

THE ULTIMATELY COOLEST WAY TO RAISE YOUR KIDS IN THE NEW ERA

GEEK PARENTING

Issue #64 April 2018

**STEPHEN
HAWKING**

AN INCREDIBLE
MIND

**THE FERMI
PARADOX**

ARE WE REALLY ALONE
IN THE GALAXY?

FUN PROJECTS

SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS
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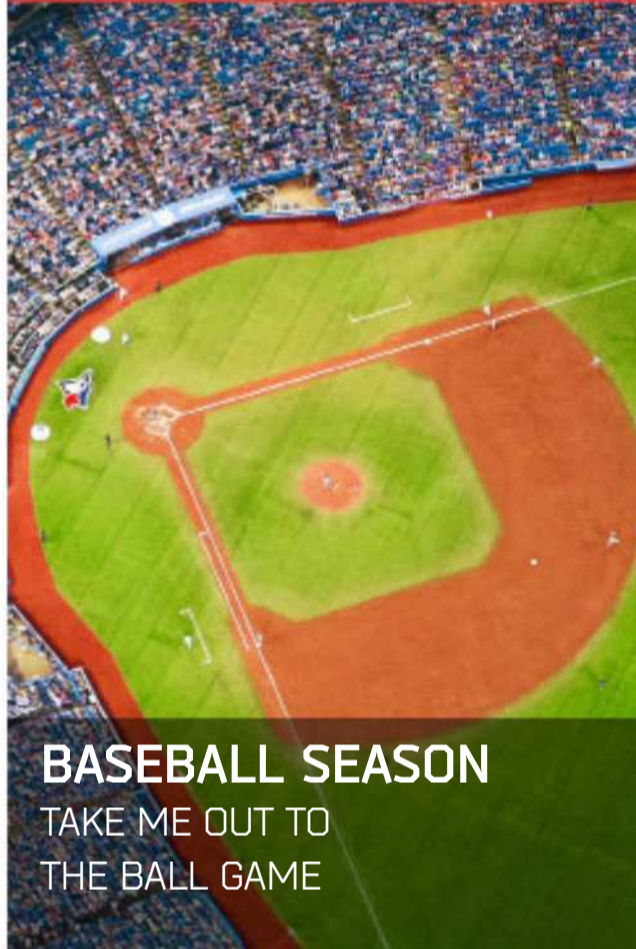


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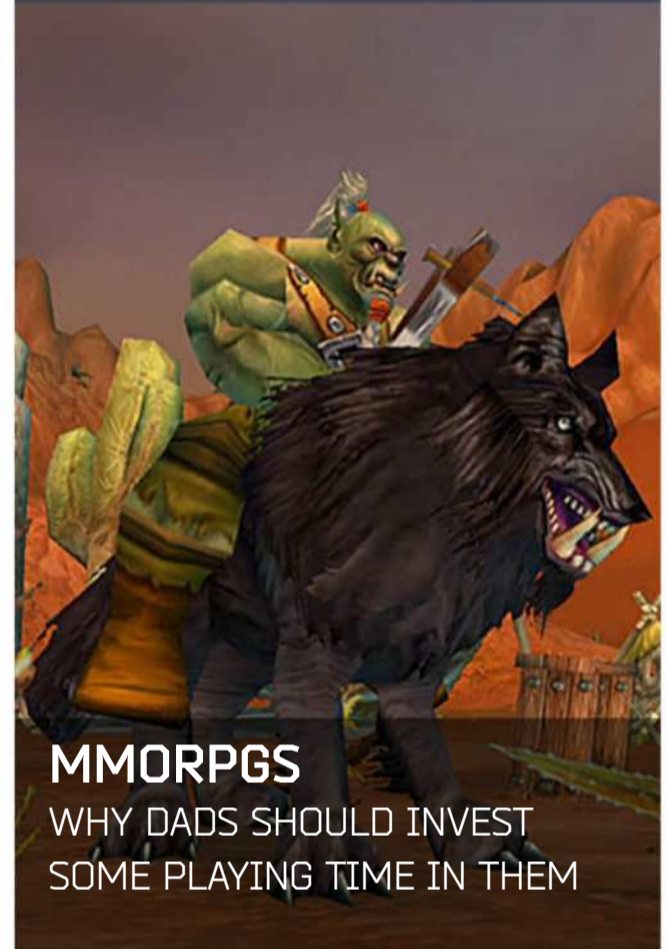
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**GEEK PARENTING
RECOMMENDS**

Kid's App | Spotlight

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TO OUTER SPACE & BEYOND!

EDITOR'S NOTE

As humans head ever faster into the future with exponential leaps in technology, we inevitably have one eye on what's out there in space. It's always a fun subject, one that reminds us just how small we seem in comparison to everything beyond our planet.

As well as a fun introduction into STEM subjects, there are many benefits to learning about space. Learning about our Solar System for example, can help your child attain a better appreciation of our own blue planet; its frailness and miraculousness. It's also always a delight to see them marvel at how wondrous our universe is, as we ourselves can do even now. Astronomy can make for excellent family time and is one thing that has the potential to keep everyone equally excited and interested.

Many agree that the future of our species will ultimately point towards the stars. Given the growth of our population and the every increasing demand on natural resources, it's only a matter of time before we seriously start considering alternate living spaces away from our Earth. It's a future we need our children to be best prepared for.

We also pay tribute to one of the greatest minds of his generation, the late Stephen Hawking, and how his legacy can inspire a whole new generation of incredible minds.

As always we love to continue hearing feedback from our readers. Get in touch at:

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THE GEEKY MONTHLY

Bringing you cool news and media from around the globe



OMATE X NANOBLOCK KIDS SMARTWATCH

This smartwatch allows you to connect to your little ones wherever they are at whatever time of the day. It offers video chat, direct messaging, even a SOS facility. It also tracks them so you can find their location in real time but extensive security measures should keep this information out of the hands of others. As well as a funky, lego style customisable wristband there's an alarm, stopwatch and pedometer. Battery life runs at an impressive 3 days.

BYTE SIZED NEWS

Netflix Patches

Netflix announced a feature specifically aimed at children which effectively rewards them for binge-watching. It does this via "patches" which kids can collect for watching episodes of certain shows. Netflix said they wanted to provide a more "interactive experience for kids" but naturally there was some backlash from parents which ultimately led to them pulling the plug. The right call in the end, we think.

Rhino Extinction?

The last male northern white rhino, called Sudan, has died in Kenya, leaving behind only two female rhinos- his daughter and granddaughter. He was unfortunately put down after months of poor health. Northern White Rhinos are a subspecies of White Rhinos, one of five species of Rhinoceroses, all of whom are endangered. The only hope now lies in developing IVF techniques before these magnificent creatures go completely extinct.

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DID YOU KNOW?

THE SUN HITS US WITH MORE ENERGY IN ONE HOUR THAN THE WHOLE PLANET USES IN A WHOLE YEAR.

Our sun is a "G-type main-sequence star" meaning that every second, it fuses around 600 million tons of hydrogen to helium, which converts to a LOT of energy as a byproduct-some of which reaches us. Tapping into this fountain of energy is difficult however, with solar panels needing a lot of land mass to cover, are unreliable in bad weather and are expensive to install. Unfortunately this has meant solar technology produces less than 0.1% of global energy demand but it is increasing every year. With more research into making this more viable in the future, it's definitely an energy source we cannot ignore.



WORLD AUTISM DAY

JOIN THE CAUSE



Monday April 2nd will see the celebration of the 11th annual World Autism Day (WAD), and with an increasing number of people now taking part in the celebrations and learning that have become associated with it, it is likely to become a staple part of the yearly calendar.

Aimed at promoting an understanding of the condition, WAD stems from a whole week of more structured learning and communications from the United Nations. Under the snappily-titled special directive 62/139, the UN hopes to increase the acceptability of autism – which is now reckoned to impact one in one hundred and fifty children – by three main elements:

- the participation of all UN organization and its member states in the events.
- a dedication to raising awareness of Autism in the general community and.
- a standing request to the UN Secretary-General to move forth this message to all the UN member states.

The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has embraced the notion of World Autism day, stating “On this World Autism Awareness Day, let us all play a part in changing attitudes toward persons with autism and in recognizing their rights as citizens, who, like everyone else, are entitled to claim those rights and make decisions for their lives in accordance with their own will and preferences.” With those powerful sentiments, what has been seen as a confusing and misunderstood condition in the past is likely to become even further accepted.

Judging by news stories and its growth in the media, autism seems to be on the increase but, in reality,

**“ ... THIS IS A
CONDITION THAT
MAY HAVE NO
SIGNIFICANT
OUTWARD EFFECT
OF A CHILD, AND
MAY NOT IMPACT
THEIR ADULT LIFE
AT ALL... ”**

professional abilities to recognise the condition have just become more finely honed, and cases are on the increase simply because more medical professionals can spot it.

Being a spectrum disorder, autism covers a huge range of developmental disorders that can leave a child confused or unsure in the kaleidoscope of situations and emotions that assault them every minute of the day.

This spectrum means that autism can be diagnosed quite early on if it is at the severe end, sometimes manifesting as early as infancy, but in the majority of less severe cases generally wait until later in childhood to start manifesting. Rather than having one distinguishing characteristic, Autism is indicated by the coming together of three separate symptoms. The triad includes

difficulty socializing, problems in communication, and a limited number of interests combined with repetitive behaviour such as can-stacking or become attached to objects such as toys, figurines or model cars – or more unusual objects like milk bottle tops, stones or shoes.



Autism tends to send shivers down the spines of prospective or new parents, but the message from WAD is that this is a condition that may have no significant outward effect of a child, and may not impact their adult life at all, particularly with increased awareness and acceptance by the world in general.

The message from the UN is clear; even if you are not parent to a child exhibiting autism, it is good to become involved and at least increase your understanding of this complex condition. Autism does not have a cure, so acceptance and even its embracing are hugely important, especially to those who live their life with it, either as a sufferer or a carer. Let's make April the 2nd really special – this year and for all those to follow! ●

THE FERMI PARADOX

ARE WE

REALLY

ALONE?

WHY HAVEN'T WE BEEN VISITED BY ALIENS [ASSUMING WE HAVEN'T]..?

P

People will often cite the relative newness of human life as a reason why we haven't been visited by alien species, but how likely is that? Scientists agree that the Earth is around 4.5 billion years old, compared to a universe that is around 13 billion years old. Mammalian protohumans developed around six million years ago – and can still be observed in some cities – but structured society is just 6,000 years old, so relatively new. Had aliens turned up when we were living in trees, or even earlier when the population consisted of lumbering lizards

without opposing thumbs, they may well have left again, convinced that nothing worthwhile was going on here.

However, telescopes such as Hubble have identified planetary systems in stars as close as just four light years away in the form of Proxima Centauri b. And what's more, there are roughly 2,000 stars at a distance of up to 50 light-years from the Solar System, of which at least sixty-four are plump, yellow-orange "G"-type stars which are very similar to our own Sun. In addition, as many as 15% of these could have Earth-sized planets in the habitable zones. All of that makes for a potentially very crowded local stellar area – let alone, universe – and begs just one question; where are all the aliens?

