Messier Marathon Target Timeline 2026

These are recommended times to observe each Messier object close to their highest point on March 21st - 22nd 2026.

Many targets from 7pm to 8pm and 5am to sunrise have the least flexibility since they set the earliest and rise the latest respectively.

Consider using a stargazing app to further prioritize your targets!

Time	Target	Target Type	Notes
7pm- 8pm	**M45** (Pleiades) **M74** (Phantom Galaxy) **M77** (Squid Galaxy)	Star Clusters Galaxies	M45 can be seen in twilight; the others require a low horizon to the west. M77 and M74 are the most challenging objects and are visible only at dusk as they set. M77 is very compact, so try it first. M74 is the toughest of the evening targets.
8pm - 9pm	**M34** (Spiral Cluster) **M41** (Little Beehive Cluster) **M50** (Heart-Shaped Cluster) **M79** **M31** (Andromeda Galaxy) **M32** (Andromeda Satellite #1) **M33** (Triangulum Galaxy) **M110** (Andromeda Satellite #2)	Star Clusters Galaxies	Both M110 and M33 have very low surface brightnesses, making them difficult in poor skies. Be careful to catch M79 before it sinks into the horizon.
9pm - 10pm	**M36** (Pinwheel Cluster) **M38** (Starfish Cluster) **M46** **M47** **M48** **M93** (Critter Cluster) **M1** (Crab Nebula) **M42** (Great Orion Nebula) **M43** (De Mairan's Nebula) **M76** (Little Dumbbell Nebula) **M78**	Star Clusters Nebulae	M93 needs a low horizon to the south-west.
10pm - 11pm	**M35** (Shoe-Buckle Cluster) **M37** (Salt and Pepper Cluster) **M44** (Beehive Cluster) **M67** (Golden Eye Cluster)	Star Clusters	Most of these objects are very high in the sky and can be observed later if necessary.

10pm - 11pm	**M81** (Bode's Galaxy) **M82** (Cigar Galaxy) **M95** **M96** **M105**	Galaxies	
11pm - 12am	**M40** (Winnecke 4) **M97** (Owl Nebula) **M61** (Swelling Spiral Galaxy) **M65** (Leo Triplet) **M66** (Leo Triplet) **M98** **M99** (St. Catherine's Wheel) **M100** (Mirror Galaxy) **M106** **M108** (Surfboard Galaxy) **M109** (Vacuum Cleaner Galaxy)	Double Star Nebula Galaxies	These objects are also very high and can be logged later as well.
12am - 1am	**M49** **M84** **M85** **M86** **M87** (Virgo A) **M88**	Galaxies	The Virgo Cluster. Observers not familiar with the region should proceed with care as many non-Messier objects are also present.
1am - 2am	**M58** **M59** **M60** **M89** **M90** **M91** **M104** (Sombrero Galaxy)	Galaxies	The eastern and southern part of the Virgo Cluster. After finishing here you're more than halfway through the marathon.
2am - 3am	**M53** **M68** **M51** (Whirlpool Galaxy) **M63** (Sunflower Galaxy) **M64** (Black Eye Galaxy) **M94** (Cat's Eye Galaxy)	Star Clusters Galaxies	M83 needs a good horizon to the south.
3am - 4am	**M83** (Southern Pinwheel Galaxy) **M101** (Pinwheel Galaxy) **M102** (Spindle Galaxy) **M3** **M5** (Rose Cluster) **M10** **M12** **M13** (Great Hercules Cluster) **M14** **M92**	Galaxies Star Clusters	Observe each of these as soon as they rise above the eastern horizon.

4am - 5am	**M4** (Spider Globular Cluster) **M9** **M19** **M29** (Cooling Tower Cluster) **M39** (Pyramid Cluster) **M56** **M62** (Flickering Globular) **M71** (Angelfish Cluster) **M80** **M107** (Crucifix Cluster) **M27** (Dumbbell Nebula) **M57** (Ring Nebula) **M8** (Lagoon Nebula) **M16** (Eagle Nebula) **M17** (Swan Nebula) **M20** (Trifid Nebula)	Star Clusters Nebulae	Work your way through the summer Milky Way from north to south. M6 and M7 need an unobstructed horizon to the southeast.
5am - Sunrise	**M73** **M24** (Small Sagittarius Star Cloud) **M2** **M6** (Butterfly Cluster) **M7** (Ptolemy's Cluster) **M11** (Wild Duck Cluster) **M15** (Great Pegasus Cluster) **M18** (Black Swan Cluster) **M21** (Webb's Cross Cluster) **M22** (Great Sagittarius Cluster) **M23** **M25** **M26** **M28** **M30** (Jellyfish Cluster) **M52** (Scorpion Cluster) **M54** **M55** (Specter Cluster) **M69** **M70** **M72** **M75** **M103**	Asterism Milky Way Starcloud Star Clusters	These are all low in the east or south! M55 is the lowest - attempt it after you have logged the others. As dawn sets in, you're only waiting for M30. It rises about 45 minutes before the Sun. Hint: Center the star Zeta (9) Capricorni in the eyepiece, shift about 1° south, then wait 14 minutes for Earth's rotation to carry M30 into the field of view.