Perseids Pump Up the Volume

2026 Perseid Meteor Shower Peaks!

Article and chart courtesy of SKY & TELESCOPE

The Perseids are active from mid-July to late August, but **the peak occurs the night of August 12–13**, when Earth passes through the densest part of the swarm. Under ideal conditions, viewers can catch up to 100 meteors per hour. Since most skywatchers have to contend with some degree of light pollution, 50 per hour is a more realistic expectation.

Perseids are the remains of **Comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle**, which orbits the Sun roughly every 133 years. Each time the comet passes through the inner solar system, the Sun's heat vaporizes a portion of its dust-rich ice. The crumbs spread along the comet's orbit, which the Earth intersects annually. As our planet cuts across the debris trail, sand- to pea-size comet castoffs slam into the atmosphere at 210,000 km/h (130,000 mph) and incinerate in brief flashes of light. The meteors originate from a point called the *radiant* located in the constellation Perseus, the reason they're called Perseids.

The shower is active as soon as it gets dark. But the later you stay up the more meteors you'll see. As Earth rotates, the radiant climbs higher during the night. I like to "sample" the shower early from 10 to 11 p.m. local time, then get a few hours of sleep before waking up around 2 a.m. and watching till 4 a.m.

All you need to watch the shower are your eyes and a reasonably dark location. If light pollution is overwhelming, consider a drive to the country. You won't regret it.

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Remember that comfort and staying warm are paramount when it comes to meteor-watching. Dress for fall, kick back on a lounge chair under a warm blanket, and be wowed.

METEOR SHOWER MAP: The Perseids will be extra special this year because moonlight won't be a factor. Similar to railroad tracks that appear to converge in the distance at a vanishing point, meteors stream from a point in the sky called the radiant. You can trace all shower members back to the radiant, which aids in distinguishing them from random meteors called *sporadics*.