

Night Sky Viewing at Widener University

March 2021

Sunrise & Sunset Times (EST)

	Sunrise	Sunset
Begin Month	7:10 am	5:20 pm
End Month	6:36 am	5:52 pm

Lunar Phases



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

Mars (*in Taurus*): Mars is the only bright planet visible in the evening sky this month, but it is rapidly fading as Earth pulls away from it. The distance between Mars and Earth will expand by 27 million miles between March 1st and March 31st. Furthermore, Mars will be nearly 4 times farther from Earth in mid-March than it was during Mars's opposition in October, and only 1/30 as bright. Still, the orange-hued Mars ranks in brightness with the first magnitude stars, and in particular it rivals nearby Pollux in Gemini. Mars stands high in the south-southwest at dusk during March, and it sets a little after 1 am EDT. Mars passes just below the Pleiades in Taurus on March 3rd.

Jupiter & Saturn (*in Capricornus*): Now more than a month since reaching conjunction with the Sun in late January, Jupiter and Saturn are beginning to emerge from the dawn glow low in the southeast. Saturn rises first in the southeast at around 5 am EST, or only 1½ hours before sunrise, on March 1st, followed a half-hour later by much-brighter Jupiter. By the 31st, however, Saturn is rising 4:30 am EDT, or over 2 hours before sunrise, with Jupiter again following a half-hour later. On March 5th, Jupiter passes quite close to Mercury; the pair will be separated by just over half the full Moon's diameter.

Mercury (*in Capricornus-Aquarius*): As March opens, Mercury is rising in the southeast during morning twilight over an hour before sunrise. Mercury passes close to Jupiter on the 5th (see above) and reaches its greatest morning elongation with the Sun a day later, on the 6th. By the second half of March, Mercury fades into the morning twilight; it will swing into the evening sky in late April.

Venus (*in Aquarius-Pisces*):

Venus is too close to the Sun to view comfortably this month. Venus reaches superior conjunction with the Sun on the 26th, after which it will gradually move into the evening sky. By May, Venus will appear low above the western horizon at dusk as an "evening star."

Sun: (*in Aquarius-Pisces*): The noon Sun stands directly over the equator at 5:37 am EDT on March 20th. This point is the *Vernal Equinox*, which marks the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere and of autumn in the Southern Hemisphere.

Constellations and Bright Stars Visible by 9 pm EST in March

Cassiopeia – high in NNW, looking like an "M"
Bright stars *Shedar, Caph, Ruchbah*

Perseus – W of overhead, E of Cassiopeia
Bright stars *Mirfak* and *Algol*

Auriga – high in NE
Bright star *Capella*, just W of overhead by 9 pm

Aries – low in WNW
Bright stars *Hamal, Sheratan*

Taurus – halfway up in WSW, to right of Orion
Bright star *Aldebaran*
Star Clusters *Pleiades & Hyades*
Planet *Mars*

Orion – up in SW
Bright stars *Betelgeuse, Rigel*

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

Canis Major – up in SSW, to lower left of Orion
Bright star *Sirius*

Canis Minor – high in S, below Gemini
Bright star *Procyon*

Leo – high in SE
Bright star *Regulus*

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

Hydra – moderately high up in SE
Bright star *Alphard* ("the Solitary One"), lower R of *Regulus*

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

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/.