

## <<shooting star>> What causes a falling star ? NASA StarChild Meteoroids NASA StarChild Stars NASA Star Art NASA.

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Answer A falling star or a shooting star has nothing at all to do with a star!  
These amazing streaks of light you can sometimes see in the night sky are caused by tiny bits of dust and rock called meteoroids falling into the Earth's atmosphere and burning up

The short lived trail of light the burning meteoroid produces is called a meteor. The chance of seeing a meteor with the unaided eye increases after midnight. People often refer to meteors as falling or shooting stars. The brightest of the meteors are called fireballs

Sonic booms often follow the appearance of a fireball just as thunder often follows lightning. At certain times of the year more meteors than normal can be seen. A star is a big ball of gas which gives off both heat and light

So where do stars come from? What happens to them as they grow older? A galaxy contains clouds of dust and gas as well as stars. It is in the clouds of dust and gas that stars are born

As more and more of the gas which is mostly hydrogen is pulled together by gravity into a cloud the cloud starts to spin. The gas atoms start to clump together. Star Art An Introduction to Myths of Different Cultures Starwatching has occupied humans from the earliest times

Our ancestors studied the night sky and saw shapes and patterns among the stars. They often made up stories to explain what they saw. The same star constellation was seen very differently by people from different countries or even different parts of the same country

When Supernovae At large distances up to about 1 billion light years astronomers can no longer use methods such as parallax or Cepheid variables. At such large distances the parallax shift becomes too small and we can no longer even see individual stars in galaxies

Astronomers then turn to a series of methods that use standard candles that is objects whose absolute magnitude is thought to be known. From the image above you can see that by knowing the size of Earth's orbit and measuring the angles of the light from the star at two points in the orbit the distance to the star can be derived

The farther the star is the smaller the angles. For stars more than about 100 light years from Earth we cannot measure any shift and the method fails. An asteroid is a bit of rock. It can be thought of as what was left over after the Sun and all the planets were formed

Most of the asteroids in our solar system can be found orbiting the Sun between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. This area is sometimes called the asteroid belt.

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