

# 10 Common Questions that show Misconceptions about Astrology... with Appropriate Answers

*Here are some of the questions most commonly asked of astrologers, on various occasions from parties to public meetings, by people from the vast general public who either know very little about astrology, or who have been previously misinformed. This Information Special is provided to help you to be prepared with appropriate answers. Number 1 is perhaps the most frequent general challenge:*

## 1 Do you really believe in that stuff?

Belief is not the right word. Belief implies pure faith, rather than reason based on observation. Skeptics who **truly** investigate astrology with an **open mind** (not with an ax to grind or a career that they feel might be threatened by open-mindedness) nearly always become convinced that there is “something to” this astrology and that certainly it deserves further investigation. Many of us who are professional astrologers started out that way.

*Here are four typical questions from people primarily interested in how astrology relates to them, personally:*

## 2 I've looked at my sign in the Daily Horoscope column in my newspaper, and it's just a joke. Either it doesn't have anything to do with what's going on in my life, or it could apply to anyone. Doesn't that prove that astrology is baloney?

First, let me say that to call a Sun Sign column a “horoscope” is a misuse of the word. “Horo” means “hour” which is a much more specific time frame than the 30 days of each Sun Sign. A **horoscope** is calculated for a specific place (longitude and latitude), a specific date (day, month, year) and a specific time (hour and minute). Obviously, your daily newspaper blurb for your sign is **not** a horoscope.

The fact that the zodiac signs are so colorful, and therefore easily translated into over-simplified fads, has contributed both to the popularity of astrology and to its vulnerability to skepticism such as yours. Many astrologers dislike Sun Sign columns intensely and would like to see them eliminated because they contribute to public misconceptions about astrology. Others think they are OK (and even justify writing them) because they feel that they attract some people toward further study (the theory that any publicity is better than no publicity, perhaps).

Sun Sign columns are vastly oversimplified and highly variable in quality. A well-written Sun Sign column is not necessarily invalid, but keep in mind that it is a very **general** indicator. A rough analogy might be that a Sun Sign column is to a horoscope, as the taking of one's pulse is to a thorough medical examination.

## 3 Well then, if I give you my birth date, time and place, can you really tell me about myself?

Astrology can be used to “read” personality and life cycle trends. At its most accurate it must be considered within the context of the person's environment and heredity. Although most people relate to interpretations of their horoscopes, astrological “readings” based on the birth data alone, without the astrologer meeting the person, could still be vulnerable to the accusation of being too general: “If you say enough, anybody will relate to something.” That's because the astrologer, without any knowledge of environment and heredity, is likely to “play it safe.” Yet an increasing number of psychology professionals are finding that a horoscope reveals information that can help them cut through months of preliminary conversation right to the main issues of concern for the client.

## 4 Are astrologers psychics?

No. It is undeniably true that some astrologers have psychic abilities, just as do some teachers, doctors, secretaries—or any other type of person we could name. Some psychic counselors use astrology as a tool, but they are usually primarily psychics, with limited astrological knowledge. Most astrologers are getting the information they tell you from your chart, based on the astrological tradition they have studied.

No psychic ability is required to learn astrology. It takes plenty of time and patience, but there are hundreds of books to help you learn. Professional astrologers need some mathematical and technical ability—today most of them have computers! For the art of interpretation, intuition helps. Consultants need “people skills.”

## 5 Can you tell my future? Does astrology mean that things are fated to happen?

The age-old question of fate and free will—with all the annual “predictions” (mostly wrong) that appear in the tabloids—it's no wonder that astrology gets associated with fatalism. Whether or not one believes that all or part of the future is predestined is a matter of faith, which has nothing to do with astrology (see #1). Yet astrological cycles have been observed to coincide with similar repeated trends, and therefore do provide us with a tool for looking ahead. This is not really so different from the type of prognosis made through various other types of future analysis, from stock market or cultural trends to the weather.

The vast majority of modern astrologers operate on the belief that the future is **not** fated and we **do** have choices. Think of it . . . why on Earth would we bother to look at a chart (or engage in counseling) unless we thought that the process of doing so could give us the ability to **influence** the future! Based on the current patterns and cycles of your chart, plus some knowledge of your current situation and attitudes, it is often possible for an astrologer to make a prognosis about your future that **may** prove to be accurate. That does **not** mean the outcome is “fated”—that you cannot **choose** to change it. A **proper** astrologer will not say, “This **will** happen.” He or she might say, “If you continue on your present course, with your current attitudes, this **could** be the trend. If you don't like that, here are some other options. What do **you want** to happen? Let's talk about your choices.”

