

# So you want a telescope

After finding out I have a telescope, and of my interest in Astronomy, I am often asked "What kind of telescope should I get my (self, kid, spouse, father, fill in the blank). My first thought is to say they can buy mine so I can get a bigger, better, different telescope. But in reality, the best answer is usually to get a good astronomy book.

Unless you are exactly like me, you will need to get a foundation of what is in the sky before you drag out a telescope. Going out on clear nights with just a lawn chair and your eyes will give you an indication if you actually want a telescope. There are many uncomfortable aspects of sky watching and astronomy. If you add to this lugging and setting up a telescope, you may find you really don't want to do this.

Spring in Ohio is a good time to start with your quest for a telescope. The clear nights are becoming a bit warmer from the winter deep chills, and the bugs aren't out as much. If you can take the few mosquitoes and the slightly chilly nature of the spring nights, you can then look forward to the summer nights. In most cases the summer nights in Ohio are quite comfortable for watching the night sky. If someone could do something about all the mosquitoes. Yes, you will be a target of these blood thirsty little creatures. Then there are the numerous encounters with other wildlife. Skunks will generally not spray, unless you scare them. Stepping on a skunk tends to scare it. Raccoons on the other hand don't fear much. Keep the snacks well sealed, and don't leave your car open. In NW Ohio that is all you generally have to worry about. But I did hear talk of a wandering Black Bear in the area!

Other parts of the country will have their own night time problems. Scorpions, cougars, wolves, bears, poisonous snakes, and the strange people who come out at night in our larger metropolitan areas, are all possible things you could run into

trying to look at the night sky. Do you really wonder why I don't automatically tell a person which telescope to buy.

Astronomy and star watching is not for everyone. We are a strange breed. We tend to enjoy being out in the dark (the darker the better), communing with the wild, lugging heavy equipment out for maybe 2-4 hours of finding and studying a specific nebulae or feature on the Moon. Then we will pack up and lug that equipment back in. If you can't spend 1/2 hour after lugging your lawn chair out just to look at the sky, well this hobby isn't really for you. A telescope really won't help.

Ok, you got past the looking at the stars for 1/2 hour, and you enjoyed it. What next? Get a good astronomy book. Take the time to learn what is up there. Before you get a telescope you need to know what you're going to be looking at. Astronomy books and star charts are the road maps to the night sky. You should be able to find at least 1 or 2 constellations before you purchase that scope. Checkout [Sky and Telescope](#) or [Astronomy Magazines](#) at your local library or bookstore. They will have a sky map of the current month.

You say you've done all that and still want a telescope? Now we're talking. Get some good binoculars and come back in a month or two. □ No really, I wish someone had told me that at the beginning of my astronomy connection. I still don't have a good pair of binoculars, and my desire for them is growing. 7×50, 8×50 and 10×50 are all good binoculars to start with in astronomy. Oh yes, the first number is the magnification of the binoculars (7 times, 8 times or 10 times) the second number is the size of the front lens in millimeters. The bigger front lens collects more light, and the higher magnification allows you to see more. 2 big notes!! High magnification may seem like a good thing, but too much causes what I call the jitters. It is hard to hold binoculars steady, high magnification makes this much more apparent. And bigger front lenses may also seem like a good idea. Bigger lenses,

means the binoculars will weigh more. Heavy binoculars also cause the jitters.

Ok, Ok you got this far? You should get a 7 inch Questar Maksutov. Make sure you get a well built tripod with this since this telescope needs good support. And when you get tired of astronomy let me know, I may have a home for your scope... That's just a joke folks. When you find out what that telescope costs you may understand. For the real answer, stop back in the future. I work up a list of good beginner scopes.

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## Signs of Spring

Have you noticed that spring is in the air? At least in NW Ohio it is. Warmer temperatures, spring flowers blooming, and of course the robins are back.

Being a country boy, I look for a few different signs of spring than most. I noticed that the vultures are circling road kill again. The ducks and geese are congregating in the flooded fields. Animals are out scrounging for food after a having a harder time of it in the winter. And of course the chorus of frogs in and around this areas ponds and swamp area.

