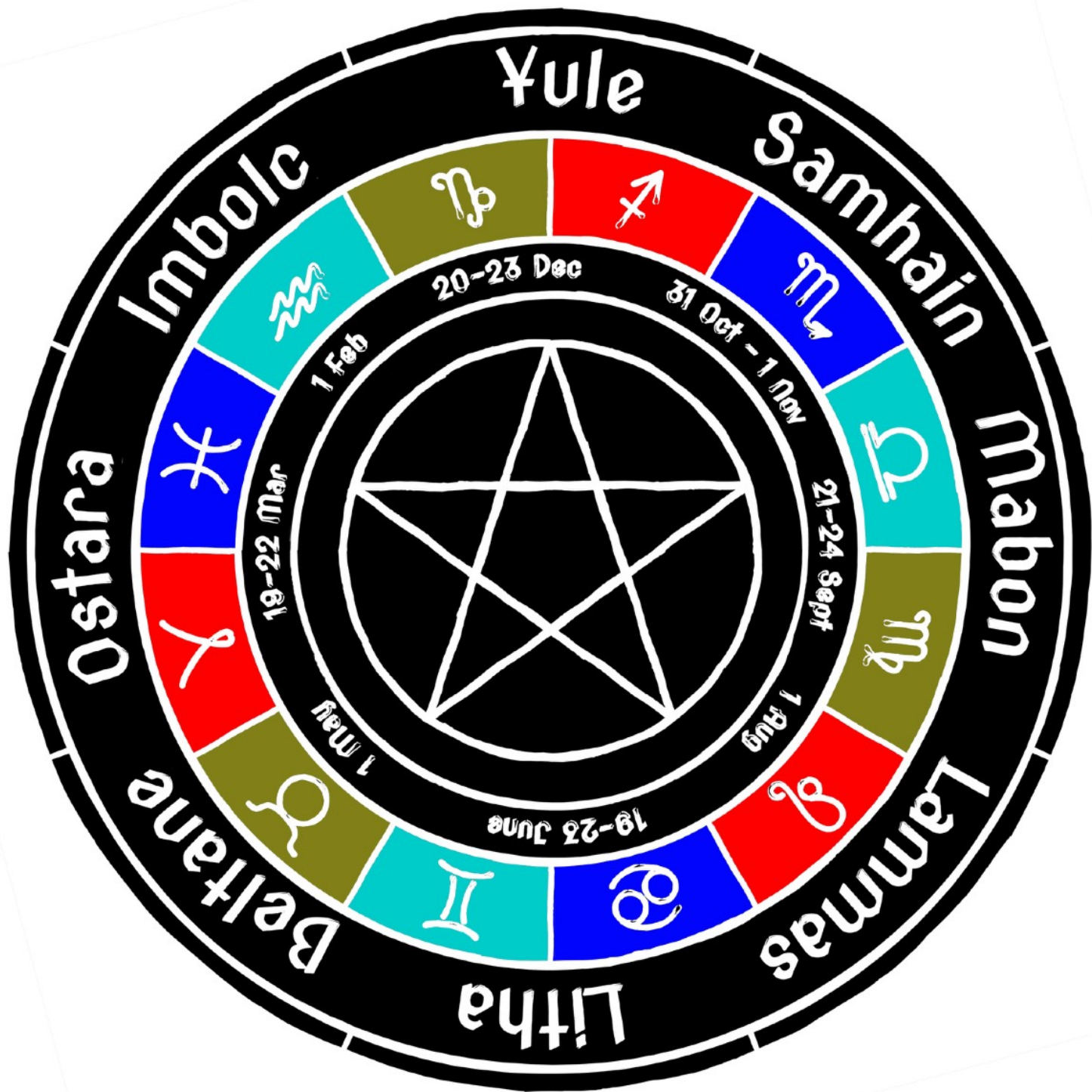
Quick Reference Table of the Zodiac Signs

