

ASTROLOGY

I sit across the table from you. Wearing coloured robes and masses of jewellery, I blend with the smell of incense to make reality seem a little less real, somehow. I have charts and images, drawings and numbers, which I consult during meaningful pauses. And this is what I tell you:

I don't see the happy person you show to the world. I sense an inner hesitancy. The world sees you as reasonably contented but that's not what is deep inside. It is your individuality which is being suppressed, partly by your own self-doubt. You are a practical person, but there is something deep within you which wants to express itself in less pragmatic ways. You have been able to subdue it until now, but the pressure is growing for you to follow your individual path. You are not like others and find the pressure to appear so is a dictum which is becoming more like a prison than you want to admit.

People like you, and mostly you like them. You are a friendly person who bends to accommodate others. In fact, sometimes you bend so much you nearly break. You try to do what others want of you and avoid confrontation whenever possible. Your need to do the right thing by family and friends restricts you so much. But you do the right thing—almost always.

There is much inside that you keep hidden from the world. You fear the rejection which may result if you were true to your real self. There are things you would wear, places you would go and assertions you would make if only you didn't worry so much about the feelings and opinions of others. The expectations others demand of your energy constrain you so much that you worry you may never reach your full potential.

The chance is coming soon and you need to be ready for it. The planets align in such a way that travel is a key word in your path. It may be that you will travel but I feel the planets may be indicating travel in relation to an auspicious person. Someone will travel onto your stage from afar—that person will be the link to your cadence. You must be ready for that eventuality—it isn't far off now and it is essential you recognise it. Those who realise their dreams are those who grasp the opportunity when the planets are right. Your time is very soon.

Using the reading

Ask for a date of birth and come back a day later with that date written on the top of your card with the star sign. I usually manage a 95 per cent hit rate with my one-size-fits-all astrology reading.

It's called the Barnum effect: a bit for everyone. We are far more alike than unlike. If the reading was totally positive, the client would reject it as unrealistic. It is essential that the 'negatives' also provide an excuse for behaviour and disappointments. People need to have a hope and recognise their uniqueness—none of us wants to be like most other people. As well, there is a real tendency among people to try to make descriptions fit. They will search for matches and find them.

Astrology is the most popular and widely used of the paranormal arts. It's fun and mostly it's harmless. So why not just let it be? That's for you to decide.

What is your star sign? Are you sure?

Astronomy arose from the division of the northern hemisphere night sky in ancient times into twelve regions of thirty degrees each. Images were made out of the prominent stars to enable early astronomers to recognise parts of the sky. They assigned names to these groups of stars—the constellations. They noted the regular patterns in the movement of the constellations across the sky over the passage of a year. Naturally there was a link to the natural cycles: harvests and rains, day length and weather.

Thirty degrees was a convenient way to divide up the sky, but not very accurate—for most of the time once allocated to Scorpio, the sun now actually rises in a constellation called Ophiuchus.

Why? The sun sign, also known as the zodiac, is allocated according to the constellation into which the sun rises at that time of the year. The constellations used are those that lie along the apparent path of the sun. If the sun rose in Aquarius at the time of your birth, then your star sign is Aquarius. The only trouble is that the range of dates which match the sun rising in each of the constellations has changed greatly over the millennia since they were first described.

Two thousand years ago when the zodiac was created, the sun rose in Aries at the March equinox. Now the sun rises in Pisces at the same equinox. This is due to the precession of the equinoxes and relates to the fact that the earth rotates on its axis over a period of 25 800 years. This has led to about a thirty-degree shift over the 2000 years since the zodiac dates were created.

The table opposite will let you know what your star sign is—now. The dates given in magazines and books are what your star sign would have been had you been born 2000 years ago, and under the Julian Calendar rather than the Gregorian one we now use.

