



A Primer to Understanding Your Birth Chart

The Sun Signs

by Frank C. Clifford

Author's Note: This introductory article on Sun signs has been written as a warm welcome to our new Dell subscribers and as a primer for regular readers and students of astrology.

The most familiar part of astrology is your Sun (or “star” or “birth” sign). But rather than simply representing a set of adjectives and keyword traits (e.g., Cancer is supposed to be “protective,” “sensitive,” and “moody,” while Gemini is said to be “curious,” “youthful,” and “chatty”), your Sun sign says a great deal about your vocation in a deeper sense — what you are “called” to do during your time on this planet. (Your Moon and Ascendant [“Rising”] sign reveal more about your personality and behavioural traits.)

Your Sun sign describes a particular life path or purpose — a way of living. Engaging with the message of your Sun sign will make you feel truly alive and make your heart sing; it’s what Joseph Campbell termed “following your bliss.” The embracing of the Sun in your birth chart can also lead to healthy self-esteem and a path of integrity and wholeness.

Of course, there are not just twelve types of people in the world, but each of the twelve Sun signs is a *particular archetype* with a *specific journey* attached to it. Each one of you is asked (“called”) to embark upon this journey (along with lots of other “life lessons” or situations, as shown in the rest of the chart). In doing so, you have an opportunity to connect with your core essence, your life-force, your vocation.

But before I write about the key ideas of the Sun signs, I would like to introduce three ideas. Firstly, be who you are! When you learn about the traits of the zodiac signs, you’re told each sign needs to curb certain tendencies. Aries is cautioned to slow down, to stop being selfish, or to be more patient. Taurus is told to get a move on, to stop being stubborn, or to quit being attached to things. But this is not the way to play the zodiac game! The strength of Aries is to jump forward, take the lead, and think of itself! The

world needs Taurus to be cautious, loyal, and stubbornly refuse to budge! In short, to get the very best out of the signs, every sign should work in accordance with their own nature.

Secondly, follow or wallow. Each zodiac sign has an opposite sign. The six pairs of polar opposites are Aries–Libra, Taurus–Scorpio, Gemini–Sagittarius, Cancer–Capricorn, Leo–Aquarius, Virgo–Pisces. They’re like different sides of the same coin, and there’s much you can learn from your opposite sign. But you need to follow the journey of your own sign, otherwise you risk wallowing in the worst traits of your opposite.

Thirdly, there are no easy formulas. There are no ideal jobs or partners based on your Sun sign alone; you and your chart are too complex for a simple mix-and-match equation like that. You’ll find every Sun sign doing every type of job and in relationships with every possible Sun sign, but each of you will be doing it your own way and with your own skill set. What your birth chart, particularly your Sun sign, *will* describe are the energies — the motivations, challenges, passions — *behind* your life’s work, your relationship choices, and experiences. That’s where astrology offers its greatest insights: it helps you *discover* and then *become* the best of who you were born to be.

So, here is a quick guide to some of the purposes of each Sun sign and some of the challenges you can face when you fail to express the sign’s true message. I’m thankful to astrologer Kim Farley for providing some additional *follow* and *wallow* keywords.

Sun in Aries, the Ardent Pioneer

The Early Opportunity: Encountering conflict, unfairness, being put second, or feeling left out has prompted you to stand up and be counted, to recognise your own needs, fight for what’s right, and face fears of disapproval.

The Life Work: You are born to enthuse people with your boundless energy, unbridled enthusiasm, and hope.



Yours is a spontaneous, dynamic, and adventurous spirit. You have an independent nature and you lack the patience to wait for group decisions or work in a team, so it's important to be in a position of autonomy and to learn to motivate yourself and blaze your own trail. Avoid waiting for others to approve of you and don't expect them to provide maintenance. Instead, sprint ahead of the pack, show courage, fight for the underdog, dare to break new ground, and put yourself first without apology.

Path to Follow: be courageous, dynamic, pioneering, enterprising, independent, and self-focused. Follow direct action and whatever is new, first, bold, or daring. Follow your own heart.

