

Getting Started in Astronomy!

Getting started in astronomy seems daunting. But it can be done with a little study of the basics using materials readily available at sellers such as www.Amazon.com. The first step is to learn the night sky. This means learning about the constellations, the brightest stars, the planets and Moon, and a few of the brightest deep sky objects. To do this, one needs the following simple tools:

- 1) An introductory book on the constellations.
- 2) A circular star chart, or “planisphere,” that shows the constellations for each season and for each time of night.
- 3) A red flashlight to read star charts and the planisphere at night.
- 4) A modest pair of binoculars.

After the constellations and binoculars have been mastered, it's time to move up to:

- A) More advanced books.
- B) A small telescope.
- C) A star atlas composed of charts that show sections of the sky in more detail.
- D) Lists and descriptions of interesting deep sky objects to observe.

Finally, join other people who enjoy the night sky by gathering with members of your local astronomy club, see contact info below.

Learn the Constellations and Observing Basics

Stargazing Basics by Paul Kinzer, simplified discussion of binoculars, telescopes and the sky, \$13.59

Patterns in the Sky by Ken Hewitt-White, star charts & write-ups on the major constellations, \$10.36

Star Wheel (40 deg North), by Sky & Telescope, large planisphere, \$11.96

Celestron Night Vision red flashlight for reading star charts, \$19.95
(www.astronomics.com)

Rigel Systems Starlite red LED flashlight for reading star charts, \$27.95
(www.astronomics.com)

Buy and observe with a pair of small binoculars, e.g. 8x42mm, 10x42mm, 7x50mm, 10x50mm

Sky & Telescope's *Moon Map* (laminated), beginners moon map for binoculars or small Newtonian reflectors and telescopes without star diagonals; *Mirror Image* version for small refractors and other telescopes equipped with a star diagonal, \$4.95 each

Observe Deep Sky Objects with a Small Telescope

The Backyard Astronomer's Guide by Dickinson & Dyer, best and most detailed discussion in print about equipment and observing the sky, highly recommended, \$32.79

Turn Left at Orion by Guy Consolmagno, observe over 100 of the best night sky objects, \$18.47

Bright Star Atlas 2000.0 – star atlas down to magnitude 6.5 in 10 charts, with lists facing each chart of the brightest and best objects for small telescopes, \$9.95 (from www.willbell.com)

Sky & Telescope *Pocket Sky Atlas* – star atlas down to magnitude 7.6 in 80 charts including all Messier and NGC objects as well as many more, \$13.57

Sky & Telescope's *Field Map of the Moon* (laminated), detailed multi-fold moon map for Newtonian reflectors and telescopes without star diagonals; *Mirror Image* version for refractors and other telescopes equipped with a star diagonal \$8.58 each

Join an Astronomy Club

There are astronomy clubs in most communities around the country. Two great resources for finding clubs near you are the Astronomical League and NASA/JPL's Night Sky Network, at the links below.

www.astroleague.org www.nightskynetwork.org