

Finding My Way

USING STARS FOR DIRECTION AND NAVIGATION

History of Star Navigation

Before there were GPS or iPhones, people had to use nature for time and direction. The position of the sun and stars were both used to help people find their way. Since the Earth rotates around the Sun, people would need to know what constellations are visible during that season of the year. Also, where you are located on the Earth can affect which constellations are most visible. People in the Northern Hemisphere often use Polaris, which is often referred to as the North Star, to find the direction of North. People in the Southern Hemisphere often use Crux to find the direction of South. By finding one of the 4 cardinal directions, someone can then use that information to identify the other directions.

Finding Polaris (The North Star)

Polaris is the outermost star of the Little Dipper constellation. If you have trouble finding it, you can find the top right corner of the Big Dipper. Polaris is located directly above it.



Finding Crux (Southern Cross)

Since Crux is a smaller constellation, it is easiest to find the two bright stars located near it called Alpha and Beta Centauri. The two stars are in line with the top star of the cross.



Star Maps

There are many sites and apps that can show you the map of what stars will be visible from your area on a given day. These are great resources if you are going on a camping trip. You can stargaze and stay safe by mapping out what stars are in what direction during the trip.

Go Explore!

Use the following sites to explore star maps and test your skills of finding Polaris or Crux.

[Stellarium-Find the Stars Online](#)

[Star Maps and More Website](#)

[Constellation Location Video](#)

[The North Star Video](#)