Retrograde Planets and Patterns

Each planet has a retrograde pattern shaped from our orbital perspective here on Earth as we view the planets in their relationship with the Sun

Each planet retrogrades at a predictable point in its cycle; therefore the retrograde phase is a specific sub-cycle that occurs within the fullness of its synodic cycle with the Sun. From our perspective, the planet slows down, stations, turning retrograde for a specific period within its cycle. Then, at a certain phase in its relationship with the Sun, it will then slow, station and turn direct.

'Inferior' is an astronomical term that refers to the planets below the Sun: Mercury and Venus. This is not a judgement, but a description of their positioning in the system. As they are in between the Earth and the Sun, we view them as retrograde when they are near the Sun in zodiacal longitude. Whereas the other planets (Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and the outer planets) are always retrograde in their oppositional phase to the Sun. At the midpoint of the retrogradation phase, the planets beyond the Earth's orbit will form an opposition to the Sun, while Mercury and Venus will conjunct the Sun.

Retrograde planets have an important role in our developmental process shaping personality, identity and confidence, as well as encouraging the formation of a strong and healthy ego. During the transiting retrograde planetary time, their energy is heightened and more in focus being close to the Earth. The middle of the retrograde period signals an important shift in the planet's perspective of the Sun. We might imagine the retrograde period as a time of reflection, stillness, slowing down - a preparatory period for allowing new images to come to a conscious perspective.

Consider all the factors of retrograde planetary cycles, such as the length of the retrograde period, the frequency, especially the zodiacal territory they transit when retrograde. Note the dates of their stations and the midpoint of their cycle, as these are significant moments in temporal time. Most memorable is their patterning and the cycles they forge in r rapport with our natal chart, The following tables consider each planet's retrograde phase, patterning, and relationship to the Sun.

Planet	Frequency of ℞	℞ Time Frame	Aspects to the Sun
☿	3 times per year	3 weeks	Can only be 28° from the Sun geocentrically, so the only major aspect to the Sun could be a conjunction.
♀	approximately once every 19 months	6 weeks	Can only be 48° from the Sun geocentrically, so the only major aspects to the Sun could be a conjunction; minor aspects include the semi-sextile and the semi-square.
♂	approx. once every 765 days	58-81 days	Mars turns ℞ at differing degrees to the Sun, but will generally be Direct when conjunct, semi-sextile, semi-square, sextile, square or trine the Sun and Retrograde when quincunx or opposite the Sun. The sesqui-square varies.
♃	annually	4 months	At the critical degree of approximately 117° from the Sun, Jupiter will turn ℞; therefore, when Jupiter is Direct, it is conjunct, semi-sextile, semi-square, sextile, square or trine (dependent on orb) the Sun. When Retrograde, Jupiter is trine (dependent on orb), sesqui-square, quincunx or opposite the Sun.
♄	annually	4.5 months	At the critical degree of approximately 108° from the Sun, Saturn will turn ℞; therefore, when Saturn is Direct, it can be conjunct, semi-sextile, semi-square, sextile, or square the Sun. When Retrograde, Saturn may be trine, sesqui-square, quincunx or opposite the Sun.
♅	annually	5 months	At the critical degree of approximately 104° from the Sun, Uranus will turn ℞; therefore, when Uranus is Direct, it can be conjunct, semi-sextile, semi-square, sextile, or square the Sun. When Retrograde, it may be trine, sesqui-square, quincunx or opposite the Sun.
♆	annually	5.25 months	At the critical degree of approximately 101° from the Sun, Neptune will turn ℞; therefore, when Neptune is Direct, it can be conjunct, semi-sextile, semi-square, sextile, or square the Sun. When Retrograde, it may be trine, sesqui-square, quincunx or opposite the Sun.
♇	annually	5.25 months	At the critical degree of approximately 101° from the Sun, Pluto will turn ℞; therefore, when Pluto is Direct, it can be conjunct, semi-sextile, semi-square, sextile, or square the Sun. When Retrograde, it may be trine, sesqui-square, quincunx or opposite the Sun.
⚷	annually	5 months	The critical degree varies; however, when Chiron is Direct it may be conjunct, semi-sextile, semi-square, sextile, or square the Sun. When Retrograde, it may be trine, sesqui-square, quincunx or opposite the Sun.

The following table illustrates the rhythm, frequency and pattern to the retrograde phenomena

Planet	Retrograde Period	% of time ℞	Approx ℞ movement	Retrograde patterning
☿	20-24 days (average 22.3 days) every four months	18%	13° 30'	Retrogrades through the elements (fire-water-air-earth), spending 4 - 6 times ℞ in the same element. Every third ℞ links back to the station where ☿ went direct
♀	40 - 43 days (average 42 days) every 19 months	7.5%	16° 00'	Five cycles in 8-year pattern. Venus ℞ returns to same degree every 8 years (orb two days and 2°). It five ℞ stations during these eight years form a pentagram
♂	58 - 81 days (average 74 days) every 2 years	9.5%	16° 20'	No discernable pattern due to time variance - Mars generally retrogrades sequentially through the signs
♃	4 months every year	33%	9° 56'	Each annual retrograde station occurs 30° - 40° of the zodiac onward from the previous one
♄	4.5 months every year	37%	6° 54'	Each annual retrograde station occurs 14° - 15° of the zodiac ahead of the previous one
♇	5 months every year	42%	3° 55'	Each retrograde station occurs 4° farther along the zodiac each year
♆	5.25 months every year	44%	2° 47'	Each retrograde station occurs 2.2° farther along the zodiac each year
♆	Varies due to elliptical orbit; currently averaging 5.25 months per year	45%	2° 42'	In 2000 annual retrograde stations were 2.25° ahead of 1999 but this is decreasing as ♆ travels slower in its orbit
⚷	Varies due to elliptical orbit; currently averaging 5 months per year	40%	4° 30'	Has retrograded 8 times in ♈, each retrograde station about 3.5° later each year. It may only retrograde once or twice in ♎, stationing about 6.5° later