

Make a Star Finder

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Make a Star Finder. Learn your way around the night sky by finding some of the constellations. Download and print the Star Finder for this month.

January

(/review/starfinder/star_finder_jan.pdf)

February

(/review/starfinder/star_finder_feb.pdf)

March

(/review/starfinder/star_finder_mar.pdf)

April

(/review/starfinder/star_finder_apr.pdf)

May

(/review/starfinder/star_finder_may.pdf)

June

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July

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August

(/review/starfinder/star_finder_aug.pdf)

September

(/review/starfinder/star_finder_sep.pdf)

October

(/review/starfinder/star_finder_oct.pdf)

November

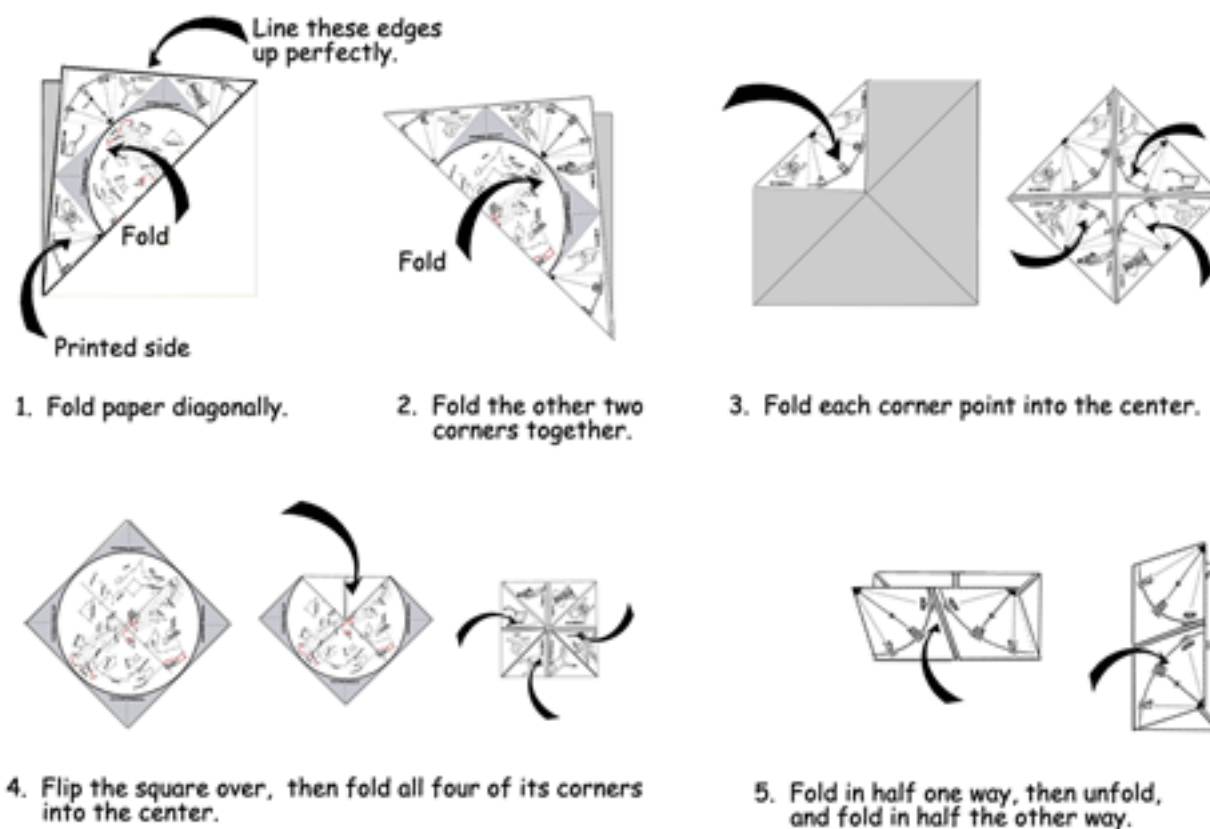
(/review/starfinder/star_finder_nov.pdf)

December

(/review/starfinder/star_finder_dec.pdf)

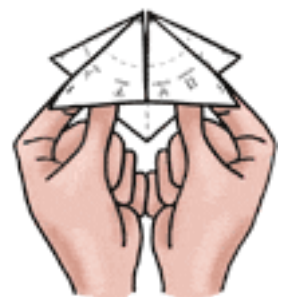
Color or decorate the Star Finder, if you like. Then cut it out on the solid lines.

Fold it like this:



Play the Star Finder game:

1. Stick your thumbs and first two fingers into the four pockets on the bottom of the Star Finder.
2. Ask another person to choose one of the top four squares. Then, depending on the number on the square she chose, open and close the Star Finder that many times (open up and down, close, open side to side, close, etc.). For example, if she chose number 6, open and close the Star Finder 6 times.



