

SPACE PARTY 2: FLY ME TO THE MOON, AND FARTHER

Throwing a “Fly Me to the Moon” party is an easy, low-cost way to teach youth about our solar system and beyond. With a computer, Web access and the free Celestia software, you can quickly turn your learning space into, well, outer space. Plan to set aside 45 minutes for the party; or modify the activities to fit your desired timeframe. Once the party’s over, your attendees will have a better appreciation of the vastness of the universe, as well as the unique features of different celestial bodies.

Just follow these simple steps and let the party commence!

Step One: Gather supplies.

Required

Computer with Internet connection
Free Celestia software (see Step Two for download instructions)
LCD Projector
Projection screen or light-colored wall/ceiling

Optional

Laser pointer or yardstick (to point out the planets)
Space exploration books
Space posters, glow-in-the-dark planets and other “far-out” décor
Carpet squares for each club member to sit on (if you plan to project the images onto the ceiling)
A little “mood music,” such as John Williams’ *Star Wars* saga or songs from National Public Radio’s Hearts of Space program
CD player

Step Two: Download Celestia.

Download your free version of Celestia at <http://www.shatters.net/celestia/>. You’ll need a computer with a Windows, Linux or Mac OS X operating system:

- Go to the Celestia home page: <http://www.shatters.net/celestia/>
- Right click on the link that matches your computer’s operating system and “Save Target As” to your desktop. Recommended Web browsers include Internet Explorer and Safari (Mozilla Firefox conflicts with this program).
- Close the download window, then double click on the application icon (it will have an “.exe” file extension) now located on your desktop.
- You may get a security warning, but it’s safe to click “Run.”
- Click “Next” in the Celestia Setup Wizard window.
- Read the license agreement and click “I accept the agreement.”
- Click “Next.”

- The Setup Wizard should automatically install the program in “C:\Program Files\Celestia.” If so, click “Next.” If the program does not automatically choose this location, browse to find the location, and then click “Next.”
- The Setup Wizard should automatically place a shortcut in the Celestia Start Menu folder. Click “Next.”
- In the “Setup Additional Tasks” window, checkmarks should appear in three boxes. Click “Next,” or uncheck any boxes you see fit and then click “Next.”
- Review your selections in the window and click “Install,” or go back to change any selections and then click “Install.”
- Make sure the “View README.txt” box is checked.
- Click “Finish” and print out the “README” file for future reference.
- Once you’ve successfully installed the program, you can delete the application icon (with the “.exe” extension) from your desktop.

Step Three: Set the space mood.

Once you’ve gathered your supplies, you can start setting the right atmosphere for the party. Perhaps ask a few 4-H club members to arrive early so they can help decorate the room with space posters, glow-in-the-dark planets, etc. You could even invite everyone in the club to bring an outer-space-themed item to the party. Insert a “cosmic-sounding” CD to really get into the space mood.

Now, set up your LCD projection equipment so that the computer screen projects onto the screen, wall or ceiling. Open Celestia from your computer by double-clicking on your Celestia desktop icon (or open it via the Start menu).

If everything is working correctly, you’ll see the Earth in front of a field of stars. Displayed on-screen is some info about your target (Earth), your speed, and the current Universal Time.

Step Four: Party!

After all of your guests have arrived and taken a seat at their desks (or on the floor), you can guide them through outer space with just a few clicks of the mouse:

- To view some of Celestia’s coolest features with your group, click on “Run Demo” under the Help menu. The demo will take you around the Earth and moon, to the sun and Saturn, to Orion and many other constellations, to the red giant star Antares, and back home again. To end the demo, press “Esc” on your keyboard.
- Right drag your mouse to orbit Earth and you might see the moon and some familiar constellations.
- Left dragging the mouse changes your orientation also, but the camera rotates about its center instead of rotating around Earth.
- Roll the mouse wheel to change your distance to Earth—you can move light years away, then roll the wheel in the opposite direction to return to your starting location. If your mouse lacks a wheel, you can use the “Home” and “End” keys instead.

- Click on your star of choice, then press “G” on your keyboard to zoom through space toward the star. Press “G” again to zoom in even more.
- Press “H” on your keyboard to select the sun, then “G” to zoom in on it. Press “G” again to see the sunspots.
- Right click on the sun to bring up a menu of orbiting bodies. Select the one of your choice and press “G” to travel toward it.
- Select the “Tour Guide” option in the navigation menu. Choose a destination from the list, click the “Go To” button and you’re off!

Advanced Prep

If you or your club members would like to learn more about Celestia’s many other bells and whistles—including keyboard and mouse commands, add-ons, joystick control and spaceship flight—download a free Celestia User’s Guide (in Word or PDF format) at <http://www.shatters.net/celestia/documentation.html>.

To link to hundreds of free Celestia add-ons available for download—including textures, models and celestial objects—visit <http://www.shatters.net/celestia/addons.html>.

For further assistance or to report any problems with Celestia, visit the User’s Forum at <http://www.shatters.net/forum/>. You’ll also find a list of helpful Web sites at <http://www.shatters.net/celestia/sites.html>.

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