Avoid Wallowing: in dithering, superficiality, people-pleasing, laziness, or appeasement. Avoid keeping everyone happy at the expense of doing nothing for yourself or going nowhere.



Sun in Taurus, the Principled Rock

The Early Opportunity: Being pushed around or having people want what you own has helped you learn to say “no,” to attach yourself to strong principles, and develop a stubborn resistance to the undue influence of others.

The Life Work: Yours is a powerfully determined energy, and it's important for you to have a strong idea of what you stand for. Your sign is the “rock,” the constant upon which others can rely. Productive and sincere, you do your best work in a steady environment of loyalty and integrity, where change is rare and (ideally) on your own terms. Helping others to build strong foundations and sustain their enterprises are two of your talents, but don't forget to ensure your own security and safety, too, and enjoy the sensual pleasures in life without being ruled by them.

Path to Follow: be steady, calm, in touch with nature, and live at a gentle, organic pace. Follow your senses and



appreciation of beauty; deepen your values and self-worth; stick to your principles.

Avoid Wallowing: in drama, conspiracy, jealousy, and covetousness. Avoid fanaticism, ruthlessness, cruelty, and obsessiveness in emotional situations.



Sun in Gemini, the Quick-witted Communicator

The Early Opportunity: Facing misunderstandings or people who can't/won't relate to you has encouraged you to clarify information, to untangle mixed messages, and become the communicator and interpreter you were born to be.

The Life Work: Eternally curious and restless, your ideal environment is one that keeps you interested and able to move freely. You need stimulating experiences that don't bog you down with too much routine or responsibility and that offer options to indulge your many eclectic interests. A natural salesperson, trader, or agent, your talent is to simplify complex ideas and convey these with clever clarity. An agile wit, you always offer people the other viewpoint and introduce ideas they hadn't considered. But stay with the facts and don't get attached to “one right way” of doing something.

Path to Follow: stay interested, look for connections, patterns, and ways to communicate effectively. Follow words, language, dialogue, exchange, writing, and reasoning. Explore the duality and contradictions in life.

Avoid Wallowing: in fundamentalism, superstition, and the “only” way to do things. Avoid being the condescending, arrogant, zealous, or sanctimonious know-it-all who always needs to be right.



Sun in Cancer, the Tender Caregiver

The Early Opportunity: Living through emotionally bleak or isolating times has helped you to seek the right kind of support system, to create your family of choice, move away from codependent situations and release emotions buried by your family.

The Life Work: Your protective, sensitive spirit and almost psychic empathy are ideal in situations that need strong emotional kinship and lessons of tough love. It is essential for you to be part of a family at work and socially — a tribe of like-minded people who offer each other nourishment — rather than ending up being bitter over playing carer-counsellor to all and sundry. Your past will always be an important part of your present, and your talent is helping you (and others) reconnect to your heritage and treasure your history — without it hardening your nature or limiting your future options.

Path to Follow: be caring, supportive, sensitive, and protective. Foster an environment of belonging wherever you go. Find your tribe, play parent, and follow your instincts.

Avoid Wallowing: in material ambition or emotional manipulation. Avoid bossing everyone or resenting others' successes. Avoid disconnecting from your history and people.



Sun in Leo, the Divine Child

The Early Opportunity: Feeling early pressure to “be someone,” living up to others’ expectations or dealing with a domineering bully has given you a chance to separate your needs from those of others,

to emerge from their shadow, and assume control over your own destiny — to be your own boss.

The Life Work: Your life must reflect your individuality and need for self-expression. You were born to shine and to stand apart from the crowd. Even if you choose to do this in a quiet way, your journey is to discover your creative potency and express the forceful energy that lies inside you. But rather than it being “all about you,” the challenge is to allow others their time in the spotlight and encourage them to find their own vision. In short, you were born to be the mentor.

Path to Follow: be honourable, have integrity, explore personal potency, individuality, and creative warmth. Follow your inner, playful child, and be your own good parent.

