



# Summer Skies

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## OVERVIEW

There's nothing more calming than laying out in the summer night, looking up at the night sky and drawing images out of the canopy of stars above you. Stargazing is a relaxing adventure for sure, but it is also the easiest way to explore space. Stargazing does not require any equipment other than your own eyes, concentration, and imagination. All you need is the night sky before you, away from the city lights.

You may not know what you are looking for while on your stargazing trek, but you probably are familiar with them without even knowing! The constellations up in the sky are images we draw based off of the proximity of stars. It's like drawing pictures out of the stars in the sky. Some commonly-known constellations are the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper, and Orion's Belt.

The International Astronomical Union currently recognizes 88 official constellations. Constellations have been important to numerous societies throughout their existence.

Ancient cultures such as the Greeks and Romans used groupings of stars to create constellations often named after mythological characters. These constellations, and the stories

associated with them, have been passed down for many generations by people who used them to navigate the land, the sea, and to tell the time of the year.

Each constellation is located in a particular region, which helps scientists map space. Think of constellations as a GPS of sorts. Much like we can use rivers, lakes, hills, and other objects as identifying landmarks, you can use stars in the same way. If you know where you are beginning, you can find the end point.



# ACTIVITY

## LOOK UP

**Tonight, you're going to go stargazing yourself. Look up at the stars and see if you recognize a constellation. Use your imagination and create your own constellation. If you need help locating a constellation, download a mobile star tracking app for assistance.**



**Resources:** [Michigan State University: Explore the Science of Space Through Stargazing](#) and [NASA Science: Hubble Provides Holistic View of Stars Gone Haywire](#).

