Best week to see Saturn

LEVEL A2/B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. Do you ever look at the night sky?
2. What planets can you name in English?
3. When is the sky clearest where you live?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

planet
A large round object in space that moves around a star.

visible
Able to be seen.

approach
A movement closer to something.

horizon
The line where the sky seems to meet the ground.

telescope
A tube with lenses that makes far things look closer.

ring
A thin circle; Saturn has bright circles around it.

rise
To go up; for the sun or a planet, to appear in the sky.

track
To follow and watch something as it moves.

III. READING

This week is a great time to see Saturn. The giant planet is at opposition, meaning Earth is almost between Saturn and the sun. Around this time, Saturn is at its closest approach to Earth for the year. On 4 October it reached opposition. The planet rises at sunset, stays visible all night, and sets near sunrise.

To the eye it looks creamy white and steady, not twinkling like most stars. At 21:00 BST on 5 October, from London, Saturn is well above the east-south-east horizon. It sits under the Great Square of Pegasus, a useful signpost in the sky. Saturn is about ten times farther from the sun than Earth.

You can track it on later evenings as it slowly moves against the constellations. You can see the planet without help, but a small telescope shows its famous rings. From the southern hemisphere, Saturn rises higher and can be easier to spot.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Starwatch: how to spot Saturn as it makes...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does opposition mean in this story?
2. When did Saturn reach opposition?
3. How does Saturn look compared to most stars?
4. Where is Saturn at 21:00 BST on 5 October from London?
5. What do you need to see Saturn's rings?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever tried to track a planet? How did it go?
2. Would you go outside late to see Saturn? Why or why not?
3. Where near you could you get a darker sky to watch stars?
4. What simple tips could help a beginner stargazer?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Can / could

Use can + verb for ability or possibility now; use could for past ability or polite possibility. Form: can/could + base verb. For example: "You can see Saturn" becomes "Last year, you could see Saturn in October".

"You **can track** *it on later evenings."*
"You **can see** *the planet without help."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each gap with can or could + the verb.

1. The planet doesn't twinkle, so you (recognise) ___ it quickly. _____
2. As a child, I (find) ___ the Great Square to guide me. _____
3. From the southern hemisphere, you (spot) ___ Saturn more easily. _____
4. On 4 October, observers (watch) ___ Saturn all night. _____
5. With a small telescope, beginners (view) ___ its rings. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 10 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 8–10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check key words with pictures or gestures: planet, horizon, telescope, rings, rise, track. Drill pronunciation of Saturn and Pegasus.
- Reading and discussion: Do a first silent read for gist, then a second read to underline details (times, directions). Pair students for comprehension before a quick whole-class check. No sensitive topics expected.
- Differentiation: Stronger students mark Saturn's path on a simple sky sketch; others match words to pictures. For homework, students note one place and time they could try to see Saturn.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Ask who has tried; pair those students with beginners to share quick tips before open class.
2. Take a show of hands, then group by yes/no and have each group list two reasons.
3. Elicit local parks or rooftops; prompt for safety and light-pollution checks.
4. Board three tips from the text (time, direction, tool) and ask students to add two more.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 60-word guide for a friend on how to spot Saturn this week, including time, direction and equipment.

Role-play: Student A is a beginner in London on 5 October at 21:00; Student B gives step-by-step advice using the Great Square and explains why a telescope is needed for the rings (5 minutes, then swap).

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Can / could

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does opposition mean in this story?
   Earth is almost between Saturn and the sun.
2. When did Saturn reach opposition?
   On 4 October.
3. How does Saturn look compared to most stars?
   Creamy white and steady, not twinkling.
4. Where is Saturn at 21:00 BST on 5 October from London?
   Well above the east-south-east horizon, under the Great Square of Pegasus.
5. What do you need to see Saturn's rings?
   A small telescope.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each gap with can or could + the verb.

1. The planet doesn't twinkle, so you ___ it quickly. **can recognise**
2. As a child, I ___ the Great Square to guide me. **could find**
3. From the southern hemisphere, you ___ Saturn more easily. **can spot**
4. On 4 October, observers ___ Saturn all night. **could watch**
5. With a small telescope, beginners ___ its rings. **can view**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use can + verb for ability or possibility now; use could for past ability or polite possibility. Form: can/could + base verb. For example: "You can see Saturn" becomes "Last year, you could see Saturn in October".

"You **can track** *it on later evenings."*
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