

## WHEN DOES THE AGE OF AQUARIUS BEGIN?

The Age of Aquarius begins when the vernal equinox point moves out of the constellation Pisces and into Aquarius. But there's no definitive answer as to when that will be. An equinox is the date in the year when day and night times are of the same length. There are two equinoxes in every year, one around the 21 of March and the other around the 21 of September. It is common custom to call the first one the vernal (Spring) equinox and the second one the autumnal equinox.

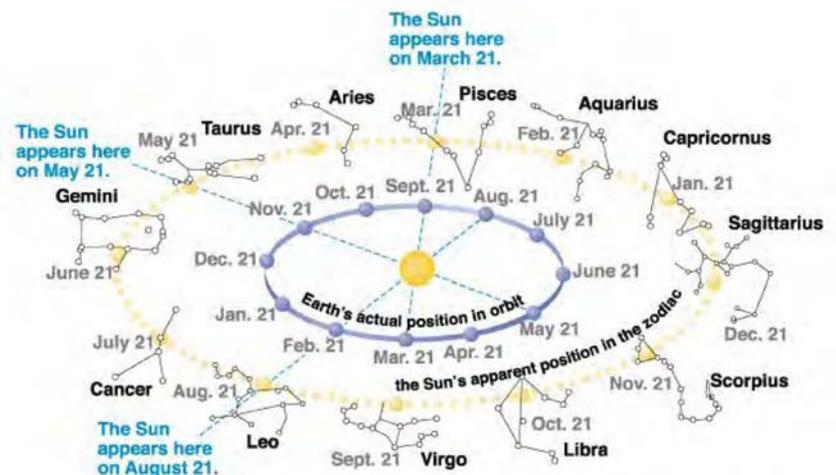
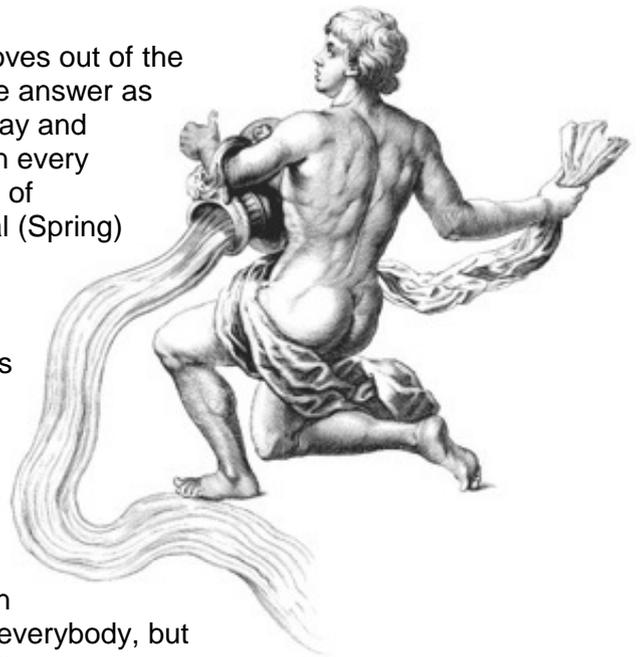
**The Age of Aquarius is not part of astronomy.** It's an astrological age, which occurs because of a cyclic motion of Earth known as the precession of the equinoxes, which causes the identity of the pole star to change over time. The cycle of precession lasts 25,800 years, and there are 12 constellations in the circle of the Zodiac. So, roughly every 2,150 years, the sun's position at the time of the March, or vernal, equinox moves in front of a new Zodiac constellation. The Age of Aquarius begins when the March equinox point moves out of the constellation Pisces and into the constellation Aquarius. When will that be? There is no absolute answer for everybody, but the **International Astronomical Union (IAU)** – which in the 20th century assumed the duty of officially naming and defining all things astronomical – created official constellation boundaries in 1930. From the perspective of astronomy then, the beginning of the Age of Aquarius is based upon IAU constellation boundaries, which astrologers or New Age practitioners might or might not choose to use in their computations. According to the Belgian astronomer and mathematical wizard **Jean Meeus**, who does adhere to the IAU's definitions, the sun passed from being in front of the constellation Aries to being in front of the constellation Pisces in 68 B.C. Looking ahead, again according to Jean Meeus, the March equinox will cross over into the constellation Aquarius in 2597. Once again, these are the astronomical dates, based on IAU constellation boundaries established in 1930. Astrologers like to divide the Zodiac into twelve equal 30 degree sections. But the constellation Pisces – as defined by the IAU – spans more than 30° along the ecliptic, which Astrologers might disregard, so there could be confusion.

Some astrologers say the Age of Aquarius actually began in 2012. That's because they believe the star Regulus in the constellation Leo the Lion marked the ancient border between the constellations Leo and Cancer. This star moved to within 30° of the September equinox point in 2012, meaning that Regulus left the sign Leo to enter the sign Virgo in that year. Presuming equal-sized constellations in antiquity, that places the border of the constellations Pisces and Aquarius at 150° west of Regulus, or at the March equinox point. By this reckoning, the Age of Aquarius did start in 2012.

**How did the Age of Aquarius enter popular culture?** The Age of Aquarius in the U.S. is associated with the hippies of the 1960s and '70s, and now with the New Age movement. In both cases, the arrival of the Aquarian age has been associated with ... well, harmony and understanding, sympathy and trust abounding. And that brings us to the 1967 smash-hit musical Hair, with its opening song Aquarius, by a musical group called the 5th Dimension. The song opened with the lines:

*When the moon is in the Seventh House  
And Jupiter aligns with Mars  
Then peace will guide the planets  
And love will steer the stars  
This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius*

This Broadway musical brought the Aquarian Age concept into the popular culture. Hair subsequently ran for 1,750 performances on Broadway and 1,997 performances in London, with simultaneous productions in cities across the United States and Europe.



Copyright © Addison Wesley

Precession of the equinoxes through the signs of the Zodiac