Season	Zodiac Sign	Ruler	Key themes
Spring	Aries <i>Cardinal Fire</i>	♈ Mars	The Ram: Spring Equinox; outward energy; creation of self/identity; 'I am' The head
	Taurus <i>Fixed Earth</i>	♉ Venus	The Bull: Mabon; material security; sensuality; fertility; agriculture; building The jaw and throat
	Gemini <i>Mutable Air</i>	♊ Mercury	The Twins: dialogue and relating; perception; curiosity The hands, shoulders, upper chest
Summer	Cancer <i>Cardinal Water</i>	♋ The Moon	The Mother: Summer Solstice; Home; emotional security; ancestors; sensitivity; nourishment The breasts, stomach and womb
	Leo <i>Fixed Fire</i>	♌ The Sun	The Lion: Lammas ('Loafmass'); Leadership; creativity; joy; radiance; passion; courage The heart and spine
	Virgo <i>Mutable Earth</i>	♍ Mercury	The Harvest Goddess: discernment; ritual; embodiment; preparation The intestines
Fall	Libra <i>Cardinal Air</i>	♎ Venus	The Scales: Autumn Equinox; relationship; balance; justice; beauty; harmony The kidneys and low back
	Scorpio <i>Fixed Water</i>	♏ Mars	The Scorpion: Samhain; taboos and the occult; power; death and rebirth The genitals and eliminative system
	Sagittarius <i>Mutable Fire</i>	♐ Jupiter	The Archer: higher knowledge; adventure; exploration; beliefs; meaning-making The hips and thighs
Winter	Capricorn <i>Cardinal Earth</i>	♑ Saturn	The Sea-Goat: Winter Solstice; earth wisdom; eldership; tradition; commitment; mastery The bones, teeth and skin
	Aquarius <i>Fixed Air</i>	♒ Saturn	The Water-Bearer: Candlemas/Imbolc; genius; belonging; freedom; humanitarianism The ankles and circulatory system
	Pisces <i>Mutable Water</i>	♓ Jupiter	The Fishes: God/Consciousness/The One; the ocean of consciousness; unconditional love The feet and lymphatic system

The Wheel of the Zodiac



The Celtic Wheel of the Year with the Zodiac



The Signs and Correspondences

Aries

The Ram

Season: Spring Equinox/Ostara/Easter

March 21-April 19*

Element: Fire

Modality: Cardinal

Polarity: Masculine/yang

Ruled by: Mars

Parts of the body: Head and eyes

Keywords: Pioneering, initiating, assertive, courageous, willful

The Sun is exalted at 19 degrees Aries

Aries begins with the Spring Equinox. This sign represents the first flush of creation, as when the seedling pushes up out of the soil. Aries initiates and asserts, is active and bold.

The shadow (unconscious) expressions of Aries include aggression, "my way or the highway", and impatience.



*Dates can vary by a day due to calendar changes such as leap years

Taurus

The Bull

Season: Mid-Spring/Beltane

April 20-May 20

Element: Earth

Modality: Fixed

Polarity: Feminine/yin

Ruled by: Venus

Parts of the body: The throat and lower jaw; ears

Keywords: Solid, dependable, security, abundance, material, sensual

The Moon is exalted at 3 degrees of Taurus

The sign of Taurus comes at mid-spring, as new life begins to solidify and stabilize. Taurus represents material resources, experiences of the five senses, material security, fertility and the abundance of the Earth. This is a slow, stable, solid energy, with stamina.

Unconscious Taurus can become stuck or unyielding.



Gemini

The Twins

Season: End of spring

May 21-June 20

Element: Air

Modality: Mutable

Polarity: Masculine/yang

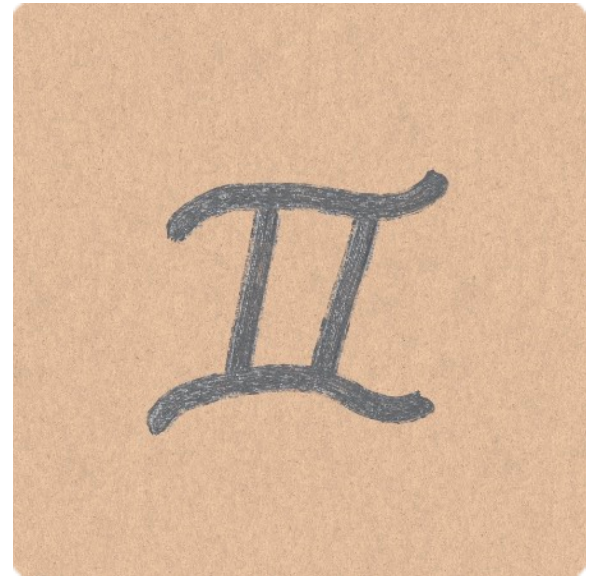
Ruled by: Mercury

Parts of the Body: Shoulders, upper chest, arms and hands; the nervous system

Keywords: Quick, intellect, perception, language, dialogue, curiosity

The sign of Gemini comes at the end of spring, at the transition (as a mutable sign) to summer. Gemini represents duality and polarity, and the integration of opposites. As an air sign, Gemini is relational and intellectual. Curiosity, interest, fact-gathering, dialogue are all qualities of this sign. Its energy is quick, adaptable and creative.

