

# Major Star Constellation

## Fact Cards



1

Major Star Constellations

There are 88 major star constellations found in our skies. Not all of them can be seen all the time. If you want to find some of these constellations make sure you pick a clear night and are away from the bright lights found in cities. It can take your eyes up to 20 minutes to adjust to the dim light from the night sky. Make sure to bring a compass and some binoculars or a telescope with you.

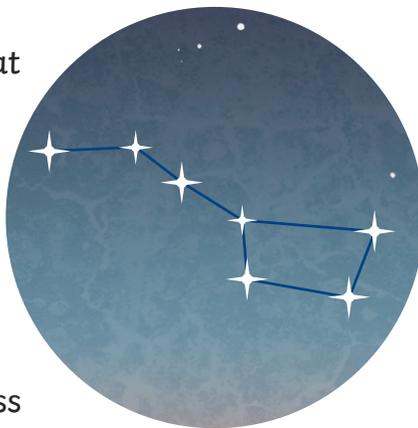


2

Major Star Constellations

### Ursa Major

Ursa Major is also known as the Great Bear. It contains a smaller set of seven stars which are known as 'The Plough' or 'The Big Dipper'. The Plough points towards Polaris, which is also known as the North Star. The North Star shows you which way is North, like a compass would and can help people to navigate if they are lost.



3

Major Star Constellations

### Ursa Minor

Ursa Minor is also known as the Little Bear. Polaris, or the North Star, is located within Ursa Minor. The two stars at the other end of Ursa Minor are known as the Guardians of the Pole.

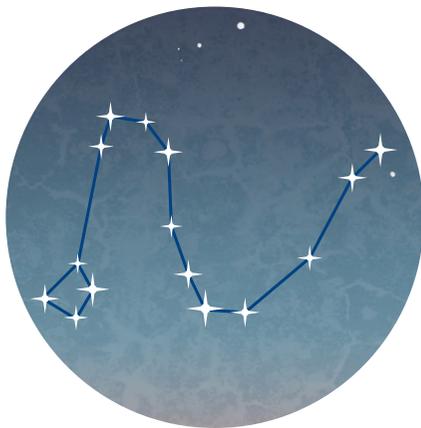


4

Major Star Constellations

### Draco

The name of this constellation is Latin for dragon. It wraps around Ursa Minor. The head of the dragon is a pattern of four stars which are called The Lozenge.



5

Major Star Constellations

### Cepheus

The constellation of Cepheus is named after the king of Ancient Aethiopia from Greek mythology. Cepheus looks similar to the outline you might draw for a house, a square with a triangle on top.



6

Major Star Constellations

### Cassiopeia

This constellation is named after the wife of King Cepheus from Greek mythology. It is shaped like a 'W'. It sits near the constellation Cepheus in the sky and as it moves during the year, it circles the North Star.



7

Major Star Constellations

### Orion

Orion was a mighty giant and hunter from Greek mythology who claimed he could slay any creature on Earth. The constellation of Orion contains a smaller set of three stars in a line which make up Orion's Belt. Below Orion's Belt, you might find a star that looks fuzzy. This is called a stellar nebula. It is where hundreds of young stars and planets outside our solar system are forming. If you follow the line of Orion's Belt to the left, you will find Sirius, also known as the Dog Star. This star is part of another constellation called Canis Major and it is the brightest star in the night sky.



8

Major Star Constellations

### Leo

Leo is known as a lion in many cultures. If you follow what looked like a backwards question mark in the constellation, this is the head of the lion.

