

Hubble sees spiral in Andromeda

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The Andromeda constellation is one of the 88 modern constellations and should

not be confused with our neighboring Andromeda Galaxy. The Andromeda constellation is home to the pictured galaxy known as NGC 7640. Credit: ESA/Hubble & NASA

The Andromeda constellation is one of the 88 modern constellations and should not be confused with our neighboring Andromeda Galaxy. The Andromeda constellation is home to the pictured galaxy known as NGC 7640.

Many different classifications are used to identify galaxies by shape and structure—NGC 7640 is a barred spiral type. These are recognizable by their [spiral arms](#), which fan out not from a circular core, but from an elongated bar cutting through the galaxy's center. Our home galaxy, the Milky Way, is also a barred [spiral galaxy](#). NGC 7640 might not look much like a spiral in this image, but this is due to the orientation of the galaxy with respect to Earth—or to Hubble, which acted as photographer in this case! We often do not see galaxies face on, which can make features such as spiral arms less obvious.

There is evidence that NGC 7640 has experienced some kind of interaction in its past. Galaxies contain vast amounts of mass, and therefore affect one another via gravity. Sometimes these interactions can be mild, and sometimes hugely dramatic, with two or more colliding and merging into a new, bigger galaxy. Understanding the history of a galaxy, and what interactions it has experienced, helps astronomers to improve their understanding of how [galaxies](#)—and the stars within them—form.

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

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