Known as the Fermi Paradox, after Italian physicist Enrico Fermi, the notion that we should have been teeming with extra-terrestrial life by now. The Fermi Paradox sets out a series of steps;



“ ... THE EARTH SHOULD HAVE ALREADY BEEN VISITED BY EXTRA-TERRESTRIALS NUMEROUS TIMES BUT, THERE IS NO CONVINCING EVIDENCE OF THIS.”

1. There are billions of stars in the galaxy that are similar to the Sun, and many of these stars are billions of years older than the Solar system.
2. With high probability, some of these stars have Earth-like planets, and if the Earth is typical, some may have developed intelligent life.
3. Some of these civilizations may have developed interstellar travel, a step that we are investigating now.
4. Even at the slow pace of currently envisioned interstellar travel, the Milky Way galaxy could be completely traversed in a few million years.

So, according to this line of reasoning, the Earth should have already been visited by extra-terrestrials numerous times but, there is no convincing evidence of this.

There could be a number of reasons for this, such as, we are

particularly uninteresting or are seen as so underdeveloped and war-like that no civilised Proxima Centaurian would dream of stopping by, lest we get very angry and try to kill or even vivisect them! It could be that no one has found a way round $E=MC^2$ and they are still on their way here, or what we find a pleasant atmosphere could be highly toxic to them. It could even be that we are just too far away from any ‘central hub’ of galactic civilisations, and where we are in the Milky Way is the equivalent of being in a desolate, rural area.

Star Trek has its Prime Directive, which forbids members of Star Fleet from contacting lower-intelligence species until they have banged enough rocks together to figure it out for themselves, and that may just be the case here. But since most technologically-lower cultures in our experience have been destroyed and absorbed, perhaps we’re lucky that we’ve been passed by.

THE GREAT FILTER



This is a theory that postulates there is some kind of barrier in the evolution of intelligent life from single celled organism to intergalactic travellers. There may be many common evolutionary steps that a species can take (learning how to use and make tools for example) but once they reach this barrier it is incredibly difficult or even impossible to get beyond it for any lifeforms.

Should this be the case, the immediate question that comes to mind is; where exactly are we on the timeline?

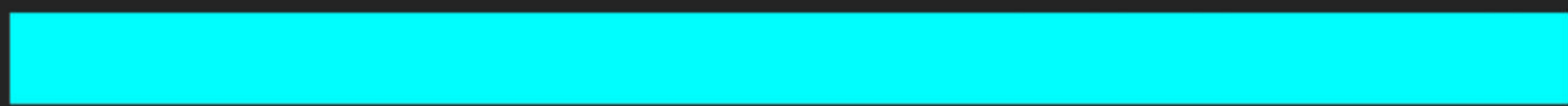
If we have already gone beyond the Great Filter, this makes us incredibly rare and would explain why we feel so alone. It might be the case that we are already one of the most advanced if not the only advanced species in the galaxy and the Filter may have happened

when for example, the first single celled organism split. Is our Earth truly special with unusually perfect conditions for there to be life, despite there being many earth-like planets out there?

If it is ahead of us, then there is cause for massive trepidation. It could be the case that it is quite common for an intelligent species to go extinct because it's entire civilisation collapsed from self destruction or a naturally occurring cataclysmic event.

So far there is no evidence that supports either but were we to find even simple bacteria on Mars or on one of Jupiter's moons for example, then it is likely that the Great Filter is ahead of us and those who abide by the theory would say we should take even greater precaution going into the future.





STEPHEN HAWKING

AN INCREDIBLE MIND

THE MAN WHO ASKED US TO QUESTION IT ALL



On the 14th March 2018 the world sat in mourning at the passing of theoretical physicist, Stephen Hawking. Renowned cosmologist and author, Hawking's was also the man who defied all odds in his own personal battle with Motor Neurone Disease to live until the age of 76.

An incredible man with an incredible mind; he was the natural successor to Einstein. It is believed that no one has come closer to providing a deeper insight into space, gravity and time.

Being diagnosed with motor neurone disease in 1963 at the age of 21 and with doctors only giving him 2 years to live, Hawking soon made the decision that his life wasn't going to be ruled by the disease. He knew in his own mind that he had so much more to give, to learn, explore and to certainly show the world.

Hawking's condition however

progressed much slower than usual and as a result he went on to live for more than half a century. His resolve allowed him to deliver on his promises to himself and ultimately the world, to answer the seemingly unanswerable questions like, how did it all begin?

It's true what they say when mindfulness thinking comes into play and you start living for the here and now, living and being in the present. That's exactly what Hawking did. Motor neurone disease was like a constant black cloud hanging above his head, not knowing what the future held as he had already proved doctors wrong on so many counts. However, living for the now stopped Hawking from wallowing in self-pity and he lived life the way he wanted, in the best way that he could.

He threw himself into his research with his main goal being to have "a complete understanding of the universe, why it is as it is and why it exists at all". The closer Hawking moved forward with his research in answering these questions the more he was driven to continue and to do more. It was his extraordinary determination and steely defiance that pushed not only him to the limits but also his work and his research.

A LIFE NOT SO FAR FROM ORDINARY

Hawking's college days were not unlike those we have come to expect of now, albeit a little different. To driving wild in his wheelchair along the streets of Cambridge, to intentionally running over other students' toes and then of course attending those college parties with a, quite literal, spin or two on the dance floor.

It was during his time at college that he also met his first wife Jane Wilde. True childhood sweethearts, Wilde and Hawking's married in 1965, two years after his diagnosis.

However, it wasn't an easy ride. In 1985, Jane was asked to make the ultimate decision about her

husband, after he had taken ill and was on life support. Jane refused to withdraw the support and Hawking was flown back to Cambridge where he had a lifesaving tracheotomy. The operation ultimately destroyed his own voice but it would also give him that instantly recognisable computer voice that would be known across the world.

Wilde and Hawking went on to have three children together but unfortunately their marriage ended in 1991, with Wilde citing in her book (*My Life With Stephen*) that Hawking's progressive conditions, the demands that he placed on her, as well as his refusal over the years to even discuss his illness, being all factors which contributed to the destruction of their relationship.

Four years after the breakdown of his marriage with Wilde, Hawking went on to marry his nurse at the time, Elaine Mason. Hawking's marriage to Elaine lasted 11 years but was also not without controversy. It had been reported over the years that Cambridge Police were actually investigating a series of assaults on Hawking! Of course, Hawking's denied all allegations that Elaine was involved and due to his lack of cooperation the investigation was shortly dropped.

“MY GOAL IS SIMPLE. IT IS A COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHY IT IS AS IT IS AND WHY IT EXISTS AT ALL.”



Stephen Hawking fulfilled a life long ambition to experience weightlessness in a zero-g plane (a plane that dives through the sky to simulate zero gravity). The experience lasted for four minutes which he described as "amazing".

THE SCIENCE THAT MADE HAWKING'S REMARKABLE

It was in 1970 when Hawking's had his first major breakthrough with his research into his theory regarding black holes. At this time, himself and Roger Penrose applied the mathematics of black holes to the universe and showed that "a singularity, a region of infinite curvature in spacetime, lay in our distant past: the point from which came the big bang".

Hawking's then went on to propose in 1974 that black holes actually radiate heat. A statement and research project which started one of the most passionate debates in the cosmology world.

Hawking's presented his argument that "if a black hole could evaporate, all of the information that fell inside over its lifetime would be lost forever"! This statement contradicted one of the most basic laws of quantum mechanics but one which Hawking actually believed to be more common.

In 1974 Hawking was elected to the Royal Society and five years later became the Lucasian professor of mathematics at Cambridge.

However, it wasn't until Hawking's research and findings all

culminated in the production in - A Brief History in Time when we saw him really being thrown into the limelight.

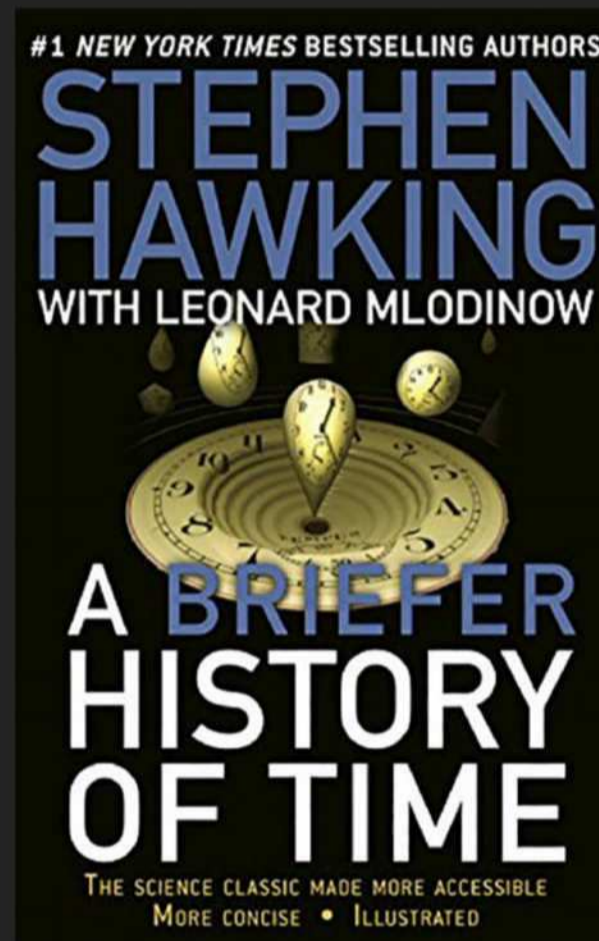
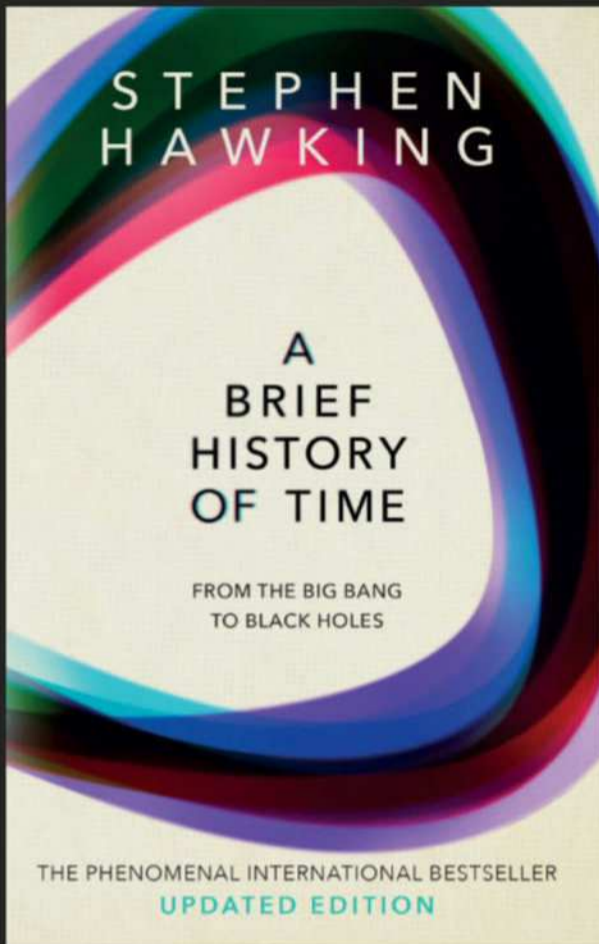
Written by Hawking's, A brief History of Time is one of the best-selling nonfiction books of all time, selling over 10million copies to date and being translated into 40 different languages!

