

How to Identify Virgo

Visualizations[[edit](#)]



Virgo as depicted in *Urania's Mirror*, a set of constellation cards published in London c.1825.

Virgo is often portrayed carrying two sheaves of wheat, one of which is marked by the bright star *Spica*.

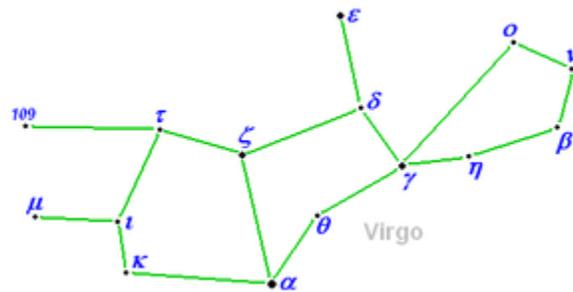
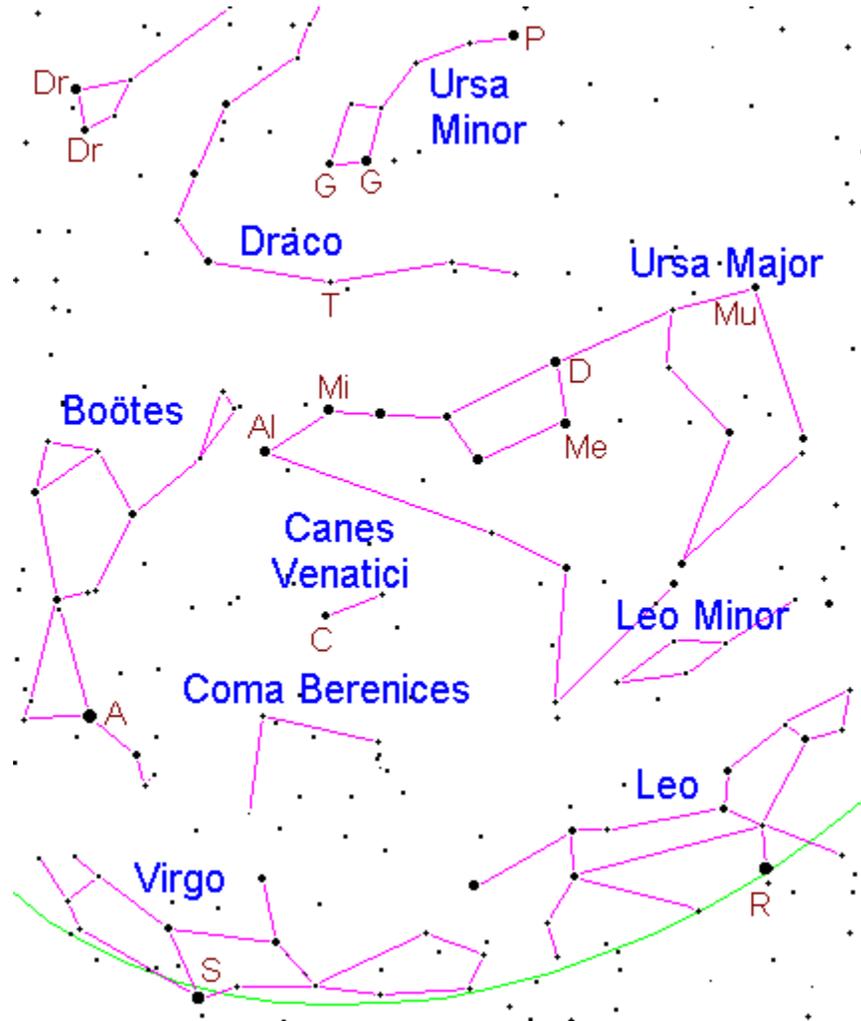


Diagram of H. A. Rey's alternative way to connect the stars of the constellation Virgo.

H.A. Rey has suggested an alternative way to visualize Virgo, which graphically shows the virgin lying down in a supine position.^[9] The stars γ Vir, η Vir, β Vir, ν Vir, and \omicron Vir form the virgin's head. The stars γ Vir, δ Vir, ζ Vir, α Vir (Spica), and θ Vir form the virgin's blouse. The stars α Vir, ζ Vir, τ Vir, ι Vir, and κ Vir form the virgin's skirt. The stars 109 Vir and μ Vir represent the Virgin's feet, and the star ϵ Vir represents the virgin's hand.

Spring Evenings & Winter Mornings



The stars of the Big Dipper are circumpolar from northern latitudes (this means these stars are visible anytime it is dark) and can be used as a landmark. The best time to use the Big Dipper as a landmark is Winter mornings and Spring evenings.

1. Look due north, the Big Dipper should be easy to see. The Big Dipper is part of the constellation Ursa Major. Locate the stars Dubhe (marked D on the chart), Merak (Me), Mizar (Mi), Alkaid (Al) and Muscida (Mu). If you have reasonably good vision, you will see that Mizar is actually a double star.
2. Follow Dubhe and Merak toward Polaris (marked P on the chart). Nearby you will see two stars (both marked G), they are called the Guardians. Polaris and the Guardians are the brightest stars of Ursa Minor. If your skies are dark, you may be able to make out the other stars of Ursa Minor (which form the so called Little Dipper).

3. Halfway between Mizar and the Guardians, you may see a dim star called Thuban (marked T). Thuban is part of the constellation Draco; in dark skies you can trace the path of Draco which winds between Ursa Major and Ursa Minor until it ends at two stars (both marked Dr).
4. Follow the arc formed by the stars Mizar (Mi) and Alkaid (Al) until you find the bright star Arcturus (A). Arcturus is the brightest star of the constellation Boötes.
5. If you see a bright “star” along the green curve that is not shown on this chart, it could be a planet. Planets are not shown on this chart.
6. You can continue the arc until you find another bright star Spica (labeled S). Spica is the brightest star in the constellation Virgo (however Virgo can be a little difficult to make out in light polluted skies).
7. Following Dubhe and Merak away from Polaris, you can find another bright star, Regulus (marked R on the chart). Regulus is the brightest star in the constellation Leo. Leo is easy to recognize even in light polluted skies.
8. Between Leo and Ursa Major is a dim constellation called Leo Minor.
9. Between Alkaid (Al) and Spica (S) is the star Cor Caroli (marked C on the chart). Cor Caroli is the brightest star in Canes Venatici, Canes Venatici can be difficult to distinguish, there are only two bright stars in this constellation.
10. Between Virgo and Canes Venatici is the constellation Coma Berenices. It is somewhat dim and may be hard to locate in light polluted skies.
11. In this diagram, Ursa Major is drawn suggesting Alkaid is the Bear’s nose. However according to tradition Alkaid represents the tip of the Bear’s tail. The lines were drawn this way to make the shape easier to find and remember.