

~~Intro to Astrologian~~

[Outdated, new guide here](#)

Brought to you by Zyrkhan Dar'locke, AKA Literally Who

The Scope of this Guide

As the title implies, this guide is intended to function as an introduction to Astrologian. This guide is concerned with *Astrologian* only. It will not address the general principles of healing as they apply to all healers. Those things are discussed in [Zyrk's Bullshit Guide to the Principles of Healing](#). Our focus is on things that are unique to Astrologian: AST-specific spells/abilities, cards, strengths, weaknesses, etc.

The guide is intended both for people who are relatively new to the job and people who are generally uncertain as to whether they're on the right track with their understanding of what the job does, what it's supposed to do, and how it's supposed to do it. The goal is to point you in the right direction and give you a solid foundation to build upon.

That said, there's very little concrete feedback to indicate whether you're doing anything right when it comes to anything other than keeping the party alive, so this may still be informative for more experienced Astrologians when it comes to expected ability usage and the general guidelines for proper cardplay.

The guide will ***not***, however, list and explain your tooltips for you, except where strictly necessary for specific reasons. If you are unfamiliar with what your skills do, you don't need this guide yet. ***What you need is to read your tooltips.*** They can be found either in game or on the official [FFXIV Astrologian job guide](#). Go. Go now, and don't come back until you've at least *attempted* to read and understand all of your tooltips.

For more in-depth AST discussion and questions beyond the scope of this guide, please direct your attention to [The Balance Discord](#), where there are plenty of skilled ASTs who are more than happy to answer questions and work with you.

Changelog

- 11/25/18, patch 4.45 - released
- 12/8/18, patch 4.45
 - Updated section on Spear's value on Bard

To-Do

- Resolving Sleeve Draw - prepping before Sleeve, order of operations
- Explanation of holding Cleric Stance to extend it
- Use cases for undraws

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What Makes Us Special?

Other than being very pretty (not to understate the importance of how pretty we are)

The way the game is currently designed, the primary goal of the entire raid is to dish out as much DPS as possible without unduly compromising the survival of the run. Healers work to keep people alive as efficiently as they can, and they contribute as much to the party's damage as they can. That's the core principle of healing, but each healer has slightly different ways to accomplish that goal. Astrologian's role in the game is defined by its mobility, unique oGCDs, and above all else, cards.

How about a trite little pros and cons list? Really it's just an excuse for me to give an overview of the big highs and lows when it comes to Astrologian gameplay and the Astrologian job fantasy.

Pros	Cons
Being pretty	Poor MP economy
Stuffing people full of buffs	DPS "rotation" may cause cerebral atrophy
Feeling like a concert pianist	Cards will give uplander many brainhurts
Being way prettier than everyone else	Seriously my MP was right here a second ago

It may come as a surprise that Balance, or even cards as a whole, aren't the only thing Astrologian has going for it. We have quite a few unique strengths, actually, though not all of them are widely understood just yet—particularly mobility. We'll begin with the simpler ones and work our way up to the lengthier explanations.

Mobility

In patch 4.3, the base cast time of Malefic was reduced to 1.5s, retaining the standard 2.5s base recast time (GCD). This change was intended to alleviate the egregious human rights violation that was the 4.0 AST oGCD clipping nightmare, which was itself a result of the extreme reduction in our instant cast spells that could be used to freely weave oGCDs, coupled with the massive increase in the number of oGCDs we needed to weave.

The result of the change, however, was much bigger than that. In addition to letting us weave oGCDs without clipping, the 1.5s cast time means that, accounting for slidecasting, we have a solid half a GCD on nearly every GCD to scoot around without losing uptime. That's absolutely massive when it comes to how forgiving the job is with positioning, dodging AoEs, and doing mechanics. It's a highly underrated strength of Astrologian, especially when you're less familiar with the content and aren't necessarily preparing for every AoE and mechanic in advance.

Astrologian's oGCDs

Astrologians have some incredibly powerful oGCD abilities and cooldowns that offer us unique strengths. We may not have Cure 3 or Benediction, but we do have Earthly Star and Essential Dignity. These skills are similar in some ways, but they have different strengths. They may seem like a plagiarized White Mage kit, but if you try to play like a White Mage with cards, you're going to make for a pretty poor Astrologian.

Earthly Star (ES)

Earthly Star is a potent AoE oGCD heal that also deals damage. Cure 3 has the advantage of being on-demand and not limited by pesky cooldowns, but it has a hefty MP cost, and you have to spend a GCD casting it (which means you're losing a potential damage GCD). Because Earthly Star is an oGCD, it has no MP cost and does not take a GCD to use. You don't sacrifice damage to use it (you actually gain damage since the skill itself does damage).

The caveat is that it's on a cooldown and it *requires* preemptive placement. If at all possible, Earthly Star should *always* charge for 10 seconds to become a Giant Dominance so that you get the full damage and healing potencies. The only time you would detonate it before it has charged is if you have *absolutely no choice* in order to prevent deaths, or if the damage would otherwise be wasted due to the enemy becoming untargetable or dying.

This is the single most potent upfront AoE heal in the game, short of limit breaks. It's also a very potent source of damage in any multi-target situation due to the fact that the damage has no falloff for multiple targets like Holy/Gravity/Bane/Flare. It's one of the most important buttons in your entire kit. **Use it and abuse it.** As a general guideline, place it every time it's available, and then adjust the timings of your placements from there.

If there are places you're not getting any healing value out of a certain usage, see if you can strip away other heals that are being used in that section of the fight. If you can't strip away other heals in that section without it causing issues, *then* you can look into delaying the placement of your Star. It's okay to delay it and even end up losing a cast over the course of the fight if it means you're saving GCDs as a result of getting better value out of the Star's healing (as long as you're not losing out on an opportunity to hit more than one enemy with the damage, which is almost always the better option).

Earthly Star represents such a large portion of your power budget in the healing department that it *needs* to be worked around when you're coordinating with your cohealer. Star timings should generally form the backbone of the healing plan, with other tools being used to fill in the gaps, because you are directly losing damage potency by losing uses of Earthly Star. You don't delay Earthly Star because Whispering Dawn is up and can cover the healing. It's the other way around. Whispering Dawn can sit on a cactus for a minute, because Earthly Star is a diva who *needs* that stage time.