Dates for the sun signs of the zodiac

<i>Sign of the zodiac</i>	<i>Official dates</i>	<i>Current dates</i>
Aries—the Ram	21 March–20 April	19 April–13 May
Taurus—the Bull	21 April–20 May	14 May–19 June
Gemini—the Twins	21 May–21 June	20 June–21 July
Cancer—the Crab	22 June–23 July	21 July–9 Aug
Leo—the Lion	24 July–23 Aug	10 August–15 Sept
Virgo—the Virgin	24 Aug–23 Sept	16 Sept–30 Oct
Libra—the Scales	24 Sept–23 Oct	31 Oct–22 Nov
Scorpio—the Scorpion	24 Oct–22 Nov	23 Nov–29 Nov
Ophiuchus—the Serpent Holder	Who?	30 Nov–17 Dec
Sagittarius—the Archer	23 Nov–22 Dec	18 Dec–18 Jan
Capricorn—the Goat	23 Dec–20 Jan	19 Jan–15 Feb
Aquarius—the Water Carrier	21 Jan–19 Feb	16 Feb–11 March
Pisces—the Fish	20 Feb–20 March	12 March–18 April

We have eighteen days in which the sun now rises in another constellation: Ophiuchus. As we have no charts for these, does this mean the poor people born on these days have no personality?

We have had a significant increase in Virgos (now 45 days) and a huge reduction in Scorpios (only seven days). It seems virginity is more valued now than a sting in the tail.

The usual argument when confronting astrologers is that simple sun sign astrology is not specific enough. We need to include the position of the planets. The type of reading you

find in books and newspapers, they say, is just a superficial generalisation. But that is what many people accept. 'I'm a really typical Gemini' and 'He's just like that because he's a Sagittarius'. If there are no common features among those within a given sign of the Zodiac, then doesn't the star sign become irrelevant?

Many of the descriptions given for the 'science' behind astrology include references to Neptune, Uranus and Pluto, whose existence was not known to the creators of astrology. Yet in the same breath, astrology's accuracy is convincingly sold on the fact it is 2000 years old.

There have been many statistical tests done to see if there is any correlation between the sun sign and the careers of people. John D. McGervey took the 1965 listing of 16 634 scientists in *American Men of Science* and tabulated them according to the star signs. He did the same with the 6475 listed in the 1973 *Who's Who in American Politics*. Surely these lists would have shown some skewing if there was any astrological influence on careers. The distribution was even, right across all twelve signs of the zodiac. No skewing in favour of one sign or against another could be detected.

Double blind testing the zodiac types

When shown their reading most people can identify with some, if not all, of it. They rarely look at the readings for the other signs. Scientific method dictates a double blind testing is required. That means the person selecting the appropriate reading and the person administering the set must not know the 'expected' outcome.

The following readings have been drawn from a range of references using the traits generally accepted as typical for each star sign. Selecting which is most accurate should, according to chance alone, match the expected star sign once in every twelve. As you read each description, note how specific, yet contradictory, they sound. Ask yourself if any, in any way, fit you. Are there some aspects of your

complex personality in each? Then choose the one which best suits you. We will check against the zodiac signs later.

One

Ones value freedom. Their quirky and eccentric natures make them individuals who see the next trend—they are often the ones who set it! Ones are our revolutionaries, marching to a different drum. They are our idealists and dreamers. But they are also rational, intuitive and logical. They often find it difficult to accept the limitations of a conventional society and clash with authority.

Internal conflict mixed with a conservative streak supports a conventional morality and lawfulness in their fight for social justice. Ones are often easy to identify by their unconventional dress and frenetic pace. Occupations which suit Ones include those which involve caring about others. Some love technology and are attracted to electronics or computing. The crucial aspect of any occupation for Ones is that they are challenging conventions and marching towards change.

Two

Twos are bold and confident people. They are motivated and can be very enterprising, showing leadership qualities. They like to take action, and can be headstrong and dynamic, impulsive and competitive.

Their fiery nature keeps Twos always active, rushing into new challenges but not always following through completely. Their confidence and speed lead Twos often to prefer to do things alone. Twos like careers with challenges, with the thrust of competition pushing them on. Dreaming of being racing car drivers or test pilots, they often end up in fire-fighting, selling, wheeling and dealing. They like things sharp, so a surgeon's job appeals. Twos like to succeed and are usually confident they will do so.