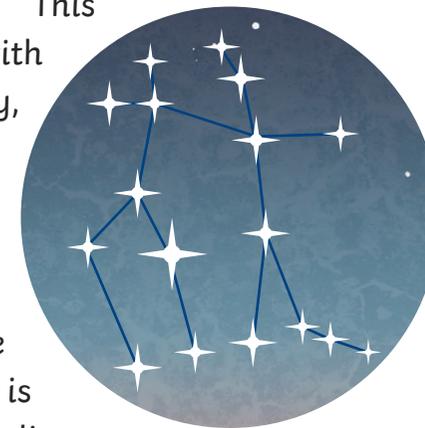


9

Major Star Constellations

### Gemini

Gemini is Latin for twins. This constellation is associated with the twins from Greek mythology, Castor and Pollux. These are also the names of the two brightest stars in this constellation and appear to be the heads of the twins. This constellation looks like two stick people holding hands. It is one of the constellations of the zodiac, which we know as star signs.



10

Major Star Constellations

### Lyra

Lyra means the Harp. One of the stars in this constellation is called Vega. This is one of the brightest stars in the night sky. It became the first star, other than the Sun, that was photographed.

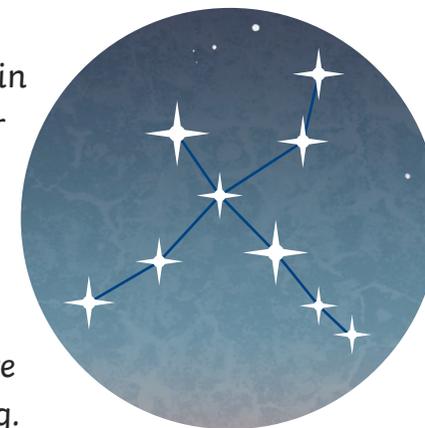


11

Major Star Constellations

### Cygnus

Cygnus is named after the Latin word for swan. There is a smaller set of stars in this constellation known as the Northern Cross as it looks like a cross in the sky. The rest of the constellation look like the wings of a swan when they are spread out, as if the swan is flying.

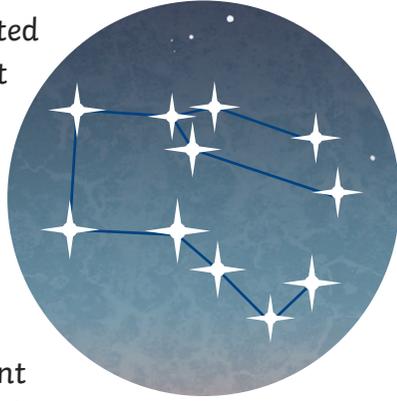


**12**

Major Star Constellations

**Pegasus**

Pegasus was known as the winged horse in Greek mythology. Pegasus is easily spotted by the four stars creating the Great Square of Pegasus. The number of stars you can see within this square shows how clear and dark your night sky is. If you can see between four and thirteen stars, your sky is good, clear and dark. If you can see more than thirteen stars then it indicates excellent skies. Pegasus appears to be attached to another constellation called Andromeda.

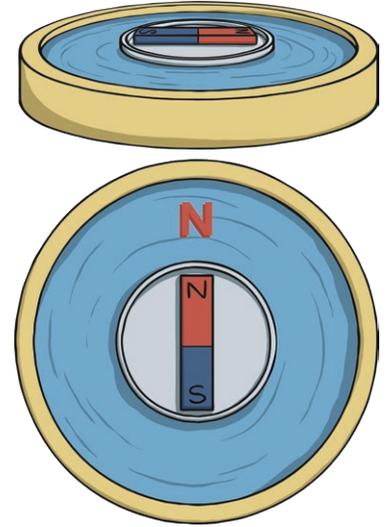
**13**

Major Star Constellations

**The Northern Sky**

When looking North, Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Draco, Cepheus and Cassiopeia can be seen all year round.

Lyra and Cygnus can be seen from April to June and Pegasus can be seen from July to September.

**14**

Major Star Constellations

**The Southern Sky**

When looking South, Gemini and Orion can be seen from January to March.

Leo and Ursa Major can be seen from April to June.

Cygnus and Lyra can be seen from July to September.

Pegasus and Cassiopeia can be seen from October to December.