Essential Dignity (ED)

Essential Dignity is a low-cooldown single target oGCD heal. Its base potency is 400, which scales with the target's missing HP up to 1000 potency when the target has 1 HP. It has the added benefit of reducing the cooldown of Lightspeed by 10 seconds on each use. More on that later. This ability can be tricky to use, because it fills several roles in Astrologian's kit.

The obvious role is as an emergency heal. It's an oGCD, so when something goes wrong and you need to get someone healed *immediately* in order to prevent their death, this is the only button you have that can do that. Even Swiftcast/Lightspeed + Benefic II is going to be nearly a full second slower due to the animation locks. The second (and sort of third) role is as a consistent oGCD healing contribution to keep the tank afloat across the entire fight. In this capacity, it's used to save both MP and GCDs that you (or your cohealer) would otherwise have to spend healing the tank.

The trouble is that these functions are mutually exclusive with one another. If you save it for emergencies, you're significantly reducing the amount of non-GCD healing that you and your cohealer can supply to the tank, which means one of you will have to spend more resources to keep the tank up throughout the fight, which means you and your cohealer are doing less damage. If you use it frequently to supplement passive tank upkeep and save MP/GCDs, you're unlikely to have an emergency heal available in the event that something goes wrong and you need one.

Generally speaking, you want to use Essential Dignity liberally in order to minimize the amount of actual resources you and your cohealer have to spend on tank upkeep. It's better to prevent people from getting low and getting into a situation where they might need an emergency heal than to hold onto it *just in case*. Of course, you will get more potency out of it if you let the tank get a little bit low before you use it, but don't hold onto it *too* long just to squeeze a little extra potency out of it. You won't use it exactly on cooldown in most situations, but you will use it frequently.

However, under some circumstances, it may be acceptable to save it for an emergency for short periods of time. For instance, if there's a section of the fight coming up where you know that people are likely to mess up, and you know that you don't have enough time to spot heal people between the mechanics, it may be wise to save your Essential Dignity for that section to keep the run going, at least until people are more comfortable with that part of the fight.

At any rate, it's on a relatively short 40 second cooldown, so use it or lose it. You won't be missing it for long, because it'll be back up before you know it.

Collective Unconscious (CU)

Collective Unconscious is a very unique ability. It is a channeled ability that creates a bubble around you. For everyone inside that bubble, it reduces incoming damage by 10% and applies an incredibly potent HoT/regen effect. The damage reduction only lasts for one server tick (for server tick explanation, see [general healing guide](#)), but the regen persists. Both effects are reapplied to all party members inside the effect as long as you continue channeling the ability. Effectively, the damage reduction remains in effect as long as the ability is channeled, and it lingers until the next server tick once you stop channeling. The regen has a base duration of 15 seconds, and it is refreshed to the full 15 second duration on every server tick while you continue channeling. The ability itself can be channeled for a maximum duration of 18 seconds.

As of patch 4.4, Collective Unconscious (and other similar ground effects) applies instantly when the ability is activated, rather than waiting for the next server tick to apply the effects. This means that you don't have to channel it *at all* in order to get the effects. You can press it *while moving* and it will apply the effect to anyone who was close enough when you activated the ability. You can weave it very freely without having to stand there and lose casts just to make sure the effect applies.

The damage reduction effect snapshots (again, the explanation of snapshotting as a mechanic, see [general healing guide](#)), so you can potentially cover raid damage with the damage reduction even if you don't stop to channel the ability, if you time it carefully. The more common use of the ability, however, is the regen. It's the most potent AoE regen in the game, at a whopping 150 potency per tick. That's the same as White Mage's single target Regen, but applied to the entire party for 0 MP and without using a GCD.

Collective Unconscious is one of the most criminally underutilized abilities in Astrologian's kit. It's incredibly powerful. In terms of total healing contribution, it's nearly as important as Earthly Star, to be completely honest. Use this ability *frequently*. Even if there's so little raid damage that you can cover all the raid damage with other resourceless oGCD heals, use it just for the tank healing. Who doesn't want 750+ total healing potency on the tank for free?

Celestial Opposition (CO/COpp) and Time Dilation (TD)

Celestial Opposition's primary effect is extending buffs that we've applied by 10 seconds in an AoE around us, and it has a 4s AoE stun tacked on that's mostly just circumstantially useful in dungeons. Time Dilation is a single target version that extends buffs by 15 seconds, but you cannot use Time Dilation on yourself. This is where we really get into some of the most unique aspects of Astrologian. Most people assume that the main point of these abilities is to extend cards. While that *is* a solid use of the abilities, it's far from the *only* use, and the other uses can often be more important.

You see, cards are far from the only buffs that you apply to your allies that you might want to extend. Namely, it can be extremely efficient to extend regens like Diurnal Aspected Benefic/Helios and Collective Unconscious. Even just extending Aspected Benefic, you can nearly get another full duration out of the regen, thus saving you the GCD and MP you would otherwise have to use to reapply it.

That's a huge chunk of MP saved and an immediate gain of 220 damage potency from getting to cast Malefic instead of spending a GCD reapplying the regen. That's worth significantly more than an extra 15 seconds on a 5% AoE card for a single person (though it would generally still be better to use Time Dilation for a card instead of regens if it were a single target card).

That's just for Time Dilation, though. Celestial Opposition can extend regens on the *entire party*, which is especially crazy for Collective Unconscious. Both Time Dilation and Celestial Opposition also preserve the original snapshot of the regen from when it was cast, affected by any relevant healing buffs like Largesse, Fey Illumination, Convalescence, etc. Of course, you have to consider whether you're actually saving any resources (GCDs, Aetherflow stacks from the SCH, cooldowns) by having that extra healing from extending the regens.

