

Night Sky Planet Watch

Enjoy looking for planets in the night sky!

This activity can be done in the morning just before sunrise, or in the evening after sunset. Choose a time that works best for you.

No Materials Needed. Binoculars or a telescope can help get a closer look at planets but can be difficult to use with young children. We suggest focusing on what you can see with the naked eye and enjoying the night sky.

Instructions:

As autumn arrives and the nights grow longer, go outside on a clear night and look up at the sky. Plan your timing so you can look for some of the planets in our Solar System! They appear as bright stars in the sky.

Step 1: Plan your timing.

Go to www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/night/usa/fairbanks to see which planets will be visible. Make sure your location is set (e.g. Fairbanks, AK). Click on each planet to see when it will be visible in this location. Use the sky map to find where in the sky it is visible.

Step 2: Go outside! Take your child(ren) outside to see the night sky! Talk about what you see. Did anything surprise you? What would you like to know more about?

In September 2020, Mars will be shining brightly. Both Mars and Venus can be seen just before sunrise. Look for both Jupiter and Saturn close to the horizon after sunset.

For more details on what to look for in the sky this month:

- Go to the UAMN Astronomy Calendar: bit.ly/akspacescience
- Watch a video from NASA: www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjqvXVUWvEQ

Hint: You can also download a stargazing app to a phone or tablet to identify the planets and stars.



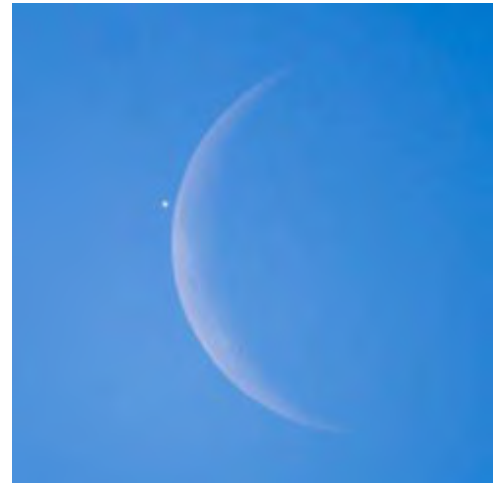
Planets Shine Brightly in the Night Sky!

Stars make their own light because they are very hot. Planets do not make their own light, but reflect the light of our star, the Sun. We can see them when they are relatively close to us. Sometimes our planet neighbor Venus shines so brightly that it is visible during the day!



Moon, Jupiter, and Venus in the night sky

[Photo by nanamori, via Wikimedia Commons](#)



Daytime Moon and Venus

[Photo by Stephen Rahn, flickr.com](#)



Mars next to star clusters

[Photo by Chris Schur, via NASA](#)