Three

Three is an emotional and sensitive sign. Threes tend to be home loving and family oriented. They like security and safety. Displaying an innate ambition they take a safer, more subtle path toward goals. Success is important but is balanced by their caring for others. They may appear to have a hard exterior, but are very soft inside. They have an unexpected tenacity and a deep and complex personality with which they hide their vulnerability. This can lead them to be very moody, their defensiveness often mistaken for shyness. Although a little prone to self-pity, they display enormous compassion for others.

They are born for the nurturing careers—social work, nursing, childcare and the service industries. Their tenacity makes them good in business, and their love of food, history and the sea often leads them to a career linked with one of these.

Four

Fours are the ambitious people—disciplined and hard working. They are determined to succeed. They are responsible people who care for society and abide by its rules. They often feel tied to obligations which may cause conflict with their determination to succeed and intrinsic ability to climb. With order dominating, especially financially, Fours are highly moral, seeking boundaries and clarity.

Childhood is often difficult due to their early maturing and then the tendency to be given, or take on, responsibilities beyond their years. Fours can be very depressed and pessimistic, but their good humour and wit helps them overcome this melancholic aspect of their personalities. Liking structure and order, they choose careers which emphasise these traits. They can achieve very high levels indeed.

Five

Fives are inquisitive and playful—eternally young. This is a sociable star sign—showing a strong desire to communicate, explore and talk. Entertaining, but easily bored, they enjoy intrigue. The duality of the sign shows that there are two sides to everything—Fives are always questioning. They gather people and ideas to feed their insatiable curiosity. They are restless and prone to nervous exhaustion, sometimes crashing into depression. They eventually spring back to repeat the cycle.

The careers which suit Fives are those based on communication such as journalist, teacher, broadcaster, writer, advertising, lawyer or salesperson. In fact, just about anything which isn't repetitious. Using their love of socialising at work, they will often achieve highly, polishing their ideas on their interaction with others.

Six

Sixes have a dramatic presence. They tend to organise everyone. Proud, enthusiastic and sharing, Sixes want to enjoy life and take everyone else along for the ride. They can sulk or become bossy if others refuse to follow. Sixes want to be special and to be loved. They are born to rule. Craving attention, they want to be singled out. Although they can become self-important at times, they are creative and generous. Their warmth is often tuned with a need to dominate, making them benevolent leaders unless opposition forces them to take a harsher line.

With a strong sense of justice, Sixes will fight for causes they believe in. Despite their strong personalities, Sixes are easily hurt but don't show their pain. Any career which allows them to control the situation and make use of their dramatic presence will suit them well.

Seven

Marriage and relationships are important to Sevens. They are in need of harmony and have a strong sense of fair play. Diplomatic, impartial and able to see both sides of an argument, decisions are often difficult for them. Sevens are often late but their charm ensures they are forgiven. They love balance in their lives, but may swing in their thinking before reaching a final stand. Avoiding confrontation, they often bend to accommodate others. Sometimes being too accommodating, they cause themselves stress. When pushed too far, Sevens demand attention, often shocking themselves and others by the unexpected outburst.

More than any other sign, Sevens need people and will adapt to maintain harmonious relationships. They tend to dress in understated good taste and choose careers which involve working with other people. They are skilled at acting in a conciliatory role while drawing on their creative and artistic natures.

Eight

Eights are described by words such as dreamy, romantic and imaginative. Their lives are controlled by the ebb and flow of their emotions. They are compassionate, impressionable and constantly concerned about the welfare of others. Eights are constantly fighting an inner struggle between emotional ties and the world's demands.

Moods rule Eight's lives. They are our artists and visionaries. Reality and illusion blend in their minds. It is their bigger picture, and their beautiful images of what life could be, which form a barrier between them and the mundane daily reality.

An Eight's compassion enables people take advantage of their sympathy, often demanding help beyond what the Eight is able to give, and causing enormous guilt when the Eight is

unable to do all that is asked of them. They are attracted to a career which enables them to express themselves in words or images—to dream about just what might be.

Nine

This is an optimistic and open-minded sign, always chasing a goal. Nines ask the big questions of life and set out to find the answers with enthusiasm. Their outgoing natures look for new adventures and new ideas. Sometimes devastatingly frank, they are always honest and tolerant, never intending to offend.

