Secondary Progressions and the ACD
A Practical Guide

by Charlie Obert

What are Secondary Progressions?

Secondary progressions are a form of symbolic direction, where a small unit of time is taken to stand for an actual period in a person's life.

Why Secondary?

For traditional astrology, the daily, clockwise motion of the Sun, the stars, and the belt of the Zodiac all the way around the earth once a day, was considered the **Primary Direction** of movement. The symbolic predictive system called Primary Directions uses that daily motion.

By contrast, the planets move, relative to the zodiac, in the opposite direction, counter-clockwise through the signs. The sun moves about one degree per day, the moon about 12 degrees per day, and so on. That is the **Secondary Direction** of movement.

In Secondary Directions, one day of motion of the planets corresponds to one year in a person's life. So, if you want information about the 10th year of a person's life, look at the position of the planets on the 10th day after their birth.

This correlation, 1 day equals 1 year, is strictly symbolic. Nobody really understands why it works, but it seems to.

What is the ACD or Adjusted Calculation Date?

When you are working with a midnight ephemeris, the position of the planets on a person's birth date in the ephemeris do not exactly match their natal position. The planets have moved a distance depending on what time of day they were born.

For most of the planets, this doesn't matter much; almost all of them move one degree a day or less.

However, for the moon it is a different story. Depending on its speed, the moon moves somewhere between 11 and 14 degrees per day.
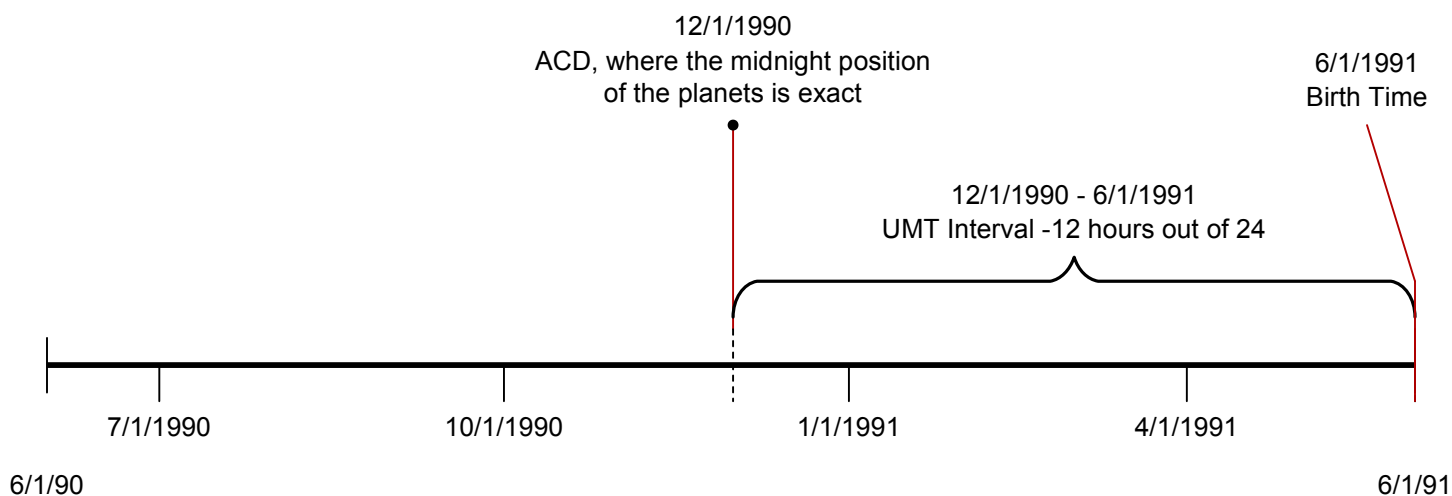
The ACD, or Adjusted Calculation Date, is the day of the year, prior to a persons birthday, when the position of all the planets in the ephemeris are at their exact progressed position. Once you have that, you can just scan in the ephemeris for the planet's progressed position for any year. You don't need to go through a lot of math every year to figure it out.

Finding the ACD

Take the UMT for the birthdate, and subtract it from the midnight Sidereal Time in the ephemeris. Take the new Sidereal Time, and look in the ephemeris for the date prior to their birthdate with the closest match in Sidereal Time. That date is the ACD, or Adjusted Calculation Date.

ACD Calculation Example

June 1 1991, 12:00 UMT Birth Time

12/1/1990
ACD, where the midnight position
of the planets is exact

6/1/1991
Birth Time

12/1/1990 - 6/1/1991
UMT Interval -12 hours out of 24

7/1/1990   10/1/1990   1/1/1991   4/1/1991

6/1/90   6/1/91

The timeline represents one day of motion of the planets in the ephemeris.

By secondary progression, it also represents one year in the native's life.