The book to non-scientists, mathematicians or cosmologists might scare you. Scare you because you have the feeling that you might not understand it, the workings behind it or the science and theory in which it presents.

But you would be wrong. This book is designed for everyone. Hawking's intention was to present his findings to the world and for the world to understand what he did.

Understanding the laws that predict how things work in the universe is a way for not only adults but children to explore our universe and understand how and why the universe exists. Drawing people into theories and physics, how light moves in the universe, the concept of space-time, black holes and of course the Big Bang and even time travel!

Interesting to note, science was also applied to the readability of Hawking's book in that it has been predicted that for every 100 copies •▶



(ABOVE) Stephen Hawking was able to describe complex ideas in simpler terms for the majority of people to try and understand. (RIGHT) He also helped his daughter write a series of books to help inspire the next generation.

bought, only 3 people would actually read it from start to finish! Hence the reason that a more concise version of the book was created ('A Briefer History of Time') as well as an illustrated version!

Finding out and learning about black holes and the universe in which we live allows us to understand better the origin and fate of the universe. Knowing that the universe must have had a beginning in time, due to the discovery that the universe is expanding and then going on to understand what the ultimate fate of the universe could be, again sparks interest and debate in everyone,

not just the scientists among us.

WRITING FOR CHILDREN

Hawking's also co-wrote a series of children's books with his daughter Lucy which helped to bring science to life in a way that would resonate with children. With titles such as *George's Secret Key to the Universe*, to George and the Big Bang. The stories within these books are told in a fun, light-hearted format highlighting physics and the universe, bringing them to life in an adventure kids can get lost in. Similar to the world of Harry Potter, the books in the ➤




LUCY &
STEPHEN HAWKING



GEORGE'S
SECRET KEY TO THE
UNIVERSE

'Like a Doctor Who adventure'
SUNDAY TIMES

LUCY &
STEPHEN HAWKING



GEORGE
AND THE BIG BANG

Going back to the beginning
of time

LUCY &
STEPHEN HAWKING



GEORGE
AND THE BLUE MOON


'Like a Doctor Who adventure . . . inspiring
curiosity and amazement' SUNDAY TIMES

LUCY &
STEPHEN HAWKING



GEORGE'S
COSMIC TREASURE
HUNT

What would you do if an alien
got in touch?



George's series take readers on a rollercoaster ride through space to discover the mysteries of our universe.

CO-WRITING WASN'T THE ONLY CULTURAL APPEARANCE THAT HAWKING'S MADE

Making a number of appearances in both TV and film, Hawking's made appearances in shows such as The Big Bang Theory, Star Trek: The Next Generation and played cameo roles in charity days such as Red nose Day 2015. As well as having his character played in films such as, The Theory of Everything and Hawking.

Hawking has of course also made several appearances in the prime-time cartoon hit, The Simpsons!

Showing that yes, a master scientist, whose theories more often than not caused controversy, was also still a human being and someone with a sense of humour at that!

He opened the door for others to question the universe, to find and look for the answers and to believe in someone who wanted to live to find out more, to act as an inspiration to others with his work and his motivations.

“LIFE WOULD BE TRAGIC IF IT WEREN'T FUNNY.”

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Of course, Hawking's work isn't all in the past as he left a number of future predictions for others to explore and delve into further. Some of which are criticised profusely, whilst others open the door for other researchers to take the reins and dig deeper in order to find the answers.

One of the biggest future predictions that Hawking's made clear was how we should be looking to spread Earth to other planets or risk as a human race, going extinct!

This concept links to his latest piece of work, which he was believed to be working on right up until his death. A theory that explained how the universe would eventually end when the stars run out of energy (a paper which is still being reviewed by a leading scientific journal).



Then coupled with this is something we're all aware of – the affects of global warming. Something which Hawking's believed will be one of the biggest threats to our planet and something which is also irreversible!

However, the predictions which caused slightly more controversy were how firstly Hawking believed that the rise of Artificial Intelligence and their growing sophistication could mean the downfall of humans!

And then there was also the prediction surrounding aliens... yes extra-terrestrial life. How if there are life forms outside of Earth and they are looking to inhibit our resources, being friendly and making friends with us, alongside taking what they need, isn't something that will probably be on their agenda.

However out there his thoughts, predictions or assumptions, Hawking's used his presence as well as his popularity and status to present his ideas on the world stage.

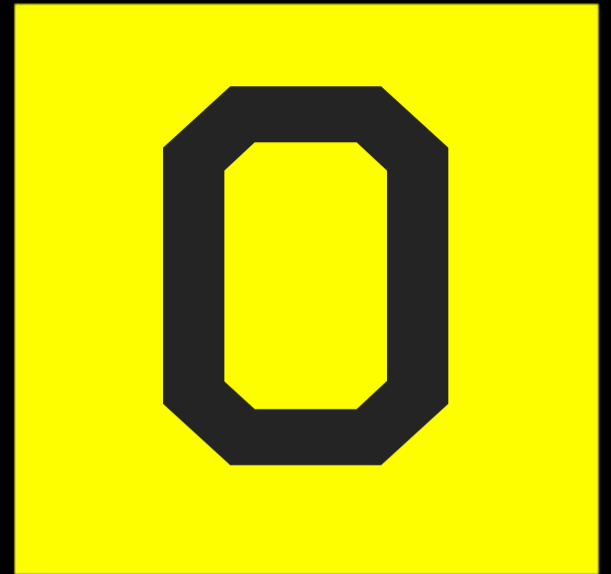
Love him or mis-understand him Stephen Hawking was an extraordinary human being with a lot to offer the world. We will continue to explore the universe, question everything and use his theories and ideas to drive further future research.

A truly inspirational man whose theories on black holes changed the way we look at the world. His cameo appearances in film and TV as well as his work with his daughter show just what a remarkable man he really was – certainly living life to the full, seizing all opportunities and most importantly, living in the moment. ●





CREATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF STAR GAZERS



On the 8th April 2018 we celebrate International Astronomy Day, a day that helps to bridge the gap between the general public and the various astronomy enthusiasts and professionals around the world.

The day in question was originally set up to provide various telescopes in busy urban locations so that passers-by could enjoy the views of the heavens and see what others see when looking into space.

The event has grown over the years, but the goal remains the same, in that it hopes to inspire our younger generations to have a keen eye when it comes to astronomy and space and to explore further the possibilities our universe has to offer.

Its focus is about getting kids to take an interest in the unknown and looking at how viewing the universe from the stars opens up the possibility that anything is possible until proven otherwise. Questioning everything and looking into the unknown to find the answers.



WHY SHOULD OUR KIDS TAKE AN INTEREST IN SPACE?

No, the answer to this question shouldn't start with because it's the best thing for them. It should be because it expands their mind, it makes them question the world in which we live, it gets them interested in science and above all astronomy in general is just really cool.

There's currently a big push on anything related to STEM topics and projects too and International Astronomy Day brings all of these elements and more together and also to the forefront of everyone's minds.

But we recognise that it is hard bringing science to life sometimes and to imagine working at somewhere like NASA or to even travel into space one day, all quite often seem like far-fetched dreams.

However, things are changing.

NASA are much more involved with the general public than what they used to be or what they might still seem to be. They want to share their adventures with us and most importantly they want to increase the excitement that space can bring to kids.

With this in mind NASA have set up and run a great kids club online. Here kids can not only play online games, but they can find out more about NASA too. They can choose to go missions with virtual astronauts, they can check out NASA TV, as well as check out the latest Podcasts and E-books relating to NASA.

There's also some great resources on here for teachers, educators and parents too. Bringing space to your home or school, using professional materials from the real space hub of the world.

APPS TO HELP POINT YOU IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



STARCHART

Starchart is a free educational and augmented reality astronomy app. Where all you have to do is point your AR enabled device at the sky and Sky Chart will tell you exactly what you're looking at! The sun, the moon, a planet to even a star sign, spot it all through this handy app!



SKY SAFARI 6

SkySafari6 is similar in that when held up to the sky, the app will find stars, constellations, planets and more! Moving with you it can offer its users the ultimate in star gazing experiences. It also provides information, so you can learn about the history, mythology and science of the heavens.



POCKET UNIVERSE

Pocket Universe is also an easy to use app which allows you to look up at the night sky and know exactly what you're looking at. With names and information about the stars you see before you, as well as providing you with a virtual walk around the surface of the moon or Mars, Pocket Universe shows us that every night there is most certainly something to see.

**“...LOOKING UP
AT THE NIGHT
SKY ON AN
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MOONLIGHT CAN
ALSO ALLOW YOU TO
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CLEARER, BUT YOU
MIGHT ALSO HAVE
A BETTER CHANCE
OF SPOTTING THE
MILKY WAY TOO!”**

**BUT YOU DO NEED TO
BE ABLE TO SEE IT.**

Hence, finding the perfect spot when it comes to star gazing is of the utmost importance.

