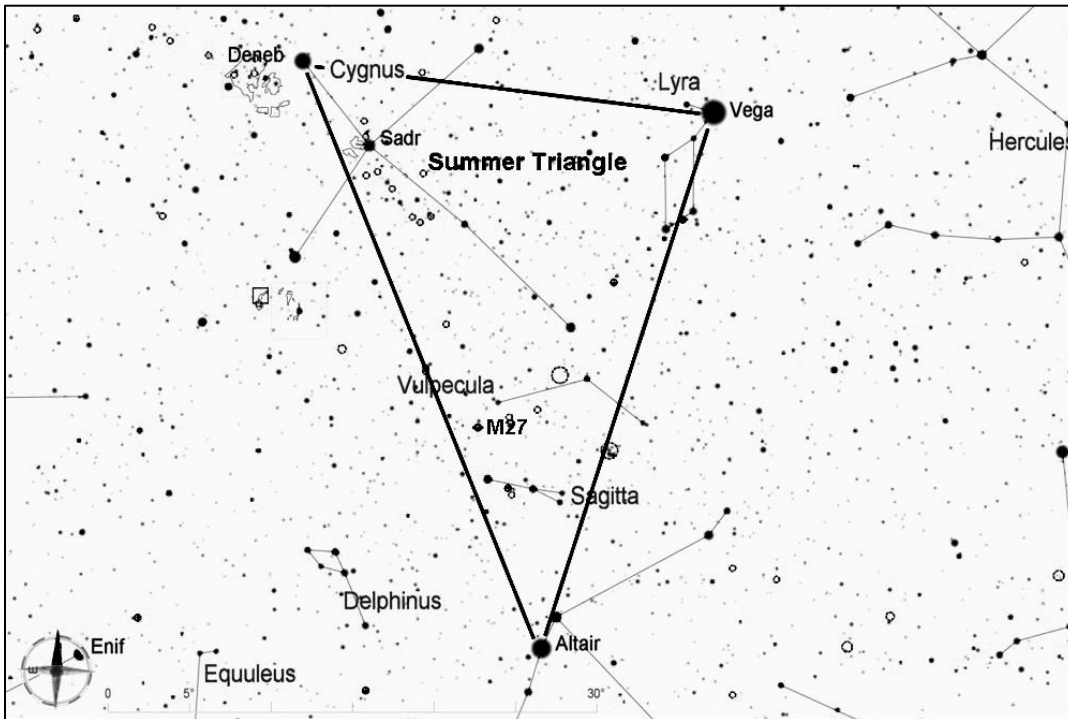


## Albireo, Double Star in Cygnus

Albireo is one of the most famous double stars because it is easy to find, and because its stars feature beautifully contrasting colors. A telescope is needed to see that there are two stars, which are 35 arcseconds apart. It is not known whether the two stars are actually close together in space or are at very different distances. The brighter star is gold or orange, and the dimmer one is blue.



Start by finding the Summer Triangle, which consists of the three of the brightest stars in the sky--Vega, Deneb, and Altair. The Summer Triangle is high overhead throughout the summer, and it sinks lower in the west as fall progresses.

Look at Deneb, which marks the tail end of the constellation Cygnus, the Swan.

The brightest stars of Cygnus form a large cross shape, so it is also known as the Northern Cross. Albireo is the star at the base of the cross (or the head of the swan). At magnitude 3, it is easily seen with the naked eye. But a telescope at a magnification of 30x or more shows that it is actually a colorful double star. If you have trouble seeing the colors, try putting the stars slightly out of focus, which spreads out their light and makes the colors easier to see.