So, 1 day = 1 year
24 hours = 12 months
2 hours = 1 month
1 hour = 2 weeks
1/2 hour = 1 week

Birth time is at Midnight Sidereal Time from Ephemeris plus UMT.
Subtract UMT from midnight Sidereal Time in the ephemeris,
and you have the Sidereal Time of the day in the ephemeris
prior to the birth date
where the position of the planets in the ephemeris on your birthday is exact.
In the above example, Midnight ST in ephemeris is 16:36
16:36 – 12:00 UMT gives 4:36
That ST in Ephemeris is between 11/30/1990 and 12/1/1990,
so the ACD would be the closest of those two days.

The planetary positions in the ephemeris on 6/1/1991 correspond to
their exact progressed position on 12/1/1990.
For age 10, the positions in the ephemeris for 6/11/1991 show their
progressed position for 12/1/2000.

So, the formula for finding the ACD:
Take Midnight ST in Ephemeris on birth date,
subtract UMT,
and find the day in the ephemeris
in the prior year
with the closest sidereal time.

Estimating the ACD

Here is a quick and useful way to estimate the ACD.

Since in progressions, 24 hours equals a year, and 2 hours equals a month, take the UMT in hours and estimate about how many months back the ACD should be. With a little bit of practice, you should be able to estimate the ACD to within a week.

For example - if your birth was February 7, 1985, and the UMT is 6:30, 6 hours is three months, 30 minutes is around a week. That means the ACD should be roughly a week earlier than 3 months prior to the birth date. That means about a week prior to November 7, 1984, or around Oct 31. (I checked that with the actual math, and Oct 31, 1984 was the exact ACD.)

Along with being a good quick way of estimating an ACD, this is a really good way to check your math when you are calculating the exact ACD for an exam.

Finding the Progressed Date for a Year

Once you have the ACD, using that with an ephemeris gives you a very powerful tool to do a quick overview of a person's life.

To find the progressed position for a given year, you count forward that many days in the ephemeris.

Here is a tip to make that easier. This tip is useful both to locate an exact day/year, and to use for scanning a person's life.

Counting forward 5 days is easy. Counting forward, 25, or 30, or 50, it is easy to lose your place. So, you can put markers every 5 days to help keep your place.

Take the birthdate - this is the adjusted birth date AT GREENWICH, since we use an ephemeris for Greenwhich - and put a 0 (zero) to the left of the day. Count forward 5 days, and put a 5, and continue marking every 5th date.

This makes it a lot easier to locate a date corresponding to a specific year. But it does a lot more than that.

Using the ACD with an Ephemeris

Once you have the years marked in the ephemeris, do a quick scan of the planet's positions, other than the moon. Look for two major kinds of changes.

- when a planet goes stationary and changes direction.

- when a planet changes sign.

Each of those marks a significant change in the person's life. With the years marked in the left column it is easy to pick out years that are turning points (direction) or phase changes (sign) for that person.

For instance, if a person is born with Mercury retrograde, the progressed year their Mercury goes exact

may mark a time when they become more outgoing and expressive. Mercury changing from direct to retrograde could show a period of increased introspection.

That is information you cannot get if you just run secondary progressions from a computer program.

You can also look for when tight aspects are formed between a progressed planet and a natal planet. Since progressed planets move so slowly, use orbs of a degree or less. So, an exact aspect from the Sun has an effective range of about three years.

The moon changes sign about every 2-1/2 days, which corresponds to 2-1/2 years of life. Those often mark changes in emotional preoccupation or general tone.

Calculating the Progressed Moon

Since the moon moves so quickly, it is worth calculating its monthly progressed position. You can then look for the aspects the moon makes to time events to within around a month.

The moon moves between 11 and 14 degrees a day, depending on its speed. At 1 day=1 year, that translates to between 55 and 70 minutes motion per progressed month.

To calculate the moon's monthly position:

1) Take the distance in minutes it travels between the date for the progressed year and the following year, and divide it by 12.

2) The moon's position for that day in the ephemeris is the value for the ACD preceding that birthday. Add the monthly travel amount to that to get the position for the next month, and so on.

Tip: It is awkward to add 57 minutes every month. It is a lot easier to add a degree then subtract 3 minutes per month.

Once you have the moon's progressed positions for a year, you can look for exact aspects to natal planets to time events. (Progressions can also be used with transits to determine how important they will be, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.)

Another Tip: Calculate the moon's monthly position for the year *preceding* the ACD also. If you see any significant changes or aspects, you can 'predict' the approximate date of a significant event in the past. Telling a person about a timed past event, that they can confirm, gives your predictions for the future a lot more credibility.

Summary

I hope I have convinced you that finding the ACD, and knowing how to scan for progressions in an ephemeris without a computer program, is not just a technique you use to pass a test. It is a very powerful and practical way to get a timed overview of significant periods in a person's life in a way that no computer printout can give you.