



# Mercury, Venus & Mars Retrogrades 101

## **Mercury, Venus & Retrogrades 101**

An Astrology Micro Course

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## Module 1 - Retrograde Basics: What is a Retrograde?

A planet is called retrograde when it appears to be moving backward from our vantage point here on Earth. It isn't actually moving backward, it only looks that way because of the way the planets move in relation to Earth. A planet retrograde isn't normal motion, so we often feel that things are off when it is. It can feel out of control at times, but if you learn to work with it instead of fighting against it, you can turn it around and make it work in your favor.

When you hear the term "turn retrograde" this means the start of the retrograde and the planet is now moving backward through the Zodiac. When you hear the term "turn direct" this means the end of the retrograde and the planet is now moving forward again through the Zodiac. There's one other term with retrogrades you need to learn, and that's "stationing" - a planet is stationing when it's hovering in about the same location in the Zodiac for a period of time. Planets are usually stationing right around when they turn retrograde and when they turn direct.

The Sun and Moon don't retrograde since the Earth orbits the Sun, and the Moon orbits the Earth. The outer planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto) retrograde for several months at a time each year, and since they're outer planets and retrograde for longer periods, they have less of an impact in retrograde.

Mars retrograde occurs every 2 years or so, and lasts for 2 - 2 1/2 months. Venus retrogrades for about 1 1/2 months every 1 1/2 - 2 years. Mercury is the only planet that retrogrades 3-4 times per year for several weeks at a time. It's a much shorter duration than the other retrogrades, but packs a big punch. Mercury is also unique because it's the only planet who has a true shadow period and a storm period. The shadow period is very, very subtle, so most of us don't feel the impact of Mercury retrograde until the storm period kicks in. The storm is when Mercury is moving at his slowest (less than 40 minutes per day). Mercury moves fast normally, so he doesn't like moving so slow. This tends to make the storm period the hardest part of Mercury retrograde. There are usually two storm periods, one at the start and one at the end with a break in the middle to give us a breather.

## Module 2 - Mercury Retrograde

Why does Mercury retrograde have such a strong impact? The reason for this is because of what Mercury rules. Mercury is the planet of communication, ruling how we communicate, understand, and our regular interactions and conversations (in person, over the phone, online, letters, text messages - the written and spoken word are ruled by Mercury). Mercury is also a tech ruler (along with Uranus), ruling the gadgets that fill up our lives these days, and rules short travel (the travel we do each day, places we can go to by car, bus, bicycle, walking, etc.). Mercury also rules daily life in general (our routines, chores, habits, and close environment), our work lives, and our health. So in spite of Mercury being a small planet, it's quite powerful! And only seems to get more powerful as our world becomes more interconnected through technology.

You may read a lot of people say that Mercury retrograde is a load of bunk. "How could it possibly impact us?!" they cry. "It's just a stupid little planet!"

There was even an article in the New York Times in 2006 that showed there were actually less traffic events (accidents, malfunctioning traffic equipment, etc.) and trains were slightly more on time during Mercury retrograde.

Though that same article also showed that there were more late flights and lost baggage during Mercury retrograde. This contradiction shows that there likely wasn't enough data over a long enough period of time to have a real answer (usually the case with astrology studies). Here's the deal - not everything that can go wrong during Mercury retrograde will go wrong. As you've learned, it all depends on what the retrograde is doing in your chart. But, what I find is usually the case with Mercury retrograde is, when things go wrong, they go REALLY, REALLY WRONG.

So, here are a few examples of Mercury retrograde's impact in the real world:

### 1) 2000 Presidential Election

This was quite the debacle. Who knew a Chad could have so much impact on voting? For those of you outside the U.S. (or too young to remember), this presidential election was between George W. Bush (who "won", if you can

call it that) and Al Gore (that you probably know now as the climate change guy). Ballots in Florida were a big old mess (where the governor of the state just happened to be George's brother), we all learned way more about voting than we ever wanted to, and it went to the courts, where Bush was victorious. And the rest, as they say, is history . . .

On election day, Tuesday, November 7th, 2000, Mercury retrograde turned direct (ended). When Mercury retrograde begins and ends, he's moving slowly, hovering in the same spot, called stationed. There's an enormous amount of energy going on during that stationed period. When Mercury turns retrograde or direct, things tend to flip upside down from how we thought they were going to be (and boy did we have no idea how this one was going to go!).

On that fated day, Mercury turned direct at 29 degrees Libra. 29 degrees is called the anaretic degree, and it's a point of crisis energy, so to have Mercury end here really pumped up the volume. It was quincunx Saturn, a hard aspect with erratic energy, adding to the wonkiness (and oh yes, Saturn rules politics, and was retrograde at the time). Libra is also one of the signs ruling the law (along with Sagittarius), hence this going to the courts.