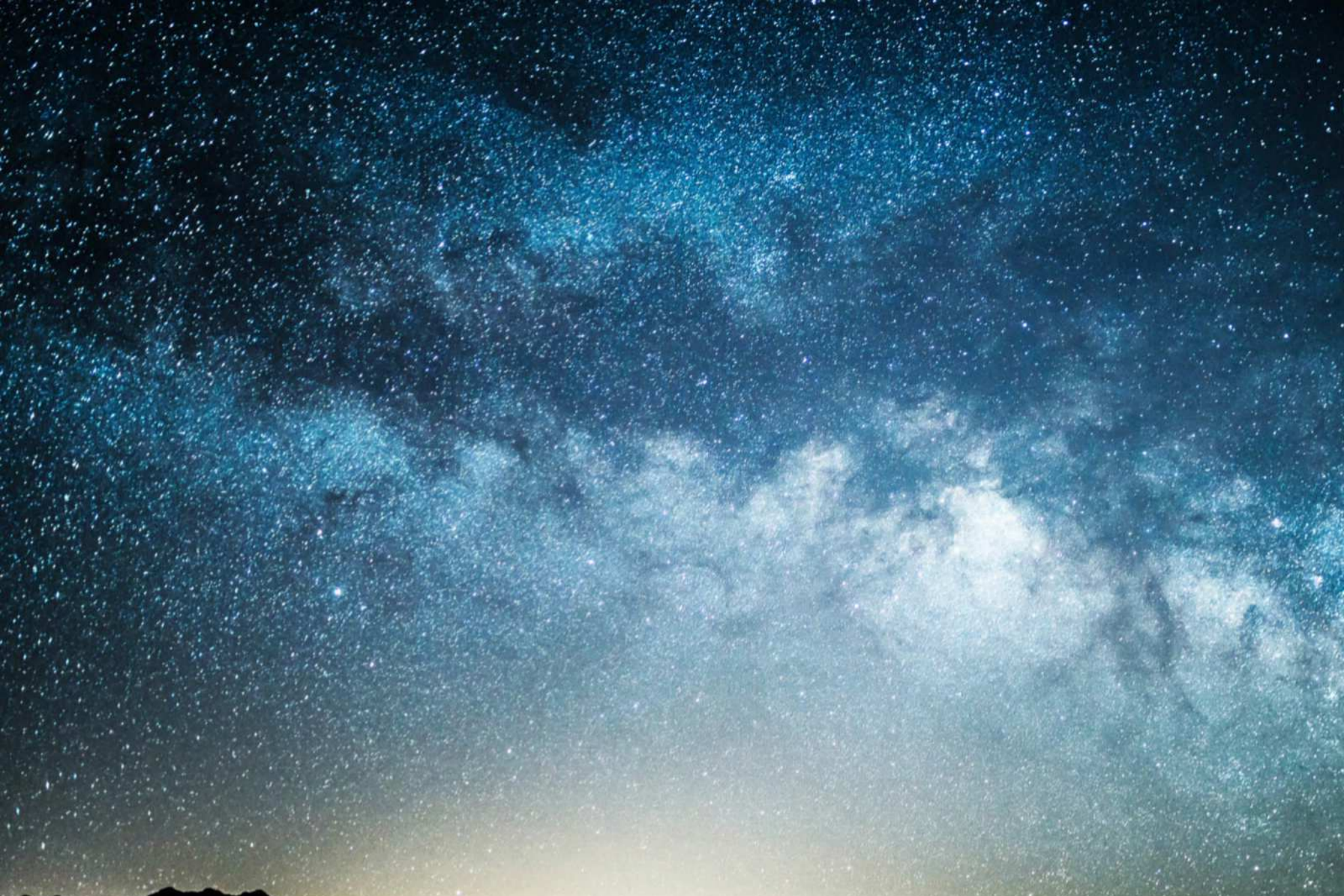
It's recommended that star gazing is best done on the clearest night possible, one where you can start out by making out the stars!

Pollution as well as street lights, building lights etc can also stop you seeing those all-important meteor showers. So, when we're aware of certain meteor showers or certainly during International Astronomy week, public parks often open up as safe, accessible places for people to attend, set up with free telescopes to watch the spectacular show in the sky.

Or if you're really keen and OK to travel, heading out into the countryside can provide you not only with the perfect escape from city life but also the perfect star gazing spot!

It may sound strange to say but looking up at the night sky on an evening without moonlight can also allow you to not only see the meteor shower clearer, but you might also have a better chance of spotting the Milky Way too!

For those who are really into star gazing and taking in their serene surroundings some of the most popular star gazing sites in the world include: Brecon Beacon in ►



Wales, UK. The reserve here has minimised the light pollution in the area and has helped to create the clearest conditions around in order to see the amazing night sky.

Then there's Aoraki Mackenzie in New Zealand. Looking into the night sky above the mountainous Aoraki Mount Cook National Park, coupled with the glacial Lake Tekapo provides a night sky so clear it almost feels magical.

It might not have the nicest of names but, Death Valley National Park in the USA, was not only the home to Timbisha Shoshone

Indians for centuries but it also maintains its "gold-tier" when it comes to night skies. Believed to offer a view of the stars close to those our ancestors experienced before the rise of cities.

There's also the Pic du Midi in France, Atacama Desert in Chile, Sark in the Channel Islands and NamibRand Nature Reserve in Namibia plus many more great places all around us.

However, we must stress you don't have to visit these places in order to see the night sky, sticking to some of the rules above about



**“METEOR SHOWERS
ARE A GREAT PLACE
TO START TO GET
KIDS EXCITED
ABOUT THE STARS.”**

safe and accessible parks, away from street lights and picking a clear night are all great starting points!

The second point is timing.

KNOWING WHEN THERE IS A PLANNED METEOR SHOWER

Meteor showers are a great place to start to get kids excited about the stars. Mainly because they actually get to see something amazing – shooting stars. Not just looking up and seeing the stars and the constellations they make but actually spotting those stars dashing through the sky.

Some dates for your meteor diary should include:

April the 16th to the 25th where if you're lucky you may be able to spot the Lyrid meteor shower which will be taking place across the Northern Hemisphere.

Or according to SkyandTelescope the two best meteor showers they believe to take place in 2018 will be the Perseids in mid-August and the Geminids in mid-December.

Using apps such as the ones we mentioned above will also help you to keep track of all of these major events as well as help parents to understand and answer any questions your kids have about the night sky!

To help you further on your star gazing journey, there are also some great telescopes now available which have been specifically designed with kids in mind.

Telescopes like the Geo Safari Jr and the Geo Safari Vega 360 (for older kids). Both these telescopes are great educational telescopes as not only will they help you see the stars but the Geo Safari Jr for example, with its audio function, can deliver facts and questions about the objects on its slide viewer.

LEARNING RESOURCES GEOSAFARI
VEGA 360 TELESCOPE



The Nancy B's Science Club MoonScope is a great telescope which also comes with the Sky Gazer's Activity Journal. Helping to bring the mysteries of science to life with real working science tools as well as suggested experiments.

LEARNING RESOURCES NANCY
B'S SCIENCE CLUB MOONSCOPE



For older kids the Celestron Powerseeker comes from the Celestron range of telescopes and provides an entry-level telescope with a great viewing lens and an easy orientation of the sky.

CELESTRON 21039 POWERSEEKER
50AZ REFRACTOR TELESCOPE



There's also a great range of telescopes designed by Meade. Also ranging in prices from £500 to £20,000! They certainly have something for everyone and have the best telescopes to get people started on their star gazing journey!

MEADE ECLIPSEVIEW™ 60MM
REFRACTING TELESCOPE





HELP IS ALWAYS ON HAND

It can be hard for parents and even teachers to know everything there is to know about the stars and when kids start to gain interest, their questions and their curiosity grows at a rapid pace.

The apps we've previously mentioned are a great starting point and to help further when it comes to providing some great and detailed information resources like **MinutePhysics** can become invaluable. MinutePhysics for example provide short videos on YouTube providing information on things like "why is the solar system flat" or "what is gravity". These videos are a great hit with kids as they are short and sweet and answer their question in a fun way and most importantly a way in which they remember!

Amazing Space is also just that, amazing, as it provides a number of useful resources about the solar system and galaxies, which you can download and use. They've been developed to provide useful information to children of all ages, allowing them to explore and have their questions answered. Its main aim is exactly what we want, encouraging young people to enjoy learning about the universe and question everything in order to

better understand our future.

Webbtelescope, (the James Webb Space Telescope) can open up new and expanses of the near and distant universe all for you to view. According to their site, Webb's infrared-detecting gaze will penetrate clouds of dust within our own galaxy to reveal previously hidden secrets and reach back in space and time to view the very edge of the cosmos!

Whatever you chose to do or equipment you decide upon, getting children into star gazing is a great way to get them to start asking questions about the world. To start looking at the world through a different lens (really no pun intended) and to want to explore the universe in which we live.

Astronomy never falters in popularity and is something which unlike fashion trends, doesn't come and go. Our curiosity for flying to the moon, new life found on Mars, the blue moon phenomenon as well as the predicted meteor showers, are all continuous stories in everybody's news feeds to continually keep this area in our minds.

Feeding this curiosity is what's important as who knows what the future holds until someone, somewhere goes on to find it. ●

FUN SCIENCE PROJECTS INSPIRE THE KIDS

Science projects are an ideal way to get kids involved in science and to demonstrate principles that will inspire and give them a thirst for more. Some projects are quick and easy, while others take more time and require planning, but they can all instil both awe and a desire to find out more, and what more could you ask for in a child. Good science projects can occupy a huge range of subjects, some of which we go through here.



EXAMPLE: ALKA-SELTZER ROCKET

[SEE STEM-WORKS.COM FOR FULL ACTIVITY](http://STEM-WORKS.COM)

REQUIREMENTS

- Yard Stick
- Measuring Tape
- Stopwatch
- Baking Soda
- Vinegar
- Clear plastic film container
- Large garbage bags
- Duct tape
- Paper towels

DIRECTIONS

1. Tape several large garbage bags laid out to the floor to create a runway.
2. Tape a yardstick to one end for the starting point.
3. Put a small amount of baking soda into container.
4. Add Alka-Seltzer tablets and water.
5. Set container on startline. BE CAREFUL OF PLACEMENT.
6. Watch it go!

SPACE SCIENCE

Of all the sciences, there are few that capture the imagination of kids as what goes on above us. Space science is seen as being far more exotic than many other fields and, surprisingly, there are plenty of projects that demonstrate either how we interact with space, or the principles of space itself. Take, for instance, a project which can show your kids actual debris from meteorites pulled from dirt in the garden, or evaluate craters on the moon by recreating them in small scale on earth. These and similar projects can show the fundamentals of mechanics in microgravity and how space influences our local environment. And of course, everyone loves Alka-Seltzer rocket!

EXAMPLE: THE WATER CYCLE

[SEE KIDS-EARTH-SCIENCE.COM](http://SEE-KIDS-EARTH-SCIENCE.COM) FOR FULL ACTIVITY

REQUIREMENTS

- Bowl
- Toothpicks
- Salt
- Modelling clay (non hardening)
- Cup
- Measuring Spoons

DIRECTIONS

1. Add a tablespoon of salt to a cup of hot water and dissolve.
2. Keep adding a tablespoon of salt one at a time until no more can be dissolved. Set aside.
3. Make a small round ball with the modelling clay.
4. Stick it to the bottom of the ball.
5. Make around 7-9 more balls and stick them to the bottom of the bowl.
6. Stick a single toothpick in each ball.
7. Place the bowl in a warm place and see what happens when it evaporates.

EARTH SCIENCE

With so many aspects of our planet seemingly under fire – mostly from us – its always good to demonstrate just how fragile many of them are. The water cycle is a hot topic as this essential resource becomes increasingly scarce in many parts of the world. Knowledge of the water cycle also brings global warming and encroaching deserts into focus in young minds. Showing the spread effect of oil on water will impress on your kids why commercial sized oil spills can be so devastating for the environment and wildlife. Luckily, this experiment also includes different means of cleaning it up too!

Crystal growth is a great way to show how much of the rock structure of the planet is put together and inspires your kids to seek out the beauty of crystals. Fun and easy to do, creating a crystal garden is cheap and easy, and produces astounding results in a very short time.

Of course, the Earth science answer to the Alka-Seltzer rocket – the Mento's volcano/geyser – is always fun and, um, invigorating.

EXAMPLE: BALLOON IN A BOTTLE

[SEE ICANTEACHMYCHILD.COM FOR FULL ACTIVITY](http://www.icanteachmychild.com)

REQUIREMENTS

- Balloon
- 2-liter plastic bottle
- Thumbtack/ pin
- Nail

DIRECTIONS

1. Place balloon in bottle, stretching the neck over the bottle opening.
2. Try to blow up the balloon.
3. Now use a thumbtack to puncture a hole in the bottom of the bottle.
4. Use a nail to make the hole bigger, until about a 1/4 inch in diameter.
5. Now try blowing it up again.

