


City Stargazing

All year round
Looking North

Safety

- Make sure you take an adult outside with you
- Remember to wrap up warm.



Do you ever
look up and
wonder at
the twinkling
stars?

People have always marvelled at the night sky. On a clear night, in a dark place, you can see planets, thousands of stars, and the Milky Way. The light from towns and cities makes it harder to make out the stars the night sky. But that doesn't mean we can't stargaze. Let's explore some constellations in the night sky.

When and where

- Wait until a little after the Sun sets so it's dark enough to see the stars. In summer, you'll have to wait longer for it to be dark enough.
- Pick a spot outside where you can see the most sky, without branches or other houses in the way.
- Stand there for a little while and let your eyes get adjusted to the dark.

Pictures in the stars

- When you look at the sky you make shapes and drawings with the stars, it's like playing connect the dots!
- Astronomers – scientists who study space – have agreed on 88 official star patterns. We call these official patterns “constellations”.



Without a compass it can be hard to know which way is north. Luckily the stars can help us out.

1 Look for this pattern of seven stars. It will be quite high in the sky during spring and summer, but it might be upside down or sideways.



2 Some people think it looks like a serving spoon, or a pan, or a kite. In England it's normally called the Plough. The Plough is part of the constellation 'Ursa Major' – the great bear.

3 We can use the stars called Merak and Dubhe to help us find which way is north.



4 Draw a line in the sky from Merak to Dubhe and then keep the line going. About five times as far away as Dubhe is from Merak you'll find a bright star that is in a dark patch of the sky.



5 This star is called Polaris, but is also known as the North Star. Draw a line from Polaris down to the horizon and you'll be pointing north.

These stars are visible all year round in the northern half of the world. So no matter what time of year it is, we can always find north!



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