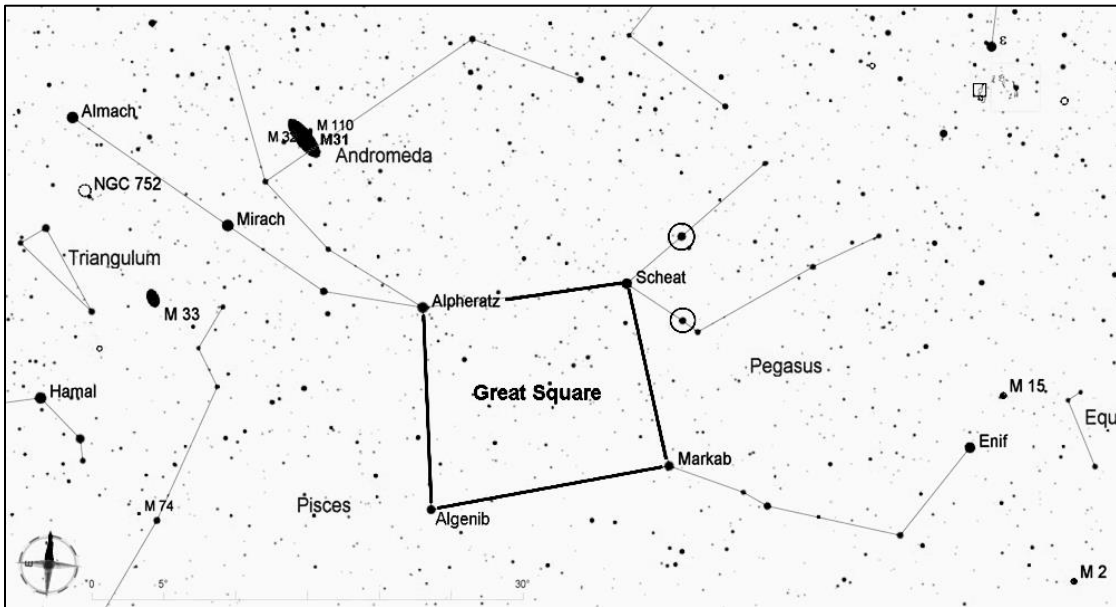


Messier 2, Globular Cluster in Aquarius

At magnitude 6.6 and covering 1/4 degree of sky, Messier 2 is a nice view through a small telescope and a very impressive one through a larger telescope. It has a dense and bright center. It is tricky to find because there are no bright stars nearby, but it is worth the effort. This cluster contains about 150,000 stars, and it is about 38,000 light years away.



Start by finding the Great Square of Pegasus, which rises in the eastern sky during the early fall evenings, is high overhead later in the fall, and sinks in the western sky during early winter. To be sure you know how the square is oriented in the sky, look for the two stars outside the northwest corner of the square (circled in the chart here) that form a small triangle with Scheat.

Starting from Markab at the southwest corner of the Great Square, follow the chain of stars to theta (θ) Pegasi, then take a right (south) to Sadalmelik, a magnitude 3.0 star in Aquarius. There are no bright stars near M2, but note in the chart below that M2 forms roughly a right triangle with Sadalmelik and Sadalsuud (magnitude 3.7). Note also that there is a chain of 4 or 5 dim stars to the northeast of M2 that should be visible in binoculars or finderscope, and this chain points in the direction of M2. Using all these landmarks should bring M2 into the field of view of a low-power eyepiece.

