

COSMIC DECODERS FAMILY EVENT

SAMPLE AGENDAS

SESSION 1 • TIME NEEDED: 90 MINUTES

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES	TIME NEEDED	NOTES
Welcome	5 minutes	Call the group together, make sure everyone has signed in and has a name badge. Explain the agenda and have families start the <i>Cosmic Card Sorting</i> and <i>Secret Messages</i> station activities at their tables.
Cosmic Card Sorting and Secret Messages	15 minutes	<i>Cosmic Card Sorting</i> asks families to sort through some images of deep space objects (cards 1-16) and group them into descriptive categories (based on similar characteristics). <i>Secret Messages</i> is a color-by-numbers activity that takes a while, so it can be worked on throughout the event and is great for keeping younger siblings busy. It will not be debriefed until later in the event.
Debrief Cosmic Card Sorting	15 minutes	First families share some of their object category names and the objects (by card number) they placed in each. Then give out the Family ASTRO “Cosmic Key” so families can get a sense of how astronomers might group nebulae, star clusters and galaxies by their visual characteristics.
Picture Analyzer	15 minutes	Here’s where families get a sense of what filters can do by examining the Hourglass Nebula image (card #17) through their Cosmic Visors.
Seeing Through Alien Eyes	15 minutes	This builds on the learning concepts in <i>Picture Analyzer</i> . Families don their Cosmic Visors once more to figure out how filters affect their ability to construct an “ordinary” scene on Earth (using felt figures of a tree, cloud, pond, and the Sun).
Debrief Secret Messages	5 minutes	Sometimes <i>Seeing Through Alien Eyes</i> leaves families a little confused. Revealing the <i>Secret Messages</i> helps make the point that distinct pieces of information can be more easily pulled out of “noise” by using filters.
<i>Cosmic Decoders</i> Card Set	15 minutes	Distribute and introduce the <i>Cosmic Decoders</i> Card Set and games. Start with <i>Build A Galaxy</i> . If families want to stay longer*, you might have each family play a different game, and then share their experience with the other families.
Evaluation	5 minutes	Families will appreciate this opportunity to give input and their comments may help you plan your next event. Also remind them about the second Cosmic Decoders session and that you'll want to know how they did playing the <i>Cosmic Decoders</i> Card Games at home.

***Special Note About Time:** This is a **very tight** 90-minute agenda. Some leaders prefer to allow 2 hours for this session so it is less rushed and leaves an adequate amount of time for debriefing and for families to play at least one card game at the event.

What’s Next:

- Invite families to participate in the second session (use the teaser that it will involve “aliens”).

COSMIC DECODERS FAMILY EVENT

SAMPLE AGENDAS CONTINUED

SESSION 2 • TIME NEEDED: 90 MINUTES

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES	TIME NEEDED	NOTES
Welcome and Message to the Universe	10 minutes	Welcome families individually as they arrive, making sure everyone has signed in and has a name badge. Encourage them to get started on the activity at their table. If snacks are provided, point them out and allow families to snack while working on the activity. This is also a chance to find out if families have played the <i>Cosmic Decoders</i> Card Games at home.
Debrief Messages to the Universe	15 minutes	Call the group together and have families share ideas about what they think is on the Pioneer Plaque.
Decoding Radio Messages from Space	25 minutes	Using the audio CD provided, “send” some sample messages to the families so they can see how radio messages could be constructed and interpreted.
Translating an Alien Message	15 minutes	So far, all messages have been of human origin. Now families get to decode a fictional message from aliens.
Sending a Family Message into Space	20 minutes	This gives each family a chance to make their own message to extraterrestrials, and think about what we humans would most want to convey about ourselves.
Evaluation	5 minutes	Families appreciate this opportunity to give feedback and their comments may help you plan your next event.

What’s Next:

- Invite families to participate in another Family ASTRO event, give the topic with a teaser for what they will learn.
- Follow up with a star party: Invite volunteers with telescopes to set up for family observing with an opportunity to explore some of the objects on the *Cosmic Decoders* Card Set. *Caveat:* You may want to explain that the objects on the cards will not look as dramatic or colorful when seen with the eye through a small telescope.