Avoid Wallowing: in using others or taking credit for their work. Don’t begrudge others receiving recognition. Avoid slavish devotion to cold science or ideology instead of what your heart tells you.



Sun in Virgo, the Skillful Discriminator

The Early Opportunity: Dealing with chaos, inequalities, or a lack of discipline in those around you has sharpened your ability to discriminate, to discover what is healthy for you, to leave the safety zone of the mind, and to develop a relationship with your own pleasure.

The Life Work: Your journey involves learning your trade and perfecting a skill that will enable you to play an essential role in any work situation. Your sign is the industrious craftsman of the zodiac — your job is to get to the heart of the matter, avoid chaos, and ensure the overall machine runs efficiently. Yours is a service-orientated spirit that has a plan to make the world a better place. But it’s important not to downplay your vital role — otherwise others may do so, too, leaving you feeling undervalued or victimised.

Path to Follow: be discerning, practically effective, and sincere. Follow specialisation, craftsmanship, personal service, and attention to detail.

Avoid Wallowing: in self-pity, chaos, confusion, escapism, martyrdom, or victimhood. Avoid indiscriminate actions and self-defeating or unproductive habits.



Sun in Libra, the Impartial Tactician

The Early Opportunity: Finding yourself surrounded by conflict early in your life or being forced to make life-changing decisions from seemingly impossible choices has developed your diplomatic, mediation,

and decision-making skills.

The Life Work: You were born to become a strategist, an expert at negotiation, with an ability to charm others into submission. You’re most effective when bringing objectivity

to situations and building bridges between opposing factions, rather than provoking opposition or being manipulative. Always good at teamwork, you shine when addressing imbalances of power or when you’re in environments where a rational, fair, and civilised approach is needed to reach complex solutions or resolve conflict. Two running themes in your journey: the fight for justice and a need to abandon the disease to please.

Path to Follow: be harmonious, balanced, reasonable, and peace-seeking. Follow diplomacy, give-and-take, justice and fairness, and reason. Invite grace, beauty, style, and art into your life.

Avoid Wallowing: in conflict and provocation, divisiveness and disruption, intolerance and rudeness. Avoid competition or comparison in relationship.



Sun in Scorpio, the Powerful Alchemist

The Early Opportunity: An exposure to the sordid, traumatic side of life, or the power games that others play, has given you a knowingness and rare psychological

insight that can enable you to exhibit strength in the face of crisis and to reinvent yourself.

The Life Work: Your journey is a deep exploration of the darker sides of human nature. Your sign has remarkable courage and willpower to face aspects of yourself and the world around you that would scare most other signs. An unflinching investigator of life’s mysteries, your path is to psychologically examine power, taboos, and the forbidden — all in a search for intimacy, trust, and a deep union with a few chosen people. Staying in a comfort zone or focusing only on the sexual or financial will never truly satisfy you, the most complex of signs.

Path to Follow: be courageous, strong, single-minded, and determined. Follow the deeper, unexplored sides of life, and investigate your own darker nature. Embrace purging, healing, transformation, and rebirth.

Avoid Wallowing: in inertia, materialism, avarice, or intransigence. Avoid getting overly attached to the basic sexual, physical, or material plane.



Sun in Sagittarius, the Eternal Teacher-Preacher

The Early Opportunity: An early injustice in which you’ve spoken up and not been believed may have prompted a lifelong desire to tell your truth, to shoot

down pretence, highlight hypocrisy, or to blow apart corruption. Narrowness or bigotry around you prompts you to reach for a grander vision of life.

The Life Work: Your sign is born to aim high and explore the possibilities beyond the simple facts. You know that the journey is much more interesting than the arrival, and your voracious appetite for knowledge can turn into a quest for the meaning of life and purpose of your existence. You need work where you can ignite others with your vision and optimism, and by separating yourself from results or expecta-

tions, you'll avoid feeling disappointed when others can't or won't match your enthusiasm and generosity.

