

## Eight House Systems Explained

Adapted from [TwoWander.com/blog/an-overview-of-astrology-house-systems](https://TwoWander.com/blog/an-overview-of-astrology-house-systems)

### Placidus

Placidus is a **temporal system**.

It marks the cusps of the houses in two-hour increments from the time of birth. The degree of the zodiac sign that is rising on the eastern horizon at the time of birth marks the cusp of the 1<sup>st</sup> house. After two hours, the rising degree is again measured, which then marks the cusp of the 12<sup>th</sup> house, and so on. Because each house is proportioned according to **the amount of time the signs spend on the horizon** from the perspective on Earth, it results in houses of unequal size. This allows for the tilt of the Earth relative to the ecliptic, so that the houses become more distorted as the birth location approaches the north and south poles. Houses can become quite disproportionate at extreme northern and southern latitudes.

First mentioned in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the Arab literature, and definitively documented in a 1602 publication by Giovanni Antonio Magini, Placidus was popularized by the Catholic Church as an argument in favor of Ptolemy's geocentric model in the campaign against the heliocentric theory. It is thought to have been named after a professor of mathematics in an effort to lend credibility to the system. It is currently the most popular version in use today, although some argue this is due to contingent factors concerning the historical accessibility of this kind of ephemeris.

### Whole-Sign Houses

Whole-Sign is a non-quadrant, **ecliptic system**.

In the whole-sign system, sometimes referred to as the sign-house system, each house is exactly 30° each. The 1<sup>st</sup> house begins at 0° of the zodiac sign in which the Ascendant falls. The next sign after the rising sign then becomes the whole 2<sup>nd</sup> house, the sign after that the 3<sup>rd</sup> house, and so on. In other words, each house is wholly filled by one sign. It is a useful system for learning how to read natal charts because of its simplicity. It is also requisite to use this house system for ancient timing techniques such as annual profections and zodiacal releasing.

It is argued that the Whole-Sign house system forms the basis from which the concept of the astrological houses were created in the first place. This system has a floating Midheaven which can be anywhere in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> houses (and the Imum

Coeli in the opposing Houses), allowing for interesting nuance with regard to career path (or home life) of the native.

Whole-Sign houses were first delineated in the foundational Hermes text. It is also used at times in Vedic Astrology.

## Campanus

Campanus is a **spatial system**. It results in wildly varying house sizes and what's known as *intercepted* houses, when one house is completely contained by a zodiac sign, with some room to spare on either side. The intercepted sign does not mark a house cusp, which can add a layer of nuance and meaning to interpretation. The prime vertical (the great circle taking in the zenith and east point on the horizon) is divided into twelve, and these divisions are projected onto the ecliptic along great circles that take in the north and south points on the horizon.

The Campanus house system is used by Jessica Lanyadoo.

## Porphiry

Porphiry is another **spatial** system, typically attributed to Vettius Valens rather than its namesake, dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> c. It follows the ecliptic and maintains the Midheaven as the cusp of the 10<sup>th</sup> house. Each quadrant of the ecliptic is divided into three equal parts between the four angles. Porphiry prioritizes the angles of the chart (the Ascendant, Descendant, IC, and MC) as the 1<sup>st</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> cusps, respectively.

This is one of the oldest systems of *quadrant* style division, whose precursor we find in the foundational Petosiris and Nechepso text. The time it takes for the Sun to move from its rising position to its noontime position, a diurnal arc, is divided into equal thirds. The same process is done for houses two and three, five and six, and eight and nine, according to the four angles.

## Equal House

This is the most popular house system in Vedic sidereal astrology. The difference between Equal Houses and Whole-Sign Houses is that in Whole-Sign Houses the cusp of the 1<sup>st</sup> house begins at 0° of the sign that contains the Ascendant, while in Equal Houses the *degree* of the Ascendant itself is the cusp of the 1<sup>st</sup> house.

In the Equal House system, the ecliptic is also divided into twelve divisions of  $30^\circ$  but beginning with the Ascendant degree, which acts as the cusp of the 1<sup>st</sup> house, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> house beginning exactly  $30^\circ$  later, at the same degree in the next sign. Proponents of this house system say it is more accurate and less distorting at higher latitudes (especially above  $60^\circ$ ) than Placidus or other quadrant systems.

The Equal House system was first delineated in the foundational Asclepius text.

## Koch

Another time-based system, the Koch system is a modern sophisticated mathematical refinement of the Equal House system, in which all the Houses are  $30^\circ$  but is defined by horizon lines at different times on the day of birth. Using the timespan that the MC has spent above the horizon, the cusp of the 12<sup>th</sup> house is located where the Ascendant was when 1/3 of this time had passed, the 11<sup>th</sup> house cusp is where the Ascendant was when 2/3 of that time had passed, and so on. It assigns special significance to the MC-IC axis, because the measure of division is predefined by the diurnal arc of the zodiacal degree of the MC at birth.

## Alcabitius

Alcabitius is also a time-based system, the predecessor system to Placidus (which in turn largely replaced Porphyry). The difference from Placidus is that the time that it takes the Ascendant to reach the meridian is divided equally into three parts. It divides the diurnal arc of the Ascendant into six equal-sized segments. Then, meridian circles are drawn through the resulting segments. The places where the circles intersect the ecliptic mark the cusps of the houses. The other cusps can be calculated by adding  $180^\circ$  respectively. The Alcabitius system was popular in Europe before the introduction of the Regiomontanus house system.

## Regiomontanus

This is a spatial system like Campanus, but in the Regiomantus system the celestial equator is divided into twelve, and these divisions are projected onto the ecliptic along great circles that take in the north and south points on the horizon. This system was largely replaced by Placidus.