

## Understanding Qualities & Elements

Qualities and elements provide valuable insight into the nature of the signs and reveal how each sign will modify the expression of a planet in a unique way. A deeper study reveals how qualities and elements either resonate harmoniously with a planet, bringing out its best, or are discordant and resist the natural positive expression of a planet.

Most charts will have at least one planet in each quality and element...but there will be imbalances.

**There are Three Qualities: Cardinal, Fixed, Mutable**

**There are Four Elements: Fire Earth, Air, Water**

### Qualities

**Qualities Describe Three Attitudes or Phases of Personality – Three Modes of Action/Reaction**

1. Does a person want to get things done, are they dynamic, action oriented, extroverted - **Cardinal**
2. Is a person resistant to change, cautious, stubborn, prefers the status quo, introverted - **Fixed**
3. Does a person go along to get along, adapt to prevailing circumstance, seek compromise - **Mutable**

**Cardinal Signs** are **Aries, Cancer, Libra, Capricorn**

People born with a significant number of planets in cardinal signs (especially sun, moon or mercury) are strong-willed and have a desire for accomplishment. They are the doers, the movers and shakers in the world. Also known as executive signs, cardinal sign personalities like to be involved in major projects and to **take charge** of whatever needs to be done.

**Fixed Signs** are **Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius**

These personalities are cautious and tend to be stubborn. Their opinions and habits are not easily changed. They do not appreciate unexpected, sudden, or imposed changes. Their tenacity is an asset in research and other areas where patience and perseverance are required. Their cautious nature prevents unnecessary waste of time, talent, and resources.

**Mutable Signs** are **Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, Pisces**

The mutable personality has a remarkable ability to adapt to all types of situations, which is not always a good thing. It certainly makes them easier to live and work with, but over time it can also lead to feelings of resentment, frustration and anger. Their adaptability allows them to survive and even thrive in most circumstances. However constantly adjusting to their environment can also inhibit the expression and development of their own talents and personality.

## Elements

**Elements Describe Four Primary (Elemental) Reactions to Life – Four Expressions of Personality:**

1. Physical – **Fire**
2. Pragmatic – **Earth**
3. Intellectual – **Air**
4. Emotional – **Water**

**An Individual's First Reaction to Things is an Instantaneous (Karmic) Process.** Describing it as if it happens slowly makes it easier to see how the elements are distinct from one another. It illustrates how the elemental reaction of one person or planet will differ from another. It also underscores how elemental tendencies or reactions influence the way we think, what we say, and the things we do.

### **The First Element is Fire - the fire signs are: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius**

Fire is active, excitable, instinctual, restless, independent, aggressive, influential, enthusiastic, and impulsive. It possesses a drive to control externals (everything that is but itself).

**The first reaction to everything for a Fire Sign is physical.** They're the ones most likely to "shoot first and ask questions later." Before they assess the practicality of their actions (earth), before considering the emotional consequences (water), and before intellectual perception has a chance to impose self-control (air), **fire signs need to do something.** The moment their interest is aroused they charge into battle, often unarmed. In their haste important details are forgotten or disregarded. They can also be unaware of how their careless impulsive actions hurt others or infringe on others rights.

The positive side of fire's animated nature is great courage. Fire signs will take chances and do things others would never attempt (and probably shouldn't). Their accomplishments can be legendary if they learn to channel their energy constructively into worthwhile endeavors, and develop the patience to complete projects they start. If they burn out or get bored they'll just start something new.

Fire signs are the most physically active signs. **Aries** needs to be active as a release of energy and to stem boredom. **Leo** wants to get around to enjoy the attention and sociable companionship of others. **Sagittarius** loves the freedom that comes from being physically independent and active.

### **The Second Element is Earth - the earth signs are: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn**

Earth is practical, hard-working, cautious, stubborn, methodical, and patient. It wants to sustain and build on structures that have already been created.

**Earth signs usually have a practical nature and seldom do anything without purpose.** Before taking action that might prove to be a waste of time (fire), before allowing reason or logic (air) to present all sides of an issue (one of which may not benefit them directly), before giving in to the persuasion or sentimentality of emotion (water), **Earth signs assess everything in terms of their goals and needs.**

Earth signs want and sometimes need tangible rewards or expressions of gratitude on the part of others in recognition for their efforts. It can be hard to convince an earth sign that everything can't be measured in terms of its material worth or potential to provide status. At the same time the practical nature of the earth signs is a valuable asset. Their eye for value allows them see the worthiness of people and things that may not be so readily apparent to others. They are remarkable at discovering ways to conserve resources.

