

2 Spot a constellation

Explore the autumn night skies and open up the universe's wonders.

What you need

- Binoculars
- Compass



1 Ursa Major ("the Great Bear") is one of the clearest constellations in the night sky. As it lies near the North Star, it is visible all year round. The brightest and easiest-to-spot part of the constellation is the saucepan shape known as the Plough, or the Big Dipper. Use a compass to find north and then search for seven bright stars in the distinct shape shown below. Dubhe and Merak are known as the Pointers – draw an imaginary line from Merak through Dubhe and keep going to find Polaris, the North Star.

2 Cygnus ("the Swan") is visible in the east not long after the sky grows dark. The constellation rises tail-first and the first star you'll see is the Swan's brightest star, Deneb. The distinctive cross-shaped constellation is also home to a black hole called Cygnus X-1 (but you won't be able to see it).

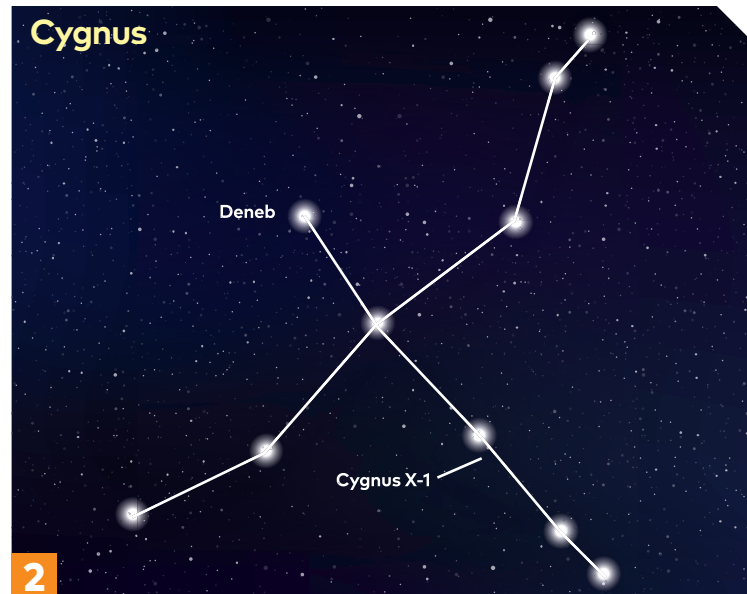
3 Later in September is a great time to spot Pegasus, the winged horse from Greek mythology. This constellation is easily found by spotting the large square shape that represents the horse's body. Look towards the eastern horizon just after dark, or use the Plough to find Polaris, the North Star (see step 1). Then, draw an imaginary line from any Plough handle star through Polaris, and you'll land on a "W"-shaped constellation called Cassiopeia. A line from Polaris passing through the final star of the "W" takes you directly to the Great Square of Pegasus.

4 Taurus ("the Bull") should also be visible in the late evening, in the north-east. The fork shape represents its horns and a bright-reddish star called Aldebaran is the Bull's fiery eye. You may also be able to make out a star cluster, called the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters, which looks like a tiny dipper.

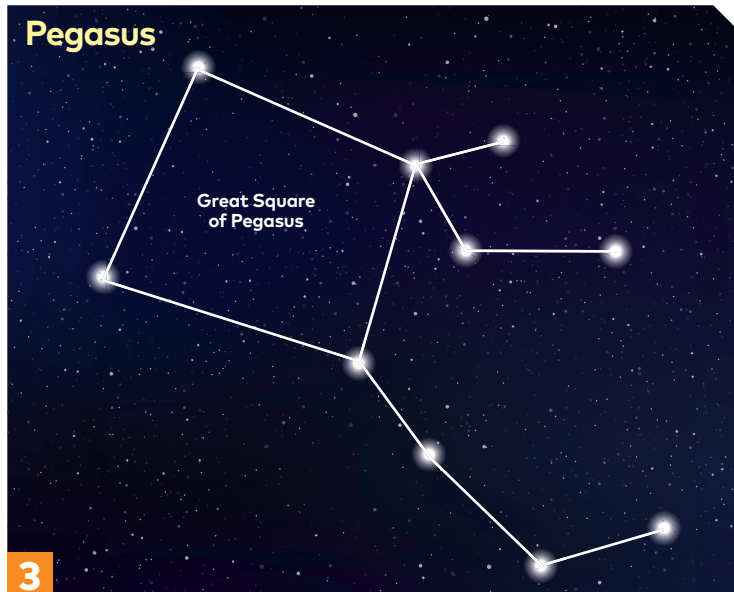
The Plough



Cygnus



Pegasus



Taurus