WEIRD SCIENCE

Not the 80's movie – there'll be no scantily-clad women here – but rather experiments from the stranger side of science. Many have asked but few have demonstrated whether you can blow up a **balloon** that has been inserted into the neck of a bottle. Can you? Try it for yourself and find out. In a similar vein, **Oobleck** – a mixture of cornflower and water – is great way to demonstrate non-Newtonian fluids, and how shear force is directly proportional to shear stress in them. They are also pretty messy which will always impress your kids. Similarly, you can help the kids make **Silly Putty** too!

Projects are a great way to teach your kids many fundamentals of science and set them on a course of lifelong learning and understanding, however, there are still some **science projects** that are never going to yield much learning, so probzably best to steer clear of them.



A GUIDE TO TEACHING YOUR KIDS CELL PHONE ETIQUETTE

Virtually every teen and tween these days has a cell phone, but with the privilege also comes responsibilities. If your child thinks that the world would come to an end if you took their phone away, (and most of them do) then they also need to have a good understanding of cell phone etiquette.

Whether you've just given your child their own cell phone or whether you're planning on taking that step, here's your guide to teaching your kids about the appropriate way to use their cell phone.

Texting And Messaging

Doesn't Replace Conversation

Although having their own cell phone generally means that your child wants to send texts and messages to their friends all the time, it's important to instil in them the idea that this should never take over from face to face interactions. Bonding with friends means spending time together in person, and that goes for family members too. It's all too easy to send a message downstairs to ask if dinner is ready rather than actually coming down and asking the question. Make sure they know that this is an absolute no-no.

Keeping It Brief

Encourage your child to keep any messages to the point and brief. If the conversation is carrying on for several minutes, tell them that it would be best to call their friend to carry on the conversation instead.

Don't Be Rude

It's very rude to have your face stuck to your cell phone when you're spending time with other people. Make sure your child is aware of how other people around them feel if they're being ignored in favour of a phone screen, and to have consideration for those feelings.

Thinking Before Texting

If your child has had a fight



with a friend, make sure that they know to wait until they're feeling calmer before texting. Putting hurtful things in writing won't help the situation and could make things much worse. Once they're ready to talk things through, it's better to do it in a phone call or in person rather than via messaging or text anyway.

Context Is Key

It's important to teach your child that messaging and texting has no clear context. If the recipient can't see the facial expression of the sender or hear the way in which they message is being said, they risk misunderstanding what is being said. A sarcastic

comment or a joke could upset the recipient simply because the context has been misinterpreted.

Consider Content

Content in messages and texts must be appropriate. Of course it goes without saying that children should be taught to never say anything inappropriate or offensive in a message, but they should also think twice before delivering bad news via this method. It's always better to deliver bad news face to face.

Timing Messages Appropriately

You must teach your child that there's a right time and a wrong time for using a cell

phone, and there are certain places and circumstances in which it would be thoroughly inappropriate. In class, in church, at a movie and during a meal are just some of the times when a cell phone should be kept out of sight.

Above all else, your child must be made aware that having a cell phone of their own is not a right, it's a privilege, and if they abuse that privilege it will be revoked. Make sure your child is aware that if they break these etiquette rules they put their cell phone ownership at risk. After all, if they're responsible enough to have their own phone, they're responsible enough to handle the consequences. ●

It seems like every device your kids have these days needs batteries, and every parent will recognize the familiar cry: “Mom, my toy car won’t work!” or “Dad, my controller battery’s flat again!”

Most families have drawers full of batteries and live in fear of them running out – after all, there’s nothing worse than having to tell an expectant and angry child that they’ll have to wait until the store opens before they can play with their favorite gadget again.

CHEAP AND CHEERFUL OR AN INVESTMENT PURCHASE?

However, when it comes to stocking up on batteries, how do you decide which ones to get? Do you go cheap and cheerful and buy a pack from Dollar Tree, or do you invest in a more expensive brand that markets itself as the longest lasting batteries on the shelf?

Most parents are all about saving money, and if they can cut back anywhere they will – after all, times are tight – so batteries might seem to be an area in which they can make a significant saving, considering that the price difference between the most expensive brands and the cheapest ones can be several Dollars.

However, experts are in agreement that when it comes to keeping the kids’ toys and devices running, buying cheap batteries is definitely false economy, and might, in some cases also be potentially hazardous.

KIDS DEVICES RUNNING FLAT TOO QUICKLY?

CONSIDERING SAFETY

If you buy cheap batteries online, there’s no guarantee that they’re going to be safe to use. Some overseas manufacturers don’t have the same safety standards as we do, and even worse, may not have any regulations at all regarding safety testing. That means that they could be potentially dangerous when used inside children’s toys. Some low cost batteries corrode quickly, leaking potentially hazardous chemicals which could be poisonous to children who may put toys in their mouths. Also, when batteries corrode, they can permanently damage the gadget or toy, which could break it completely – and that’s something that no parent wants to happen to their child’s favorite toy.

BATTERY LIFE

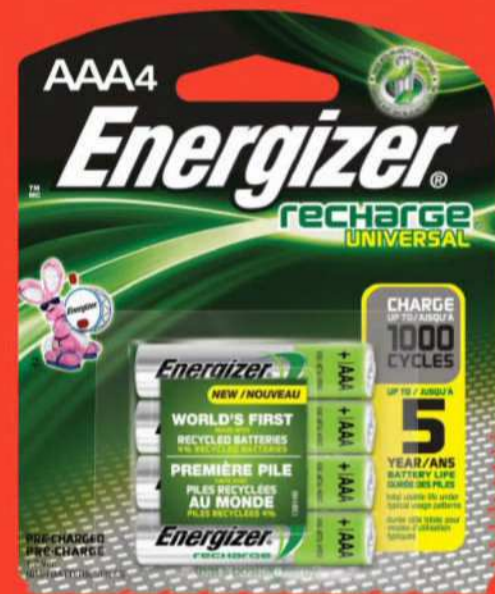
Cheap batteries are also often false economy since many of them don’t last as long as better quality brands. This means that, although the initial outlay might be lower, you’ll end up spending more in the long run on replacements, and you’ll also be at risk of incurring the wrath of your child when there aren’t any spares left to power the gadget of the moment. Also, as you’ll be replacing more frequently, that means that there’ll be more waste and more damage to the environment, so poor quality batteries are also a non-eco-friendly choice.

WHY YOU NEED TO INVEST IN QUALITY BATTERIES

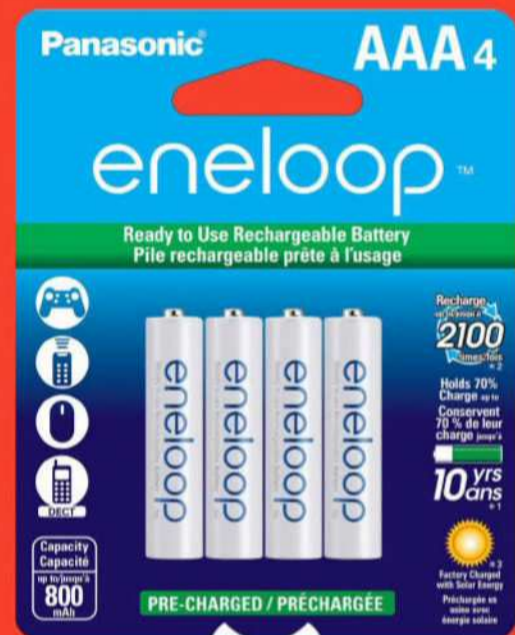
WHICH BATTERIES TO BUY?

When it comes to low drain devices like TV remotes or alarm clocks, disposable batteries, even cheap ones, should be just fine. However, the general consensus is that rechargeable lithium batteries are the best choice for powering children's toys and gadgets because of their long lifespan. There are many brands of rechargeable batteries on the market, however they aren't all created equal, so you still need to take care to buy a well known brand. Cheap rechargeable batteries may represent a fire hazard if they overheat, and this is obviously a major safety concern, especially when in the hands of children.

OUR TOP 3 PICKS



ENERGIZER 8 PACK



SANYO ENELOOP 16 PACK



AMAZONBASICS 800 MAH

**Sam Tydeman**

Sam Tydeman is a 30 something mother of two girls and an avid book reader. She has read to both girls every single night since they were babies and this has meant that they are absolute book worms. Her favourite book as a child had to be Pongwiffy, A witch of dirty habits!

**Sunday Simmons**

Sunday Simmons is a freelance writer, indie author and mother of three. She specializes in entertainment writing and music journalism, and has a passion for geeky things – from comics, to movies to anime!

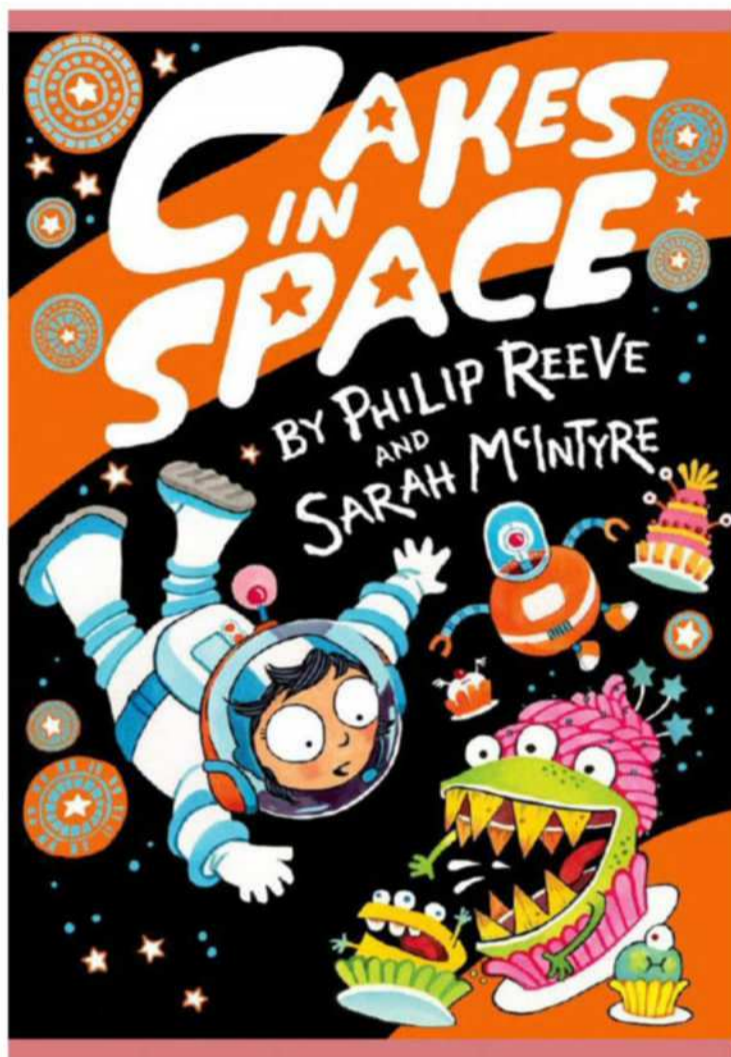
GEEK PARENTING RECOMMENDS

BOOKS FOR APRIL

BY SAM TYDEMAN

Who doesn't take a look up at the school from time to time and wonder exactly what is up there?

