

YOUNG EXPLORERS

WISH UPON A ... METEOR?

When you see a streak of light across the night sky, someone might tell you to make a wish. This tradition has been going on for centuries—even back to the ancient Greeks who wished on shooting stars to help them connect with the Greek gods. But here's the thing: shooting stars aren't actually stars!

It's Getting Rocky

In fact, shooting stars are meteors, grains of rock or dust that hit our atmosphere. Some of these grains are broken bits of asteroid, some are left behind by passing comets. As the meteors burn up, they create a glowing tail we can see from Earth.

Fall Meteor Showers Guide

While you might see a meteor on any clear night, certain times are better. Here's what to look for and when:

October 8–9: Draconids Meteor Shower

Watch the constellation of Draco the Dragon breathe fire as meteors plummet from the dusty path of comet Giacobini-Zinner. To find the Draco constellation, look between the Big Dipper and Little Dipper to see the tail of the dragon. Follow the zigzag trail of the body to the dragon eyes (the Rastaban and Eltanin stars), where you will see the meteors.

November 17–18: Leonids Meteor Shower

The Leonids are known for fireballs (larger explosions of light and color) and earthgrazers (meteors that streak close to the horizon and have long, colorful tails). Although these meteors appear to originate in the constellation Leo, it's best to view the whole sky, with your feet facing east.

December 13–14: Geminid Meteor Shower

At 9 or 10 pm, face south to see as many as 120 meteors an hour. Meteors will appear to shoot from the direction of the Gemini constellation, or the 'twins'.



Look Up

Make the most out of your stargazing with these 4 steps:



Find a place well away from light.



Let your eyes adjust to the darkness for 30 minutes.



Lie on your back (a pillow and blanket help).



Be patient.