The truly unique thing about Celestial Opposition is that it also extends buffs on *yourself*. This opens up an entire world of possibilities. I'll talk more about this in the Tips & Tricks section, but for now, just remember that 99% of the time, **the primary function of Celestial Opposition is extending your Lucid Dreaming**. If you can manage to make a small adjustment in the timing of your Celestial Opposition so that you can also extend cards and/or regens with it, by all means, do so. But if you fail to extend Lucid Dreaming, you're likely in for a very bad time.

Synastry

Synastry places corresponding buffs on yourself and a target party member, mirroring 40% of the healing done by *single target healing spells*. The exact wording here is very important. You see, *spells* and *abilities* are different things (for the full explanation of spells vs abilities... [you know the drill](#)). Simply put, *spells* are actions that are on the GCD. *Abilities* are things that are not tied to the GCD, and they have their own internal recast time/cooldown. Benefic, Benefic II, Helios, and their Aspected counterparts are all spells. Essential Dignity, Collective Unconscious, and Earthly Star are abilities. Synastry specifies that it only works with *single target healing spells*, which means that it only mirrors the healing from Benefic, Benefic II, and the upfront potency of Aspected Benefic (not the HoT or the shield portion).

This puts Synastry in a bit of a strange place. It makes you extremely good at doing one of the things that you spend all your time avoiding if at all possible: casting Benefic II. It essentially buffs your least GCD efficient, last-resort single target heal. It's quite common, then, that Synastry could go unused for an entire encounter, because it buffs something that you only use sparingly.

That's not to say it *should* go unused, though. It *is* free healing if you have the oGCD space to weave it in before refreshing Aspected Benefic. 80 extra potency on an Aspected Benefic isn't going to end world hunger, but it *can* add up if you're doing this multiple times in a fight, and it's literally free. However, you may still find yourself having to cast Benefic II every once in a while, and throwing up Synastry sometime before you cast that Benefic II is a pretty hefty amount of extra healing. It could reduce the number of Benefic IIs you'll have to cast over the entire fight, or it could reduce the other resources you're spending on healing that tank, like the SCH's fairy gauge or Aetherflow stacks.

That said, there *are* some situations where Synastry may legitimately be the most efficient tool you have for the job. For situations where you need to focus healing on two targets at once, whether that be multiple tank busters, shared tank busters, or focused damage on the tank and a single non-tank at the same time, Synastry can be incredible. For massive amounts of healing on a single target, it can also be incredibly powerful. Healing a Dark Knight's Living Dead is probably the most prominent example of this.

Even just as a way to supplement tank upkeep in certain places in the fight, Synastry effectively turns your Benefic II into the upfront nuke equivalent of a full duration Diurnal Aspected Benefic. When paired with Synastry, Benefic II is 910 potency compared to Diurnal Aspected Benefic's 1040 (not including Sect bonuses), but Benefic II costs significantly less MP, and of course, the healing happens all at once. It's not really any less GCD efficient than a Diurnal Aspected Benefic, so if you need some extra single target healing somewhere and you don't have any better tools to handle it at that place in the fight (like Essential Dignity or your cohealer's oGCDs), Synastry + Benefic II is a perfectly good option.

Lightspeed (LS)

Lightspeed reduces the cast times of your spells by 2.5 seconds and reduces their MP costs by 50% for 10 seconds. This effectively makes everything an instant cast spell other than a raise (Ascend). Some spells have a base 3 second cast time, but unless your GCD is very slow and/or your connection is very unfortunate, the 0.5 second cast time should go off without a hitch even while continuously moving. Just from reading this description, the uses for Lightspeed should be fairly straightforward, but it's often a point of confusion.

Before I discuss how you *do* use Lightspeed, I must make one thing crystal clear: Unless you are spamming Gravity on multiple targets, **Lightspeed does not inherently make you do more damage.** It does not allow you to get more casts off in the same amount of time. It is not a haste buff. You do not gain a GCD. You *frontload* a GCD when you use it, but you do not *gain* a GCD in the grand scheme of things. Gravity is an exception because its cast time is longer than the GCD, so you do actually get more casts of Gravity in the same amount of time when you have Lightspeed on. The other "exception" would be if you can squeeze in one last hit before an enemy dies or goes untargetable by frontloading the last GCD, as you might with Swiftcast.

The first obvious use is to take advantage of the instant cast times. This could be for periods of extended movement, typically to deal with mechanics without losing casts. It could be to create a little more space between casts so that you can double weave a large number of oGCDs in a short amount of time, as it's used in the standard opener. It could even be used in dire situations to hardcast a raise, or multiple raises.

The second effect is where things seem to get complicated. Taking advantage of the MP cost reduction is much less straightforward, because our MP expenditure is anything but consistent over a whole fight. It's extremely spiky, where we spend most of our time casting low-cost damage spells, and then periodically dump comparatively huge amounts of MP on extraordinarily expensive heals in response to incoming damage spikes.

This matter is further complicated when you consider that the base cooldown of Lightspeed is 120 seconds, the same as Lucid Dreaming and Celestial Opposition. This might make it seem like an obvious choice to lump Lightspeed in with those abilities so you can extend it with Celestial. However, *Essential Dignity reduces the cooldown of Lightspeed by 10 seconds on each use.* This means the cooldown on Lightspeed is more commonly somewhere around 90 seconds, not 120.

Thus, we must ask the question: to extend, or not to extend? You'll certainly have higher uptime on the Lightspeed effect if you delay it so you can extend it, but in this case, **uptime is not what matters**. Because we do not spend MP at a consistent rate across all parts of the fight, uptime and **value** are not as strongly related as you might think. Ultimately, the goal is to save as much MP as possible with our uses of Lightspeed across the whole fight. The disparity in MP cost between our damage spells and our large MP expenditures is so large that you have to consider how much MP expenditure you actually stand to cover with a given use of Lightspeed.

If you extend Lightspeed but only cast Malefic and Combust during those 20 seconds, you're only saving about 2700 MP. If you refresh Aspected Benefic once under Lightspeed, you save around 3120 MP. That's fairly solid, and quite consistent, but it's not necessarily the best option.