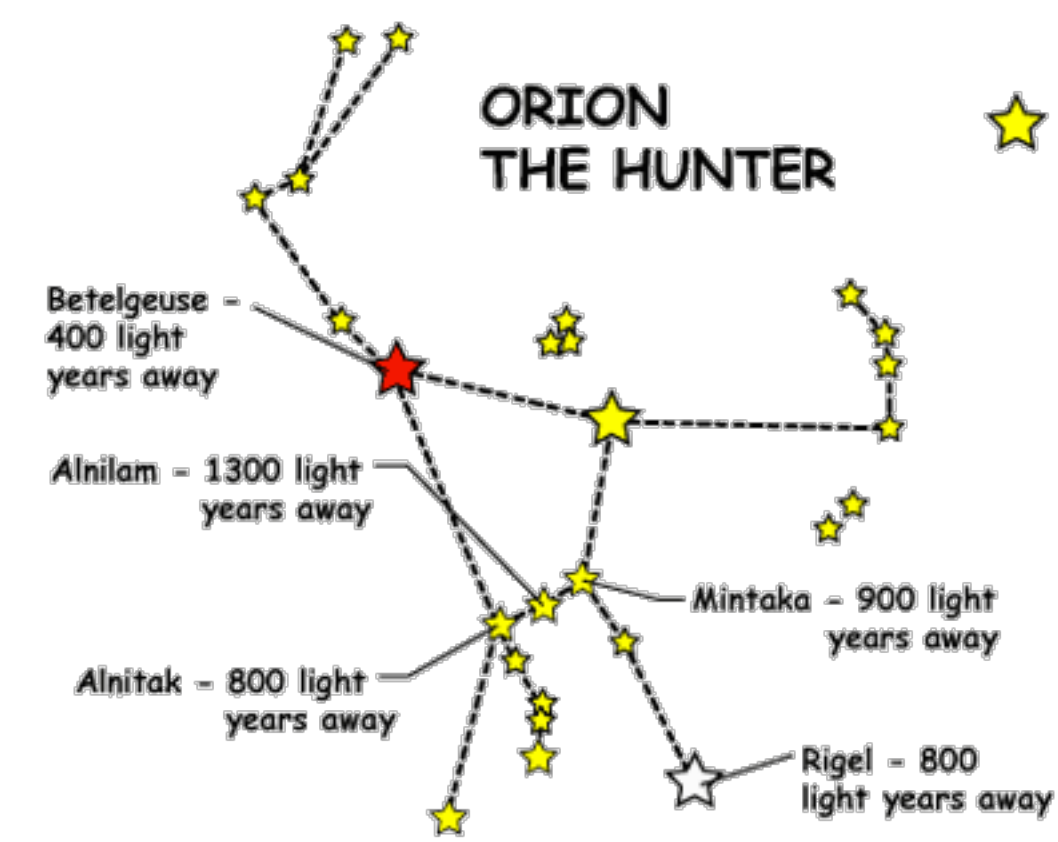
3. Then, ask the person to look inside the Star Finder and pick one of the four visible constellations. This time, open and close the Star Finder once for each letter to spell out his choice. For example, if he chose "Lyra," you would open and close the Star Finder 4 times, once for each letter: L - Y - R - A.
4. Ask the player again to pick one of the four constellations visible. Open the panel to see the name of a constellation (highlighted in red) she will try to find in the sky for this month.

For some of the months, not every part of the Star Finder may show a highlighted constellation for you to find. In this case, just try to find the constellation that is nearest to the part of the sky you picked. Or, just find any constellation!

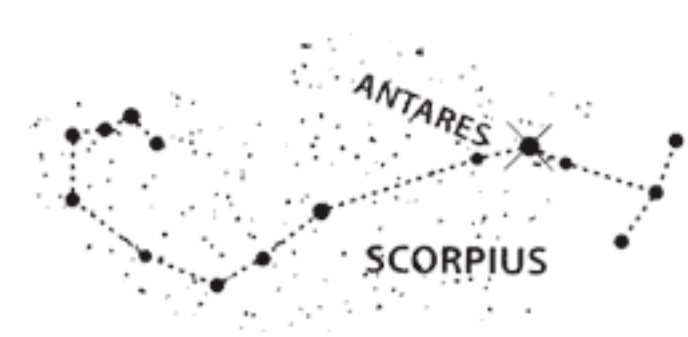
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[What ARE Constellations Anyway? \(/dr-marc-space/#/review/dr-marc-space/constellations.html\)](/dr-marc-space/#/review/dr-marc-space/constellations.html)

A constellation is group of stars like a dot-to-dot puzzle. If you join the dots—stars, that is—and use lots of imagination, the picture would look like an object, animal, or person. For example, Orion is a group of stars that the Greeks thought looked like a giant hunter with a sword attached to his belt.



Other than making a pattern in Earth's sky, these stars may not be related at all. For example, Alnitak, the star at the left side of Orion's belt, is 817 light years away. (A *light year* is the *distance* light travels in one Earth year, almost 6 trillion miles!) Alnilam, the star in the middle of the belt, is 1340 light years away. And Mintaka at the right side of the belt is 916 light years away. Yet they all appear from Earth to have the same brightness.



Even the closest star is almost unimaginably far away. Because they are so far away, the shapes and positions of the constellations in Earth's sky change very, very slowly. During one human lifetime, they change hardly at all. So, since humans first noticed the night sky they have navigated by the stars. Sailors have steered their ships by the stars. Even the Apollo astronauts going to the Moon had to know how to navigate by the stars in case their navigation instruments failed.

Finding the Constellations

We see different views of the Universe from where we live as Earth makes its yearly trip around the solar system. That is why we have a different Star Finder for each month, as different constellations come into view. Also, as Earth rotates on its axis toward the east throughout the hours of the night, the whole sky seems to shift toward the west.

The Star Finder charts are for a latitude of 34° N, which is about as far north of the equator as Los Angeles, California. (Charts are from *The Griffith Observer* magazine.) The farther north you are, the more the constellations will be shifted south from the Star Finder charts. The Star Finder charts show the sky at about 10 PM for the first of the month, 9 PM for the middle of the month, and 8 PM for the last of the month. These are local standard times. For months with Daylight Savings Time, star chart times are an hour later.

The star charts are maps of the sky overhead. So, to get the directions lined up, hold the map over your head and look up at it, and turn it so the northern horizon side is facing north.

If you live where big city lights drown out the beauty of the stars, you may see only a few of the brightest stars and planets. How sad! But see if you can find at least one or two constellations on a clear, Moonless night.

Ever wondered about the difference between astrology and astronomy? (/starfinder2)



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