

Mercury Retrograde: Instructions for Beginners - and Dismissers!

by Anne Whitaker

Well, it's that time of the year again. Mercury went retrograde on 13th December 2023, not resuming direct motion again until 2nd January 2024. I was entertained by my colleague Victor Olliver's brief posting on Facebook today, and his opening salvo, i.e. '...*Such is my contempt for the Mercury retrograde nonsense...*'

His three brief lines were followed by an absolute torrent of comments of varying opinion and example regarding the significance or otherwise of this thrice-yearly celestial phenomenon, inspiring me to dig into my own Mercury Retro archives in order to share this brief but hopefully entertaining and informative piece with my readers. I hope you enjoy it and that it inspires you to do your own research.

In the spring, summer and autumn/winter of each year, the planet Mercury does something strange. It appears to slow down in its orbital pace, stop, then start to move backwards. This is known as retrograde motion. It is of course an illusion. Otherwise, we'd have fallen off the solar system aeons ago.

However, the effects down here on Earth when Mercury is in its 2-3 week retrograde phases are anything but illusory. For years, I studied this phenomenon in my own life, the lives of family, friends, and astrology students. In sum, communications of all types become strangely awkward and hard to manage during those times.

I learned to look forward to having some rest during Mercury Retrograde, since my referral rate dropped. Normally clients always turned up for appointments, MR periods being the exception. Cancellation rates increased.

Once, a client called to cancel because her house had just caught fire (*yes, she called the Fire Brigade first!*). Two clients often turned up at the same time. Cheques invariably got lost in the post, or clients forgot to bring cash.

One summer I moved office during MR, becoming involved in a dispute of byzantine complexity with the telephone company which took almost a nervous breakdown on my part to sort out.

As MR periods approached, I used to entertain my students by looking at their individual horoscopes, which enabled me to be more specific regarding possible MR effects. I told one student, a lawyer, that a female helper in his workplace was likely to have communication problems which would impact on him.

His feedback? His secretary sprained her wrist, and was unable to type during the entire MR period.

Mercurial people, i.e. those with the sign Gemini strongly emphasised or the planet Mercury dominant in their horoscopes, are most affected by Mercury's retrograde phase. Anyone involved in the business of communication can look forward to a less than smooth three weeks.

A good example is my old friend Ronnie who used to run a first rate copying and web design business here in Glasgow; Mercury's retrograde havoc wreaked on his computers one year convinced him that *"There's definitely something in this astrology business, Anne!"*

What can mercurial folk do, then, to maximise advantage and minimise disruption when Mercury is retrograde? MR is a positive time for going back over all matters to do with communication, and cleaning up.

Some examples: if you've been putting off a purge of your filing system, do it now. If your accountant has asked you nine times for your last year's papers, use this 2-3 weeks to update them.

Dig out and finish some of those half-worked articles if you are a writer. If you've been writing furiously and the brain/wrist is seizing up, have a break. Catch up with some reading. As we know, fallow time is creative.

The don'ts? *If it is not feasible to avoid or delay taking important new initiatives or completing existing processes, e.g. signing contracts, leases, etc., try to accept complications or thwartings philosophically.*

Also – be prepared for delays, eg when travelling, especially long distance. Don't sit under the mailbox waiting for cheques. And please, don't arrange for a phone installation!

"Come on then!" I can hear you shouting as you search for my mobile number or email. *"Tell us WHEN!"*

...oh, all right. I'll tell you.

Mercury retrogrades in 2024:

- December 13, 2023 to January 2, 2024 in Capricorn & Sagittarius
- April 1 to April 24 in Aries
- August 4 to August 27 in Virgo & Leo
- November 25 to December 15 in Sagittarius

P.S.:

I know you'll find this hard to believe: I recently published a book of collected essays, articles and columns called ["Postcards to the Future"](#) – available (currently on seasonal Special Offer) everywhere on Amazon – whose subtitle is *'Mercurial Musings 1995-2021'*. However – there isn't a single article on Mercury, or even Mercury Retro. Maybe I should rectify that in the next edition...

About the author:



Anne Whitaker has been an astrologer since the 1983 Jupiter-Uranus conjunction in Sagittarius. She holds a Certificate from the Faculty of Astrological Studies (1983) and the Diploma from the Centre for Psychological Astrology in London (1998) as well as several academic qualifications. She writes for a number of international magazines and journals, and mentors international students studying with reputable courses. Her latest book *"Postcards to the Future: Mercurial Musings 1995-2021"* is an acclaimed collection of 60 essays, articles and columns from the many publications to which Anne has contributed over the years, including the UK's *Astrological Journal*, USA's *The Mountain Astrologer*, *Dell Horoscope* magazine, and *astro.com*. Website: <https://anne-whitaker.com/> Email: info@anne-whitaker.com