If you elect not to hold Lightspeed for Celestial in favor of covering some large MP expenditures, you may actually save more MP overall, depending on exactly what spells you're casting. If you cast two Aspected Benefics, an Aspected Helios, and fill the rest with Malefic/Combust, you save 2940 MP even though you've only covered 5 GCDs instead of 9. In addition, you didn't delay Lightspeed, which means that you'll have its next use available sooner, potentially for another high MP expenditure or movement section. Shifting the cooldown like this can sometimes even get you an extra use of Lightspeed in the encounter.

Neither option is going to be correct in every situation. The most optimal usage is going to be whatever combination of the two allows you to cover the most total MP expenditure over the entire encounter, and/or causes your Lightspeed uses to align the most favorably with movement or MP expenditure. There are a lot of factors to consider, and it can be very intimidating, but I like to think of it this way: **Extending Lightspeed may not always be the *absolute best* answer, but it is rarely the *wrong* answer.** In either case, Lightspeed usage is a very important (and often poorly understood) part of your MP management as an Astrologian, so make sure you're giving it some thought.

Cards. Gods help us, cards.

“You just spent seven pages talking about oGCDs *and you didn’t even cover cards?*” Yes indeed. I said it would be an introduction, not that it would be brief. This is where it gets complicated. *Very* complicated. The branching sequential probabilities involved in quantifying and optimizing the average return you get out of your cards are mind boggling, and more importantly, probably entirely uninteresting to everyone but me and about five other people in the universe. So, I’m not going to get into it.

If that’s something you want to discuss, feel free to head over to the Astrologian channels on [The Balance Discord](#), where all six of us nerds who love suffering more than we love ourselves will be happy to discuss the subject until we’re consumed by the existential dread at the futility of attempting to understand the minutiae of a job that the creators of the job clearly didn’t understand when they designed it.

Cards are one of the most poorly understood aspects of Astrologian, which may seem strange, considering that’s the job’s entire identity. Unfortunately, you can be an incredible healer while still having absolutely no idea how to handle your cards, and almost no one would ever notice unless they were looking at your logs under a microscope. But our cards are much more than RNG. If you learn to play your cards right, you can get *significantly* more value out of them than even the best healers.

My goal here is to provide general guidelines for card usage. As with most things, cards are extremely situational, so there are very few (if any) absolute rules. In the broadest terms, you want to contribute as much damage as possible with your cards. That *generally* means playing as many AoE damage cards as you can (Unless you’re in 4man content, such as dungeons, in which case you will almost always prefer the Extended or Enhanced single target Royal Road effects).

There are edge cases and exceptions to every single guideline, but those are all entirely circumstantial, and there are far too many to list. As you gain experience, you’ll begin to understand edge cases like these, or you will at least become aware of certain situations where you’re unsure of what to do, at which point you can think it through on your own or come ask on The Balance.

Sweeping Generalizations Guidelines

The priority for damage cards is **Balance >>> Arrow >= Spear**. Balance is by far the most powerful card, and it is the standard against which we compare the other cards. Arrow and Spear each come in at about 2/3s of a Balance, but their effects are less straightforward. This will be explained in the individual card sections. Ewer and Spire are just used to get Expanded Royal Road for your damage cards 98% of the time, and Bole is usually just Redrawn or burned into Minor Arcana (MA) if Redraw isn’t available.

Here, have some more rules:

1. You *must* use Draw and Sleeve Draw as frequently as possible. Do not sit on these cooldowns. Your cooldowns only start ticking once you've *played* the card, so you should also try to resolve Draws in a timely manner.
2. Do not Undraw or Redraw a Balance in combat *under nearly any circumstances*. This is the one card it's worth sitting on an entire Draw cooldown for if you can't play it or Spread it when you draw it (place it in your Spread, as in the skill called Spread, not "Spread it" as in "play it as an AoE").
3. An AoE damage card consists of two parts: Expanded Royal Road and the damage card. If you Draw into a Ewer or Spire and you do not already have an Expanded Royal Road, *Royal Road the Ewer/Spire* (even if you already have a different Royal Road effect). Don't Redraw it just to try to get the damage card first.
4. Generally speaking, don't Redraw any damage card. All damage cards are powerful enough that you are better off playing them than Redrawing them in the hopes of getting a better card, on average. There are some exceptions to this under exactly the right circumstances, but if you're not careful and you don't account for all the factors at play, you stand to lose more than you stand to gain, and the odds are not in your favor.
5. Even if you have a damage card in your Spread and you draw another damage card before you get an Expanded Royal Road, *don't Redraw that damage card*. And definitely don't Royal Road it. Just play it on whoever will make the most of it, and hold onto that damage card in your Spread until you do get an Expanded Royal Road for it.
6. Some jobs use certain cards better than others. 90% of it just comes down to player skill and whoever is *going to do the most damage* during the duration of the card (not necessarily the same as who is doing the most DPS overall), but there are important factors that can sway your decision.
 - a. Summoner and Machinist utilize Arrow so poorly that they receive virtually no benefit from it. More on this later.
 - b. Black Mage and Samurai (and to a slightly lesser extent, Monk) utilize Arrow exceptionally well. If they aren't significantly *behind* the other DPS, they should get the Arrow.
 - c. Bard (and to a much lesser extent, Monk) utilizes Spear ridiculously well, depending on where they are in their rotation, due to crit's interaction with their job gauge. *Spear is worth nearly twice as much on a good Bard as it is on anyone else*, even assuming they only refresh their DoTs once under its effect. If they double snapshot the DoTs as they would under certain buff windows, the difference is even more absurd. That's not a wholly insurmountable gap, though, so if the Bard is obviously incompetent, incredibly undergeared, and/or has Weakness/Brink of Death, go ahead and give it to the higher DPS.

Balance

This card is simple. 10% damage buff to *everything* you do for 30 seconds. This is **it**. It's what we're here for. It's what we dream of. It's why people like us. AoE Balance is the card to end all cards. If you must play it single target due to an awkward Sleeve Draw or due to Drawing into it when your Spread is already full, put it on whoever will do the most damage while it's active. That might not be the same person who's at the top of the DPS chart. The Machinist might be top DPS, but most of their damage is concentrated into their Wildfire burst windows, so if they're in their setup/recovery phase for the entire duration of the card, they're probably not the best target for that card.

