The Moon, Jupiter and Mars together, 26–28 December 2026

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Before breakfast on 27 December 2026 the Moon sits beside Jupiter, and on the 28th beside Mars, high in the south-west. When to look and what to say.

Before breakfast on Sunday 27 December 2026, the Moon sits beside Jupiter, about 3° away, high in the south-west. The next morning, Monday 28 December, it has moved on to sit beside Mars, about 5° away. Both are about five fists up before dawn, easy to see with bare eyes, even from a town. On the 26th the Moon is on its way, between the two planets and the west. Peabody's event page has a countdown, and Sky Tonight gives your own dawn time from a ZIP that never leaves your phone.

When and where

Look about an hour before sunrise, on the way to a holiday breakfast. Face south-west: the Moon is the obvious thing, more than half lit and shrinking. On the 27th, the very bright point beside it is Jupiter. On the 28th, the dimmer orange point beside it is Mars.

Three degrees is about two fingers held side by side at arm's length; five degrees is about three. A child can measure the gap with their own hand and check it again the next morning.

The same three are up late in the evening too. In Denver, Peabody's sky table has the Moon rising in the north-east at about 8 pm on the 26th, 9:15 pm on the 27th and 10:25 pm on the 28th. A family that stays up late can see the pair climb in the east, but the mornings show them highest.

The point of it: watching the Moon move

The planets hardly shift in three days. The Moon moves about 13° a day against the stars, about its own width every hour, so over three mornings it visibly slides past Jupiter and then Mars. That is the best way there is to show a child that the Moon really is travelling around us, not just hanging there.

A way to make it stick:

1. On the 26th, draw what you see. The Moon, and the two bright dots near it.
2. On the 27th, draw again. The Moon has jumped next to Jupiter.
3. On the 28th, once more. Now it's next to Mars. Put the three drawings side by side.

Which one is which

- Jupiter is the biggest planet, 11 Earths wide by NASA's numbers, and it shines much brighter than any star near it. Peabody's table calls it "very bright".
- Mars is about half Earth's width, and it looks orange. It is getting brighter through the winter as Earth catches up with it; the two are closest around its opposition in February 2027.
- Venus is a bonus. Turn to the south-east and look about two fists up: the brightest point in the whole sky, brighter than Jupiter.

None of these twinkle much, which is one way to tell a planet from a star. Our post on what planet that bright star is has the two-minute version.

They are not really close

The Moon is about 384,000 km away. Jupiter and Mars are hundreds of millions of kilometers away, and far from each other too. They only look close because they happen to line up from where we stand. Astronomers call this a conjunction, which just means "together" in the sky.

Three questions grown-ups ask

Do we need binoculars? No, but they're a treat. Held very steady, binoculars on Jupiter can show a few tiny points in a line beside it: some of its moons.

What if it's cloudy on the 27th? Look on the 28th for the Moon by Mars, or on the 26th for all three in a row. If all three mornings are cloudy, Jupiter and Mars stay in the morning sky through January.

Is it safe to be out before dawn? As with any night outing, a grown-up goes too, away from roads, and everyone stays warm. Watch where the sunrise will be: the Sun comes up in the south-east, and nobody should look at it.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, with no ads and no sign-up. After a cold morning look, the library has stories at your child's reading level.

Sources

- The Moon's distances from Jupiter and Mars come from astronomy-engine (MIT license), geocentric; directions, heights and rising times come from Peabody's sky table for Denver.
- Jupiter's and Mars's sizes: NASA's planetary fact sheets, checked 29 October 2026.
- NASA, what's up in the sky.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/moon-jupiter-mars-december-2026