

ROAMING THE NIGHT SKY

After the sun sets, take the family out to roam the night sky. Find the constellation Orion, the hunter; the Dog Star Sirius; or the star cluster, Pleiades.

When: Choose a cloudless or near cloudless night. Use the accompanying sky chart anytime in April, and for best results, use approximately 90 minutes after sunset.

While you can observe the night sky at any moon phase, try to plan your observations around the first quarter or last quarter moon phases. During a full moon, the reflected light from the moon will make it difficult to see low magnitude stars.

Where: Find an open area away from tall trees and buildings and away from artificial light sources.

How: To use the sky chart, orient it so the direction at the bottom of the sky chart corresponds to the direction you are facing. So if you are facing north, make sure “north” on the sky chart is located at the bottom.

To figure out directions, watch where the sun sets. That will be west. If you are facing west, east will be at your back. And if you raise your right arm out to your side, that will be north. Your left arm will be south. You can also use the compass on your smart phone.

Other: There are also many apps that will help you navigate the night sky such as Star Walk 2, Star Tracker, Star Rover, and SkySafari.

