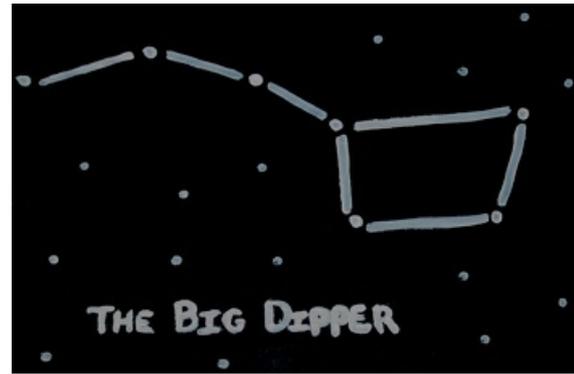


Constellation Placemats

When you take your child outside to look up at the night sky, what does he see? If you live far away from a city, he may be gazing at thousands of stars twinkling above him. If not, he may have trouble viewing groupings of stars from the surrounding "light pollution." Either way, you can introduce your child to the concept of constellations, or commonly known groups of stars, from the comfort of your very own home. Pick a few constellations to serve as the inspiration for a set of placemats crafted by your child!

What You Need:

- 4 large sheets of black construction paper
- Washable white paint
- Cotton swabs
- Clear contact paper
- Internet access



What You Do:

1. Using the Internet for help, can your child identify any constellations? Help him pick a few constellations to focus on that are easily viewed from your home (Orion's Belt, the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper, Cassiopeia, and Aries are a few easily visible Northern Hemisphere constellations).
2. Go outside with your child and look at the night sky! Even if you can't pick out any constellations, you can still count the stars you see and make some observations about them.
3. Get ready to make your placemats! Have your child dip a cotton swab into the white paint and dab it onto the black construction paper to create stars. For each placemat, orient the stars to form one of the constellations he studied. You may want to help your child label the constellations to keep track of what he learned.
4. Let the placemats dry, and then use the clear contact paper to laminate the placemats.

Now the whole family can learn about the night sky when they sit down to eat and use your child's homemade constellations placemats!