This is particularly true for children, who have a natural level of curiosity about them. If you want to encourage your little one to dream about reaching for the stars, then why not encourage and embrace this in the books that you are reading to them, with them or buying for them to read alone?



Cakes in Space

By Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre
(Ages 6-11)

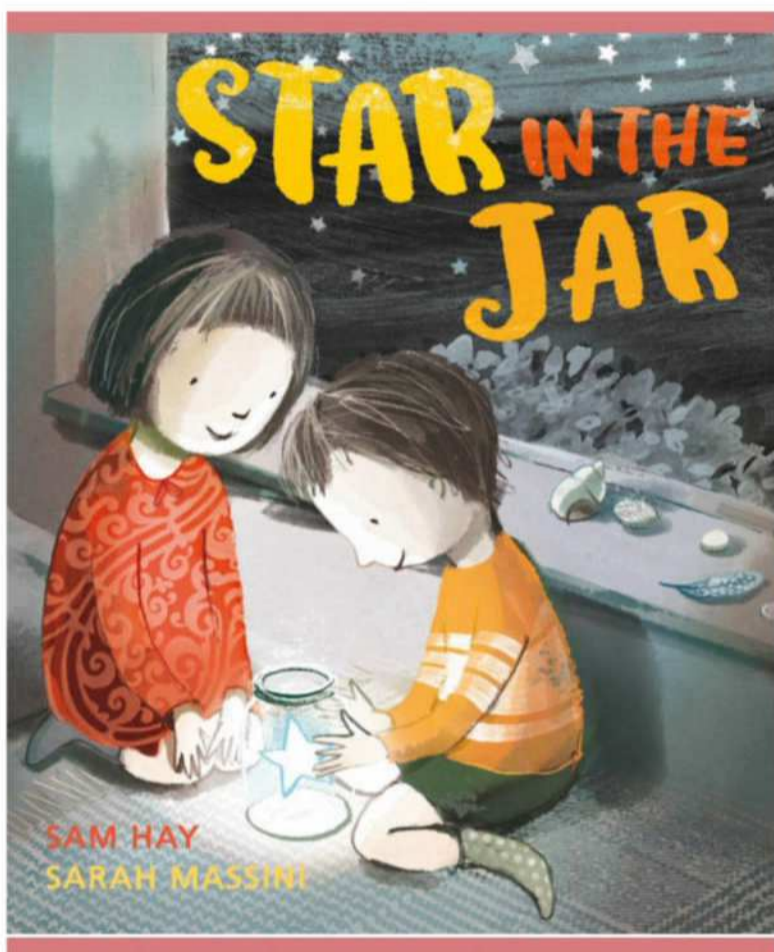
Now, we might love the idea of some delicious cakes floating around in space, but in this particular book it isn't the best discovery, Astra and her family live in space and whilst her family are all snoring away in their sleeping pods she finds herself and her friend Pilbeam wide awake. This can only mean one thing, it's time to explore. Whilst heading around the ship they find out they are in big trouble, the shop has been invaded by a salvage gang who are searching for spoons. Even worse than that, there are some rather menacing cakes lurking in the canteen.



Flat Stanley in Space

By Jeff Brown
(Ages 5-8)

If you are looking for a fun and enjoyable series of books to read, then you can't go far wrong with Flat Stanley. Not only are these books brilliantly written, but there also plenty of them to get through, ideal if you have a really keen reader. Our pick this month is Flat Stanley in Space, when Stanley and his family are chosen to head into space by the President of the United States. Unsurprisingly they have an adventure, particularly when they face a city full of aliens.



Star In The Jar

By Sam Hay and Sarah Massini
(Preschool)

If you have a girl in your family then chances are that you are going to want to make sure that she feels empowered and inspired to make a success of herself. One great way to do this is with this powerful book. Containing the stories of 100 different and equally heroic women, it ensures that every little girl feels that she is ready to face the world and that she definitely doesn't need to be rescued by a prince on horseback!



Knowledge Encyclopaedia Space

By Rachel Bright
(Non-fiction book)

Do you have a child who seems really keen on space and wants to learn more? Whilst there are plenty of informative books out there, this has to be one of the best. Not only is it packed full of amazing facts and information about a variety of aspects of space. But it also has a wealth of bright and colourful images too which will keep kids interested and want to keep reading.

So, if you are looking to travel to a galaxy far far away, then why not start with your bedtime read? Whilst you might not be quite ready to grab your space helmet and board a rocket, you can help your little one to dream about how things might be in space!

| Entertainment

ENTERTAINMENT FOR APRIL

BY SUNDAY SIMMONS

Space. The final frontier. Alternate universes, cyborg super heroes, weird and wonderful planets – we've got them all in this month's animation recommendations! Pretty much everyone at some point in their lives has a fascination with space, and never more so when you're a kid. The wonders of the universe spread out before you in animated format, and anything's possible! Grab your mini-geeks and check out some spectacular space series!

Join us every month for great recommendations both new and old perfect for the geeky family!



Silverhawks (1986)

'Wings of silver, nerves of steel...' the kitschy opening theme tune pretty much sums up Silverhawks in one clever tagline. This mid-eighties space cartoon has managed to retain a loyal following, and I certainly still have a soft spot for this imaginative if a little overly contrived animation.

When space gangster Mon Star escapes from a prison planet, his escape threatens to wreak havoc across the Limbo sector of the galaxy. Enter the Silverhawks, a crack team of cyborgs who's mission in life is to protect Limbo, and round up Mon Star and his gang before they trash the neighbourhood.

That's the premise, the rest is out and out space adventure, action packed fun, brilliant main characters, and a suitably dislikable bad guy. What more could you ask for? This is a genuinely good and sadly overlooked bit of eighties animation, and you can check it out on DVD!



Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys (1996)

If you've never seen this cartoon, then you absolutely must! Charlie is a NASA monkey sent into space, unfortunately his trajectory goes awry and he's picked up by an alien race who assume he's an example of an Earthling! He's gifted with intelligence, and soon captains his own space ship in the war against the evil Nebula.

This is a perfect example of a brilliant cartoon not given enough air time, and sadly it only managed one season. Why? I really don't know! It has everything you could possibly ask for in a cartoon of this kind – action, adventure, masses of humour, and an interesting is overdone good versus evil plot.

It's more than that though, the characters are well thought out - endearing even - and there's a lot to take in. Grab yourself an absolute treat on DVD and get binging!



Bucky O'Hare and the Toad Wars (1991-92)

Based on the comic character of the same name, Bucky O'Hare is grossly underrated and a definite must watch in my humble opinion. Set in the alternate universe of 'Aniverse' (where humanoid animals are the norm), toads are under the mind-control of the wicked computer Komplex, and Captain Buck O'Hare is in command of the only ship left to protect the masses!

When a malfunction on Bucky's ship opens a portal into our universe, slap bang in the middle of young Willy Dewitt's bedroom, the unwitting lad becomes part of Bucky's crew and helps in the fight against the evil toad army.

This is an unusual but ultimately awesome cartoon – a mix of action, adventure, and more than a few laughs, and you can watch it on DVD today!

LETTING THE CREATIVE SPARKS FLY

Creative activities to do
with kids when we're all
stuck inside

BY
Amanda
Wright

I

'm not going to lie, from the outset this article is not for the faint hearted. It includes tips on

some creative activities you can do with kids when we're all stuck inside, and believe me, some of these are going to get messy!

No matter what time of year or what the season, today's weather can be so unpredictable. With snow days,

rainy and storm days, as well as just the kids wanting to be in the house and wandering around bored because the hundreds of toys and board games they have are simply just not enough, days.

To help combat the boredom and bring back some fun, we've provided some creative, tried and tested projects which might help to keep parents sane when we're all stuck inside together!

Creative and imaginative projects



Papier Mache – yes, it's a messy business but no matter what age, papier mache is always fun. Not only do kids love getting their hands dirty but you can also make it interesting and linked with something they're actually studying at school! For example, making a T-Rex for the garden, a challenge within itself, but looking to create its claws, its sharp teeth and its huge head and body. Or what about the solar system, with its different planets and stars. Or a piñata, filled with their favourite treats, or a bird house ready to pop outside, which can be filled with seeds and straw? It also doesn't stop there. You then need a whole host of paint colours or pens at the ready to really make their work of art come to life! This one activity can create hours of fun and of course to help on the road to papier mache inspiration there is now an app available to show you every possible papier mache idea imaginable!

It's true what they say when a **cardboard box** really is everything to kids! If you

can find a cardboard box and any other creative tools lying around (string, straws, toilet tubes!) mixed together with some paint or colouring pens then you are all set to let their creative juices flow! It's amazing what can be pulled together and what a simple cardboard box can be turned into. From a top racing car, to the best princess castle in all the land. A cardboard box isn't just a cardboard box, it's a pet grooming parlour, or a spaceship ready to head into out of space - the possibilities become endless (plus whilst their busy making their ideas into reality you can sit and enjoy that long overdue coffee!)

Masking tape! Ok so hear us out on this one. You might have hundreds of car racing tracks, but nothing beats a masking tape track laid out around the house! Or what about pretending that a strip of masking tape is a balance beam to practice some gymnastic moves on, or a tight rope at a circus, ready for you to put on a show?!

Problem Solving ideas



Now we have to admit that there is a lot of fun to be had in **building tents from sheets!** This is completely old school but for kids who have the latest tents, or wendy houses, building a den or a tent in the house is so much more interesting when you simply have a sheet/towel! With everyone using their imaginations to find solutions on how to make it work, structuring it and securing it in place and being proud of their achievement when everything is held in place and you're sitting having lunch inside! It's also something that everyone can get involved in making it a real family affair.

**“IT’S ALSO
SOMETHING THAT
EVERYONE CAN GET
INVOLVED IN MAKING
IT A REAL FAMILY
AFFAIR.”**

Science Experiments



Finally, we look to the nutty professor to inspire some **mad science projects**. Things like the skittle experiment, where you place the skittles around the edge of the plate and using hot water pour this around the skittles and watch the colours run – it really does create a rainbow! Or the most exciting experiment for kids is the water defying gravity trick. Fill a glass of water to the very top and place a piece of cardboard over the top. Flip the cup over with the cardboard still in place, then carefully remove the piece of cardboard and be amazed at how the water stays in the cup! Of course, we'd 100%

recommend doing this over your sink or bath where in case of an actual accident, all bases are covered – remember you're working with kids!

Now, we might dread the thought of yet another day housebound, with arguments, tears and tantrums (and let's face it that's just from the adults), but actually if planned right these days are almost always the best!

They are completely creative, everyone can get involved, everyone can learn something new and above all they're great fun! ●

D

ads, when it comes to our generation, we tend to stick with what we know, rather than learning

something new. Whether its banks, shoes, curry dishes or video games, we tend to resist change. Yeah, okay, other genres look enticing but we're not really sure that its for us, and so we tend to pass them by. Many Gamer Dad's are stuck on First Person Shooter (FPS's) and combats, adventure games like Tomb Raider or Uncharted, and Simulators such as Forza, Project Gotham Racing or the various flight simulators out there if we are feeling exotic.

