Our Night Sky for October 26 th, 2026

Once again, we can find Saturn well above the horizon and very easy to find. It is about 37 degrees above the horizon and just about due south. You notice that when referring to solar system objects we almost always relate the planets position as it relates to earths directions North, south, east and west and a repeatable measure above the horizon. This is because of the general familiarity with compass bearings and basic geometry for angles of elevation. The proper name for this is horizontal coordinate system. This is sometimes called alt azimuth, alt for elevation above the horizon and azimuth for the degrees described by the distance around a circle that is the horizon.

As solar system objects reach higher in our sky, measuring the distance down to the horizon becomes a bit unwieldly and maybe not as accurate. We need a system that relates to the sky and not earth-bound references or starting points. There is a very precise system call Right Ascension or simply R.A. Picture a system that is quite similar to the earlier system but with a few key differences. What we called the horizon is now a tilted circle, it has a scale of hours minutes and seconds, and it rotates with the sky. Like the planet's, different parts of the solar systems equator will rise and set at different times of our year. This circle extends completely around the earth, a full circle of the sky equals 24 hours, with each hour in the sky measuring1/24 of 360 degrees or 15 degrees. Measuring up and down from this celestial equator is similar to latitude and it is called right ascension; this is a more precise guide to Our Night Sky.