

HOW TO SPOT ISS IN YOUR SKY

2 November 2016 marked 16 years of humans living and working continuously aboard the International Space Station (ISS). The first module of the ISS was launched into space in 1998 and the initial construction of the station took about two years to complete.

So, since November 2000 the ISS has been continuously occupied. The ISS serves as both an orbiting laboratory and a port for international spacecraft. The primary partnering countries involved in operating the ISS include the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan and Russia.

The ISS orbits at approximately 350 km above the Earth and it travels at an average speed of 27,724 km per hour. The ISS makes multiple orbits around the Earth every day. Every so often, you can see the ISS in your night sky. To us on Earth, it looks like a bright star moving quickly above the horizon. Then, just as suddenly as it appeared, it disappears. So how do you know when you can see the ISS pass overhead?

NASA has a great tool to help – the Spot the Station program lets you sign up to receive alerts to let you know when the ISS will be visible from your location – anywhere in the world.

The notices contain information on where to look for the ISS in the night sky. Just note where the sun sets and you can easily find the direction where the station will appear. The height at which the

station will appear is given in degrees. Just remember that 90 degrees is directly over your head. Any number less than 90 degrees will mean that the station will appear somewhere between the horizon and the 90 degree mark.

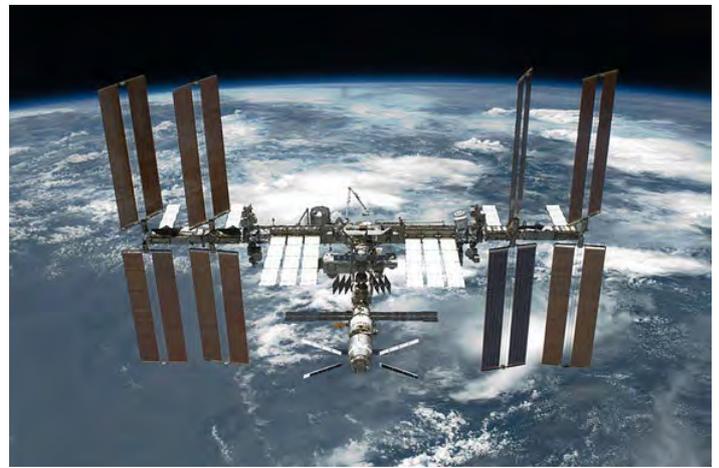
The station is so bright that it is really hard to miss if you're looking in the correct direction. Alternatively, you can stretch out your fist at arm's length toward the horizon, the width of which is equivalent to about 10 degrees.

Then, just use the appropriate number of fist-lengths to find the location marker, e.g., four fist-lengths from the horizon would be equivalent to about 40 degrees. And now, a new map-based feature even makes it track when to look for the station as it flies over you in your night sky. The easy-to-navigate map lets users type a location directly into the search box, zoom, pan and search the map. Blue pins populate the map, identifying the best sighting opportunities for each location, with a 50km radius around each pin.

Visible to the naked eye, the station is best seen at dawn and dusk, and it is the third brightest object in the sky after the Sun and Moon.

You can sign up for alerts via email or text message. Typically, alerts are sent out a few times each month when the station's orbit is near your location and clearly visible for at least a couple of minutes

Visit the Spot the Station website to sign up and view a list of upcoming sighting opportunities.



Photograph of the International Space Station taken from the space shuttle Endeavour on May 30



Photo of the ISS passing over Marstons Mills, Massachusetts on November 4, 2016.



Astronauts Robert Curbeam, Jr. and Christer Fuglesang working on the International Space Station. Image Credit: NASA