

Meteor Fact Sheet

What is a Meteor?

Although many people believe shooting stars are stars that are burning up, they are actually meteors, which are small particles of debris in the solar system (most are only the size of a pebble or a grain of sand!)

Before meteors (shooting stars) enter the Earth's atmosphere, they are called meteoroids. They become visible as they heat up and glow. This happens when they are between 75- 40 miles (120 - 64 km) above the Earth. Meteors generally disintegrate when they are 60 -30 miles (96 - 48 km) above the Earth. **Those meteors that do reach Earth's surface are called meteorites.**

Although, only a few may be visible, thousands of meteors enter Earth's atmosphere every day. It is easier to view meteors at night as their light is more visible, but there are just as many 'shooting stars' during the daytime.

Often meteors are seen in showers that are caused when Earth is passing through the debris field of a comet. Two of the most active meteor showers are called the Perseid (visible in August) and Leonid (visible in November).

You can call me,
Shooting star,
Though I'm no star at all...
I'm really just a little rock,
Enjoying my free fall,
When I cruise across the sky,
And hit the atmosphere,
I sometimes make a shining trail,
Then I disappear,
Yes, I'm just a meteor,
Not a star at all,
At times I wish I was a star,
So I'd be known by all!