

CATCH A METEOR

Every year, visitors from space come to Earth. But don't worry! This "visit" is courtesy of meteors and meteoroids.

WHAT IS A METEOR?

When meteoroids (pieces of rock and dust from space) fall through Earth's atmosphere and glow brightly, we call them meteors—though some say they look like "shooting stars." Meteors fall very fast through the air, and friction created between the meteor and the air particles cause them to heat up and glow. A meteor shower occurs when a larger amount of meteors than normal seem to be "shooting" from the same spot in the sky.

Dozens of meteors fall to Earth every day, and while they are hard to see from cities where bright lights flood the sky, people in rural areas can often spot them.

WHAT IS A METEOR SHOWER?

Even though "shower" sounds like a lot, it's more like a "sprinkling," with up to 25 meteors falling per hour.

Meteor showers occur when the Earth's orbit around the Sun takes us through a debris field, which is often a trail of cosmic dust left behind by a comet. The millions of tiny particles can create a "shower" of dozens of meteors per hour.

HOW TO CATCH A METEOR?

The best way to view a meteor shower is to get away from the city to a place with dark skies. Find a flat area with few trees or buildings, then lie back and let your eyes take in the whole sky. Any time a streak of light appears, your eyes will go right to it because you'll sense the movement.

Telescopes or binoculars won't help you see meteors, but they are great for looking at other objects like Mars and Saturn while you wait for shooting stars.

DON'T MISS THE NEXT SHOWER

You can find out when the next meteor shower will happen from the American Meteor Society (amsmeteors.org) with their weekly forecasts.

Grab a blanket and enjoy the sight!

