



**Virtual Activity:  
TAPS Good Grief Camp at Home**

Activity Created/Presented by

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Activity Name

Backyard Stargazing

Age Group

All (parent help needed for littles, and some ages may not stay up late enough to see a dark summer sky)

Description

Since ancient times, the night sky has captured the imaginations of people all over the world. When camping, stargazing is one of the most fun activities the whole family can enjoy together, and it gives us a great opportunity to think deeply about the universe we live in.

When we camp out, the low light allows us to see some amazing view of the stars, but even in our backyards we can see some of the brightest objects in the sky, including the moon, major constellations, planets, and even the International Space Station!

The first part of the activity is a night sky scavenger hunt! In the summer in the Northern Hemisphere, there are lots of well-known constellations to find. But the first part of the scavenger hunt is to find the moon! The moon is not always visible during night though, sometimes it is not in the sky at all, and sometimes it can be seen in the day. Keep checking to see if you can find it, and then write down what phase it is in.

The next part of the scavenger hunt is to find the major constellations. For this part, you definitely need it to be dark out! These nine major constellations are visible on any clear night, as long as there is not too much light from your surrounding area at the time.

There are also a few other bright objects visible in July, including Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, and Venus, all depending on where you are and what time you are looking, but all without a telescope! One helpful way to find these objects is to use a free app on your smartphone, one option being the Night Sky app. These apps help you to locate individual items in the sky and track when they will be visible to you. One really fun use is to see when the International Space Station will be visible. It is so fun to look into the sky and see an object with our fellow human beings living and working on it streaking across the sky.

Your family can take this time to talk about your thoughts on our place in the cosmos and be mindful about the grand scope of the universe, and how fortunate any of us are to experience the wonderful things that the Earth has to offer in this large and mysterious universe.



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### Supplies Needed

Stargazing Scavenger Hunt

Night Sky App

### Adaptations

If you are in the southern hemisphere by any chance, your sky will look very different!

The night sky changes slowly but steadily over the month. The moon phases and moves, the planets and stars rotate across our view, and the satellites (like the ISS!) that can be seen through telescopes change their patterns. You can always look online to see what is visible any given night from your area, and just be patient if you are interested in seeing any specific object in the sky!

If you live in the city where there is too much light to see most objects, there are a variety of cool live streams you can watch, including the ISS [https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/nasatv/iss\\_ustream.html](https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/nasatv/iss_ustream.html) and the Northern Lights <https://liveauroranetwork.com/>.

### Reference/s

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/night-sky/id475772902>

<https://www.reallifeathome.com/printable-star-gazing-scavenger-hunt/>

<https://www.thrillist.com/news/nation/astronomical-events-2020-stargazing-night-sky-map/>