

Going Deeper into Retrogrades

In "Hot Degrees 2026", we listed all the points at which planets make retrograde and direct stations during the year. At these degrees where a planet travels very slowly and stops, the planet produces a much deeper imprint than usual and creates a sensitive point that can be activated by any planet transiting it. Years ago, the New York astrologer Eleanor Bach taught that these "hidden transits" to station degrees were potent and should be noted.

Even when a planet traverses its own station degree *before* the retrograde occurs, it puts emphasis on that planet and degree and is an occasion you should note. Some find that even though the planet is direct, the retrograde effect is strong on a day when the planet transits either of its two station degrees. The table at the end of this article shows when each of the planets transit their own station degrees during 2026.

Flowing with Retrograde Mercury

Everyone knows that Mercury retrograde is when you should read the fine print, not initiate important new ventures, and try to avoid screw-ups by taking special care with communications, agreements, and procedures. You may also know that Mercury retrograde could be an excellent time to identify and deal with whatever needs to be finished, repaired or improved. It's also a time to pause and reflect, turning your attention inward to contemplate your deeper motivations. When Mercury is retrograde, it can be easier to get out of old ruts. This is because the normal flow of your life tends to be reversed, stimulating you to look at life from a fresh viewpoint. The retrograde is an opportunity to re-view, re-visit, and ultimately re-new.

The Retrograde Cycle

An important thing to remember about any retrograde planet is that it goes over the same section of the zodiac *three times* giving heightened emphasis to a *whole degree area* in your chart. A retrograde also repeatedly activates whatever planets, angles, midpoints, etc. that fall within the retrograde arc, or make aspects (especially hard aspects) to degrees within it.

To understand what a retrograde is doing in the chart, you must look at not just the period when a planet is traveling backwards, but also at the periods before and after the retrograde when the planet is traversing the same degree area. These periods, often called the *retrograde shadow*, are part of a whole retrograde cycle.

The retrograde cycle has three main phases:

- The *pre-shadow period*, which starts when the planet, traveling forward in the zodiac, transits the degree where it will later make its direct station. This period lasts until the planet turns retrograde.

- The *retrograde period*, from when the planet makes its retrograde station to when it makes its direct station. Throughout this period the planet is traveling backward through the zodiac.
- The *post-shadow period*, when the planet, having resumed direct motion, moves from the degree of its direct station forward to the point where it originally went retrograde.

Being conscious of these three phases gives you a strategy for using the retrograde productively.

- The *pre-shadow period* is when you really should start paying special attention to details, because what you do now can result in problems that you experience later during the retrograde.
- The *retrograde period* is when the results of problems set up during the pre-shadow can surface. Also, any decisions that you made during the pre-shadow are now up for review. During the retrograde period you may, but not always, change those decisions. In order to keep from perpetuating existing problems or creating new ones, continue to take special care with details.
- The *post-shadow period* is when you feel life resuming its normal rhythm. With Mercury going over its retrograde arc one last time, you get a chance to re-visit and resolve any problems that arose and integrate the lessons learned.

For more specific guidance on the kinds of issues that will come up during the retrograde cycle, look to the signs and natal houses covered by the retrograde arc and the natal planets and sensitive points that lie within it. If Mercury, Gemini, or Virgo are strong in your chart, you may be affected by Mercury retrograde more than most people.

The Table of Retrograde Shadow Dates

The table at the end of this article shows when these phases occur during 2025, not just for Mercury but for the other two inner planets. There isn't as much lore about the behavior of Venus and Mars when retrograde, but you can expect that the affairs of these planets would be affected in phases analogous to the way Mercury is affected.

While Jupiter and the planets beyond it go retrograde for some months every year, Venus and Mars each go retrograde only about every two years, typically in alternate years. Venus will be retrograde in 2026 and will station direct on Nov 13, the same day as Mercury goes direct. In 2026, Mars will not be retrograde. The outer planets move so slowly that their shadow periods can last anywhere from 9 -12 months and so they are not listed here.

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2026 Planetary Stations with Retrograde Arc or “Shadow” Enter/Exit Dates

Feb 11 2026	Mer	8°Pi29'D	Enters	5:06p	EST
Feb 26 2026	Mer	22°Pi33'R	R	1:48a	EST
Mar 20 2026	Mer	8°Pi29'D	D	3:33p	EDT
Apr 9 2026	Mer	22°Pi33'D	Exits	7:24a	EDT
Jun 12 2026	Mer	16°Cn18' D	Enters	8:32p	EDT
Jun 29 2026	Mer	26°Cn15' R	R	1:36p	EDT
Jul 23 2026	Mer	16°Cn18' D	D	6:58p	EDT
Aug 6 2026	Mer	26°Cn15' D	Exits	11:30p	EDT
Jun 30 2025	Mer	4°Le14' D	Enters	1:54a	EDT
Jul 18 2025	Mer	15°Le34' R	R	0:45a	EDT
Aug 11 2025	Mer	4°Le14' D	D	3:30a	EDT
Aug 25 2025	Mer	15°Le34' D	Exits	4:36a	EDT
Oct 4 2026	Mer	5°Sc02'D	Enters	5:09a	EDT
Oct 24 2026	Mer	20°Sc58'R	R	3:13A	EDT
Nov 13 2026	Mer	5°Sc02'D	D	10:54a	EST
Nov 30 2026	Mer	20°Sc58'D	Exits	1:04a	EST
Oct 30 2026	Ven	22°Li51' D	Enters	8:22a	EDT
Oct 3 2026	Ven	8°Sc29'R	R	3:16a	EDT
Nov 13 2026	Ven	22°Li51' D	D	9:02p	EST
Dec 15 2026	Ven	8°Sc29' D	Exits	1:31p	EST