

How to Build a Backyard Stargazing Station

Learning objective: To understand the features and structure of instructional texts, including the use of imperative verbs and chronological order.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions below. Think about why the author has chosen specific words to make the instructions clear.

Nova the barn owl has created this guide to help you observe the night sky from your own garden. First, gather your equipment: a warm blanket, a thermos of hot cocoa, a star chart, and a torch covered with red cellophane. Red light helps your eyes adjust to the darkness better than bright white light. Next, find a flat, dark spot in your garden away from any street lamps. Lay your blanket down carefully to create a comfortable base. Once you are settled, switch off your torch and wait for five minutes. This allows your pupils to dilate, making faint stars easier to spot. Now, use your star chart to identify constellations. Start by looking for the North Star, which remains fixed while others appear to rotate. Keep a notebook nearby to record your findings. Remember, patience is the most important tool for any astronomer. If you feel chilly, wrap your blanket tightly around your shoulders and keep your eyes focused upward. With a little practice, the secrets of the galaxy will begin to reveal themselves to you.

Word bank: Chronological · Imperative · Equipment · Procedure · Safety · Observation

1. List two items you need to gather before starting your stargazing session. (2 marks)

2. Why does Nova recommend covering your torch with red cellophane? (2 marks)

3. Why is it important to wait for five minutes in the dark before looking for constellations? (2 marks)

4. What does the author mean when they say the North Star 'remains fixed'? (2 marks)

5. Do you think these instructions are easy to follow? Justify your answer using evidence from the text. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a diagram of a perfect stargazing spot in a garden, labelling the items Nova mentioned in the passage.

Extension challenge: Write a short set of instructions (4-5 steps) for a friend explaining how to make a simple snack to take with them on their stargazing adventure.