For the U.S. birth chart (if the Sibley chart is used - there is some debate about what the correct birth date and time is for the U.S., but this is the chart most widely used and the one I like), the 11th house cusp is at 29 degrees Libra, the same degree that Mercury turned direct at. The 11th house rules the masses (like a large group of people voting). The natural ruler of the 11th house, Uranus, in the U.S. chart was conjuncted by Jupiter the day before, making the problem bigger (Jupiter is expansive), and making this something rather unexpected (Uranus and the 11th house rule the unexpected).

What's most interesting about the U.S. birth chart in relation to Mercury retrograde is that the U.S. chart has Mercury retrograde! But you see, this was the end of the retrograde, not the start, so the retrograde energy that's natural for the U.S. was going away. You can be protected no matter what if the natal Mercury is retrograde and progressed Mercury is direct (or if your natal Mercury is direct and your progressed Mercury is retrograde), but in the progressed chart for the U.S. at that point, progressed Mercury was also retrograde.

There was some concern in 2012, because on election day that year, Mercury was turning retrograde. But ahh, there's the difference, Mercury was turning retrograde, not direct. It was also in a different sign (Sagittarius). Turned out Mercury helped re-elect President Obama (retrogrades bring things back), and just made the Romney camp put too much emphasis on some questionable polling from some questionable people.

## **2) 2014 Super Bowl**

It was February 2nd, 2014, with the Denver Broncos, helmed by Peyton, versus the Seattle Seahawks, led by the young-and-yummy Russell Wilson, in what turned out to be a very mild New York (and they were so worried it would snow, the big wimps). So, the game begins . . .

. . . and it was a disaster immediately.

The very first snap for the Broncos was botched, over Peyton's head and into the end zone, and a safety gave Seattle a 2-0 lead without them doing a darn tootin' thing. That pretty much set the stage for what was a blowout win for the Seahawks, killing the Broncos 43-8.

What was Mercury doing? Oh yes, he was getting ready to turn retrograde! Mercury retrograde began a few days after the Superbowl that year, on February 6th. The first storm period began the next day.

This retrograde began in Pisces, conjunct Pisces ruler, Neptune in Pisces. So fitting when you consider Pisces and Neptune bring in the fog, the haze, making it sooo difficult to see or understand anything . . . the Broncos couldn't get their act together to save their life. And, of course, Peyton Manning has his Mercury and Venus in Pisces.

## **3) U.S. Stock Market**

This is not an event, rather, it's a series of events. First, did you know that October is seen as cursed by finance guys? They call it the October Curse or October Effect. There's this belief that the stock market nosedives in

October. It's been proven untrue, and it turns out that September is actually a worse month for stocks.

BUT if you look at the list of the worst single day nosedives in the history of the stock market in the U.S., you'll find that for the top 10, Mercury retrograde was involved for all 10.

ALL 10!!!

I don't know what the odds of that are, but I'm guessing pretty small. No wonder banks secretly employ financial astrologers.

Below is a list of the 10 worst days and their percentage losses, and what Mercury was doing for each of them:

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Percentage Loss</u>
1	Oct 19th 1987	22.61%
2	Oct 28th 1929	12.82%
3	Dec 18th 1899	11.99%
4	Oct 29th 1929	11.73%
5	Nov 6th 1929	9.92%
6	Aug 12th 1932	8.40%
7	Mar 14th 1907	8.29%
8	Oct 26th 1987	8.04%
9	Oct 15th 2008	7.87%
10	July 21st 1933	7.84%

\*Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_largest\\_daily\\_changes\\_in\\_the\\_Dow\\_Jones\\_Industrial\\_Average](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_daily_changes_in_the_Dow_Jones_Industrial_Average)

## Numbers 1 and 8

The day known as Black Monday came on October 19th, 1987, and is the largest percentage loss in one day for the Dow Jones Industrial Average. This was not just an American event though, as this day saw a massive

stock market collapse worldwide. It was followed up shortly afterward with the 8th largest percentage loss for the DOW on October 26th.

So what was Mercury doing? Mercury turned retrograde October 16th, 1987, in the sign of Scorpio, which rules stocks. Pluto was also in the sign of Scorpio at the time, and conjunct Mercury during that retrograde. Pluto is also the planetary ruler of stocks.

### **Numbers 2 and 4**

This was the start of the Great Depression. In some ways, it was worse than the previous. The 28th and 29th are also sometimes referred to as Black Monday and Black Tuesday.

How was Mercury involved? Mercury had just turned direct in Libra (10 or 11 days before) and was still in the shadow period, and was square (hard aspect) Pluto in Cancer, who just turned retrograde. The two had stationed square. Not only that, but Uranus was opposite the Mercury direct quite closely in Aries and was retrograde, hence it being such a sudden downfall.

