

# Night Sky Viewing at Widener University

## August 2020

### Sunrise & Sunset Times

	Sunrise	Sunset
Begin Month (EDT)	6:00 am	8:15 pm
End Month (EST)	6:29 am	7:35 pm

### Naked-Eye Planets in the Evening & Morning Sky this Month

**Jupiter** (*in Sagittarius*): Jupiter was in opposition with the Sun in mid-July, and it remains in fine position for viewing this August. Jupiter resembles a brilliant cream-colored star as it hovers above the southeastern horizon as darkness falls. In mid-August, Jupiter reaches its highest point above the southern horizon (i.e., transits the meridian) around 10:30 pm and sets shortly after 3 am. Jupiter currently resides within the constellation Sagittarius, just to the left of the famous “teapot” asterism, and to the right of fainter Saturn.

**Saturn** (*in Sagittarius*): Like Jupiter, Saturn was in opposition with the Sun in July, and it is still in good position for viewing during August. Saturn resembles a bright yellow star just to the east (left) of brilliant Jupiter in the southeastern sky at dusk. Saturn follows Jupiter by about half an hour, and it lies due south by about 11 pm at midmonth.

**Mars** (*in Pisces*): Mars lies far to the east (left) of both Saturn and Jupiter, rising in the east-southeast at approximately 11:15 pm in early August, and by about 9:45 pm by month’s end. Well on its way to opposition with the Sun in mid-October, orangish Mars far outshines yellowish Saturn, and by the month’s end it will be brighter than Sirius.

**Venus** (*in Taurus-Gemini*): Now a “morning star,” Venus is nothing short of spectacular this August. Throughout the month, Venus rises a few minutes before 3 am, which is three to three and a half hours ahead of the Sun. Once it clears the northeastern horizon, Venus radiates like a blazing yellow star in that part of the sky. Venus reaches its greatest morning elongation with the Sun on the 13<sup>th</sup>, at which time, a telescope will reveal Venus to exhibit a distinctly half-illuminated disk (“quarter phase”).

**Mercury** (*in Gemini-Cancer-Leo*): As August opens, Mercury can be spotted low in the east-northeast at dawn, but it quickly sinks out of view after a week. Mercury reaches superior conjunction with the Sun on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and late in the month appears very low in the west at dusk.

**Perseid Meteor Shower**: Earth passes through the debris of Comet Swift-Tuttle around August 11-12, producing the Perseid Meteor Shower. This year, the last quarter Moon will unfortunately interfere with some of the faintest meteors. Look generally toward the northeast after midnight, but meteors can be seen in any part of the sky.

### Lunar Phases



### Constellations & Bright Stars Visible Around 10 pm in August

**Ursa Major** – dipping toward NNW horizon  
Asterism *Big Dipper*, w/ pointer stars *Merak*, *Dubhe*; handle stars *Alioth*, *Mizar* (& *Alcor*), *Alkaid*

**Ursa Minor** – up in NNW, to upper left of North Star  
Asterism *Little Dipper*, contains *Polaris* (North Star)

**Virgo** – low in WSW  
Bright star *Spica*, setting

**Boötes** – high in WSW  
Bright star *Arcturus*, well above *Spica*

**Corona Borealis** – high in SSW, just east of *Boötes*  
Bright star *Gemma* (also called *Alphekka*)

**Libra** – low in SW  
Bright stars *Zubenelgenubi*, *Zubeneschamali*

**Scorpius** – low in S  
Bright star *Antares*; stars *Shaula* and *Lesath* form Cat’s Eyes in Scorpion’s tail

**Ophiuchus** – halfway up in S, above Scorpius  
Bright star *Ras Alhague*; *Jupiter* to left of *Antares*

**Sagittarius** – low in SSE  
Asterism the “Tea Pot”; also planets *Jupiter*, *Saturn*

**Lyra** – high overhead  
Bright star *Vega*

**Aquila** – halfway up in SE  
Bright star *Altair*

**Cygnus** – high in E, below Lyra  
Bright star *Deneb*, forms Summer Triangle with *Altair* & *Deneb*

**Pegasus (including the Great Square)** – rising in E

**Cassiopeia** – rising low in NNE  
Easily recognizable “W” shape

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