Shadow Gemini gets caught in always wanting to know more, to a lack of ability to focus, or rationalizing.



Cancer

The Crab

Season: Summer Solstice/Midsummer/Litha

June 21-July 22

Element: Water

Modality: Cardinal

Polarity: Feminine/yin

Ruled by: The Moon

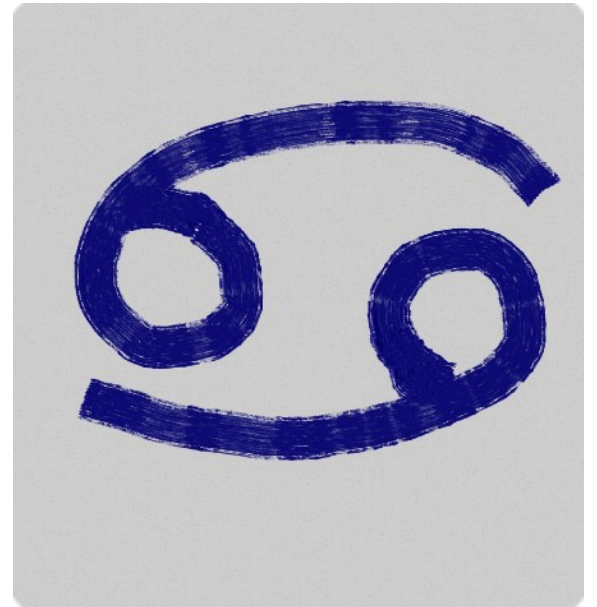
Parts of the body: Stomach, breasts, womb

Keywords: Home, mother, ancestors, nourishment

Jupiter is exalted at 15 degrees

Cancer denotes the beginning of summer. This is the sign of the 'great mother'; in ancient astrology, this sign was considered the beginning of the Zodiac. Cancer symbolizes nourishment, the foundation of home, and emotional sensitivity. Home is both the literal home, as well as feeling at 'home' in oneself.

Unconscious Cancer expressions include clinging to the past; stagnation; and hyper-reactivity.



Leo

The Lion

Season: Mid-summer; Lammas/Loafmass/Lughnasa

July 23-August 22

Element: Fire

Modality: Fixed

Polarity: Masculine/yang

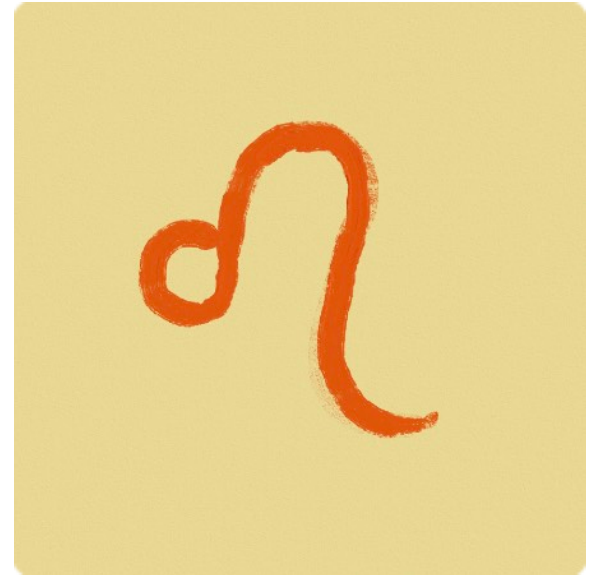
Ruled by: The Sun

Parts of the Body: The heart and spine

Keywords: Creativity and creative self-expression, courage, passion, leadership

Leo is the sign of royalty, creative self-expression, and leadership. Radiance, warmth and creativity are conscious expressions of this sign.

Unconscious Leo can become stuck in self-centered viewpoints.