Arrow

Let me begin by saying that **Arrow is unequivocally a good card**, despite what people say about it. It is an *attack speed* buff. That term may be a little misleading, because it's not limited to physical attacks/weaponskills. It does precisely what the tooltip says it does. It reduces the cast and recast times of weaponskills *and spells*, and also reduces the recast time of auto attacks by 10%. To paraphrase, it makes your GCD and auto attacks 10% faster.

It *does not* affect your DoTs, HoTs, or oGCDs. The spell/skill speed *stats* affect your DoT/HoT tick values, but Arrow *does not give you spell/skill speed*. It does not change the stat value in your character sheet. It increases your attack speed, meaning your GCDs and auto attacks. Because it doesn't affect *all* damage and because its efficacy varies from job to job, it's estimated that an AoE Arrow is really only worth around 2/3s of an AoE Balance.

Now, I mentioned earlier that Summoners and Machinists benefit very little from Arrow. In Summoner's case, a huge portion of their damage comes from DoTs, oGCDs, and their pet. Arrow does not affect DoTs or oGCDs. And, while the card buff does get mirrored over to their pet, the pet does not actually attack faster (unless they have *a lot* of spell speed for some reason or you're giving the Summoner an Enhanced Arrow, which you should certainly not do) because their "GCD tiers" are so far apart. The pet essentially only checks to see if it can attack every 0.5 seconds, so the Arrow would have to push them over a 0.5 second interval to actually cause them to attack faster, which is far beyond what is accomplishable under normal circumstances.

In the case of Machinist, their GCD alignment with their cooldowns and their Heat Gauge are very important, and they are not designed to facilitate unexpected changes in GCD speed. While it is possible for a very skilled Machinist to adjust their gameplay to accommodate an Arrow and leverage it into a very small DPS gain, many will simply delay their GCDs to force the correct alignment and negate most of the benefit of the Arrow, or worse, get confused and caught off guard and botch their rotation.

As previously mentioned, Black Mage, Samurai, and Monk all utilize Arrow exceptionally well due to the way their kits function. Nearly all of Black Mage's damage is tied directly to their GCD, so Arrow is a nearly perfect conversion of raw DPS for a BLM. It's actually fairly comparable to a Balance for them. Samurai is in a similar boat. While a significant amount of their damage comes from Shinten, an oGCD, that oGCD is limited by their gauge rather than by cooldowns. Attacking faster and landing more attacks means more gauge generation for Samurai, which means more Shinten, so again, nearly all of Samurai's damage is affected by Arrow.

Monk has a fair amount of oGCD damage that isn't affected by Arrow, but it *does* have the ability to make some rotational tweaks in order to leverage an Arrow into raw potency gains if their GCD is fast enough, as with a single target Arrow. If they are attacking quickly enough, they can refresh Dragon Kick and Twin Snakes every third rotation instead of every second rotation, which means more Bootshine and True Strike, which is a raw potency gain over Dragon Kick and Twin Snakes.

Special Encore: Why Arrow is good even though people complain about it

Expanded Arrow is 5% attack speed for 30s, which will put everyone ahead by *roughly* 60% of a GCD over the duration. You can't actually *do* 60% of a GCD in damage, but what you're concerned with is the *expected value*. Not everyone will necessarily get an extra GCD in a phase from Arrow, but across the whole party and across multiple uses of Arrow in a fight, it should average out. Thus, the *expected value* is 60% of the average upfront potency of each player's GCD.

This is muddled by the fact that not all GCDs do the same amount of damage. Getting an extra combo starter instead of an extra combo finisher is quite a large disparity in the value of the GCD gained. It's also muddled by the fact that certain circumstances can potentially negate most of the effect of the Arrow, namely unfortunately timed mechanics while the card is out. It's far less *reliable* than Balance, which is a big part of why it's not as good.

But, **don't be fooled into believing that you have to get an extra GCD in order for Arrow to be a DPS gain**, particularly in the case of Expanded Arrow. Even if no one gains a GCD or auto attack, everyone is attacking faster. If everyone is ahead by 60% of a GCD in the last phase because of a single Arrow, for instance, the killing blow on the boss happens 60% of a GCD sooner, thus meaning you killed the boss sooner, which means higher Damage **Per Second**.

People will often complain about Arrow because it throws off their rotation. Ultimately, it's a small difference (again, 60% of a GCD for a base duration Expanded Arrow), and this effect on your damage output is *entirely* negligible (unless you are a MCH, then you have an excuse). It may slightly misalign the GCD in relation to certain cooldowns and cause someone to not land one of their GCDs under a buff window, for instance because the GCD went out right before Trick Attack instead of right after.

In the worst case scenario here, they lose 10% of a combo finisher because it wasn't buffed by Trick Attack, and then they unfortunately don't get an extra GCD under Trick Attack at the end of the window because their alignment was *super* unfortunate. They lose out on 10% of that combo finisher's potency, so 34 potency in the worst case for a Ninja.

Then, they gain an extra hit somewhere because of the Arrow. Worst case, that's a 150 potency combo starter. Even applying the "60% chance" as an oversimplified modifier on the expected return, that's $150 * 0.6 = 90$ potency they gain back on average, *in the extremely unlikely worst case scenario*. Not to mention that Arrow can just as easily cause you to get *extra* hits under some buffs, thus compensating for misaligning GCDs with other buffs, and it can also net you extra auto attacks, which are much more significant than many people think.