Earth signs are not particularly motivated to do anything until they find it expedient to do so. But they instinctively recognize and enjoy the material comforts of life and will not hesitate to expend energy in their pursuit.

**Taurus** will persistently pursue anything that fills a basic need or desire, provides comfort, or results in a good meal at the end of the day. **Virgo** works hard to secure its own needs through service and responsibility to others. **Capricorn** is ambitious and will forego temporary needs and desires. They are in it for the long haul. They want to be on top. No matter how long it takes to get there. They believe when their ambitions are met and they are in charge they can get whatever they want.

### **The Third Element is Air - the air signs are: Gemini, Libra, Aquarius**

Air is intellectual, social, adaptable, reflective, articulate, communicative, detached and aloof.

It's good with groups, but not with intimacy. It's excellent at planning and evaluating, not so good at executing the plan. It makes for great Monday morning quarterbacks.

**Air signs have an intellectual orientation to everything.** Before taking any action that might be unnecessary (fire), before practical considerations can distract their attention (earth), and before emotion or sentimentality blurs the facts (water), **Air signs focus their attention on the available information in order to form (what they believe to be) a complete and unbiased judgment.**

Air signs get distracted in data and information. They're always looking for something new to talk about or use socially. Attracted to all forms of education and communication, they're superb at making (they believe) objective decisions and impartial judgments. Caught up in intellectual curiosity they often fail to realize that just because something makes sense to them doesn't mean it's true.

No matter how rich their inner world and imagination may be, air signs need to acknowledge the physical and emotional realities of life. In relationships they need to remember that ideas can't replace intimacy or physical engagement. In practical matters they need to learn that what works in theory may not work in reality.

Air signs are quick to acquire communication skills and like to use them. **Gemini** wants to find out what's going on – why, where and when...so they can talk about it...and talk about it...and talk.

**Libra** doesn't like to be alone, wants social engagement and therefore seeks the companionship of others. **Aquarius** intrigued by new ideas and innovation, wants to be where others are gathered so they can talk about what they're interested in.

### **The Fourth Element is Water - the water signs are: Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces**

Water is sensitive, impressionable, empathic, nurturing, emotional, introverted, receptive, insecure. Its sensitivity can border on vulnerability, often resulting in the need or desire to withdraw from the world or attempt to control it (think mother). Water is easily influenced by emotion. It tries to control its environment, for better or worse, in order to protect itself from its own over-sensitivity.

**Water signs lead with their feelings, intuition and heart** (or believe they do). Before taking action that might create uncertainty (fire), before practicality can impose a limit on their "feelings" (earth) and before intellectual reason (air) can offer evidence that their emotional fixation may be distorting their perception, Water signs react to everything on an intuitional or emotional level.

They tend to be shy and need constant reassurance. Their willingness to do anything is largely a matter of how they feel at the moment. They'll do almost anything for approval (which is dangerous).

The problem with water signs is they conflate feeling and emotion, which are not the same thing. Feelings do not motivate you to take action one way or another. E-motions on the other hand propel you into action or into reaction internally or externally.

Emotion tends to dominate the inner landscape of a water sign, distorting their perception about people and circumstances, negatively affecting their decisions. On the other hand, when they allow reason to balance their emotions and develop their intuition, they can be unerring in their judgment.

Emotion is a powerful force. It affects people deeply. It can elevate a person to the heights of inspiration and achievement or plunge them into the depths of self-pity, confusion and fear.

Water signs have the most sensitive and "absorptive" souls. They need to be thoughtful of the environments they live and work in. The emotional environment in which they're raised plays a major role in determining their emotional and mental health as adults. They need to be on guard for what can manifest as possessiveness (my children etc.) or emotional dependency (take care of me).

**Cancer** seeks emotional security and satisfaction through home, family, a sense of belonging, and feeling in control of their environment. **Scorpio** seeks emotional satisfaction through an intense exploration or involvement (fixation) with their inner life...and sometimes through outright manipulation or control of others. **Pisces** seeks emotional security by withdrawing into their imagination and emotional experience, "fitting in" by taking on the tonus of their environment.

## **Homework - Putting the Elements and Qualities Together**

1. Combine the characteristics of the Elements and Qualities together. See if you can feel how these combinations produce a unique expression for each of the zodiacal signs.
2. Reflect on what attributes the signs with the same element or quality have in common.
3. Reflect on how each of the planets might express itself in any given sign.
4. Recognize which planets you do or don't feel you're starting to understand. Some will seem easier to explain to yourself than others. This will give you a clue about where to focus your studies.