

Going Deeper into Retrogrades

In our annual Hot Degrees tables we list eclipses, major aspects and all the points at which planets make retrograde and direct stations during the coming year. At these degrees where a planet travels very slowly and stops, the planet, lingering in place, 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" (as she called them) to station degrees were potent and should be noted.

Like eclipses, it's possible for these degrees to act as sensitive points before, as well as after, the planet makes its station. 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 2016.

This table also defines the whole retrograde cycle, a concept that can be useful for helping you and your clients to ride the retrograde wave productively.

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 actually signals an excellent time for revisiting old territory and fixing whatever needs to be fixed. This is the 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

But there's more to the story. An important thing to remember about any retrograde planet is that it goes over the same section of the zodiac *three times* -- forward, backward and then forward again. This gives heightened emphasis to a *whole degree area* in your chart, highlighting the issues of the houses where the retrograde arc occurs.

A retrograde also repeatedly activates whatever *sensitive points* lie within this degree area. Sensitive points can include any chart factors (planets, angles, midpoints, etc.) that fall within the retrograde arc, or make aspects (particularly squares, oppositions and semi- and sesqui-squares) to degrees within it.

First, a planet *about to go retrograde* highlights these sensitive points in the order in which you usually experience them day after day, year after year through repeated transits from the Sun, Moon and chart angles. Then, when the planet goes *retrograde*, it highlights these points in reverse order. After planet goes *direct*, the usual order resumes.

Noting the zodiacal order of the planets in a chart can be informative. For example, if you have Saturn placed where it is usually transited just before Jupiter is transited, you will tend to feel that hard work eventually brings its rewards. If Jupiter is placed so it is usually transited just before Saturn, you may feel that whenever you grow especially expansive and happy, hard realities soon bring you down to earth. At times when a planet transits in *reverse* over your Jupiter and Saturn, you will clearly not experience these planets in the same way. In his book *Planets in Containment* John Sandbach shows how useful the zodiacal order of the planets can be in chart interpretation.

The Three Phases of a Retrograde

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, which are 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. Strive for clarity in all your communications.
- *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 will usually, but not always, change those decisions.

Ideally, this is a time for pausing to review and reflect upon what you've been doing, so that you can view it in a new light. It's time to clean up old business, creating a clean slate for initiating new ventures when the retrograde cycle is over. 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. If you do not make a decision during this phase, then the decision that you made during the pre-shadow and/or retrograde phase is likely to stand.

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.

Cruising the internet, you will find more excellent advice about weathering Mercury retrograde. Roman Oleh Yaworsky's site PowerfulLight.com, Wendy Guy's site EvolvingDoor.ca, and DebraClementAstrologer.com are all well worth visiting.

The Table of Retrograde Shadow Dates

The table at the end of this article shows when these phases occur during 2016, not just for Mercury but for all the planets. There isn't as much lore about the behavior of Venus, Mars and the other planets when retrograde, but you could expect that the affairs of these planets would be affected in phases analogous to the way Mercury is affected. At their websites Wendy Guy and Debra Clement discuss the meaning of other planets as well as Mercury going retrograde.

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. Occasionally both will go retrograde in a given calendar year, as they did in 2001 and 2012 and will in 2018, or neither will retrograde, as in 2011. But usually they retrograde in alternate years. In 2016 it's the year for Mars retrograde, and in 2017 it's the year for Venus. Because the retrogrades of Venus and Mars are rarer than those of the other planets, mundane astrologers tend to take extra note of them.

Neptune and Pluto move so slowly that their shadow periods overlap from year to year, and so they are always in the shadow of one retrograde or another. Still, it could be informative to consider the pre- and post-shadows that are attached to each individual retrograde period.

-- Pat White

Thanks to Solar Fire user David G. Walters, who brought up the matter of retrograde shadows and contributed information to this article.

CALCULATIONS BY SOLAR FIRE 9

2016 Planetary Stations with Retrograde Arc or "Shadow" Enter/Exit Dates

Note: Includes cycles that run over into the previous or following year.

Venus makes no stations and has no shadow periods during 2016.