Nines value freedom of belief for themselves and others. Hating boredom, without a firm purpose they can become depressed but are usually having fun. Impulsive, innovative and intuitive, Nines often initiate but don't always follow through. They leave that to their less adventurous followers. Their vivid imaginations cause them constantly to seek new challenges and may cause a degree of dissatisfaction with life.

Nines dress casually. They enjoy sharing knowledge and continuing to learn. They love travel and sport. Due to their broad interests and constant search for new challenges, many Nines change careers mid-life.

Ten

Tens are the intense, magnetic and passionate people. They take risks without fear. Their forceful and dominant personalities rarely leave them unnoticed. Others find Tens difficult to know. They value their privacy and keep much of their personal lives hidden. Tens love power and breaking new ground.

Brooding and intense, Tens have a sharp insight. They display great empathy, preferring to understand than be

understood. They can be manipulative yet compassionate, compulsive yet discerning. They resist change and their entrenched thinking can become self-destructive. They display jealousy and resentment, often bearing grudges for a long time. Tens tend to have piercing eyes and a self-contained stance. Mystery, magnetism and sexuality define a Ten. They prefer careers which use their astute minds, often creating major change within their work environment.

Eleven

Loyal, dependable, enduring, steadfast, secure and stable. That's an Eleven. Elevens find security, and a reason for being, in their partner, home and work. Their practical side often overwhelms their more artistic traits. Although cautious, Elevens are stubborn, strong and determined. They enjoy an orderly routine without insecurity or risk taking, adhering to duty and routine. This may appear to be inflexibility, but they often cope with life's ups and downs better than other signs. Elevens have a jealous and possessive nature, but can be very generous. They have a love of fine things and can be self-indulgent.

Elevens' most striking feature is their voice. They often have a beautiful singing voice and tend towards careers in the Arts. Being practical and productive, Elevens suit careers requiring stability. The world depends on its Elevens.

Twelve

Twelves are modest, restrained and refined perfectionists. They expect high standards of themselves and others. Intelligent, organised and exacting, they tend to be very practical and efficient. The conflict between a strong sexuality and morality can lead to prudishness. The desire to serve others often dominates a Twelve's life, and they become stressed by their expectations of themselves.

Attention to detail makes Twelves invaluable colleagues, but also increases the work needed to get any job done to their satisfaction. They often become workaholics. They value common sense along with hygiene, tidiness and efficiency. Well groomed, they shine in careers which draw on their organisational skills and are often satisfied with supporting roles, which they do extremely well. They display great loyalty and discretion but can become frustrated when bored.

Which one are you? Are you sure?

A key to the 'correct' star signs for each of these descriptions is given at the end of this chapter.

Test as many other people as you can. Have them pick you out. Have them choose the one which fits themselves and others they know well. Then check them against their date of birth. Is there any correlation with the accepted star signs? With the true signs?

Due to chance alone, you should get one person in twelve right. I have rarely done that well.

Evaluating astrology

Most astrologers seem to genuinely believe there is a truth to what they are saying. Under test conditions, when they have been involved in the test design, many astrologers are genuinely surprised when their readings are no better than random chance predicts.

Perhaps there is something to it when we take in the complexities of the planets. Maybe we can ignore the fact that the gravitational effect of the planets is massively less than that of the table in the birth room. Gravitational pull reduces inversely with the square of the distance away. A planet is so far away it has significantly less pull than anyone

near you. I rather like the fact that my husband had more gravitational influence over our daughter at birth than Mars. But then others feel differently.

Astrologers complain that just considering the sun sign is too simple. Many have rejected simple sun sign astrology. But if there is no correlation with the sun sign, it is a rejection of the aspect of astrology that is considered to be the core belief for most of the population.

Astrology has wonderful language and fantastic imagery. It also makes people talk about their feelings and personalities. And it's fun. Viewed from that perspective, it's harmless.

Reference

Wallaby, Sir Jim R. 1987, 'What star sign are you really?', *The Skeptic*, vol. 7, no. 3. pp. 8-9.

The Zodiac Key

One	Aquarius
Two	Aries
Three	Cancer
Four	Capricorn
Five	Gemini
Six	Leo
Seven	Libra
Eight	Pisces
Nine	Sagittarius
Ten	Scorpio
Eleven	Taurus
Twelve	Virgo