

Night Sky Viewing at Widener University

August 2026

Sunrise & Sunset Times (EDT)

	Sunrise	Sunset
Begin Month	6:00 am	8:15 pm
End Month	6:28 am	7:34 pm

Lunar Phases



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

Venus (*in Virgo*): Venus, the brilliant Evening Star, beams with a yellowish radiance in the west at dusk. Venus continues to brighten during the month of August as the distance between it and Earth decreases day by day. Venus reaches its greatest eastern (evening) elongation with the Sun on the 15th. Yet, Venus is setting earlier each night: nearly 2 hours after sunset at the beginning of August, but just 1½ hours after the Sun by month's end. Venus races through the western half of Virgo during August, approaching the star Spica at month's end.

Saturn (*in Pisces*): Nestled among the dim stars of Pisces, Saturn rises at 11 pm on the 1st and by 9 pm on the 31st; it stands halfway up in the south by 4 am EDT midmonth. Saturn, resembling a bright, cream-colored star, easily outshines all the true stars in its vicinity, including Fomalhaut, which lies well below it. Saturn's optimum visibility will come in early October, when it reaches opposition with the Sun.

Mars (*in Taurus-Gemini*): Mars, which drifts from Taurus into Gemini this month, glows with a distinct reddish orange hue; it rises in the northeast at around 2 am in mid-August. On the morning of August 9th, Mars rises with the waning crescent Moon to its left. Mars will slowly brighten over the next few months until it reaches opposition with the Sun next February, when it will outshine nearly every star in the sky.

Mercury (*in Gemini-Cancer-Leo*): As August opens, Mercury is well situated at dawn, resembling a bright star low above the northeastern horizon. Mercury is at greatest western elongation with the Sun on August 2nd, when it rises by 4:30 am, or 1½ hours before sunrise. As the month progresses, Mercury gets brighter, but it also descends into the twilight glow, eventually reaching superior conjunction with the Sun on August 27th. On the morning of August 15th, Mercury lies close to Jupiter, making for a beautiful naked-eye pairing.

Jupiter (*in Cancer*): Jupiter passed behind the Sun (conjunction) on July 29th, and it will remain hidden in morning twilight until it reappears low in the northeast at dawn in mid-August. At that time, it will rise in the northeast (paired with Mercury, as described above) at 5:45 am EDT, or only an hour before sunrise. By month's end, Jupiter will rise by 4:15 am, or over 2 hours before the Sun.

Perseid Meteor Shower: Occurs on night of August 12-13, when Earth passes through the debris of Comet Swift-Tuttle. The Moon's phase will be new, and so it will not interfere with seeing the fainter meteors.

Near Total Lunar Eclipse: Occurs on August 27-28. For details, visit <https://earthsky.org/astronomy-essentials/partial-lunar-eclipse-of-the-august-27-28-2026/>

Constellations & Bright Stars Visible Around 10 pm in August

Ursa Major – dipping toward NW 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
Planet *Venus*

Boötes – high in WSW

Bright star *Arcturus*, well above *Spica*

Corona Borealis – high in SSW, just east of *Boötes*

Bright star *Gemma* (also called *Alphecca*)

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*

Sagittarius – low in SSE

Asterism the "Tea Pot"

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* & *Vega*

Pegasus (including the Great Square) – rising in E

Cassiopeia – rising, low in NNE

Easily recognizable "W" shape

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/.