

Night Sky Viewing at Widener University

October 2026

Sunrise & Sunset Times (EDT)

	Sunrise	Sunset
Begin Month	6:58 am	6:44 pm
End Month	7:29 am	6:00 pm

Lunar Phases



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

Mercury (*in Virgo-Libra*): Mercury is briefly visible at dusk during the first half of October; it floats low above the western horizon shortly after sunset, never emerging from the twilight glow and setting just 45 minutes after the Sun. Mercury reaches greatest evening elongation with the Sun on October 12th; afterwards it sinks into the twilight, eventually reaching inferior conjunction with the Sun on November 4th.

Venus (*in Virgo*): This month, Venus wraps up a spectacular run in the evening sky that began last January. As October opens, Venus is brilliant as ever, but only those observers with an unobstructed western horizon will be able to see it. Venus sets less than an hour after sunset on the 1st, and so it is a good idea to start looking for it at least a half-hour earlier when it is still a few degrees above the horizon. A small telescope will reveal Venus to have a thin crescent phase. The gap between Venus and the Sun gets progressively smaller over the next several weeks until October 23rd, when Venus reaches inferior conjunction with the Sun, passing between Earth and the Sun. Venus swings into the dawn sky in early November to become the brilliant Morning Star.

Saturn (*in Cetus*): Saturn is at its best this month; it reaches 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. Cream-colored Saturn beams from within the non-zodiac constellation Cetus, the Whale, just a whisker below the southern border of Pisces. Saturn hovers low in the east at nightfall, stands halfway up in the south at midnight, and sets at dawn.

Mars (*in Cancer-Leo*): Rising in the east-northeast at around 1 am in mid-October, orangish Mars starts out in Cancer and drifts into Leo during the month. Mars's brightness rivals that of similarly orange-colored star Pollux, and it will continue to slowly brighten until it reaches opposition with the Sun in February, when it will outshine nearly every star in the night sky.

Jupiter (*in Leo*): Jupiter is well-placed for viewing in the wee hours of the morning this October. Jupiter resembles a majestic golden star within the constellation Leo, which is up in the east-northeastern sky during the hours before daybreak. On October 1st, Jupiter peeks above the horizon shortly before 3 am EDT, and around 1:15 am on the 31st. Jupiter far outshines the nearby stars, including Leo's brightest, Regulus.

Orionid Meteor Shower: Peaks on the night of October 21-22. Its source: minute particles from Halley's Comet. The waxing gibbous Moon will wash out the fainter meteors until it sets around 3 am.

Constellations & Bright Stars Visible Around 9 pm EDT in October

Lyra – just W of overhead

Bright blue-white star *Vega*

Aquila – moderately high in SW

Bright white star *Altair*

Cygnus – nearly overhead

Bright star *Deneb*

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

Sagittarius – low in SW, setting

"Tea Pot" asterism

Pisces Austrinus – low in SE, getting higher

Bright white star *Fomalhaut*

Cetus – very low in ESE, rising

Bright orange stars *Diphda*, *Menkar*

Pegasus (Great Square) – high in ESE

Bright stars *Scheat*, *Markab*, *Algenib*

Andromeda – high in E, to left (E) of Pegasus

Bright stars *Alpheratz* (NE corner of Great Square), *Mirach*, *Almach*

Aquarius – midway up in S

Pisces – getting higher in E

Planet *Saturn*

Aries – low in ENE, rising

Bright stars *Hamal*, *Sheratan*

Cassiopeia – "W" high in NNE

Bright stars *Shedar*, *Caph*, *Ruchbah*

Perseus – rising in NE, to lower right of Cassiopeia

Bright stars *Mirfak* and *Algol*

Auriga – low in NNE, rising

Bright star *Capella*

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/.