

A Look at the Ascendant

We all know, or can guess, our own Sun sign. And we are all familiar with the popularity of daily horoscopes based on the Sun signs. Asking someone what their Sun sign is, can be a useful social gambit and lots of fun. For people starting to show interest in astrology, the Sun and the Moon and the Ascendant are often the main focus of attention.

The energy associated with the Moon is active at our first breath and guides our earliest emotional reactions to everything around us. It also guides the development of our earliest defense mechanisms. As we grow we fine-tune these defense mechanisms, but never completely leave them behind. The energy associated with the Ascendant guides self-perception -- what we actually see when we look at ourselves.

The aim of this article is to take a closer look at the role of the Ascendant in our lives. At the moment of birth, specifically at the moment of the first exhalation, if we look towards the eastern horizon, and follow that line all the way out to the circle of the zodiac, we will land on the degree, and on the sign, that is our Ascendant.

The Ascendant appears in the chart as the cusp (or leading edge) of the 1st house, the beginning of the chart (and the beginning of our life). The entire chart rotates one degree every 4 minutes. That is why an accurate birth time is important. (If the birth time is incorrect by 40 minutes, then the ascendant will be incorrect by 10 degrees.)

Astrology books often associate the Ascendant with other people's first impressions of us. Why should this be so? The Ascendant acts like a mirror -- a selective mirror, or a mirror with a filter over it. For example, when a person with a Capricorn Ascendant looks in this special mirror they see what's needful and they see their own role in meeting these needs. The immediacy of these impressions blocks out other things that might be seen, but pale in comparison. And so we develop a self-image.

Once we begin to develop a self-image (either consciously or unconsciously), we tend to polish it up, and attempt to project to the outside world what we consider to be the best parts of that self-image -- i.e. we build our masks. People react to these projections -- or more subtly, to the choices we make in what we attempt to project.

Earth, Air, Fire, Water. Do these supersede the individual zodiac signs associated with the Ascendant? A sense of what is practical, and a psychic understanding of the Earth's cycles (the heartbeat of the Earth), is shared by all Earth sign Ascendants (Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn). What might feel like non-stop thinking, and concern with social innovation, are shared by all Air sign Ascendants (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius).

Fire Ascendants (Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius) all share a joy of both movement and a sense of conquest (or accomplishment of a well-defined goal). Water Ascendants (Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces) all share a need, and a comfort, exploring behind the scenes, where others rarely choose to go. Below is a quick visit to each Ascendant.

Ascendant in Aries:

Don't fence me in, don't saddle me with a dependent, and don't drag things out! How about trying that snowboard on a ski-jump? Is it OK to keep my kayak in the kitchen?

Ascendant in Taurus:

The spider may weave an amazingly strong web in space. But I weave a web in time. Through the voice. Chanting and story-telling, to name just two. Ritual gives me space and peace. There is no rush.

Ascendant in Gemini:

I am friendly, and accessible, and fun to be around. And I am interested in your story. The world is a funny old place. So let's share it together.

Ascendant in Cancer:

How can anyone watch pain and be entertained by it? I just don't get it about people -- about the 'games' that people play. But I am strong, and I will find my bearings and create light along the way.

Ascendant in Leo:

Acknowledge me, and I will stand firm. I need to be seen, so that you can see me. Then you will know me -- and know that I am here for you.

Ascendant in Virgo:

I understand the strength of granite and the majesty of the high mountains. I can build a computer, or a space station, or a workable tax plan. Don't take me for granted.

Ascendant in Libra:

People are precious. Loneliness is the ultimate evil. Friendship is the basis of all of life's gifts.

Ascendant in Scorpio:

It's hard being a magnet for psychic debris. I invite you to be my friend -- but please leave the superficiality behind.

Ascendant in Sagittarius:

Fun is not superficial. Laughter is basic to survival. Play-time rituals are both restful and energizing. And then we can all deal with the rest of it.

Ascendant in Capricorn:

I know I'm the responsible adult in the room, and there is plenty to do. Clean up your own mess, thank you.

Ascendant in Aquarius:

I want more than pleasant, more than quirky. I want scope -- in space, in time, in human interaction, in the core of my being.

Ascendant in Pisces:

True practicality is not contained within the physical dimension. Why is there such resistance to looking at the big picture?