

Have you ever looked up at the night sky? It's fun to gaze up at the moon and the stars. The moon is especially interesting because it is so close to Earth. We can see the moon because it reflects light from the Sun. If you pay attention to the moon, it seems to change shape over time.

The moon doesn't actually change shape, but it does appear to have different shapes at different times of the month. We call the different shapes of the moon **phases**. Most people have seen a full moon at some time. That's one phase of the moon.



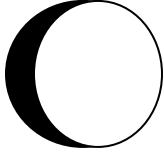
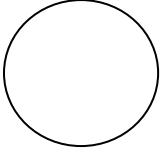
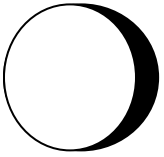
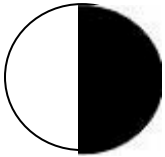
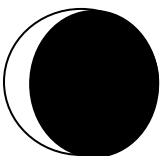
Besides the full moon, the moon has seven other phases. The moon goes through the same eight phases, in the same order, every 28 days.

Have you seen a full moon in the night sky?

Here's a quick list of the eight phases of the moon and what they look like:

Phase	Description	Image
New Moon	The side of the moon facing Earth is completely dark. No moon is visible in the sky.	
Waxing Crescent	A tiny sliver is visible on the right side of the moon.	
First Quarter	The entire right half of the moon is visible.	

Phases of the Moon

Phase	Description	Image
Waxing Gibbous	The entire right half of the moon is visible, plus part of the left half.	 A circle representing the moon with a black shadow on the left side, leaving a white illuminated portion on the right.
Full Moon	The moon appears as a complete circle in the sky.	 A completely white circle representing the moon.
Waning Gibbous	The moon starts to appear smaller because the right part of the moon is now in darkness.	 A circle representing the moon with a black shadow on the right side, leaving a white illuminated portion on the left.
Third Quarter	Only the left half of the moon is visible.	 A circle representing the moon with the right half shaded black and the left half white.
Waning Crescent	Only a tiny sliver is visible on the left side of the moon.	 A circle representing the moon with a large black shadow covering most of it, leaving only a thin white sliver on the left side.

The moon never actually changes shape. The different phases of the moon are caused by its different positions as it orbits Earth. What do you think the moon will look like tonight?