Virgo

The Virgin

Season: End of summer

August 23-September 22

Element: Earth

Modality: Mutable

Polarity: Feminine/yin; receptive

Ruled by: Mercury

Parts of the Body: The intestines; digestion and absorption

Keywords: Discernment, analysis, ritual, detail-oriented, preparation

Mercury both rules and is exalted in Virgo.

Virgo is the sign of the harvest. It is often depicted as a woman holding a sheaf of grain. The sign represents the ability to discern and differentiate between the 'wheat and the chaff' and prepare for the coming winter. Key characteristics include analytic abilities, attention to detail, and commitment to service. This sign is connected with health as well as daily work and service.

Virgo can tend to become overly focused on perfection and purification when unconscious.



Libra

The Scales

Season: Autumn Equinox/Mabon

September 23-October 22

Element: Air

Modality: Cardinal

Polarity: Masculine/yang

Ruled by: Venus

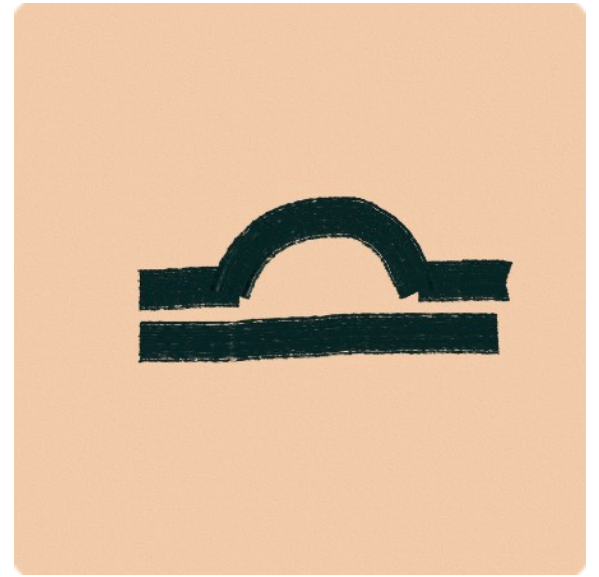
Parts of the Body: The kidneys and low back

Keywords: Justice, balance, symmetry, peace-making, diplomacy, relationship

Saturn is exalted in Libra.

As the first sign of autumn, Libra represents one of two points in the year during which day and night are of equal length. Coming at the halfway point in the Zodiac, this is the sign of relating to another. Libra is the only sign represented by an object rather than a person or animal, and the scales point to its primary meaning of balance. Other meanings and indications include art and beauty; comparison; analysis; and justice.

The shadow expressions of Libra include indecision and projection.



Scorpio

The Scorpion

Season: Mid-autumn; Samhain/"All Hallows Eve"/Dios de la Muerte

October 23-November 21

Element: Water

Modality: Fixed

Polarity: Feminine/yin; receptive

Ruled by: Mars

Parts of the Body: Sex organs and organs of elimination

Keywords: Intense, emotional depth, the occult, taboos, passion, loss, regeneration

Scorpio marks the time of year when darkness overtakes light, from which much of its meaning derives. The occult (what is 'hidden'); many subjects considered taboo in the modern world; loss and death belong to this sign. Yet the fact it rules the sex organs also points to its connection to the creative life force. This fixed water sign is sensitive to what lies under the surface.

Suspicion, destructiveness and fear can be unconscious expressions of Scorpio.



Sagittarius

The Archer

Season: End of autumn

November 22-December 21

Element: Fire

Modality: Mutable

Polarity: Masculine/yang

Ruled by: Jupiter

Parts of the Body: Hips, thighs and arteries

Keywords: Inspiration, faith, beliefs, going beyond, exploring, higher knowledge



Sagittarius comes when the Sun is reaching its lowest point in the year. As the centaur (body of a horse with torso and head of a man), this sign bridges instinct and intellect; as the archer it reaches for what is beyond. This sign represents the inner fires of faith and freedom, as well as making meaning of the world. All things 'foreign', higher education, and religion fall under this sign.

The shadow of Sagittarius comes in over-confidence in actions or beliefs.