I live on the outer edge of what used to be [the Great Black Swamp](#). To the south and east was the main portion of this swamp that covered most of the area around Toledo and Bowling Green Ohio. I live in an area with more high ground than they have in the areas east. There are still places to find some of the swamp that was NW Ohio.

The acreage around my house is one of those places. Just north, as in a few hundred yards, of my house there is about a

6-10 acre area of swampland. This used to be my parents property. I spent many a day in high school trying to explore it. One very hot and dry summer, I was able to make my way deep into the heavy brush. If I could have gotten my hands on a machete, I would have blazed a good path through it. Even without rain for most of that summer, there were still places in that swamp that held a foot or so of water. From what I could tell the deepest parts of the swampland may only be 3 feet deep. These were little pockets about 3 or 4 feet in diameter. My guess is that there were large trees there at one point, and they were blown over by the wind or fell with age. I really don't know since I don't remember seeing any downed trees.

This small swamp holds a variety of small animals. Mostly frogs and toads, but there are snakes and salamanders, birds of all sorts, various members of the rodent family (Large rat with bushy tale type), raccoons, possums, fox, rabbits, muskrats, deer and of course the insects, lots and lots of insects. Seeing these animals out and about more than usual is a good sign that spring finally made it to NW Ohio. They tend to be less visible in the winter, and when the leave finally fill the trees, they are harder to spot as well. So spring in the swamp is the time to see the wildlife come to life.

Where can you go to see it? Well there is a new state wildlife area (Williams Co Rd J between Co Rds 8 and 9. This is an old stone quarry that is now a fishing and wildlife area. I have been able to see many animals in the early morning or dusk around here. It is only open during daylight hours. You want to be careful because it is a public hunting area (check local hunting seasons) And of course you don't want to bother the fishermen/women. Other good spots are [Goll Woods](#) in Fulton County, [Independence Dam State Park](#) near Defiance OH, Toledo area Metro Parks. The [Toledo area parks](#) are wonderful. It is worth the time (if you are ever in the area) to check them out.

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# Under the weather

Not too hard to do on a day like today. It seems to be just wonderful out. I only know this by looking out the window, and seeing the sky for most of the day. The frogs are still in chorus so it can't be that cold. Me, I'm laid up with a headache, sore throat and slight fever. Mostly lost my voice this morning, but since I've had nobody to talk to today, I really don't know if it is back. I don't feel tempted to try it either. Since I was feeling OK yesterday, I am wondering how soon this stuff can pop up.

I've been feeling a bit sorry for myself today, because I have to take care of myself during illnesses. It has been that way for many a year now, but I miss the attention I used to get. Even when S. had a job, if I was sick she would always leave me a thermos of hot tea by the bed. I used to do little things like that for her when she let me know she wasn't feeling well (she hid it better than I did, I admit I'm a bit of a whiner when it comes to being sick) The children are good at leaving me alone when I don't feel up to my regular self. Not to say they won't get me things if I ask, but this is all about not having to ask.

I wonder how many married or coupled people see the little things that are part of their lives together. I will be the first to admit that I didn't see all of them when my wife was alive. I only started seeing them in the things that were missing after she was gone. Four years later, I still see the missing little things. Things that she did for me, and things I did for her. Things done just because of who we were alone and together. Making a cup of tea when sleep was hard to come by. Picking up a single rose for no reason. Letting her sleep in while I took care of the girls, or the other way around.

That thermos of tea when I wasn't feeling well. That little hug (or big one) when I came home from work. The hand on my shoulder when I was making dinner. Little things in life that can be very important to our lives.

In the future, and in the recent past, I've been noticing the little things in all my dealings with other people. Those little things put together make the big things in life happen.

Have a good day looking and giving the little things.

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## Telescope review 2 Meade 70AZ

This was the telescope I just received for my birthday. It is a 70mm refractor with a Altazimuth mount. This telescope came with a planetary imager that I will review at a later date.

