

Night Sky Planet Watch

Enjoy looking for planets in the night sky!

Planets move in predictable patterns and their movements in the sky. They use these observations to tell time, navigate, and predict the weather.

No Materials Needed Binoculars or a telescope can help get a closer look at planets. However, they can be difficult to use with young children. We suggest focusing on what you can see with the naked eye.

Note: This activity can be done in the morning just before sunrise, or in the evening after sunset. Choose a time that works best for you.

Instructions:

Go outside on a clear night and look up at the sky. Plan your timing so you can look for some of the planets in our Solar System. They appear as bright dots in the sky, but do not twinkle like stars.

Step 1: Plan your timing

Go to www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/night/usa/fairbanks to see which planets will be visible. Make sure your location is set (e.g. Fairbanks, AK). Click on each planet to see when it will be visible in your location. Use the sky map to find where in the sky it is visible.

Step 2: Go outside! Try to spot planets in night sky! Talk about what you see. Did anything surprise you? What would you like to know more about?

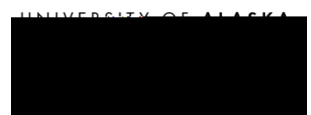
For more details on what to look for in the sky this month:

x Go to the UAMN Astronomy Calendar: bit.ly/akspacescience

x Watch a video from NASA:

solarsystem.nasa.gov/what-to-skywatching-tips-from-nasa/

Hint: You can also download a stargazing app on a phone or tablet to identify the planets and stars.



The Planets and the Night Sky

The stars in the sky appear to move in predictable ways, always keeping the same position relative to each other. Tracking their movements is fairly simple. However, planets are not as predictable; they constantly move in relation to the background stars, and follow close to the paths of the Sun and Moon across the sky. The ancient Greeks called the planets "wandering stars", and the word planet comes from the Greek word *planētēs* meaning "wanderer."