Path to Follow: be explorative, questing, and enthusiastic. Ask the big questions, and always seek to broaden your knowledge. Follow vision, faith, generosity, and inspiration.

Avoid Wallowing: in trivia, gossip, hypocrisy, name-dropping, or superficiality. Avoid over-rationalising or focusing on the facts while missing the deeper significance.



Sun in Capricorn, the Master of Distinction

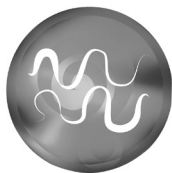
The Early Opportunity: Adversity, a lack of support, or a tyrannical figure in your life may have delayed initial progress, but it has spurred you on to aim to achieve

great things on your own and to believe that patience and application will result in a satisfying type of success later on.

The Life Work: Your sign is born to rise above initial hardship or delays, to endure a long apprenticeship, take on responsibilities, and attain a position of respect and authority. Your journey is a monument to hard work, backbone, and individual achievement. Like fine wine, you mature well, often making your greatest contribution in the second or third chapters of your life. But always attend to your reputation, avoid becoming the type of tyrant you fought against, and retain a moral code that is beyond reproach.

Path to Follow: be industrious, sincere, disciplined, and thorough. Follow the steady climb and commit to the long haul. Be dignified, respectful, and honourable. Seek mastery.

Avoid Wallowing: in clannishness, emotional manipulation, pettiness, meanness, or ruthlessness. Avoid clinging on to past family hurts and nursing long-held resentments.



Sun in Aquarius, the Iconoclastic Individualist

The Early Opportunity: If early events or a lack of role models confirmed an inner feeling that you didn't fit in, don't deny your own needs by adopting the role of the

people-pleaser. Instead, use any past feelings of alienation to embark upon your own unique path, define your own rules, and become your own role model for leadership.

The Life Work: You were born to tear up the rulebook and topple traditions, stereotypes, and hierarchies. Yours is an innovative spirit able to provide a clear, original perspective in your work. You do your best in areas where differentness and originality are valued strengths. You're a catalyst who should dare to take the road less travelled, to help the group understand that everyone is both equal and special, and avoid letting your own ego needs dominate your actions.

Path to Follow: be original or radical with your ideas and hold on to your ideals. Seek to serve the greater good and your community. Attach yourself to the principles of equality, and personal rights and freedoms.

Avoid Wallowing: in egocentrism, favouritism, or narcissistic entitlement. Avoid despising the ordinary or common. Avoid a constant need for special treatment or recognition.



Sun in Pisces, the Spiritual Samaritan

The Early Opportunity: Resisting the control and undue influence of others has led you to trust your own intuition, acknowledge your survival instinct, form a stronger sense of self, and recognise your talent for acceptance and forgiveness.

The Life Work: Your sign's key aptitudes are compassion, intuition, sensitivity to suffering, and altruism. You do your best work when dedicating time to healing those in need or improving conditions for others — rather than plotting an ambitious path for yourself or trying obsessively to control the “small stuff.” Your artistic, poetic, or spiritual energy allows the people around you to see the interconnectedness of all life, provides them with a glimpse into the world of spirit, and reminds them that we are all in need of empathy, kindness, and support.

Path to Follow: be compassionate, sensitive, imaginative, and selfless. Offer service to a greater good and understand the mystical links between all walks of life. Heal the world through your creativity.

Avoid Wallowing: in criticism, fussiness, self-defeating negativity, anxiety, or obsessing over detail or the inconsequential. Avoid being trapped in routine or martyrdom.

Frank Clifford is the author of the textbooks *Getting to the Heart of Your Chart*, *The Solar Arc Handbook* and *Palmistry 4 Today*. In 2012, he was honoured with a lifetime achievement award for his contribution to astrology. A writing award from ISAR and a Regulus nomination followed. Frank's website can be found at <http://www.frankclifford.co.uk>, and his London courses are at <http://www.londonschoolofastrology.co.uk>. His new online school (teaching both astrology and palmistry) can be found at <http://www.londonschoolofastrology.com>

