



The new school year starts, and with it comes a range of new real life teaching opportunities for you to take advantage of with your class. The most notable predictable teaching events you might like to focus on this term are the oppositions of Mars and Saturn, and the chance to easily locate the brightest asteroid using only a pair of binoculars.

The term opposition may sound mysterious but it simply refers to when a planet is directly opposite the Sun - with the Earth being in the middle. The time of opposition usually coincides with when a planet is at it's closest to the Earth and therefore ideally placed for viewing. Both Mars and Saturn reach opposition in Term 1 2010 and can be easily located by your students without the need for binoculars or a telescope.

The Martian opposition occurs at the very start of the school year on January 30. By coincidence the Moon will be located to the right of Mars on the same night making it very easy for your students to find Mars. Saturn will be at opposition on 22 March.

An easy opportunity to locate and view the brightest asteroid in the Main asteroid belt with only a pair of binoculars occurs in February. Vesta will pass between two easy to locate stars on the evenings of 15th and 16th February. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/y9b56q6> for a finder chart.

Finally, a piece of trivia your students will be interested in. In 2010, February has no Full Moon.

Regards,  
**Paul Floyd.**  
[www.nightskyonline.info](http://www.nightskyonline.info)

## Best nights for a star party in Term 1 2010

Amateur astronomical societies are generally happy to assist schools by running a star party. This means that they will bring telescopes and volunteers to your school so that your students can look through them at the night sky. Book ahead and avoid the time just between First Quarter Moon and two nights after Full Moon to avoid the light of the Moon washing out other sky objects. Using this criteria, the best nights therefore are:

- \* Friday 19 to Sunday 21 February
- \* Sunday 21 March to Monday 22 March

A list of S.E. Queensland Astronomical Societies can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://tinyurl.com/7k7fb4>

## Planets visible to the eye

**February:** Your students can look for Mars above the North Eastern horizon as soon as the sky begins to darken. Mars appears to the unaided eye as a bright pale orange coloured star.

**March:** Mars continues to be visible above the Northern horizon. Your students can also locate Saturn at the end of evening twilight low above the Eastern horizon. Saturn appears to the unaided eye as a pale yellow moderately bright star. A medium sized telescope will show the rings of Saturn. Saturn is at opposition on March 22nd - meaning that it is ideally placed for viewing.

## Easy Constellations

### Orion 'The Hunter'



Look high above the North Western horizon at the end of evening twilight.

### Crux 'The Southern Cross' and 'The Pointers'



Look above the South Eastern horizon at the end of evening twilight.

## 2010 Moon Phases



New



First Quarter



Full Moon



Last Quarter

	New	First Quarter	Full Moon	Last Quarter
<b>February</b>	14	22	---	6
<b>March</b>	16	23	1 / 30	8
<b>April</b>	14	21	28	6

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