### **Number 3**

This one is a little mysterious as I couldn't find much about it (probably because it was so long ago!). But for this dip, Mercury turned direct 3 days before conjunct Uranus in Sagittarius, in the same sign as Saturn (Sagittarius), and opposite by sign Pluto and Neptune in Gemini. What's funny about this one is the DOW only dropped a little under 8 points. It closed just under 60. It was so small back then!

### **Number 6**

Like #3, I couldn't find much on this one either, but it was during the Great Depression, which was a volatile time. This one is interesting - Mercury had just retrograded backward into Leo (1 or 2 days before), and conjuncted anaretic Jupiter in Leo when it did. Jupiter has expansive energy, and sometimes he makes things that are bad worse. Looks like that was the case here!

### **Number 7**

1907 was a bad year, culminating in the Panic of 1907 later that year in October. But March had a pretty bad day for the stock market. Like with #6, Mercury retrograded back into a different sign, going from Aries to Pisces, on the 14th, starting the day at 0 degrees Aries (a critical degree), and then square Pluto in Gemini and Mars in Sagittarius in Pisces. Saturn was also in Pisces at the time.

### **Number 9**

You should be old enough to remember this one! This is the most recent date on the top ten list, and was actually the second worst day for actual point loss (not percentage).

How was good old Mercury involved? Mercury actually turned direct in Libra on October 15th. He was square Jupiter in Capricorn. Expansion! Adding to the mix was Saturn opposite Uranus (Mr. Responsible challenging the recklessness) and Pluto (Mr. Stocks) gearing up to enter a new sign, Capricorn (naturally ruled by Mr. Responsible, Saturn).

### **Number 10**

Another one during the Great Depression. For this dip, Mercury was retrograde in Leo and opposite retrograde Saturn in Aquarius.



## Module 3 - Venus & Mars Retrograde

Venus and Mars don't retrograde as often as Mercury, but can have just as strong of an impact, if not more at times, depending on what they're doing. Let's go into Venus retrograde first.

Venus rules love and money, so this is what is usually impacted when she is retrograde. The most obvious impact is usually on relationships, and we tend to see a lot of people breaking up. Retrograde can bring things back, so we can see a lot of people getting back together too. Old flames come back into our lives, we think about the people from the past, and we may not see them as clearly as we should until the retrograde is over. Then we remember why they weren't in our lives, and can go back to that. Financial impact tends to be secondary with Venus, but we usually do so people have more financial problems, and it's usually from not being responsible or paying enough attention. We can be overly indulgent, lazy, and stubborn with Venus retrograde.

The last Venus retrograde occurred July 25th - September 6th 2015, starting in Virgo and quickly entering Leo for most of the retrograde. As the retrograde began, the Boy Scouts ended their ban on gay adult leaders (fitting since Venus rules equality), and Tom Brady's suspension was upheld by Roger Goodell (also fitting since Venus rules justice, but in typical retrograde fashion, the suspension was reversed just before the retrograde ended in September - of course, it eventually went through and he's serving the suspension to start the 2016 season). In August and September., we had the Syrian refugee crisis. And in August, the stock market had a major correction, opening one day in August over 1,000 points down (Venus rules money).

Mars rules our energy and drive, so when he's retrograde, we tend to have too much or too little energy and drive. We can feel like we're stalled, unable to get new projects and ventures off of the ground, and this can make us quite grumpy. Mars rules assertiveness, which can be aggressiveness when it's negative, and is also one of the rulers of war, so we tend to see more violence with Mars retrograde. Mars also rules accidents, and that can also be more prominent with Mars retrograde, especially when we're angry and not thinking straight. We need to be much more understanding and not lose

out cool, otherwise we can erupt, and it becomes difficult to put the pieces back together again once the retrograde is over.

Mars retrograde doesn't happen as often as Mercury or even Venus retrograde. Mars madness comes every 2 years or so. It's nice we get a longer break, but it means that when he's here . . . yikes!

Mars was retrograde in 2014, from March 1st to May 19th 2014 in Libra. The 2014 retrograde occurred in Libra, a cardinal sign, and at the time we were dealing with a cardinal t-square with Jupiter in Cancer opposite Pluto in Capricorn and both square (hard aspect, 3 signs away) Uranus in Aries. The Mars retrograde in Libra opposed Uranus in Aries, completing a grand cross. T-squares and grand cross are difficult energy to deal with, especially when a retrograde planet is involved. No surprise then that on the very first day of the 2014 retrograde, March 1st, Russia sent troops into Crimea, taking control - Mars is one of the rulers of war, and Libra rules peace. On March 8th, Malaysian Airlines Flight MH370 disappeared (and Jupiter was stationing at the time, ruler of flight; these two made it all so hazy that we still don't know what happened and the stories and conspiracy theories went haywire).