And this is all assuming that the player in question doesn't compensate in any way for the Arrow. Even without adjusting or compensating in any way and just taking the full brunt of the downside because they're just unga bungaing their keyboard, it is still a significant DPS gain. And a good player can make small adjustments to compensate for such misalignments, thus leveraging the card even more. Complaining about Arrow and how you can't adjust to it is literally complaining about a card that is a DPS gain even when you don't adjust. **It is literally complaining about doing more DPS.**

Spear

Alright, finally done with that mess. Spear is another slightly less straightforward card, but I promise the explanation isn't nearly as unwieldy as the one for Arrow. Spear increases your critical hit rate by 10% for 30 seconds. It's important to note that, unlike the crit *stat*, Spear does not increase your crit *multiplier*, only your crit *chance*. All this means is that Spear is worth more damage when people have a higher crit *stat*, because that means they have a higher crit *multiplier*. It also means that it doesn't do anything for attacks that automatically crit, like a Monk's Bootshine, and it won't do anything more for you if you exceed 100% crit rate.

For instance, if you have 10% total crit chance from your crit stat, your crit multiplier is 1.45, which means an AoE Spear is roughly a 2.25% effective damage gain, compared to an AoE Balance at 5%. Late in the expansion, when people have large amounts of secondaries, you can potentially reach 25% crit chance or more from the stat alone. 25% crit rate from stats would put your crit multiplier at 1.6, so AoE Spear would be roughly a 3% effective damage gain.

This difference seems small, but that's a ~20% increase in the efficacy of Spear from one extreme to the other. It's enough to shift the card priority, as a matter of fact. At low crit levels, Spear is worth decidedly less than Arrow in almost all situations, but at high crit levels, Spear is solidly on par with Arrow, even pulling ahead in some circumstances depending on details like the party composition, or even the timing of the card in a given fight.

Bole

Bole reduces the damage taken by the target by 20% for 30 seconds. Yes, you read that right. It's a 30 second Rampart that you can put on someone else. I'll go ahead and say it. On its own, that's *absolutely bonkers*. Unfortunately, even though its effect is very numerically strong, its usability is equally poor. Both the game's encounter design and Astrologian's job design work pretty actively to make Bole a difficult card to make use of.

Encounters are scripted. The damage is scripted and almost always comes in spikes, as opposed to coming as a threateningly high amount of sustained damage. Slapping a Bole on the tank at a random point in the fight might sound great, but if you're not likely to get any tangible value out of doing so unless you can find a way to translate that mitigation into damage. Mitigation for the sake of itself is pointless. The purpose of reducing damage taken ultimately comes down to reducing the amount of resources (GCDs, MP, Aetherflow—**DAMAGE**) the healers have to expend in order to keep everyone alive.

And therein lies the problem. You can't control when you're going to draw a Bole. You can't account for it. You can't plan a defensive cooldown rotation or healing sequence around it. You have to play as though you aren't going to get a Bole, and then if you *do* get a Bole, what's the point? You've already planned everything around *not* having that extra mitigation. Playing this Bole here is going to be pretty difficult to translate into a tangible DPS gain, even if you *did* pull that Bole at the right time where it will cover a significant amount of damage.

In addition to that problem, Astrologian's job design itself makes it very difficult to find yourself in a situation where you even *can* play a Bole without sacrificing far more than you could possibly gain by playing the Bole. Particularly, it's impossible to play a card without consuming your currently active Royal Road effect. If you already have an Expanded Royal Road in preparation for playing an AoE damage card, playing that Bole has the associated opportunity cost of losing that Royal Road, which likely means less damage contribution overall. The opportunity cost is greater than anything you stand to gain, so you are ultimately better off not playing it at all.

It's not all doom and gloom, though. It *is* a powerful effect, and if you pull one at exactly the right time when things are going wrong, Bole can save lives. It can save entire runs. In those situations, the survival of the run is obviously more important than the DPS loss. And, if you find yourself in a situation where you can play it with no opportunity cost (Bole in hand, Redraw is unavailable, and you have no Expanded Royal Road; or Sleeve Draw put a Bole in your Spread and you have no Expanded Royal Road), you can absolutely slap it on the tank if you know they're going to be taking a bunch of damage in the next 30 seconds. It might save you a heal.

Ewer & Spire

These cards get lumped in together because they are functionally the same. Ewer regenerates MP over 15 seconds, and Spire does the same with TP. Of course, their *real* use is as Royal Road fodder to fuel our AoE cards. But, there are occasionally situations where the correct move is to actually play the cards themselves.

TP management is a huge joke at this point. Between Invigorate, Goad, and Tactician, TP is almost never an issue. The only times this should come up is if someone dies and nobody has their TP support abilities available, or during extended AoE segments, as AoE weaponskills cost *a lot* of TP. Spire sometimes sees use in dungeons for this purpose, but that's about it.

MP management can actually be an issue, though. MP is one of the primary limiting factors on the healers' ability to keep the party alive with expensive healing spells and raises. Summoners and Red Mages might even need some MP support if they end up casting multiple raises.

The difficulty with these resource cards is in understanding when you should actually bother playing them. There is a distinct difference between someone being *able* to receive the resource granted by the card and someone *needing* the resource granted by the card. Again, it all goes back to DPS. It makes absolutely no difference if you end the fight at 90% MP or 0% MP, as long as you never had to hold back or stop casting due to a lack of MP.

If your last cast of the fight dropped you down to 0 MP and you never held back or stopped casting due to a lack of MP, you did not need any extra MP. You did not need a Ewer. You could have taken one. It would not have overflowed your MP bar. But it also would not have resulted in any tangible gain whatsoever. The point here is that **someone only *needs* MP/TP if they would otherwise have to hold back or stop attacking as a result of a lack of MP/TP.**

In that situation, giving them MP/TP is absolutely the best thing you could possibly do for the group's DPS. Of course, with healing, there is also the element of having a safety net. Having enough MP for an emergency raise, or for an extra heal. You may want to play a Ewer just because one of the healers' MP is looking dicey. But, you should communicate about it if possible. It's quite natural for a healer's MP to dip extremely low before rebounding when their Lucid Dreaming comes back up, or the group's Refresh/Mana Shift comes back up. They may not actually need the MP.

Miscellaneous Stuff You Should Know

Astrologian has a lot of little quirks that you kiiiind of have to know in order to play the job to its fullest potential. Some of them are nice little tricks that will only come in handy every once in a while, but others are somewhat vital to your success.

