

Night Sky Viewing at Widener University

July 2026

Sunrise & Sunset Times (EDT)

	Sunrise	Sunset
Begin Month	5:37 am	8:34 pm
End Month	5:59 am	8:16 pm

Lunar Phases



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

Mercury (*in Gemini*): Mercury switches from the evening sky to the morning sky this July. Shortly after sunset on July 1st, Mercury can be spotted very low above the northwestern horizon, to the lower right of Jupiter; it sets less than an hour after sunset. Mercury fades into the twilight glow by the end of the first week of July, reaches inferior conjunction with the Sun on July 12th, then vaults into the morning sky in the second half of the month. Toward the end of July, Mercury becomes well placed at dawn, rising above the northeastern horizon by 4:30 am, or 1½ hours before sunrise.

Jupiter (*in Cancer*): As July commences, Jupiter, which has been a familiar fixture in the evening sky since last autumn, can still be spotted as a brilliant golden “star” low in the northwest in evening twilight; it sets by 9:45 pm, or slightly over one hour after sunset, on the 1st. Jupiter continues to sink into the evening twilight, effectively vanishing from sight before midmonth. Jupiter passes behind the Sun (conjunction) on July 29th and will reappear low in the northeast at dawn by mid-August.

Venus (*in Leo*): Venus rules the early evening sky, glowing like a dazzling yellow gem in the west at dusk. Venus will continue to brighten, bit by bit, over the next few weeks, but it will also be slowly sinking toward the western horizon – it sets 2½ hours after sunset (about 11 pm EDT) in early July, but only two hours after the Sun by month’s end, at which time a telescope will reveal a nearly “quarter phase.” On July 16th, the 2-day-old crescent Moon passes just below Leo’s brightest star Regulus and a day later to the lower left of Venus.

Saturn (*in Pisces*): Saturn, resembling a bright, cream-colored star, enters the late evening sky this month, although it remains well-placed for early morning viewing as well. On July 1st, Saturn rises in the east around 1 am. By the 31st, Saturn will be rising a full 2 hours sooner, at 11 pm, and it passes due south at dawn’s first light.

Mars (*in Taurus*): Mars, with a distinct reddish orange hue, rises in the northeast at around 2:45 am in mid-July. While currently fainter than the nearby and similarly colored star Aldebaran in Taurus, Mars will slowly increase in brightness until it reaches opposition with the Sun next February, when it will rival Sirius, the night sky’s brightest star. On the morning of July 4th, Mars slides just below the planet Uranus, a lovely pairing which is easily viewed in binoculars or a small telescope.

Earth: Earth reaches *aphelion* (its greatest distance from the Sun) on July 6th, when it will be 94.5 million miles (1.017 AU) from the Sun, or about 3.4% farther from the Sun than it was at perihelion in January. Nevertheless, this has minimal impact on the seasons.

Constellations & Bright Stars Visible Around 10 pm EDT in July

Leo – very low in W, setting

Bright star *Regulus*, soon to set
Planet *Venus*

Virgo – low in WSW

Bright star *Spica*

Ursa Major – halfway up in NW, getting lower

Asterism *Big Dipper*, w/ pointer stars *Merak*, *Dubhe*;
handle stars *Alioth*, *Mizar* (& *Alcor*), *Alkaid*

Ursa Minor – halfway up in N, directly above North Star

Asterism *Little Dipper*, contains *Polaris* (North Star)

Boötes – high in WSW

Bright star *Arcturus*, well above *Spica*

Corona Borealis – high in SW, to upper left of Arcturus

Bright star *Alphecca* (a.k.a *Gemma*)

Hercules – overhead, highlighted by “keystone” of 4 stars

Bright stars *Rasalgethi*, *Kornephoros*

Libra – one-third of way up in SSW

Bright stars *Zubenelgenubi*, *Zubeneschamali*

Scorpius – low in S

Bright star *Antares*

Ophiuchus – halfway up in S, above Scorpius

Bright star *Ras Alhague*

Sagittarius – low in SSE

Asterism the “Tea Pot”

Lyra – high in E, approaching overhead

Bright star *Vega*

Aquila – halfway up in SE

Bright star *Altair*

Cygnus – high in E, below Lyra

Bright star *Deneb*

Altair, *Deneb*, & *Vega* form the Summer Triangle

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/.