

# The Sun-Mars Cycle

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.2 (posted on 10 September 2019)*

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The main astrological technique I use to study the collective is through the paired, dyadic cycles of the major bodies of the solar system, all of which can be called “planets” in astrology. Technically, the Sun and our Moon are termed “Lights,” but planets is the generic word for any major body. What I call “Civilizational Astrology” comes in two groups of cycles — the six shorter cycles between planets in the inner solar system (Sun, Mercury, Venus, and Mars), and the ten longer cycles between the outer planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto), which move through the zodiac much more slowly.) Many astrologers focus on one additional cycle, the monthly soli-lunar cycle between our Moon and the Sun.

The longest of the shorter cycles is the Sun-Mars cycle, which is roughly two years in duration, with an average of 25.6 months. Usually, each successive Sun-Mars cycle begins one sign after that of the previous cycle (but two consecutive beginnings sometimes skip a sign, or even two signs in extremely rare instances).

The cycle’s symbolic implications surround the characteristic ways that assertive or kinetically vital energies (Sun-Mars) will tend to be felt and applied within the collective (indicated by the section of the zodiac where the Sun and Mars conjoin) during that cycle’s 25 months. Put in the crudest terms, the Sun-Mars cycle shows us where the sharpest cutting edge or most intense heat are in the collective psyche of humanity, whether that edge is the thrust of desire through what we want and actively seek, or the heat of conflict through aggressive confrontations arising from implied or actual threats. The symbolism here is wholly masculine in tone, so it tends to be more physical than other cycles, as well as competitive. A certain phallic symbolism about penetration or conquest is unavoidable. The Sun-Mars cycle isn’t inherently violent, but it does lean in that direction, and it doesn’t take much to push it over the edge.

Here’s a brief story to illustrate the cycle’s core meaning: You live in Alaska, and you travel by dog sled. Your sled uses a team of dogs to pull it, most of which are harnessed in pairs. The most important of that team, however, is the lead dog, who is harnessed alone at the head of the sled. While each pair of dogs has its own special task, they tend to dutifully follow the ass of the dog in front of them, but the lead dog is critical in setting the pace and direction of the sled.

That dog must be especially sensitive and responsive to your verbal commands as driver of the sled — mush (go), gee (turn right), haw (turn left), whoa (stop), etc.

The question then becomes, what qualities do you want in your lead dog? Would you like that dog to be Aryan, meaning very assertive, innately competitive, willing to go where angels fear to tread, but headstrong and not always receptive to your commands? Or would you prefer a Taurean lead dog — steady as a rock, durable as hell, but stubbornly resistant to changing commands? Or Gemini — quick and nimble, but easily distracted by external stimulus? You get the picture.

Of course, in the actual Sun-Mars cycles, we're not "choosing" a lead sled dog. We get whatever the archetype field gives us.

Below are the dates and zodiac positions of Sun-Mars cycle beginnings in the initial three decades of the 21st century (2000s through the 2020s), with keyphrase interpretations of each cycle's primary approaches and concerns to collectively taking action over its two-year effective period:

1 July 2000	10° Can 06	protection and security, but usually defensive and not always courageous
10 Aug 2002	18 Leo 06	pride, power, and integrity, but sometimes more show than substance
15 Sep 2004	23 Vir 01	course corrections and adjustments, but typically only tweaking the system for greater efficiency
23 Oct 2006	29 Lib 43	(almost Scorpio) digging into underlying causes with powerful impact and effect, but often without transparency
5 Dec 2008	14 Sag 09	sweeping, wholesale changes enthusiastically undertaken, but frequently without consideration of long-term effects
4 Feb 2011	15 Aqu 31	social or ideological engineering, but actions may include inherent biases
17 Apr 2013	28 Ari 08	eager willingness to address urgent crises, but sometimes without regard for the long-term consequences, possible "bull in a china shop" syndrome
14 Jun 2015	23 Gem 17	quicksilver, nimble, action and assertion as a response to momentary stimulus, but inconsistent and often superficial
26 Jul 2017	4 Leo 12	pride, power, and integrity, but sometimes more show than substance
2 Sep 2019	9 Vir 41	course corrections and adjustments, but overly cautious and