But there are many other genres out there and its only the bravest of older gamers who ever seem to tackle them. Of these, the most shunned is the MMORPG or Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game if you feel like a mouthful, which are fast becoming a new form of social interaction amongst younger gamers. In fact, they are so social, that it may be this factor alone that tends to put older players off, but if you are comfortable hiding behind an Avatar and actually interacting with strangers during gameplay, you would do well to give MMORPG's a try.

If you do decide to take the plunge but are not sure which of the many to start on, you could do worse than start with, appropriately, granddaddy of them all, World of Warcraft. Launched in 2004, WoW – as it's



MMORPG CHALLENGE

BY DAVID LAYZELLE



known to its fans – is a subscription game with nearly 6 million players signed up around the world, that focuses on four types of gameplay;

- **Normal** – a player versus environment (PvE) realm where the gameplay is more focused on defeating monsters and completing quests, player-versus-player fights must be consensual, and any roleplay is optional.
- **PvP (player versus player)** – an environment where, in addition to defeating monsters and completing quests, open PvP combat is allowed so a player may be attacked by the opposing faction's players at any time.

- **RP (roleplay)** – a variant of PvE, where players roleplay in-character.
- **RP-PvP – roleplay-PvP** – a variant of PvP, where players are in-character and cross-faction combat is allowed.

However, you could also be playing Elder Scrolls, Neverwinter, or even Star Wars: The Old Republic if you fancy slaughtering aliens over dragons and Orcs. There's even a growing multiplayer side to firm favourites like GTA V if you fancy some "real" mayhem. There are an increasing number of MMORPG's out there, and suddenly, you don't have to be a fifty-six-year-old bricklayer when online!!

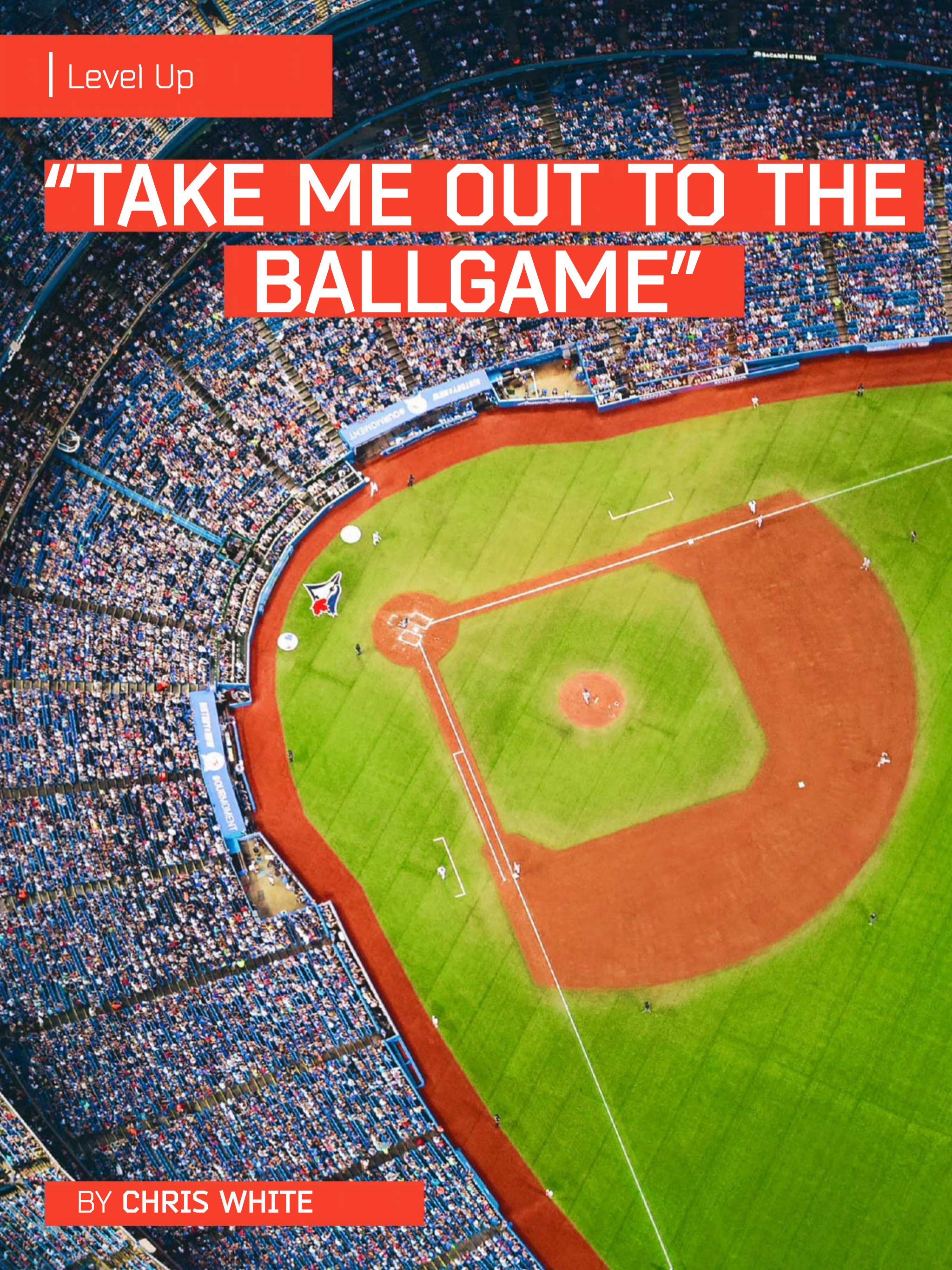
This ability to be another persona is actually much of the draw of MMORPG's, along with social interaction and as we tend, as a species, to withdraw from the real world, increasingly real games like these give us the possibility of interacting with others, albeit while dressed as a princess or dragon-master. In fact, with stand-alone games becoming rarer, dipping a toe into online multiplayer gaming might just get you started in the future of computing, and you wouldn't want to be left behind.

So, if your inner-elf is feeling unloved, and needs expression, sign up for a MMORPG, get that axe swinging, and spice your meat with goblin blood! ●

| Level Up

"TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME"

BY CHRIS WHITE





Chris White is a full time geek, father of 4, and self proclaimed Jedi master. An IT Professional by day and a freelance writer by night just doing his part in raising the next generation of geeks.



For decades kids would meet in backyard and downtown streets to play one of the greatest games of all

time. They would fantasize about larger than life heroes who they aspired to be. Trading and collecting cards with those hero's pictures. Only, these kids lived before computers and big-budget Hollywood movies, before comic books and video games, and before iPads and fidget spinners.

If you didn't figure it out yet, I'm talking about one of the most excellent team-sports of all time, baseball. It's hard to know precisely when baseball was invented. The internet will tell you during the 18th century in England, however, the current incarnation of the sport can be dated back to New York City in the 1850's. By the end of the decade, baseball would widely be known as the "national pastime."

Before there were Superheroes and Jedi, before there were comic books and video games, before LEGOs and Funko Pops, there was baseball. A team based sport that would be played in backyards and neighborhood streets all around the world. Kids would collect cards of their favorite.

If you are unfamiliar with the sport, Baseball is a team based game. It is played by innings which are broken up into Top and Bottom, as in the Top of the Inning and the Bottom of the Inning. The game is played on a Diamond that consists of three bases (hence, "base" ball) and "home plate."



Nine players take up roles in the field as defense while one batter from the opposing team tries to hit the ball in a way that they can get on one of the bases and eventually make it home and score a “run.” Each team gets three outs per inning, and then they switch sides. At the end of nine innings, the team with the most runs wins. Now, it’s much more detailed than that, but at this point, you should probably just look it up on YouTube.

As a kid, I remember hours spent chasing an old beat-up baseball around my neighborhood. I remember playing little league and eventually during high school. I would say that the sport helped define who I was then..and still am today. You learn patience while keeping your eye on the ball and waiting for your pitch. You learn organization by understanding each person’s positions and role. Most important you learn how to be humble in victory and driven in defeat.

As a parent raising kids in a digital

world, it is even more important to me that they learn teamwork and physical activity. Little league baseball offers such a tremendous opportunity for parents in the way of coaching. I would argue that the closest you will come to parenting, without actually becoming a parent, is probably coaching. If your child is even vaguely interested in the sport, then you should join them. Some of my best memories are with amazing coaches through the years.

Sure, it’s not Iron Man, but baseball is a real and tangible way that our kids can connect with fighting for victory and believing they can rally to the cause. It’s the closest that we may ever come to flying an X-Wing fighter over the surface of a planet-sized killing machine. While that might sound far-fetched, just remember those words as your child has the game-winning hit and the crowd explodes behind them.

“For it’s one, two, three strikes you’re out at the old ball game!”



The Nine Positions in Baseball

1

The **Pitcher** stands almost in the center of the field at the Pitcher's Mound. It is the Pitcher's job to throw, or pitch, the ball to the person who is at bat. Pitchers develop a variety of signature pitches like Fastballs, Curveballs, Knuckleballs, and Change-Ups, just to name a few.

2

The **Catcher** sits directly behind home plate, where the batter lines up to hit. Their primary job is to catch the ball that is being thrown by the Pitcher. The Catcher is also responsible for covering home plate if a runner is trying to score a run and the ball is being thrown. If a runner on base tries to steal the next base after the ball is thrown, it is the Catcher's responsibility to throw the ball to that base before the runner can slide in safe.

3

The **First Baseman** is assigned to the first base. This is where the batter will run once they have hit the baseball. The First Baseman will play away from the base as to try and field any balls that are hit in their direction. If a defensive player touches first base before the batter, then the batter is out. This makes the primary function of the First Baseman to hold the base and wait for the ball to be thrown to them before the batter reaches base.

4

Similar to the First Baseman, the **Second Baseman** is assigned to the second base. They will also play away from the base to field any baseballs that are hit their way. They share covering second base with the Short Stop depending on which side of the field the ball is hit.

5

Similar to the First and Second Baseman, the **Third Baseman** is assigned to the third base. They also play away from the base to field any baseballs that are hit their way. It is the Third Baseman's primary responsibility to cover the third base in an attempt of a runner trying to get on the base and the ball being thrown to get the runner out.

6

The **Short Stop** lines up between second base and the Third Baseman. They cover that specific area of the field in case a baseball is hit their way. They will also share covering second base with the Second Baseman in regards to a runner stealing second base or a ball being through from the opposite side of the field to second base.