The mount with this scope, as with most inexpensive scopes is lacking. It is much too small to support the telescope. It also is a little short to use the telescope standing and looking near zenith.

This mount was also difficult to aim and keep in the same place. It had a lot of wobble and wiggle in both the horizontal and vertical axis. It also was prone to heavy vibration. The small finder scope was almost impossible to use. Most scopes in this class now come with the red dot sights. That would have been much easier to use. Since this scope is geared toward a beginner, I find that these problems are just too extensive for a beginner to get much real use out of the telescope.

Now on to the telescope. The optics really weren't that bad. There was some blue fringing on the moon and bright stars. I

haven't looked at any planets yet, so I can't say on that, but I would assume that any of the brighter planets will have the blue fringe. This is what I expected with the scope. What I didn't expect was the amount of reflection in this scope. It was almost as if there was no baffling or the inside of the tube was painted with a gloss paint instead of flat. This was very noticeable when looking at the moon. The detail of the moon after centering it in the eyepiece was good. I'll push the power up the next time I get out.

The two eyepieces were inexpensive models, but the views were again what I expected. I did get some better views when I used my plossels. I haven't fully examined all there is to this scope, and have yet to compare it head to head with other scopes. The diagonal mirror was of similar quality as other parts of the assembly.

All this said, I'm going to play with the mount to see if I can get it to be a little more friendly. I want to see if the scope warrents getting a mount update or just making something up in the workshop. It could be quick grab and go scope when I don't want to lug out the reflector or set up the computerized scope. I will be mounting a small red dot finder to make things easier to find.

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## Strange thinking..

I kind of follow the political news. I try to stay on top of scientific news. I'm very confused when the two of those collide.

The biggest collision of politics and science in my mind is global warming. Governments all over the world, and of course the United Nations are trying to "solve" global warming.

Jumping over any science that is actually happening. With this scientists on both sides of the debate are getting very political on their views. Me, I want to talk about the science and leave any political views out of the picture. Feel free to comment on either picture.

Global warming – is it really happening? The best answer science has right now is.. Wait for it.... Maybe! That's right maybe! The past 20 years of weather data shows some warming, the past 10 years has been very stable. Hmmm. Global warming simulation programs show that the warming of the planet will be increasing in the next 20 to 40 years. These same simulations can not use past information to determine the global average temperature in past years... Hmmm again! There is a lot of science going on here and it all points to maybe. (at least for me)

Global warming – What causes it. Well until you actually determine that it is happening, you can't really say what is causing it can you? This is where the politics really gets going, so I'm not going there. Just for the science background, most of the heat on earth comes from 1 source, the Sun. Yes, there is planetary heat (think radioactive decay and volcanoes), and heat produced by man (burning all sorts of stuff and other things from our mechanical world), but that is minimal. The thing to determine is how much heat comes from the sun, and how much is released back to space. If the heat in is more than the heat out, you have global warming. If you have more heat out then heat in, you have global cooling. If they are the same, well, you have steady temperatures. This will have to be measured for more than 10 – 15 years to determine if we are warming or cooling. As far as I know, nobody has these measurements. Big world, and it is hard to do, if not impossible with today's technology. So the talk about carbon footprints and greenhouse effect has no bearing on actual science known.

Global Warming – What can we do? Nothing and everything. Most



things people come up with to actually combat the global warming are good to do. Reduce, Reuse and Recycle is scientifically a very good choice. There are a limited amount of resources available to us. While this may have effect on global warming, the best thing is using less, wasting less, and getting better value. By carbon credits? Doesn't do much except move your money to someone else. Not much science in that choice. Alternate fuels? That one is still up in the air as far as science goes. There are some good alt-fuels, some bad. We really need to check to see if the energy cost producing the fuel is less than the energy created. The science I see that may make the biggest impact in the next 10-20 years is [algae](#). Another is the new [Volt from GM](#)

One final thought, remember when it comes to weather forecasting: This is one of the few jobs where you can be wrong 50% of the time and still have a job.