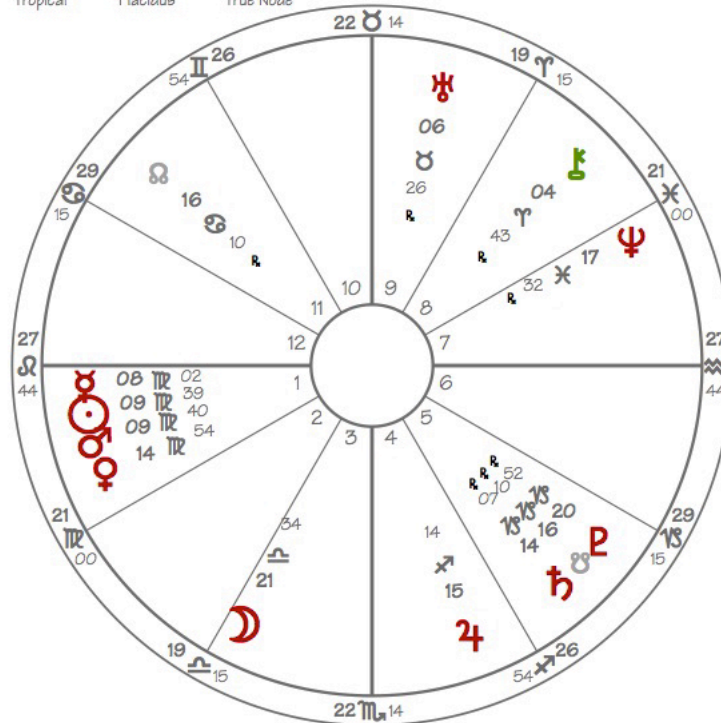
typically only tweaking systems for greater efficiency

- 7 Oct 2021 15 Lib 06 action to achieve harmony and balance, but typically based on momentary expedience, compromise, or lack of principle
- 18 Nov 2023 25 Sco 37 digging into underlying causes with powerful impact and effect, but frequently without transparency, possible "down and dirty" syndrome
- 9 Jan 2026 19 Cap 13 challenging or defending authority through emphasis on institutions and top-down hierarchies, tending to reinforce the existing status quo
- 20 Mar 2028 1 Ari 00 eager willingness to address urgent crises, but usually without regard for long-term consequences, possible "bull in a china shop" syndrome

We can also examine the complete chart for the beginning of any Sun-Mars cycle, which provides a wealth of symbolic information. Here is the chart for the moment of the 2019 Sun-Mars conjunction, erected from the nation's capitol:

### 2019 Sun-Mars Conjunction

Natal Chart  
Monday, September 2, 2019  
5:42:23 AM EDT  
White House, District of Columbia  
Tropical Placidus True Node



What does the chart suggest about the coming two years collectively? With the four faster moving planets clustered in Virgo and the Moon in Libra, we shouldn't look for sweeping changes in how society operates. Like all earth signs, Virgo is instinctively cautious. It tinkers with existing systems to perfect them or improve efficiency, but it doesn't radically change anything. If we're looking for sweeping or radical changes in society, this Sun-Mars cycle lobbies against that.

Since the 2020 Presidential election occurs within this cycle, we can assume that practical reforms will be a greater concern than theoretical or ideological considerations. While Uranus as the elevated planet in the 9th House suggests that revolutionary ideas may be discussed, the overall chart is staunchly conservative. The exact trine between Venus and Saturn from Virgo to Capricorn lobbies for adherence to the existing status quo, which means no change in wealth inequality or corporate domination. Predatory capitalism may be a sick giant, but it's in no danger of being handed its walking papers tomorrow. According to this chart (and throughout the coming two-year Sun-Mars cycle), single-payer Medicare for all doesn't have a snowball's chance in hell. The same fat chance applies to reductions in military spending.

The Venus-Neptune-Jupiter T-square and the Moon-Pluto square imply that personal wishes and needs will be prominent. During this national election cycle, lots of tasty carrots are likely to be dangled in front of voter-donkeys, but few of those promises will actually be delivered later. According to the chart, we're still in the realm of dreams, hopes, and fantasies much more than realities. Basically, we're still hanging onto the past rather than looking to the future.

It's always a bit risky astrologically to focus too much on any one technique. Putting a particular alignment or even an entire chart under the microscope may omit many other relevant and powerful symbolic factors, such as the outer-planets cycles I've written about in recent commentaries. So, please take what I've written here with a grain of salt. None of this is cast in stone, and I'm all too aware of my own fallibility.