7

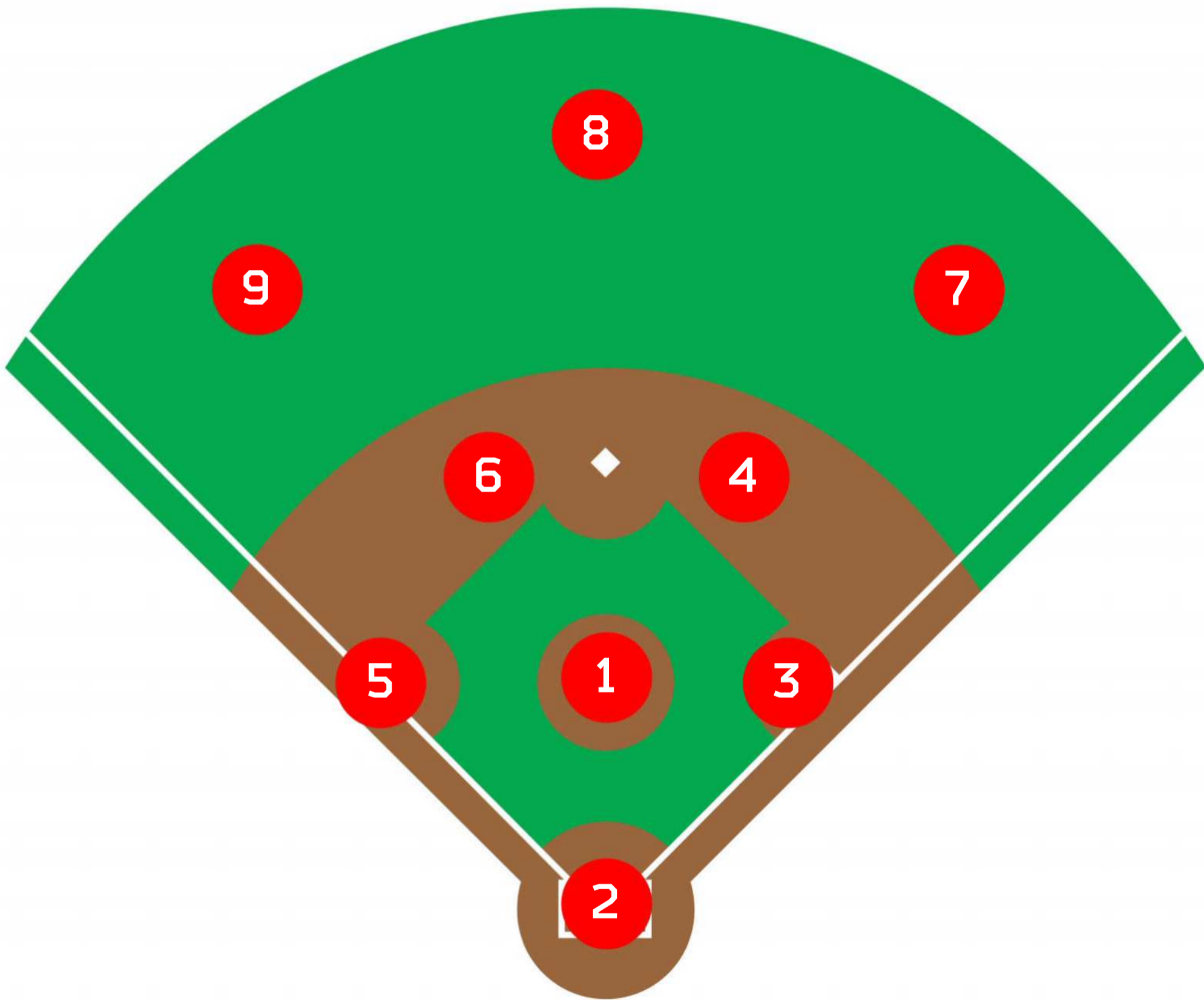
The **Right Fielder** lines up farthest away from the batter, in the right side of the outfield. They are responsible for catching any balls that are hit to the right field area.

8

The **Center Fielder** lines up farthest away from the batter, in the center of the outfield. They are responsible for catching any balls that are hit to the center field area.

9

The **Left Fielder** lines up farthest away from the batter, in the left side of the outfield. They are responsible for catching any balls that are hit to the left field area.



NASA App

NASA, iOS/android, 7+, Free

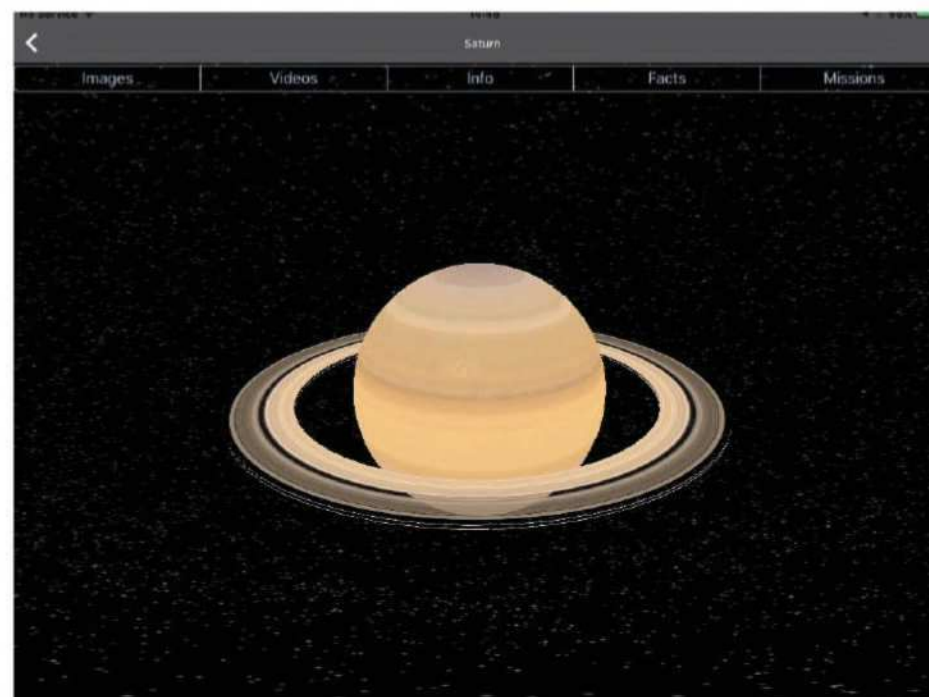
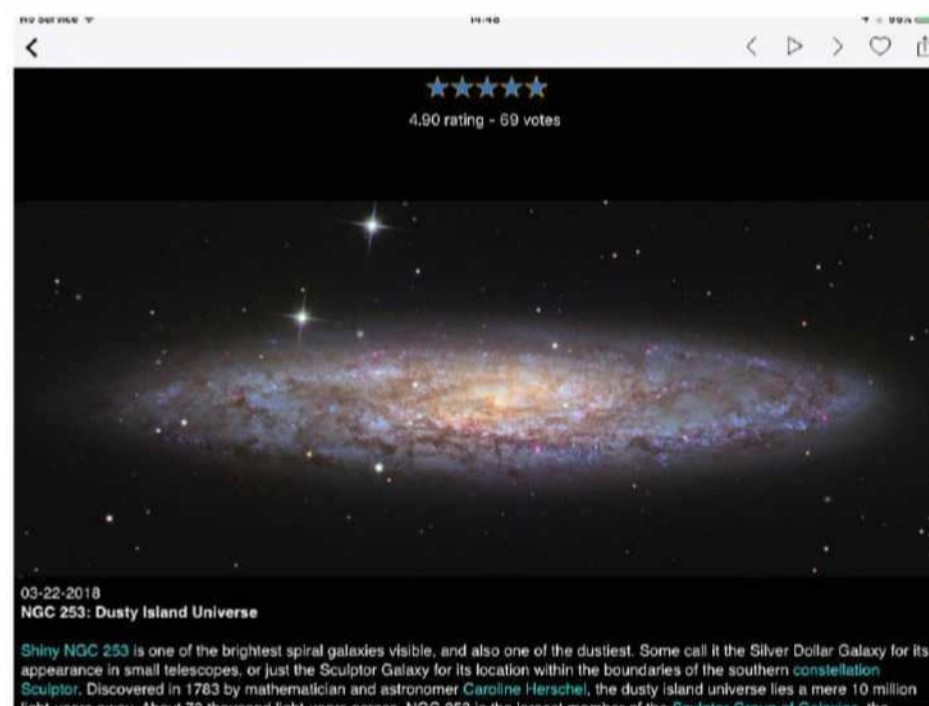
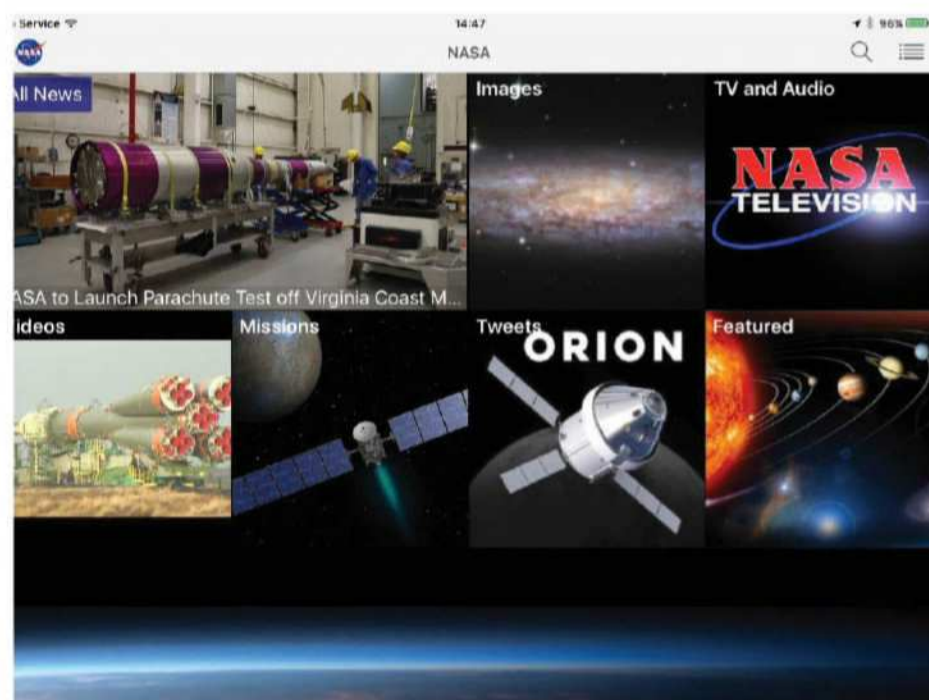
To Outer Space & Beyond!

Where else to start learning about space than the official NASA app? It is packed with information, photos, videos, even NASA's own television channel. You can learn about different planets, past and future mission, when the next scheduled launches are; anything and everything that NASA has or continues to work on can be learned about here.

In fact the sheer wealth of information may seem daunting at first, but it is organised in such a way that each section can be looked at one by one. It's easy to navigate with an intuitive interface that even younger kids will already be accustomed to. Whether as a parent or a teacher, the level of interactivity also comes in how you want to explore with your kid(s), whether to spend a few times learning everything about Mars or about the Apollo program.

The app constantly updates itself with news and new discoveries, so it's certainly one that can last for an indefinite amount of time. The featured section is the app's most interactive section, and probably where your little (and not so little) ones will spend most of their time-at least at first. Planets are 3D rendered so you can rotate them or zoom into them, and each have their own photo and video galleries.

There is a Facebook share functionality that requires Facebook login to use but this is entirely optional. There are also no IAPs or advertisements for a truly free experience.



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