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What Really Happens During Mercury Retrograde?

Here's what you need to know before the messenger planet scrambles, well, everything.

By **Maressa Brown** | Updated on May 2, 2022 @ 05:30PM



No matter your career path or big-picture goals, we can all feel the pressure to be in hustle mode and as productive as possible 24/7. For many of us, that means we have to make a conscious effort to slow down — by doing yoga or meditating, getting acupuncture or a massage, or using a mindfulness app. But every few months, you can rely on an astrological event to force the issue.

When Mercury, the planet that oversees communication, transportation, and technology, appears to move backwards from our vantage point on Earth, we're often stirred — and occasionally, required — to decelerate from our typical daily grind in order to reflect, revise, and tie up loose ends.

The slowdown and backup tend to delay or curtail progress on all of the aspects of life that the messenger planet rules. But it's also about

taking all of that mental energy we often expend out in the world and turning inward, spending time reflecting, revising, and rethinking whatever it is we've been training our brains on for the past several months.

Here's your full guide to understanding the basics of Mercury retrograde and making the most of this often frustrating, and potentially fruitful, period.

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How Often Is Mercury Retrograde?

When your flight is delayed, your laptop glitches out, or an ex you haven't talked to in eons texts out of nowhere, you might joke that Mercury must be retrograde. It's easy to feel like the messenger planet is perpetually wreaking havoc on your travel, tech, or communication because Mercury retrograde happens every three or four months for a total of three or four times a year for about three weeks at a time. That means it's retrograde approximately 18% of the time.

Unfortunately, the next one is right around the corner. From May 10 to June 3, Mercury will officially move backward, but even in its pre-retrograde [shadow or storm phase](#), it can throw a wrench in communication, transportation, and technology. The storm is the result of the [fastest moving planet](#) in our solar system — Mercury moves around the sun every 88 Earth days, traveling at nearly 112,000 mph — slowing down significantly, almost to a standstill. So, too, will everyday communication, transportation, and technology-related aspects of life.

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But what's true for every major astrological aspect is true here, as well: The day you'll feel the effects of Mercury's backwards turn the most will be the day it "stations" (aka goes) retrograde or direct.

What Happens When Mercury Is Retrograde?

You might have to deal with delays and

You might have to deal with delays and setbacks.

Mercury retrograde is notorious for throwing technology, communication, and travel plans out of whack. You might find yourself sitting in inexplicably heavier traffic than usual or having to contend with an unusually aggravating subway delay, scouring for a lost credit card, bill, or receipt, on hold with a potential employer, missing texts or emails, and troubleshooting glitchy apps.

Examples like these are absolutely the most negative, stressful part of Mercury moving backwards, which is why they're the ones we tend to focus on and use to characterize Mercury retrograde. But as with just about everything in astrology, transits aren't considered entirely positive or negative. It's more like the fact that a rainy day has its pros and cons — and is simply a current state of weather.

It's also an ideal time to reflect and revise.

Whether we like it or not, we all know that life isn't designed to plow ahead 24/7/365. Mercury retrograde serves as the universe's chill out periods, reminding us that ultimate progress often hinges on reverse motion. This could look like revising a business proposal, reconnecting with a former colleague or friend, doing your taxes, revising your New Year's resolutions to be even more realistic and attainable, or tying up loose ends on a project you started in the past that somehow landed on the backburner.

Sure, tending to old business can feel boring or as though you're being forced to take steps backwards. But Mercury retrograde encourages us to focus on the type of old business, which could stimulate growth and forward movement in the long-run.

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You'll face blasts from the past.

Mercury retrograde also has a way of setting the stage for often eyebrow-raising run-ins with exes, former coworkers, or childhood friends with whom you lost touch. You might also dig up old journals, feel like listening to music or seeing films you haven't enjoyed in years, or come across an intriguing email that got lost in the shuffle. Given Mercury's curious, scattered energy, not every one of these moments has weighty significance. In other words, that Tinder match who randomly hit you up after eight months might be nothing more than a bored dude scrolling through his old contacts and putting out feelers for a hookup. But it's possible that beloved book you're rereading for

for a hook-up. But it's possible that beloved book you're rereading for the third time could inspire a creative new approach on a current professional project.

If you're a Gemini or Virgo, you might feel it more.

If you were born under Gemini (May 21–June 20) or Virgo (August 23–September 22), or any of the major planets in your birth chart are in either of these signs, you'll likely be more sensitive to Mercury's retrograde phases. That's because both Gemini and Virgo are ruled by the communication planet, so its influence is stronger on these signs. Plus, chances are your Mercury-ruled astrological wiring has led to a career and/or lifestyle that requires heavy-duty communication, technology, and travel, so you'll feel it more for that reason, too.