In April, Boko Haram kidnapped almost 300 girls from a school in Nigeria (Libra is a very pro-woman sign, so Mars retrograde in that sign is not so good for females). Clipper's owner Donald Sterling was also banned from the NBA for life after that whole racist debacle (this was very fitting considering Libra rules equality). A ferry with hundreds on board sank off of the coast of South Korea with the captain elsewhere (remember that?). And these are just a few of the Mars retrograde 2014 moments.

We also had Mars retrograde in 2016, April 17th - June 29th, starting in Sagittarius and going backward into Scorpio on May 27th until the end of the retrograde. The start in Sagittarius also stimulated a t-square, this time in mutable signs (conjunct Saturn in Sagittarius, square Neptune in Pisces and Jupiter in Virgo). We can remember a lot of what happened during this retrograde: To kick it off on April 17th, Brazil began to impeach its first female president, Dilma Rousseff. Four days later, on April 21st, Prince passed.

In May, while in Sagittarius, EgyptAir 804 crashed, believed to have been a bomb from the get-go, and this occurred with the full moon in May which conjuncted the Mars retrograde in Sagittarius. Sagittarius also rules flight. In late May, it was feared more than 1,0000 migrants trying to get to Europe died in the Mediterranean.

Then in June, with Mars in Scorpio, Muhammed Ali passed, and there was the Orlando nightclub shooting, which left 49 people dead and prompted politicians to start speaking up about gun violence. The retrograde ended with the Brexit vote, abruptly removing the United Kingdom from the European Union, and the stock markets around the world did NOT respond well (no surprise, Scorpio rules stocks).

Mars retrograde is always pretty eventful - the next one in 2018 will occur in Aquarius and trigger a fixed t-square with Mercury retrograde as well, and then swing into Capricorn and join Saturn and Pluto for some raucousness. So be prepared!

## Module 4 - The 4 Ways a Retrograde Can Impact You

Not every retrograde that occurs is going to impact you. There are plenty of times when a retrograde came and went and we barely felt a thing. There are some ways you can determine if a retrograde will be difficult for you or not. These are the four main ways you'll know that the retrogrades of Mars or Mercury will be difficult for you:

**1) You have natal planets or your Rising in the sign the retrograde planets naturally rules (Gemini, Virgo = Mercury; Aries = Mars; Taurus, Libra = Venus).**

Whenever the planetary ruler of a sign goes retrograde, the energy is slightly off. This will be associated with the areas of life ruled by the planet of that sign. It tends to be subtle, but always there, and you have a general feeling of things not going quite right. It tends to be strongest when it's your Sun sign, Moon sign, or Rising sign ruler who is retrograde.

**2) You have natal planets or your Rising in the sign the planet will retrograde in.**

The sign that the planet will retrograde in gets completely thrown for a loop. Its energy is going in reverse, dragged backward by the retrograde. If you have any natal planets in the sign of the retrograde, the areas of life ruled by those planets can have a lot of issues during the retrograde, and you have to pay special attention to them.

**3) The turn retrograde or direct will conjunct, square, or oppose a natal planet.**

The turn retrograde and turn direct of any planetary retrograde tends to be very strong because the planet is stationary. Squares and oppositions are hard, difficult aspects (an aspect is when two points are at certain distances to one another; squares = 3 signs away, oppositions = in the opposite spot). So putting the two together, you have a planet that's hovering in the same spot, funneling continuous difficult energy to the planet it's squaring or opposing. It's like putting something under a magnifying glass in bright sunlight. The orb of influence can be up to 3 degrees.

#### **4) The retrograde will conjunct a house cusp.**

There are 12 houses in a natal chart, and a house cusp is the very beginning of a house, and is directly tied to the energy of that house. When the retrograde conjuncts (is in the same spot as) a house cusp, it's sending a massive amount of difficult energy to that house while it's on the cusp, which creates some challenges. It's especially difficult when it's one of the angles (1st, 4th, 7th, or 10th house cusps).

#### **When It DOESN'T Impact You:**

If the retrogrades won't do any of these things, and make no more than a couple of hard aspects during the retrograde, you can skate by relatively unscathed. The other time when a retrograde isn't much of a problem is when you were born while that planet was retrograde because the energy is natural to you, and you're operating on your normal wavelength. In fact, you can be full-steam ahead while the rest of us flounder! The only problem may be that other people can bring issues into your life (the non-native-retrograde folks).

To a lesser extent, you can also find it easier when your progressed planet is retrograde. Instead, the retrograde native experiences their issues when the planet ISN'T retrograde! An exception to this is if the retrograde will square or oppose a natal planet or house cusp; a natal planet retrograde only protects you from general retrograde energy and not from difficult transit aspects (unfortunately!).