# Geminid meteor shower 2026: the best night, the time, and the kids

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The Geminids peak the night of 13–14 December 2026 with a thin Moon that sets early. When to go out, what a child will see before bedtime, and how to make it count.

The Geminid meteor shower peaks on the night of Sunday 13 December into Monday 14 December 2026. The Moon is a thin crescent, about a fifth lit, and it sets around 9 pm, so the rest of the night is dark. For families that makes 2026 one of the best Geminid years in a while: worth going out, if the sky is clear. Peabody (peabody.kids) has a free page for it, Geminids 2026 for kids, with a countdown, and Sky Tonight gives your own dark-enough time from a ZIP that never leaves your phone.

## When to look

The Geminids are unusual among the big showers: they start early. The point in the sky the streaks come from, in the constellation Gemini, is already low in the east by about 8 or 9 pm in mid-December, and it climbs all night until it is high in the south around 2 am.

- Before bedtime (8 to 10 pm): a few an hour at first, building. A child who looks for twenty minutes after the Moon sets has a fair chance at several.
- Around midnight: much better. In a dark place, near one a minute.
- 1 to 3 am: the best of it. The American Meteor Society gives a rate of up to about 150 an hour for a perfect sky; from a town with streetlights you will see a fraction of that, and that is still more than any other night of the year.

The nights either side of the peak (12–13 and 14–15 December) are good too, a little thinner. If the 13th is cloudy, try the 14th.

## Where to look

Anywhere. Shooting stars can appear in any part of the sky; their paths just point back toward Gemini. Lying flat and taking in as much sky as possible beats staring at one spot. Face away from the nearest lights.

## What a child will actually see

Mostly quick white streaks, a second or less. Geminids are slower than most meteors, about 35 kilometers a second, so they seem to glide, and a few are yellow or green. Now and then a bright one leaves a short glowing trail. Each is a grain of grit about the size of a sand grain, shed by a rocky object called 3200 Phaethon, burning up 70 to 100 kilometers overhead.

## How to make it work with kids

1. Pick a dark spot you can reach in five minutes. A back yard away from the porch light is better than a long drive at bedtime.
2. Dress for an hour of not moving. Hats, gloves, a blanket underneath as well as on top. December nights are colder than they feel at the door.
3. Phones away for twenty minutes. Eyes take that long to get used to the dark, and one look at a bright screen starts the clock again. Peabody's Sky Tonight has a red Outside mode for exactly this.
4. Make counting the game. Each person calls "there!" and the tally goes on paper. The shower night kit prints a sheet with a box for every ten minutes.
5. Agree on a time to go in before you go out. Twenty minutes counts as a success.

## Before you go out

Is it worth waking a child up at 2 am? For most families, no. The early evening of 13 December, once the Moon has set, is the honest compromise: fewer meteors, but a child who is awake and warm. Older children who want the full show can try the hour before a normal wake-up on the 14th, when the radiant is still high in the west.

Do we need binoculars or a telescope? No. Both shrink the view to a small circle; meteor showers need the whole sky and bare eyes.

What if it's cloudy? Nothing helps but waiting. The shower runs from about 4 to 20 December, so a clear night on the 12th or 14th still gives a good show.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, with no ads and no sign-up, and nothing your child taps on the space pages is sent anywhere. After a cold night out, the library has stories to read under the blanket, at your child's reading level.

## Sources


- American Meteor Society, meteor shower calendar 2026–2027: the peak night and the rate.
- The Moon's phase and setting time come from Peabody's own sky table, worked out with astronomy-engine (MIT license) for Denver; it sets a little earlier or later elsewhere.
- NASA, meteors and meteorites.


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Free at peabody.kids/blog/geminid-meteor-shower-2026