

Night Sky Viewing at Widener University

April 2017

Sunrise & Sunset Times (EDT*)

	Sunrise	Sunset
Begin Month	6:45 am	7:26 pm
End Month	6:03 am	7:55 pm

Lunar Phases



Naked Eye Planets This Month in the Evening & Morning Sky

Mercury (*in Aries-Pisces*): As April begins, Mercury is favorably positioned to be spotted about 20-30 minutes after sunset. The elusive innermost planet is at its best on the evening of the 1th, when it reaches greatest elongation east of the Sun and sets over 1½ hours after sunset. Mercury remains viewable for about the first week and a half of April, after which it sinks rapidly into the evening twilight. Mercury reaches inferior conjunction on the 20th when it passes between Earth and Sun, and then it swings into the morning sky, rising only about half an hour before sunrise at the end of the month.

Mars (*in Aries-Taurus*): Mars maintains its status as an evening planet throughout April; it glows like an orange star low in the southwest at nightfall. Mars sets about 3 hours after the Sun on the 1st, but only 2 hours after it by month's end; the actual clock time of Mars-set is roughly between 10 and 10:15 pm EDT all month. Mars continues to slowly fade as Earth pulls away from it.

Jupiter (*in Virgo*): Jupiter is at its finest this April; it reaches opposition with the Sun on the night of April 7th, when it will be closest to Earth and visible from sunset until sunrise. Now that Venus has departed the evening sky and started to appear in the morning sky, Jupiter is unrivaled in brightness among the evening objects except for the Moon; it resembles a brilliant golden star in Virgo near the bright bluish-white star Spica. Look for Jupiter as it rises in the east shortly after sunset. By midnight, it stands moderately high up in the south.

Saturn (*in Sagittarius*): Saturn currently lies in western Sagittarius, near the border with Ophiuchus. Saturn resembles a moderately bright golden star rising in the southeast, at around 1:30 am EDT on the 1st and by about 11:30 pm on the 30th. Look for Saturn in the pre-dawn sky all month; it stands approximately due south as twilight begins.

Venus (*in Pisces*): After having adorned the evening sky for several months and then reached inferior conjunction with the Sun at the end of March, Venus reappears in the morning sky during April. Venus rises less than an hour before sunrise at the beginning of April, and about 1½ hours before the Sun at the end of the month.

Sun: (*in Pisces-Aries*): The Sun begins April in the constellation Pisces, then crosses into Aries on the 18th.

Constellations & Bright Stars Visible Around 9 pm EDT

Auriga – high in NW
Bright star *Capella*

Taurus – getting low in WNW
Bright star *Aldebaran*
Star Clusters *Pleiades & Hyades*

Orion – getting low in WSW
Bright stars *Betelgeuse, Rigel*

Gemini – high up in SW, to upper left of Orion
Bright stars *Pollux, Castor*

Canis Major – up in SW, to lower left of Orion
Bright stars *Sirius, Adhara*

Canis Minor – in SSW, below Gemini
Bright star *Procyon*

Leo – high in S
Bright star *Regulus*

Ursa Major – high in NNE
Asterism *Big Dipper*, w/ pointer stars *Merak, Dubhe*;
handle stars *Alioth, Mizar (& Alcor), Alkaid*

Hydra – getting higher in SE
Bright star *Alphard* (“the Solitary One”), lower R of *Regulus*

Boötes – high in NE, near handle of *Big Dipper*
Bright star *Arcturus*

Virgo – rising in ESE
Bright star *Spica*
Brilliant planet *Jupiter* close to *Spica*

For more information on the night sky, visit the Widener Observatory Stargazing website at www.widener.edu/stargazing/. A set of free sky maps can be obtained at www.skymaps.com/.