

How to Read an Ephemeris

Components of the Ephemeris

An ephemeris (eh fem' er iss) is a reference book showing precisely when certain celestial phenomena occur. Janet's Plan-its weekly Highlights and Star Pages list a lot of this data so you only need these pages if you want to explore astrology at a deeper level or identify when influences will impact your individual chart. (See Making It Personal near the beginning of this planner.)

Check the Keywords at the back of this planner to see the symbols for the planets, signs, aspects and lunar phases. (Note: the ephemeris uses a different symbol for Pluto: **P**.) The time listed is calculated for Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), the worldwide standard in England. To convert to your time zone, subtract 4 hours for Atlantic, 5 hours for Eastern, 6 for Central, 7 for Mountain and 8 for Pacific. During Daylight Saving Time, subtract one hour less.

The twelve equal signs of the zodiac are 30 degrees each, measured in celestial "longitude." The longitude table for each month has columns for various celestial factors and a row for each day. (You can ignore the "Sid. Time" column unless you're calculating a chart "from scratch.") A position is listed in this order: degree, space, minute (1/60th of a degree) and in the case of the Sun and Moon, the second (1/60th of a minute). These are measurements in space, not to be confused with clock time. The minutes (other than for the Sun and Moon) use a decimal fraction. The Moon moves so quickly it's listed at both midnight (0 hr) and noon. The other planets' positions are listed at midnight GMT. When planets are Retrograde as a month begins, the second line of the month says R. The column is shaded when the planet is Retrograde and a D shows the day it turns Direct. The position is also listed for the Moon's North Node. (The South Node is always the same degree and minutes of the opposite sign.) The table shows its "true" position, which alternates between Retrograde (normal for it) and Direct. Many astrologers only use the Mean (average) position for the Nodes (see below), which is always Retrograde.

The Star Pages tell you the day a planet enters a sign. The ephemeris shows the exact minute in the "planet ingress" list at the bottom. A space separates the two months that share the page. The "Astro Data" column on the left tells you when planets turn Retrograde (R) or Direct (D) and when two outer planets have an aspect. The degrees of these phenomena are not listed here, but you can "ballpark" them from the row for the applicable date. (You can ignore the items showing when planets rise above (N) or below (S) the "celestial equator," the middle of the zodiac path.)

The "Last Aspect" and "D Ingress" columns list the time that the Moon makes its last aspect in a sign, becoming Void of Course (see Using This Planner) and when it enters the next sign, ending the Void period. Janet's Plan-its™ daily entries tell the Void and ingress times. Here you can see the Moon's last aspect, an influence that continues throughout the Void period. The "D Phases & Eclipses" box lists the main phases of the Moon: New, First Quarter, Full and Last Quarter. First it states the day of the month, then the time, then the phase, and last the zodiac degree, sign and minutes where it occurs. New and Full Moons that aspect anything in your chart within a couple of degrees can have a big influence for you (see 2011 On a Page).

A second "Astro Data" box on the right has information you may not need, like the SVP (related to Indian astrology) and the Julian Day (number of

days since the century began). It also lists some useful data: the zodiacal longitude on the first of the month for Eris (the new planet out past Pluto) and the asteroids Chiron, Pallas Athena, Juno, Vesta, along with the Mean (average) position of the Moon's North Node.

Relating the Ephemeris to YOUR Chart

Now that you're familiar with the types of information in the ephemeris, how do you figure out when planets affect YOU? Look for aspects to your birth chart. These occur when a moving ("transiting") planet reaches the same degree as one of your natal planets. To figure out the type of aspect, you'll need to look at the order of the signs in the zodiac, from Aries to Pisces. The aspect depends on the sign of the transiting planet relative to the natal planet: same sign = conjunction; the sign immediately before or after = semisextile; 2 signs before or after = sextile; 3 signs before or after = square; 4 signs before or after = trine; 5 signs before or after = quincunx; 6 signs away = opposition. Another type of aspect occurs when the transiting planet is 1-1/2 signs before or after (semisquare) or 4-1/2 signs before or after (sesquiquadrate). These are harder to spot. Allow up to five degrees leeway (the astrological term is "orb"), although the closer to exact, the stronger the influence.

For example, look at your birthday. The degree of the Sun is the same every year on that date (within a degree). Now you can look for other dates in the year when a planet goes through the same degree of the same sign and you'll know that planet is activating your Sun's potentials, strengthening or adding to how you express your purpose and intentions. If any planet is within 5 degrees of a sign three or six signs away, your Sun is receiving a square or an opposition, and that time frame should hold challenges for you personally; you may not get the glory you deserve around then or be able to wield your usual influence. This same process can be applied to any planet in your chart. Aspects from transiting planets amplify what your natal planet signifies by its sign and house positions and its natal aspects. If the transiting aspect is a helpful one, the outcome should be positive with a smooth experience. If the aspect is a difficult one, then your experience is likely to be more stressful or require you to work harder to obtain a happy result.

Find the planetary stations (or see the graph on 2011 On a Page) and look to see if any of the planets change direction in an aspect to anything in your chart. If so, you're apt to experience a slow-down in the activities associated with your natal planet when the transit stations. The nature of the transiting planet describes the pressures applying to your life and the type of aspect hints as to whether the experience will be pleasant or trying. For instance, if you receive a square from stationing Saturn, obstacles will slow your progress in the area(s) associated with the receiving planet. If you receive a trine from Jupiter, your path should be nearly bump-free for the part(s) of your life that Jupiter affects. Be sure to look for your natal house starting with the sign that your receiving planet rules. Thus if your Mars receives an aspect, look at your house that starts with Aries. The Keyword list includes sign rulers.

You can use these same principles to assess your personal impact from aspects noted in the Star Pages, which give the zodiac degrees of the astrological phenomena.