


City Stargazing



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 faint wisps of light that are our galaxy, the Milky Way. The light from towns and cities makes it harder to make out the stars. But that doesn't mean we can't stargaze. Let's explore some constellations in the night sky.

Safety

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

When and where

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

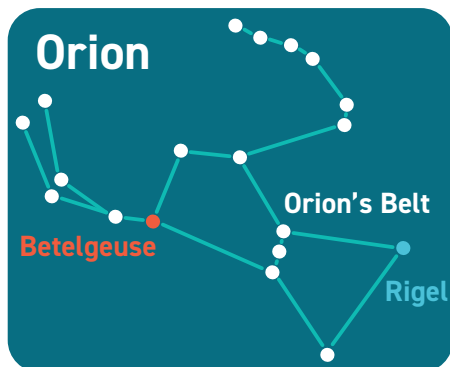
Pictures in the stars

- When you look at the sky you can 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"



November to February – Orion

Orion, the hunter constellation, is visible on dark winter evenings. Its brightest star is Rigel, and its biggest star is Betelgeuse.

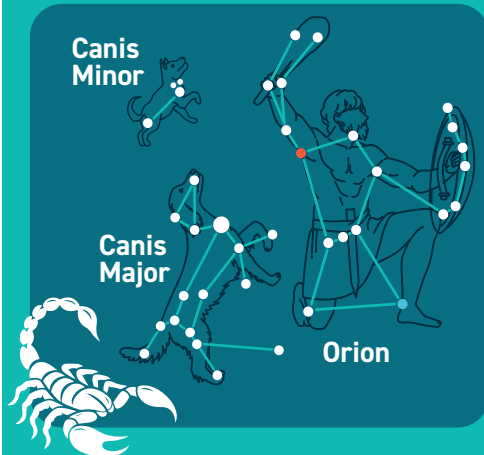


1. To find Orion, first find Orion's Belt. Three evenly spaced bright stars make this group easy to recognise.



2. Orion is seen in the south half of the sky in winter. A compass might help you know where to look.
3. Using Orion's Belt as a starting place, can you spot the stars making up his body, arms and knees?

Orion was a hunter in Greek Mythology. Legend says Orion boasted he would hunt all the animals on Earth. This angered Gaia, the goddess of Earth, so she sent a giant scorpion after him. Scorpius the scorpion constellation rises as Orion sets, eternally chasing him and his loyal hunting dogs Canis Major and Minor through the night sky.



Many cultures recognised the constellation as a person. For instance, the ancient Egyptians linked Orion's stars to Osiris, their god of rebirth and the afterlife. In ancient Arab culture, the constellation was interpreted as the figure of a giant.

What do you think the constellation looks like?

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