Extending Buffs

1. Extending Lucid Dreaming is your top priority for your Celestial Opposition usage unless you *absolutely do not need the MP*. The extension itself is worth about 3k MP, almost half the amount restored by the base duration of Lucid Dreaming. Pairing Lucid Dreaming and Celestial Opposition *is not optional*.
2. All other buffs that you apply can be extended as well. Any buff with a green number (indicating that it was applied by you) can be extended, including Cleric Stance, Lightspeed, Largesse, stat potions, Surecast, Eye for an Eye, Synastry, Sprint, the timer on your Earthly Star, and even Protect and food buffs. Some of these interact in unique ways:
 - a. Synastry only functions while both buffs persist (the buff on yourself and the buff you place on the party member), so if you wish to extend the duration of Synastry, you must catch them with the Celestial Opposition to extend both buffs.
 - b. Earthly Star's first and second stages are separate buffs. Neither buff can exceed its original 10 second maximum duration. If you use Celestial Opposition while Earthly Star is in its first (uncharged) stage, you will reset the charge timer to 10 seconds, thus delaying its transformation into the full potency Giant Dominance. Be careful not to shoot yourself in the foot by accidentally delaying your full potency star if you can't afford to wait the extra time before you can detonate it.

Other Strange Interactions

1. Earthly Star is technically a pet. It counts as a unique, separate entity from ourselves, but it scales with our stats as a pet would. Somewhere in the spaghetti code, they've made the Earthly Star "pet" closely match player scaling, so the numbers you see match up with the listed potencies as though they were player potencies, unlike the reduced pet scaling observed with actual pets.
 - a. This means that Earthly Star is not affected by Cleric Stance, because the buff only applies to ourselves, and it does not mirror over to the "pet." Mind potions do affect Earthly Star, though, because they increase our actual stats, and the "pet" scales off our stats.
 - b. It also means that Earthly Star does not attribute any enmity to us, either from the healing or from the damage, aside from a superficial amount of enmity to put us in combat.

2. Essential Dignity calculates its heal value based on the missing health of the target at the *beginning* of the skill, rather than at the end, when the animation completes and the heal is delivered. This can be a good or a bad thing.
 - a. If you cast Benefic II and seamlessly follow it up with Essential Dignity, the Essential Dignity calculates its heal potency based on the health the target had before the Benefic II landed, because Essential Dignity's execution began just before the heal from Benefic II was registered. This can be somewhat finicky based on your connection, and it is less reliable with Aspected Benefic due to the difference in animations.
 - b. On the flip side, if you press Essential Dignity simultaneously as a tank buster is going through, even though the animation delay causes the heal to land after the tank buster, Essential Dignity will calculate its heal potency based on the HP the tank had before he took the hit, potentially leaving you with a ~500 potency heal instead of an ~700+ potency heal.

Undraw Macros

In most situations, using macros for any combat skill has the drawback of removing skill queueing, which creates small delays between actions due to latency and input delays. For that reason, macros can be a contentious topic, as each individual must weigh the cost and benefit of using macros for various things.

This is the exception to that. Astrologian has skills for discarding cards/effects from the Draw, Spread, and Royal Road slots in the gauge. These are called Undraw, Undraw Spread, and Empty Road, respectively. It may seem counterintuitive at first that you may actually want to entirely discard things while in combat, but these situations do occur with some regularity.

The issue is that these skills are *actual skills*, complete with a small animation lock, which can unnecessarily clog up your oGCD weaving space or even cause GCD clipping. But there's no reason for them to *be* actual skills, because they do something that can be accomplished with a simple macro command, but the macro command version incurs no animation lock whatsoever, and can even be used *in the middle of a cast*, because they are the same thing as simply right clicking on an icon on your buff bar to dispel the buff ("clicking it off").

[These macros are something of a necessity.](#) If you wish, you may include a line for Balance in the Undraw and/or Undraw Spread macros, but as there is no reason you should ever be discarding a Balance while in combat, I advise that you do not include those lines, as a safeguard against mishaps. If you're out of combat or in a period of such extended downtime that you may actually need to discard a Balance, you can simply right click the buff on your bar, or use a separate macro for it if you play with a gamepad.

Choosing a Sect

I touched on this briefly in the general healing guide, but let me spell it out here. **Regens. Are. Better. Than. Shields.** It is simply a fact of the game design. Regens are inherently more MP efficient *and* more GCD efficient than shields. The purpose of shields is not to be efficient, but rather to do something that regens can't do: increase your maximum effective hit point (eHP).

This is primarily used as a safety net for learning to be able to cover for mistakes with upfront, brute force healing and mitigation, and to allow the group to meet HP checks during progression when you don't have enough gear to comfortably survive unavoidable damage without the shields. (Those of you who are thinking "what about shields for Limit Break cheese?" We're just not going to talk about it. It's bad, and Square Enix should feel bad that it exists to this extent.)

Shields may not be aiming to be efficient, *but we sure as hell are*, and we have free access to more efficient regens in the form of Diurnal Sect. Therefore, we strive to only use Nocturnal Sect when it is genuinely necessary. If nothing in the fight hits so hard that you legitimately need shields in order to survive it, you're better off just sticking with Diurnal Sect and saving yourself the MP and GCDs so that you and your cohealer can contribute more damage to the group.

Even when your cohealer is a White Mage, you should carefully consider whether the content you are doing presents any real need for the shields you could provide with Nocturnal Sect. It will depend on the fight, the skill level of your group, how geared everyone is, and even how loudly the group might complain about not having shields due to erroneous assumptions that you have to have both regens and shields in a group.

But, if the fight demands shields for unavoidable damage that can hit for more than people's max HP, if your group is undergeared, if they like collecting vulnerability stacks, if they're prone to taking avoidable damage in a way where you could cover for them by babysitting them with shields, or even if they just whine incessantly about the lack of shields out of ignorance... just suck it up and use Nocturnal Sect.

Under normal circumstances, Diurnal Sect is strictly superior unless shields are absolutely required for surviving unavoidable damage, because Diurnal Sect is inherently much more efficient. You want to clear the fight as efficiently as possible, but in order to do that, you have to actually *clear the fight*. **If your group is too insecure to even play the game without their shield diapers on, you have to decide what you value more: your principles or the clear.**

To put some numbers to it (including the appropriate sect healing bonuses):

Diurnal Aspected Benefic is 1144 total potency.

