

Tips for Using Night Sky Network PlanetQuest Toolkit Activities with the Orion Nebula

Overview: The Orion Nebula plays a key role in the story of star and planet formation, as well as being a commonly observed object at star parties. Here are some suggestions for using the Orion Nebula with PlanetQuest toolkit activities to engage audiences in our search for planets around other stars!

How Do We Find Planets Around Other Stars?

Activity Description: Manipulate foam balls (representing stars) to simulate the way we find planets now and how future NASA missions will search for planets.

How to use the activity with the Orion Nebula: Tell audiences that Hubble Space Telescope images show some stars in the Orion Nebula have disks of material encircling them. These disks are the building blocks of solar systems - the birthing grounds for future planets. This activity will help audiences understand how future NASA missions will be used to detect and study individual planets.

Where Are The Distant Worlds?

Activity Description: Use a star map to find constellations and to identify stars with extrasolar planets.

How to use the activity with the Orion Nebula: Some stars with known planets are located in the constellation Orion, the home of the Orion Nebula. Use this activity to help audiences locate the subject of Hubble's latest image and stars in Orion known to have planets.