Dec 19 2015	Mer	14°Cp54'42" D	Enters	6:31p	EST
Jan 5 2016	Mer	01°Aq02'36" R	SR	8:05a	EST
Jan 25 2016	Mer	14°Cp54'42" D	SD	4:49p	EST
Feb 14 2016	Mer	01°Aq02'36" D	Exits	1:34p	EST
Apr 14 2016	Mer	14°Ta20'16" D	Enters	2:08p	EDT
Apr 28 2016	Mer	23°Ta36'06" R	SR	1:19p	EDT
May 22 2016	Mer	14°Ta20'16" D	SD	9:19a	EDT
Jun 7 2016	Mer	23°Ta36'06" D	Exits	1:46p	EDT
Aug 10 2016	Mer	14°Vi49'21" D	Enters	7:23a	EDT
Aug 30 2016	Mer	29°Vi04'38" R	SR	9:03a	EDT
Sep 22 2016	Mer	14°Vi49'21" D	SD	1:30a	EDT
Oct 6 2016	Mer	29°Vi04'38" D	Exits	2:18p	EDT
Dec 1 2016	Mer	28°Sg50'55" D	Enters	8:17p	EST
Dec 19 2016	Mer	15°Cp07'51" R	SR	5:55a	EST
Jan 8 2017	Mer	28°Sg50'55" D	SD	4:42a	EST
Jan 27 2017	Mer	15°Cp07'51" D	Exits	12:29p	EST
Feb 17 2016	Mar	23°Sc03'28" D	Enters	10:18p	EST
Apr 17 2016	Mar	08°Sg54'02" R	SR	8:13a	EDT
Jun 29 2016	Mar	23°Sc03'28" D	SD	7:38p	EDT
Aug 22 2016	Mar	08°Sg54'02" D	Exits	9:57a	EDT
Oct 12 2015	Jup	13°Vi15'18" D	Enters	9:37p	EDT
Jan 7 2016	Jup	23°Vi14'16" R	SR	11:40p	EST
May 9 2016	Jup	13°Vi15'18" D	SD	8:14a	EDT
Aug 7 2016	Jup	23°Vi14'16" D	Exits	1:54a	EDT
Nov 10 2016	Jup	13°Li12'58" D	Enters	11:38p	EST
Feb 6 2017	Jup	23°Li08'25" R	SR	1:52a	EST
Jun 9 2017	Jup	13°Li12'58" D	SD	10:02a	EDT
Sep 6 2017	Jup	23°Li08'25" D	Exits	10:06p	EDT
Dec 19 2015	Sat	09°Sg46'44" D	Enters	2:59p	EST
Mar 25 2016	Sat	16°Sg24'18" R	SR	6:00a	EDT
Aug 13 2016	Sat	09°Sg46'44" D	SD	5:49a	EDT
Nov 19 2016	Sat	16°Sg24'18" D	Exits	6:53a	EST

Dec 30 2016	Sat	21°Sg10'56" D	Enters	3:29a	EST
Apr 6 2017	Sat	27°Sg47'41" R	SR	1:05a	EDT
Aug 25 2017	Sat	21°Sg10'56" D	SD	8:08a	EDT
Dec 1 2017	Sat	27°Sg47'41" D	Exits	1:55a	EST
Apr 8 2015	Ura	16°Ar33'30" D	Enters	5:35a	EDT
Jul 26 2015	Ura	20°Ar30'09" R	SR	6:37a	EDT
Dec 25 2015	Ura	16°Ar33'30" D	SD	10:52p	EST
Apr 10 2016	Ura	20°Ar30'09" D	Exits	2:54p	EDT
Apr 11 2016	Ura	20°Ar33'26" D	Enters	1:49p	EDT
Jul 29 2016	Ura	24°Ar30'28" R	SR	5:06p	EDT
Dec 29 2016	Ura	20°Ar33'26" D	SD	4:28a	EST
Apr 14 2017	Ura	24°Ar30'28" D	Exits	9:21p	EDT
Feb 19 2015	Nep	07°Pi01'08" D	Enters	12:14p	EST
Jun 12 2015	Nep	09°Pi49'02" R	SR	5:07a	EDT
Nov 18 2015	Nep	07°Pi01'08" D	SD	11:30a	EST
Mar 8 2016	Nep	09°Pi49'02" D	Exits	5:03a	EST
Feb 22 2016	Nep	09°Pi14'27" D	Enters	0:02a	EST
Jun 13 2016	Nep	12°Pi02'23" R	SR	4:42p	EDT
Nov 19 2016	Nep	09°Pi14'27" D	SD	11:37p	EST
Mar 10 2017	Nep	12°Pi02'23" D	Exits	4:11p	EST
Dec 26 2014	Plu	12°Cp58'29" D	Enters	7:38a	EST
Apr 16 2015	Plu	15°Cp32'45" R	SR	11:54p	EDT
Sep 25 2015	Plu	12°Cp58'29" D	SD	2:57a	EDT
Jan 15 2016	Plu	15°Cp32'45" D	Exits	4:25a	EST
Dec 28 2015	Plu	14°Cp55'37" D	Enters	6:16a	EST
Apr 18 2016	Plu	17°Cp29'06" R	SR	3:25a	EDT
Sep 26 2016	Plu	14°Cp55'37" D	SD	11:01a	EDT
Jan 16 2017	Plu	17°Cp29'06" D	Exits	2:55p	EST
Dec 29 2016	Plu	16°Cp51'14" D	Enters	4:44a	EST
Apr 20 2017	Plu	19°Cp23'54" R	SR	8:48a	EDT
Sep 28 2017	Plu	16°Cp51'14" D	SD	3:35p	EDT
Jan 19 2018	Plu	19°Cp23'54" D	Exits	0:14a	EST

Extra steps were taken this year to make the times shown more accurate. The station times have been quite accurate all along because, using the state-of-the-art Swiss Ephemeris, Solar Fire calculates most planetary positions to an internal accuracy of <0.01" of arc. However, the Enter and Exit times are hand-calculated from displayed times, which are only given to the nearest second of arc. These times should be considered approximate. Also, the slower a planet travels, the harder it is to pinpoint the time when it reaches a given zodiacal position. Pluto is calculated to an internal accuracy of only <1" of arc, so that its exact station times should be taken with a grain of salt and its Enter and Exit times could be off by more than a day.