



How to...

MAY MOON

The full Moon in May is called the Flower Moon because of the flowers blooming across North America at this time of year.



Enjoy viewing the stars

Head outside and look up to see the celestial wonders above.

With the weather warming up and school days winding down, it's a perfect time of year to head outdoors and take up stargazing. You can stay up late with family and friends to see the stars or, with an adult's help, look for astronomy clubs near you that may host stargazing events for the public. If you'd like to see what sights you can spot at night, here's how you can get started.

Notice the Moon

You've seen the Moon many times. But have you ever noticed how it affects the rest of the sky? A full Moon lights it up and can actually block you from seeing the planets and fainter stars. The best time to stargaze is at the end of the Moon's cycle, when it's really small, or during a new Moon when it's usually not visible. The new Moon happens about once a month. This month, the new Moon phase will begin on May 26.

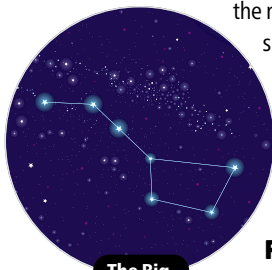
Find a good spot

When the new Moon phase arrives—or at least gets close—it's time to stargaze. Check that it's not cloudy that night, and have an adult help you find an area

away from street lamps, neon signs, and headlights. (They are considered light pollution and can make it difficult to see stars.) Remember that it can take up to 30 minutes for your eyes to adjust to the darkness.

Look for planets

Once your eyes have adjusted, the brightest objects to look for first are other planets. You can see Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn with just your eyes. Venus, the most vibrant planet in our solar system, should be easy to spot in the Western sky just after sunset. It looks like an extra large star. If you're willing to get up super early (before dawn), you might see the Moon passing Saturn and Venus in the Eastern sky in late May.



The Big Dipper

Focus on constellations

Constellations and asterisms are groups of stars that make up patterns in the sky. First, look for the Big Dipper, a well-known asterism made of seven bright stars. If you follow the handle of the Big Dipper down, it will point you toward a bright red star called arcturus. It's inside the Bootes constellation, which is shaped like an ice cream cone. Then look up from there to a bright blue star called spica in the constellation Virgo.

3 ways to see more



You can make the most of stargazing with a few helpful items. Many libraries and astronomy clubs allow users to borrow the first two for free.

Binoculars You can see some amazing views of objects in the night sky with simple binoculars, according to NASA. Binoculars give a much larger field of view of the sky than most telescopes.

Telescope A telescope can help you see distant objects and finer details, like the rings around Saturn, more clearly.

Planisphere A planisphere is a type of star chart, which is like a map of the stars. You can print one out at in-the-sky.org.