Elements and modes

The twelve signs are grouped in two ways: by **element** (what they are made of) and by **mode** (how they move). Every sign has one element and one mode. The "balance" on page 2 of each chart counts how many planets — plus the Ascendant — fall in each group: it is not a judgement, it is the background of the character.

The elements — four temperaments

Element	Signs	What it says about a person	When there is a lot / little
Fire ♈ ♌ ♐	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	energy, drive, enthusiasm, initiative; acts first, thinks later	a lot: courage, impatience · little: slow to start, waits for others
Earth ♉ ♍ ♑	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	concreteness, patience, practical sense, constancy; wants to see facts	a lot: a builder, at times rigid · little: many ideas, little hand
Air ♊ ♎ ♒	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	ideas, words, relationships, detachment; understands and communicates	a lot: the mind above all · little: feels and acts, finds it hard to step back
Water ♋ ♏ ♓	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	feeling, intuition, memory, sensitivity; feels before reasoning	a lot: feels everything, shows little · little: feelings are shown with deeds

Examples from the family charts. Nadia: **Water 0** — feelings are shown with deeds more than with words. Bruno: **Earth 5** — a builder. William: **Fire 0** — not the one who starts things, but the one who adapts, understands and then moves. Nina: **Water 5, Air 0** — feels a great deal, shows little, finds it hard to step back.

The modes — three ways of moving

Mode	Signs	What it says	When there is a lot
Cardinal	Aries, Cancer, Libra, Capricorn	**starts**: takes the initiative, opens, leads	starts strong, at times does not finish or starts too many things
Fixed	Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius	**keeps**: tenacity, constancy, long memory	once decided, no turning back; hard to change mind
Mutable	Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, Pisces	**adapts**: flexibility, curiosity, variety	agile, impatient with routine and fixed roles

Examples. Nadia and Mino: **seven fixed planets** — once they decide, they do not turn back. Chiara: **nine cardinal points** — she starts, pushes, does not stand still. Ilaria and Liam: **six or seven mutable** — agile, curious, no lovers of routine.

How they combine

Every sign is an element plus a mode, and the combination describes it. **Scorpio** is fixed Water: feeling that does not let go. **Aries** is cardinal Fire: energy that starts. **Virgo** is mutable Earth: practicality that adapts. **Aquarius** is fixed Air: ideas held with tenacity. **Cancer** is cardinal Water: takes the initiative in order to protect. **Capricorn** is cardinal Earth: starts projects with a plan.

	Cardinal	Fixed	Mutable
Fire	Aries	Leo	Sagittarius
Earth	Capricorn	Taurus	Virgo
Air	Libra	Aquarius	Gemini
Water	Cancer	Scorpio	Pisces

Cardinal and Lilith

Why "cardinal"

From the Latin *cardo*, the hinge a door turns on: these are the **signs that open the seasons**. The Sun enters one of these four signs exactly when the season changes — that is why they are the four "hinges" of the year. The **fixed** signs sit in the middle of the season (Taurus = full spring, Leo = full summer, Scorpio = full autumn, Aquarius = full winter); the **mutable** signs close it and prepare the next one.

Cardinal sign	Opens	Date	How it takes the initiative
Aries (Fire)	spring	equinox, 20-21 March	charges ahead
Cancer (Water)	summer	solstice, 21 June	moves things in order to protect, with feeling
Libra (Air)	autumn	equinox, 22-23 September	starts relationships, agreements, mediations
Capricorn (Earth)	winter	solstice, 21-22 December	starts projects and constructions, with a plan

The **angles** count too: Ascendant, Descendant, Midheaven and Imum Coeli are the "cardinal points" of the chart, and houses 1, 4, 7 and 10 are called **angular** houses — planets placed there weigh more. Examples: Tanya has five cardinal planets, all in Aries — pure initiative; Angelo has five, with the Sun in Cancer and the Moon in Libra — sociable and enterprising.

Lilith, the Black Moon

Lilith is neither a planet nor a real body: it is a **mathematical point**, the **apogee** of the Moon's orbit, that is the point where the Moon is farthest from the Earth. In our charts we use the **mean** Lilith (calculated on the idealised orbit), the one most programs use; there is also the "true" Lilith, which swings a few degrees around the mean — if an app gives a slightly different value, that is why. In the tables its symbol is ⚸.

What it means. By tradition it is the **instinctive, independent, untamed** part of us: what asks no permission, does not adapt, will not be commanded. The sign and house it falls in show where a person refuses compromise, where they may feel "outside" or judged — and where they have an original strength all their own. It is not a "bad" point: it is the pride of being oneself; when tense (square, opposition), the risk is breaking instead of negotiating.

> **Examples.** Nina: Lilith in Capricorn in the 1st house, square the Midheaven — a public image that asks no permission. Roberto and Roxana: Lilith conjunct the Midheaven — a public image outside the usual patterns. Lula: Lilith on the Descendant — an independent, untameable side in relationships.

How much these points weigh

Lilith, like Chiron and the North Node, is a **secondary** point: in the readings it is mentioned only when it makes tight aspects (within 4°), never on its own. The picture of a person is made by Sun, Moon, Ascendant and the planets; elements and modes are the background; Lilith, Chiron and the Nodes are the nuances.