If you were born during a Mercury retrograde, you might be more inspired.

If you happen to have been born when Mercury was retrograde, which is the case for approximately 25% of the population, you might find the transit is especially productive or creatively rewarding for you. Whether you're writing, talking to a loved one, giving a speech, or having a therapy session, you could feel like it's more effortless to convey your thoughts in a compelling, on-point way.

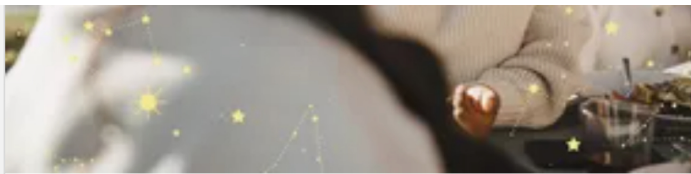
As someone with natal Mercury retrograde, this is a theory I've tested and found to be fairly accurate, although it will depend on how a particular Mercury retrograde is hitting your chart. If it is in your seventh house of partnership, it could influence conversations with your significant other or friends. If it's in your second house of income, it could affect how you communicate on the job.

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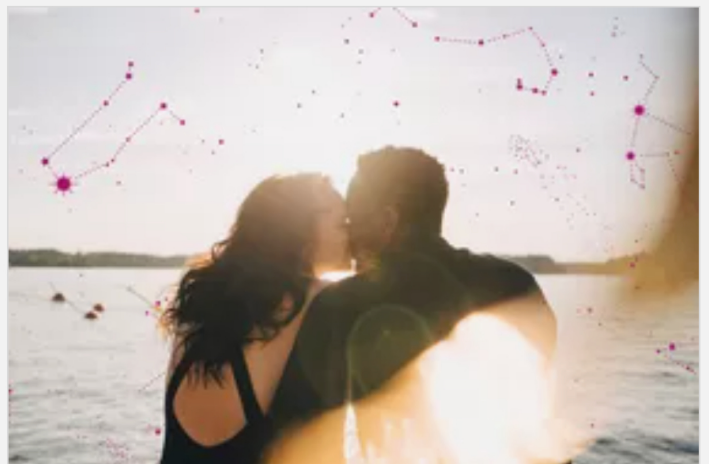
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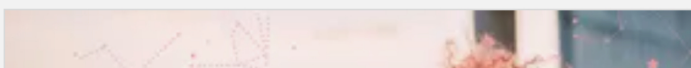
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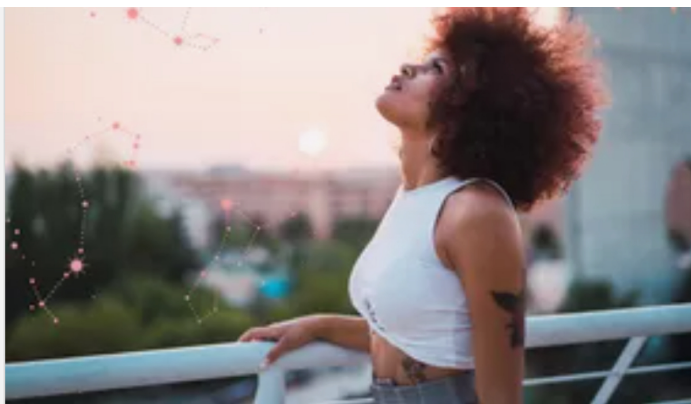


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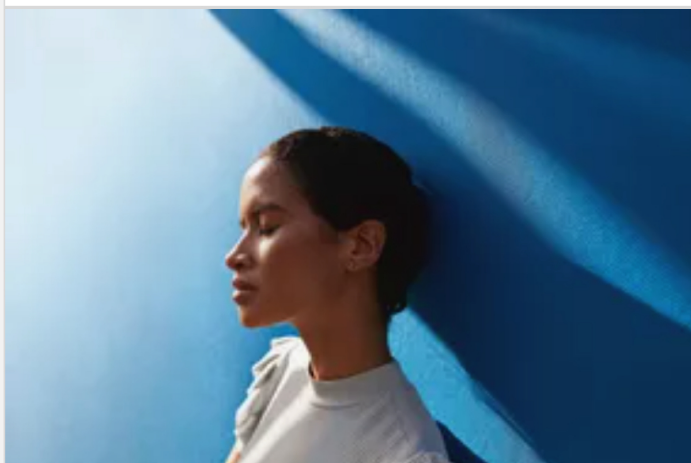
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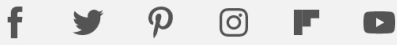
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