Capricorn

The Sea-Goat

Season: Winter Solstice

December 22-January 19

Element: Earth

Modality: Cardinal

Polarity: Feminine/yin; receptive

Ruled by: Saturn

Parts of the Body: Knees, bones, teeth and skin

Keywords: Structure, integrity, tradition, wisdom, mastery

Mars is exalted in Capricorn

Capricorn marks one of the two Solstices of the year, in which the Sun appears to stand still. The sea-goat is a creature which brings the spiritual element from the ocean into manifestation on land. This sign relates to mastery and wisdom, maturity and discipline, as well as the 'fruits of one's labor'. Structure, both individual and social fall under Capricorn, as do authority figures.

Shadow Capricorn confuses control with authority, and over-work with discipline.



Aquarius

The Water-Bearer

Season: Mid-winter; Imbolc/Candlemas

January 20-February 18

Element: Air

Modality: Fixed

Polarity: Masculine/yang

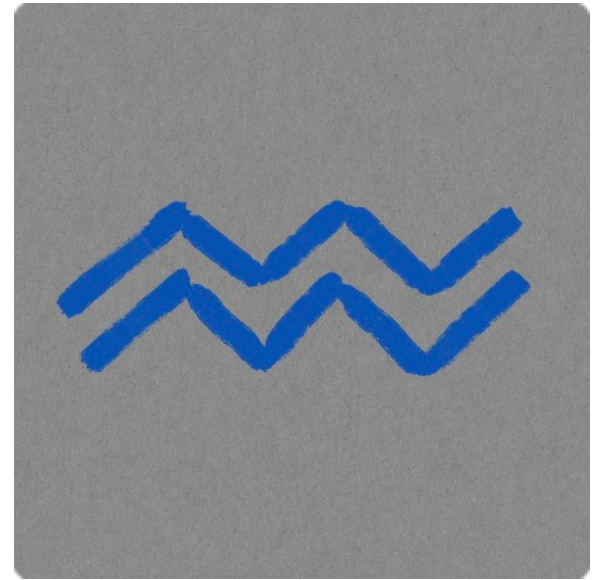
Ruled by: Saturn

Parts of the Body: Ankles and circulatory system

Keywords: Vision, invention, science, humanitarianism and individuation

Aquarius is the sign of mid-winter, when the light begins to return. The water borne by Aquarius is wisdom and the 'water' of life. As the last air sign, it relates to one's relationship with the larger society. In Aquarius, the wisdom and mastery of Capricorn are put to use in the collective, sometimes in radical or revolutionary ways.

Shadow Aquarius can become stuck in thinking like the group, or in revolution for the sake of revolution (the 'rebel without a cause').



Pisces

The Fishes

Season: End of winter

February 19-March 20

Element: Water

Modality: Mutable

Polarity: Feminine/yin; receptive

Ruled by: Jupiter

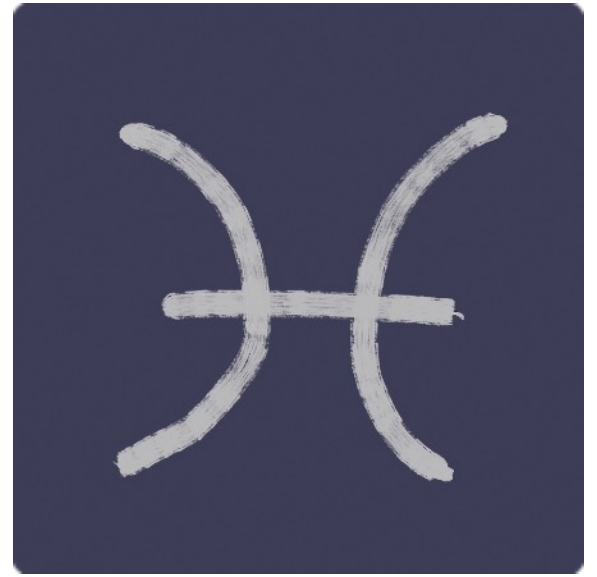
Parts of the Body: The feet, lymphatic system

Keywords: Consciousness, oneness, dreams, imagination, dissolution, spirituality

Venus is exalted in Pisces.

As the last sign in the Zodiac, Pisces represents the return to the ocean of consciousness, the end of the journey in preparation for rebirth. This is the sign of dreams and imagination, of deep empathy and compassion for all of life. In Pisces, there is the sense of being part of the whole and connected to all.

Unconscious expressions of Pisces include victimhood, escapism, and lack of boundaries.



