Night Sky Viewing at Widener University

December 2026

Sunrise & Sunset Times (EST)

	Sunrise	Sunset
Begin Month	7:04 am	4:37 pm
End Month	7:23 am	4:46 pm

Lunar Phases



Last Quarter 1st | New 8th | First Quarter 17th | Full 23rd "Cold Moon" | Last Quarter 30th

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

Saturn (*in Cetus*): Saturn resembles a bright, cream-colored star in Cetus, the Whale, near its northern border with Pisces. In mid-December, Saturn stands due south, to the upper left of the whitish star Fomalhaut, at around 7 pm EST, and sets in the west by 1 am. Though noticeably fainter than it was at opposition back in early October, Saturn is brighter than first-magnitude Fomalhaut. Saturn reaches eastern quadrature with the Sun on the 29th, which means that it lies 90 degrees east of the Sun, and therefore halfway between opposition and conjunction (next April) with the Sun.

Jupiter & Mars (*in Leo*): Jupiter and Mars continue their joint residence in the constellation Leo this December, though more separated than they were back in November. Jupiter mimics a majestic golden star which far outshines any true star, including Leo's nearby lucida Regulus. Orangish Mars also outshines Regulus but is currently only one-tenth as bright as Jupiter. As December 1st, Jupiter rises in the northeast around 10:15 pm EST, with Mars following 30 minutes later. On New Year's Eve, Jupiter is up by 8:30 pm, while Mars follows at 9:30 pm. At dawn, the two bright planets stand high in the south-southwest, well to the upper right of the even more brilliant Venus. Jupiter and Mars will continue to slowly brighten for another two months until they reach opposition with the Sun, Jupiter on February 10th and Mars on February 19th.

Venus (*in Virgo-Libra*): Early morning risers with a window facing east will be greeted by a beautiful beacon in the sky this December – the planet Venus. There is no mistaking this magnificent light in the sky, as it outshines all other nighttime objects except for the Moon. At midmonth, Venus rises around 3:30 am, two hours before the onset of twilight and over 3½ hours before sunrise. About an hour after it rises, Venus should be high enough to clear most obstructions on the horizon.

Mercury (*in Libra-Scorpius-Ophiuchus-Sagittarius*): Mercury rises 1½ hours before sunrise on December 1st and resembles a bright star to the far lower left of Venus. As the month progresses, it sinks into the dawn twilight and reaches superior conjunction with the Sun on January 1st.

Earth: reaches the ***winter solstice*** on December 21st at 3:50 pm EST. Autumn ends and winter begins in the Northern Hemisphere.

Geminid Meteor Shower*:* Peaks on the evening-morning of December 13th-14th; meteors appear to emanate from the constellation Gemini. Its source: minute particles from asteroid (or dead comet) 3200 Phaeton, whose dust trail the Earth will be passing through at that time. The waxing crescent Moon sets early and will not interfere with the viewing.

Constellations & Bright Stars Visible Around 8 pm Local Time in December

Summer Triangle – low in W, setting
Consists of three bright stars: *Vega*, *Altair*, and *Deneb*

Pisces Austrinus – low in SW, setting
Bright white star *Fomalhaut*

Cetus – halfway up above horizon in S
Bright orange stars *Diphda, Menkar*
Planet *Saturn*

Pegasus (Great Square) – high in SSW, above *Fomalhaut*
Bright stars *Scheat, Markab, Algenib*

Andromeda – nearly overhead, connected to Pegasus
Bright stars *Alpheratz* (NE corner of Great Square), *Mirach, Almach*

Aquarius –low in SW, below Pegasus

Pisces –high in S, below the Great Square of Pegasus

Aries – high up in S, above Cetus & below Andromeda
Bright stars *Hamal*, *Sheratan*

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

Perseus – just E of overhead, follows Andromeda
Bright stars *Mirfak* (or *Agenib*) and *Algol*

Auriga – getting higher in NE, follows Perseus
Bright star *Capella*

Taurus – well up in ENE, getting higher
Bright star *Aldebaran,* Star Clusters *Pleiades & Hyades*

Orion – rising in E
Bright stars *Betelgeuse*, *Rigel*

Gemini – rising in NE, following Taurus
Bright stars *Pollux, Castor*

Canis Major – soon to rise in SE, to lower right of *Rigel*
Bright star *Sirius*

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/.