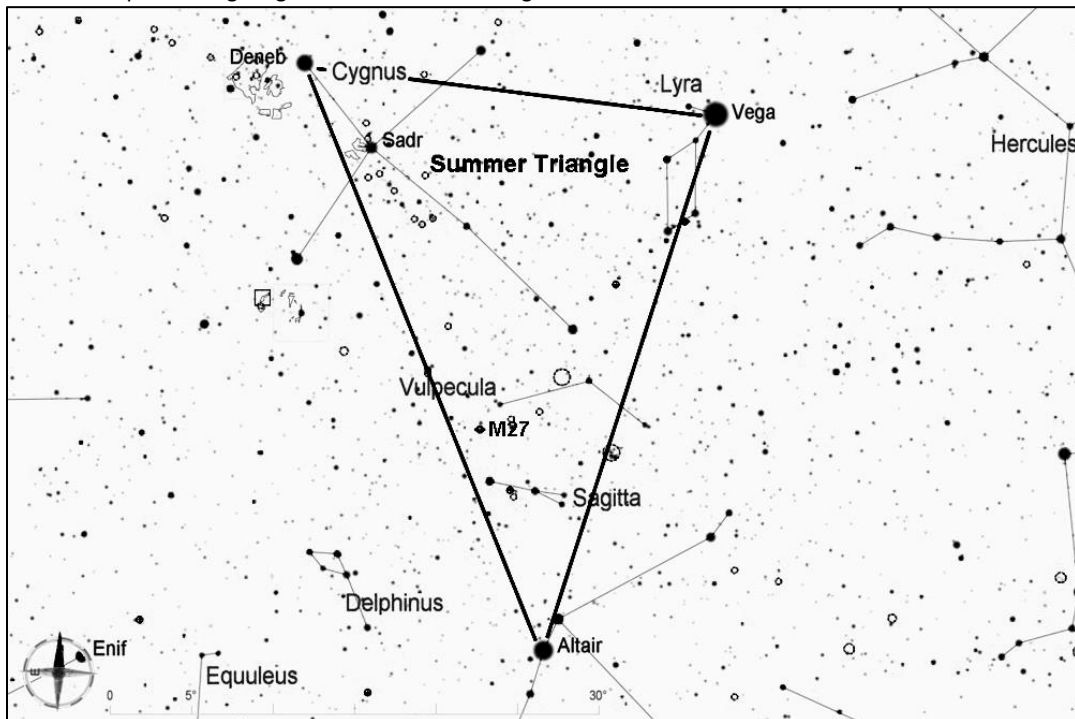


Messier 56, Globular Cluster in Lyra

Messier 56 is a small but attractive globular cluster. It is bright enough to find pretty easily. Through a medium or large scope, its center is bright and its periphery is nicely resolved into individual stars. On summer evenings, M56 is high overhead where there is less haze and humidity, and it makes an impressive sight against the star-filled background.



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.

For this star hop, start from brilliant blue-white Vega (magnitude 0), the brightest of the three stars of the Summer Triangle.

The constellation Lyra has a distinctive shape consisting of a small triangle (including Vega) connected to a parallelogram. Look for the southernmost star of the parallelogram, the one furthest from Vega, which is γ (Gamma) Lyrae. Just south of γ , there is a chain of 4 dim stars that will be visible through a finderscope or binoculars. Follow this chain to the southeast, as shown below. Get the last star in this chain centered in the eyepiece, then look less than 1/2 degree south to find M56.

