



Create a constellation

Get creative and find your own patterns in the night sky.

What you need

- An empty picture frame
- Pens and paper
- Warm clothing

How does it work?

Star patterns are called constellations. They get their names from the shapes the stars make when they have lines drawn between them – like a dot-to-dot puzzle. Many of the most famous star groupings are named after characters in myths and legends, such as Aquila and Hercules, showing the ancient connection between our stories and the universe in which we live. Orion, for example, with his famous belt of three stars, is named after a mythological hunter, because when the stars are joined up it looks a bit like a person hunting. These starry figures helped people remember and share their traditional tales.

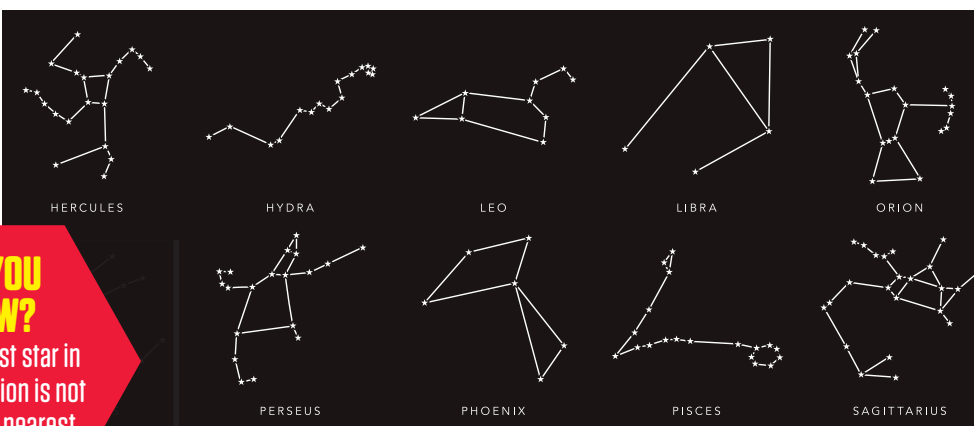
By being easy to pick out in the sky, they also helped guide travellers in the right direction. You can find the standard constellations at night if the sky is clear, or perhaps you can invent your own and come up with legends to tell family and friends.

1 On a night when the sky is free of clouds, head outdoors with an empty picture frame. Find a safe place to sit and gaze up at the stars. Your view will be clearer if you can find a spot where there isn't much outside lighting to distract your eyes.

2 Hold the empty picture frame up to the night sky and move it around until you spot an interesting-looking grouping of stars. Look for patterns among the stars contained in the frame – if you joined them up, what would they look like?

3 Sketch out the brightest stars onto a piece of paper. Then add some connecting lines to create a shape. Don't worry about being realistic – many common star patterns don't look much like the thing they are supposed to represent.

4 Add some details to bring the image to life. Come up with a catchy name for your new constellation. Perhaps you could invent a legend behind it. Can you find the stars in your constellation on the star map on page 30?



DID YOU KNOW?

The brightest star in a constellation is not always the nearest one to Earth.