

Shooting Stars

Although they look like falling stars, shooting stars are actually space rocks and other space junk burning up within the Earth's atmosphere. Mostly they are about the size of a pebble and, hopefully, they are all gone (burnt up) before they reach Earth.

If you are patient enough, it is possible to see around six shooting stars in an hour. The incoming space rocks plough into the Earth's atmosphere at around 75 000 kilometres an hour. Due to air friction, they heat up and slow down in a fraction of a second and the hot air around them glows as the rock burns up.

We don't actually see the rock, just the glowing path of the heated air, but it is a very special sight and well worth looking out for!

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1. What are shooting stars made from?

2. How many shooting stars should you be able to see in a three-hour period?

3. What do we actually **see**, when a space rock enters Earth's atmosphere?

4. What makes the space rock heat up and slow down for a fraction of a second?

5. How quickly do space rocks travel as they enter Earth's atmosphere?

Research:

Use a dictionary to find out what a meteor is. How is a meteor similar to a shooting star?



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