Nocturnal Aspected Benefic is 805.

Diurnal Aspected Helios is 660.

Nocturnal Aspected Helios is 431.25.

On top of that, Diurnal Sect's regens can be extended with Time Dilation and Celestial Opposition, and they can make better use of snapshotting healing buffs like Largesse, Convalescence, etc., thus saving you *even more* MP and GCDs that can be put toward contributing more damage. Regens simply have far better synergy with Astrologian's kit.

Of course, if you happen to be in a party with another Astrologian (my condolences), your regens and shields do not stack with each other, so one of you will have to use Nocturnal Sect (even though regens from multiple White Mages stack).

Similarly, your shields will not stack in any way with Scholar shields, as an Astrologian shield will always overwrite a Scholar shield, and vice versa, regardless of the strength or duration of either shield. Don't be that guy who stays in Nocturnal Sect with a Scholar. Don't do it. Do not.

Sect Swapping/Stance Dancing

Astrologian shields are slightly stronger than Scholar shields, with the sole exception of a critical Adloquium. Because of this, when applying pre-pull shields, it is customary for the Astrologian to apply the shields in Nocturnal Sect and then swap to Diurnal Sect during the pre-pull countdown. Of course, you are free to also do this when you're paired with a White Mage and intend to use Diurnal Sect for the fight itself.

In dungeons, you can also swap to Nocturnal Sect just as the last enemy in a pull dies, apply a shield to the tank in preparation for the next pull, and then swap back to Diurnal Sect. This gives you a nice buffer for the tank's HP while he gathers the mobs, giving you more time to DPS or do whatever else before you need to heal the tank.

Secondary Stats

The most up to date Astrologian best-in-slot (BiS) set(s) can always be found in the Astrologian channel pins on [The Balance Discord](#).

Secondaries for Astrologian follow the same convoluted explanation given in the [general healing guide](#). The short version is that crit is king, determination and direct hit are essentially interchangeable, and spell speed is largely a matter of preference. There are no relevant stats that are especially *bad* on Astrologian, really.

The main thing about secondaries for Astrologian is that Astrologian has a relatively poor MP economy compared to White Mage and Scholar. Our MP recovery outside of playing Ewers on ourselves (which is a last resort option, because it has a hefty opportunity cost on our raid DPS contribution) is considerably worse than the other healers'. We also tend to spend quite a lot of MP because of how exorbitantly expensive Aspected Benefic is, and how frequently we have to reapply it due to its relatively short duration. It's nearly twice as expensive as White Mage's Regen, and its duration is three seconds shorter.

The reduction of Malefic's cast time also inadvertently increased our MP expenditure by a surprising amount. Not only did it give us more casts by eliminating all the GCD clipping we put up with before, but it also had the obscure effect of eliminating the ~120ms delay between full cast time spellcasts that was originally taken up by short animation locks. The result was a significant increase in the number of Malefics we can typically cast in a given amount of time, which means we're spending even more MP, while White Mages and Scholars are still subject to the "caster tax," the delay between their GCDs, because Stone and Broil have full cast times.

But what does this have to do with secondaries? It's quite simple. Astrologian needs a bit more junk in the MP trunk compared to White Mage and Scholar. Some combination of little more piety and a little less spell speed. More piety means more max MP, which means more passive MP regeneration. Less spell speed means fewer casts in a given amount of time, which means less MP spent.

Opener(s)

The most up to date Astrologian opener(s) can always be found in the Astrologian channel pins on [The Balance Discord](#). Keep in mind that Astrologian openers are extremely flexible and depend almost entirely on the circumstances of the fight, the timings of the planned raid DPS bursts, party composition, and whether you were able to prepare cards before you pull. Any premade Astrologian opener is a generic *framework*, not a universally optimal opener.

Courtesy of Ahri, the current opener framework (as of Patch 4.45) is as follows ([visual representation here](#); note that the usage of the card manipulation skills will be situational):

- 15s Largesse
- 14s Earthly Star
- 12s (Nocturnal) Aspected Helios
- Swap to Diurnal Sect
- 9s Aspected Helios
- 6s Aspected Benefic on MT [Pot]
- 3s Gravity
- 0s (pull) Combust II [Spread (Balance), LS]
- 2.5s Malefic [Lucid, Cleric]
- 5s Malefic [Lord, COpp]
- 7.5s Malefic [Sleeve Draw, *cards*]
- 10s Malefic [*cards*, Lord if applicable]
- 12.5s Malefic [*cards*, *cards*]
- 15s Malefic [*cards*, *cards*]
- 17.5s Malefic [Lord if applicable, TD]

Precasting Gravity

The question many will have is, “Why precast Gravity when Malefic does more damage?” It’s a little counterintuitive, but it does make perfect sense. If you precast Malefic, you cannot begin your precast until -1.5s, which means your next GCD will not come up until 1s into the pull. That’s 1 second of dead air. Functionally, it’s the same as just doing a late precast.

You could argue that you can use that space to play your Balance, allowing your Combust to be buffed for a whopping 25 extra potency, but it’s simply not worth it. You’re gaining 25 potency on Combust and 20 potency on Malefic to push back all your GCDs, which is going to cost you damage/casts, or otherwise delay your damage, which translates to the *per second* part of DPS.

Either way, it is a DPS loss. So, we sacrifice 20 potency by casting Gravity instead of Malefic, we lose another 25 potency by not getting our first Combust under Balance, and we avoid losing 40% of a GCD worth of damage (88 potency in the case of Malefic, as a very simplified approximation).

Contact Stuff

I'm Zyrkhan Dar'locke on Gilgamesh. You can find me as Zyrk#8529 on [The Balance Discord](#), as a moderator and Astrologian mentor, for feedback, questions, comments, etc. Feel free to contact me directly for things relating to the guide, but as always, The Balance Discord is open for gameplay questions, guidance, and discussion.