

Astronomy Club of Asheville

May 2024 Highlight

The Moon and 3 Planets at Dawn

This article and illustration are courtesy of the folks at [SKY & TELESCOPE](#)

May 3-6

At dawn on May 3rd, there's a "four for the price of one" array of planets with the Moon. From right to left we have the **Moon**, **Saturn**, **Mars**, and **Mercury**. All three planets shine at roughly the same brightness. Saturn glows at magnitude 1.2, while Mars is just a wee bit brighter at magnitude 1.1. Far more noticeable is the color contrast between these two, with Mars displaying a peachy-orange hue and Saturn a pale, honey-yellow. Brightest of all is Mercury, which is a +0.8 magnitude dot *just* above the eastern horizon. On this particular morning, it achieves an altitude of only 3° half an hour before sunup. You'll need binoculars to have any chance of claiming it.

As for the Moon, it's a 28%-illuminated, waning crescent on May 3rd. On each of the three subsequent mornings, it will participate in a new and interesting conjunction. At dawn on the 4th, it's roughly midway between Saturn and Mars; on the 5th, it's parked between Mars and Mercury (slightly closer to the former); and on the 6th, it sits above left of Mercury. Plenty of reasons to keep an eye on the morning sky!