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## Finding information

In an extensive lookup, I was finding a lot of information on electric ranges. It seems like my range has a common failure type. I can't believe that the number of stoves that fail by turning on as high as they can go. I'm going to have to do an all out search for an old style stove without any electronic stuff. I'm going to try to find all manual controls. This may mean not having a smooth top cook surface, which I really like. Maybe I could find one with a safety feature that actually turns the oven off if the temp gets too high. This is really a pain. For now, I have to unplug the elements in the oven, so I can use the cook top. I could probably get by with this for quite some time, but eventually I'll need to cook a pie, cookies, or even a pizza.

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# Stupid Oven

I've been steaming about this most of the evening. For supper I put in a Lasagna for dinner, set the timer, the temperature and walked away. An hour into the cooking time I smelt something burning. I checked the stove and there was a blinking light. I opened the oven, and it was much warmer than the 400 I set it at, and the broiler was on too. I couldn't turn the thing off either!!!!!! Dinner almost ruined (very brown on top) and a stove that would not turn off! I had to turn off power at the breaker box to make sure it was off.

Now it is an older stove (10-15 years?), so you can expect a thing or two to go wrong after the use it got. But really, a failure of some part causing both elements of the stove to turn on and continue heating? Shouldn't it fail to the off position (no heat)? I found out the cause of the problem, and the part is around \$100 dollars. I should be able to put it in myself. My concern with this is that the thing will fail again in the ON position. At that much money (1/3 to 1/5 the cost of new), I may want to research new stoves, and find one that fails on the off side. I find this a little dangerous, especially now that I'm getting older. Fixing this problem will give me another 10-15 years, and by then I may have some concentration problems. Bad enough I won't remember I put the tea-kettle on, but the stove being on when it looks off bothers me.

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# Jokes that didn't work...

Well, I tried to get my oldest with an April Fool's Joke today, but unfortunately she had a similar idea to try to get me. Both of us failed. I know her too well. And since my joke was similar she saw right through it. All in good fun. She's been trying to get me since I got her up for School on a Saturday. That had to be one of my best.

I do try to plan my pranks, jokes and other April Fools day fun on people who like that sort of thing. Getting caught by that may not be everyone's favorite thing. I tend to plan one or two major things, and a couple of smaller ones. I have yet to make anyone really mad.

Did anyone catch the Google prank today. It was a stroke of genius. The ability to send your e-mail back in time. I wonder how many people believed that one.

Also see the following for the 100 best all time pranks.

[April Fools' day Pranks](#)

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## Evening Ramblings

It is about time to get some shuteye this evening, but unfortunately I've gotten my second wind. That never bodes well for getting a good nights sleep. While I was getting sleepy while watching a show with my daughter, just after the show ended, I'm wide awake.

I'm already getting sick and tired of the political season, and we aren't out of the primaries yet. I'm might be physically ill by the time the general election rolls around.

Baseball news isn't too good for the teams I follow.. Extra inning losses for both the Cubs and Tigers. While I'm a life long Tiger fan, I follow and root for the Cubs as long as they aren't playing the Tigers. I guess you would call me a Cub convert.

A sunny warm day and warm evening would be wonderful. I think I've had enough snow, ice and rain to last for a while.

I think I learned my lesson about grocery shopping on an empty stomach. I just went in for some milk and potatoes for dinner this evening. I had everything else I needed. I picked up berries, a roasted chicken, some other odds and ends I didn't need. Oh well, it shouldn't go to waste. The chicken was very good.

I think I need to find a movie to watch for later this week. I'm not sure what I want to watch.

Oh well, I should try to sleep....

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## Last day of March...

And that means that April Fool's Day is tomorrow...

I've always like this day, since I have a very gullible daughter. My tricks on her are infamous in family discussions. I'm searching my devious little brain right now trying to come up with another trick or more that I can pull on anyone of my daughters.

I also have to think of a prank or two to pull on people at work.. Can't be too bad, or I'll get in trouble.

Anyone know of any good gags, pranks, tricks?

I'll post if I am able to pull anything off tomorrow. Be on your guard if I know you... You will never know if a prank is in your future..