Planetary Dignities

In traditional tropical astrology, each planet is said to 'rule' - have an affinity for or be dignified in - one (Sun and Moon) or two (inner planets) signs, meaning that the planet more naturally expresses itself in those signs. Similarly each planet is said to be 'debilitated' (i.e. not at home) in one or two signs, generally directly across the zodiac from where it is dignified.

A planet's exaltation is where it expresses its greatest attributes, aided by the ruler of that sign. Opposite its exaltation is a planet's fall, where it is said to be weakened through the influence of that sign's ruler.

In the case of the double rulerships, the planet has been assigned to a 'masculine' (yang) sign as well as a 'feminine' (yin) sign. For example, Mars has an outward, assertive expression in the archetypally masculine sign of Aries; but a more inward and emotional expression in Scorpio.

Planet	Domicile	Detriment	Exaltation	Fall
Sun	Leo	Aquarius	Aries 19	Libra 19
Moon	Cancer	Capricorn	Taurus 3	Scorpio 3
Mercury	Gemini/Virgo	Sagittarius/ Pisces	Virgo 15	Pisces 15
Mars	Aries/Scorpio	Libra/Taurus	Capricorn 28	Cancer 28
Venus	Taurus/Libra	Scorpio/Aries	Pisces 27	Virgo 27
Jupiter	Sagittarius/ Pisces	Gemini/Virgo	Cancer 15	Capricorn 15
Saturn	Capricorn/ Aquarius	Cancer/Leo	Libra 21	Aries 21

Modern astrologers have assigned the outer planets Uranus, Neptune and Pluto to the signs of Aquarius, Pisces and Scorpio respectively. Some astrologers look at both the traditional and modern rulerships.

Table of the Houses

The houses denote the areas of life affected by the planets and signs. The houses are 'where' the action occurs. A natal planet in a given house shows the areas of life in which you will most experience/express that planet.

House	Keywords
First	The Ascendant; the helm; how you 'meet' the world; appearance
Second	Material security; pleasures; personal skills and resources; self-worth; values
Third	Communication; local environment; short travels and commutes; siblings/neighbors
Fourth	Home; emotional foundation; lands; roots; mother
Fifth	Creative self-expression; play; lovers and children
Sixth	Daily work; service; health; small pets; co-workers
Seventh	Close relationships; partnerships; clients; marriage
Eighth	Shared resources; debt; taxes; inheritance; vulnerability; death and loss
Ninth	Higher knowledge; higher education; long journeys; beliefs; religion
Tenth	Mastery; taking power in the world; career; how you 'show up'
Eleventh	Groups; goals; how you 'belong' in society
Twelfth	Confinement and isolation; spirituality; what's unconscious

Signs of the Zodiac Worksheet

Look at your chart and find each of the planets, plus the Ascendant (sign on the cusp of the first house) and Midheaven or MC (the cusp of the 10th house). For each planet/point, determine the sign, then the element and modality for that sign.

Add up the number of planets/points in each sign and modality using the following formula. Note: This is not the only formula possible, just one example that weights the planets and points according to their importance in your chart.

Give the Sun and Moon each 3 points;

Include your Ascendant at 3 points as well.

The planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn each 2 points;

Your MC and the outer planets (Uranus, Neptune and Pluto) 1 point each.

Total # in Fire signs:

Total # in Earth signs:

Total # in Air signs:

Total # in Water signs:

Total # in Cardinal signs:

Total # in Fixed signs:

Total # in Mutable signs:

Are your elements and modalities relatively balanced, or are you higher in one or two of them? What does that say about how you might support balance in your life, as well as how you most naturally operate?

Important: *There is no 'correct' way to be! The balance (or lack thereof) of elements and modalities in your makeup are perfect for you.*

Look at the keywords for each element and modality (p. 3) and play around with describing yourself in a way that feels correct to you. You can also experiment with describing how you express a particular planet according to its element and modality. For example, if you have Venus in the fixed fire sign of Leo, maybe you are the radiant hearth fire in a relationship.

One more step would be to look at the sign where the ruler of your Ascendant is located, using the table on page 20.

References and Resources

Books and websites for further exploration:

Articles on astro.com

"The Inner Sky", by Steven Forrest

"Chart Interpretation Handbook", by Stephen Arroyo

"Mythic Astrology: Internalizing the planetary powers", by Arielle Guttman and Kenneth Johnson

"The Goddess in Your Stars", by Geraldine Thorsten

"The Pulse of Life", by Dane Rudhyar