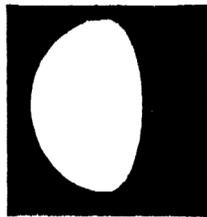
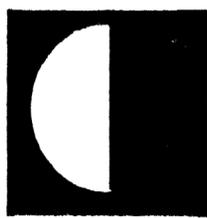


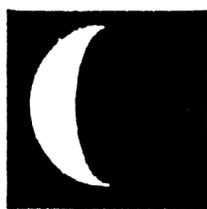
Full Moon - The Moon's illuminated side is facing the Earth. The Moon appears to be completely illuminated by direct sunlight.



Waning Gibbous - The Moon appears to be more than one-half but not fully illuminated by direct sunlight. The fraction of the Moon's disk that is illuminated is decreasing.



Last Quarter - One-half of the Moon appears to be illuminated by direct sunlight. The fraction of the Moon's disk that is illuminated is decreasing.



Waning Crescent - The Moon appears to be partly but less than one-half illuminated by direct sunlight. The fraction of the Moon's disk that is illuminated is decreasing.

Following waning crescent is New Moon, beginning a repetition of the complete phase cycle of 29.5 days average duration. The time in days counted from the time of New Moon is called the Moon's "age". Each complete cycle of phases is called a "lunation".

Because the cycle of the phases is shorter than most calendar months, the phase of the Moon at the very beginning of the month usually repeats at the very end of the month. When there are two Full Moons in a month (which occurs, on average, every 2.7 years), the second one is called a "Blue Moon". See the article "Once in a Blue Moon" for the story of how the usage of this term has evolved (Ref: Philip Hiscock, *Sky & Telescope*, March 1999, pp. 52-55.).

The first time that the thin waxing crescent Moon is visible after New Moon (low in the evening sky just after sunset) marks the beginning of a month in the Islamic Calendar - see the [FAQ Crescent Moon Visibility and the Islamic Calendar](#).

Although Full Moon occurs each month at a specific date and time, the Moon's disk may appear to be full for several nights in a row if it is clear. This is because the percentage of the Moon's disk that appears illuminated changes very slowly around the time of Full Moon (also around New Moon, but the Moon is not visible at all then). The Moon may appear 100% illuminated only on the night closest to the time of exact Full Moon, but on the night before and night after will appear 97-99% illuminated; most people would not notice the difference. Even two days from Full Moon the Moon's disk is 93-97% illuminated.

New Moon, First Quarter, Full Moon, and Last Quarter phases are considered to be primary phases and their dates and times are published in almanacs and on calendars. (Click [here](#) for a list.) The