

Night Sky Viewing at Widener University

September 2026

Sunrise & Sunset Times (EDT)

	Sunrise	Sunset
Begin Month	6:29 am	7:33 pm
End Month	6:57 am	6:45 pm

Lunar Phases



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

Mercury (*in Leo-Virgo*): Mercury has a poor evening appearance this September; it hovers very low above the western horizon shortly after sunset but never emerges from the twilight glow. At best, Mercury sets just 45 minutes after the Sun at month's end.

Venus (*in Virgo*): Since last January, Venus the Evening Star has beamed like a yellow gem in the western sky at dusk, and late this month it attains its peak brightness. Over the summer Venus has been setting earlier each night, and unfortunately it now hovers so low above the western horizon at dusk that if your view in that direction is obstructed, Venus's brilliance may go unnoticed. On the 1st, Venus, accompanied by the much fainter true star Spica to its right, sets 1½ hours after sunset, or 9 pm EDT. At month's end, Venus sets only a half hour after the Sun, at which time a telescope will reveal a distinctly crescent phase. Venus vanishes entirely from the evening sky when it passes between the Earth and Sun (inferior conjunction) on October 23rd, after which it vaults into the dawn sky in early November to become the brilliant Morning Star.

Saturn (*in Pisces-Cetus*): Cream-colored Saturn beams from within the faint constellation of Pisces, which stands low in the east at nightfall. Saturn rises at 9 pm on the 1st and at 6:45 pm on the 30th; it stands halfway up in the south by 2 am EDT midmonth. Saturn will reach opposition with the Sun on October 4th, when it will be closest to Earth and at peak brightness, outshining autumn's first-magnitude jewel Fomalhaut, which lies to its lower right in late evening.

Mars (*in Gemini-Cancer*): Mars, glowing with a distinct reddish orange hue, drifts from Gemini into Cancer this month. Mars rises in the northeast at around 1:30 am in mid-September. Mars's brightness now rivals that of the nearby similarly orangish-colored star Pollux, and it will continue to 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 night sky.

Jupiter (*in Cancer-Leo*): Jupiter was in conjunction with the Sun in late July, and it began to reappear at dawn in mid-August. As September opens, Jupiter rises in the northeast at about 4:15 am, or 3 hours before the Sun. By month's end, Jupiter rises by 2:45 am, or 4 hours before sunrise. Look toward the northeast for brilliant Jupiter, which resembles a golden star, but which far outshines any of the nearby true stars

Earth: reaches the **Autumnal Equinox** on September 22nd at 8:05 pm EDT. Summer ends and autumn begins in the northern hemisphere.

Constellations & Bright Stars Visible Around 9 pm EDT in September

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

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

Boötes – getting low in WSW
Bright star *Arcturus*

Corona Borealis – halfway up in W, above Boötes
Bright star *Gemma* (also called *Alphecca*)

Hercules – high in W, between Lyra & Corona Borealis
“Keystone” pattern of 4 stars, star cluster M13

Scorpius – getting low in SW
Bright star *Antares*; stars *Shaula* and *Lesath* form “Cat's Eyes” in Scorpion's tail;

Ophiuchus – halfway up in SW, above *Scorpius*
Bright star *Rasalhague*

Sagittarius – low in S
Asterism the “Tea Pot”

Capricornus – low in SE

Lyra – overhead
Bright star *Vega*

Aquila – high up in S, below *Vega*
Bright star *Altair*

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

Pegasus (including the Great Square) – rising in E

Cassiopeia – rising in NE
Easily recognizable “W” shape

Perseus – rising in NE, below Cassiopeia
Bright stars *Mirfak* and *Algol*

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/.