**Scientifically-oriented people often confront astrologers with these questions:**

**6**

**How can planets millions of miles away possibly have any effect on individuals?**

We don't, in fact, know that they do, although recent scientific research suggests that a causal effect may one day be found for some astrological phenomena. What we **can** demonstrate is **synchronicity**—repetitive and observable correspondences between cycles of celestial bodies and human affairs or events on earth. Most astrologers are technicians, not scientists. They observe that a technique works and they learn to use it. Electricians don't know **why** electricity works, either, but they do know how to use it.

**7**

**Aren't astrologers still stuck in ancient pre-Copernicus Earth-centered theories?**

No. We dare say that today's professional astrologers know considerably more about the astronomy of the solar system than most astronomers know about astrology! Certainly since Einstein one should accept that it is **relevant** and valid to view the cosmos or **anything** else from one's own vantage point.

A horoscope is calculated for a specific place, date and time on Earth. Whatever symbolic interpretation is derived from that horoscope, the **perspective** or point of view is that of the individual, institution, event or question that was born at the specific place, date and time of the horoscope. In terms of our point of view, you can't deny that there is truth in the idea that each person is at the center of his or her own personal universe.

Astrologers most generally use Geocentric Astrology (Earth-centered), but many also work with charts that are calculated from a Sun-centered perspective. This is called Heliocentric Astrology. Most certainly, astrologers **do** know the difference between the two!

**And finally, here are two typical questions from people who are concerned about whether astrology conflicts with religion:**

**9**

**Isn't astrology a form of worship that is anti-Christian?**

Of course not! Astrology is **not** a religion, although it can and has been **used** as a tool of religion—as is evidenced in many examples of zodiacal symbols in ancient religious art. Zodiac symbology can be found in temples, in association with the 12 tribes of Israel, for example. And the association of the apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke and John with the Man, the Lion, the Bull (or Ox) and the Eagle, respectively, relates directly back to the zodiac symbols that were, in Biblical times, thought to be the cardinal points. Various astrologers are Christians, Jews, Hindus—of many and varied religious backgrounds. (It is difficult to find an atheist-astrologer, because respect for the amazing order of the universe that astrology demonstrates is impossible to reconcile with belief in a universe based on mere chance.)

Thousands of years ago some ancient peoples did worship the stars. The proper term for that is **astrolatry**. To suggest that modern day astrologers, as a group, are practicing astrolatry makes as much sense as to assume that all horticulturists are tree-worshipping druids.

**10**

**Well, the Bible condemns astrology, doesn't it?**

A few biblical passages—if taken completely out-of-context of the chapters they are in—can **seem** to be anti-astrology. If placed in **context**, the meaning is quite different. **No** passage condemns astrology, in itself. Some passages warn against the fatalistic **misuse** of astrology. Astrology permeated the culture in biblical times, and many subtle astrological symbols are used in scripture in quite favorable references. Modern Bibles correctly translate the "Magi" who followed the star to the birthplace of Jesus as "astrologers." Even the very first chapter of Genesis says that the lights in the sky are to serve as "signs," with the implication that those signs will be "read" and used!

A primary objection of some religious fundamentalists is perhaps that one might rely on astrology to influence one's future, rather than on God. Yet these same people probably listen to weather reports and make plans accordingly. At the root of the problem is probably the fear of astrology as fatalistic, which takes you back to question #5!

**8**

**Aren't you 2000 years out-of-date? The stars aren't where you say they are anymore.**

Astrologers use **signs** of the zodiac, **not** constellations. The signs are equal sectors of the ecliptic, which is the plane or great circle defined by the earth's orbit around the sun. Planetary positions are measured in celestial longitude from 0° Aries, which is the point of the Vernal Equinox. The reference point, then, for this zodiac of **signs** is the **seasons** of Earth, not the stars. This is called "the tropical zodiac" and Tropical Astrology is the most commonly used form of astrology in western culture. The sidereal zodiac, more commonly used in Eastern culture, takes its reference point from particular stars but still divides the ecliptic into equal signs, so it is not the same as the astronomical zodiac (the zodiacal constellations), which are **unequal**.

Your confusion comes because the classical Greeks (who started the system of measurement from 0° Aries) named the signs for the constellations that lay approximately, from Earth's vantage point, in their path at that time. Due to the precession of the equinoxes the zodiac of signs now offsets the zodiac of constellations by about 25°.

In any case, astrological symbolism is primarily involved with planets within the solar system rather than with the stars—other than, of course, the **one** star which is our **Sun**. The positions of the planets (or of any other body or factor used in a horoscope) are measured according to their degree of celestial longitude on the ecliptic (in other words, according to where they are in the **signs**.)