

Re: Tips for Deciding on Very First Telescope.....

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.astro.amateur/2004-12/0881.html>

From: Mark Smith (emarksmi_at_san.rr.com)

Date: 12/05/04

Date: Sun, 05 Dec 2004 07:48:34 GMT

As I was in your position about 10 months ago, let me tell you what I'd suggest:

1. Follow Jon's Advice. Find a local Astronomy Group and look through as many telescopes as you can (let us know where you are from and I'm sure somebody can point you to a local club). Ask questions and compare telescopes.
2. StarLord has an EXCELLENT page on buying a telescope. Read it. (<http://home.inreach.com/starlord/>)
3. Decide what you want in a telescope. Portability? Something to grow with you? Look at Planets and the Moon? DSO's? Photography in the future (do NOT start with Photography)?
4. Establish a budget.
5. Return to 1 and look at the telescopes and setups similar to what you have decided you want.
6. Start Shopping. If you are in Southern California, I strongly suggest you visit Oceanside Photo and Telescope. Excellent people who are looking to build customers, not sell you whatever they can. When I bought my telescope, they actually talked me OUT of some items that ended up saving me nearly \$800 and I've never missed what I didn't buy.

As for manufactureres, that will depend largely on what you buy. I ended up with a Celestron C 9 1/4 SGT (although I don't really use the GoTo for other than identifying that I've found objects and accurate tracking). I know people with Meades, Takahashi's, Televues, and many others. I prefer the GEM's, but you can get more aperature and less complexity with a big Dob (although portability suffers). Take into account the size of your car when you buy.

Just so you know, here is how I progressed to what I bought:

1. Research. Decided on an Orion 5" Mak.

2. Went star watching several times with SDAA. Found somebody with the EXACT scope I was considering. Nice and sharp.
3. Decided on the "extras" I wanted and found I was over budget. Found some extra Money and started an E-Mail correspondence with OPT.
4. Came into some more money and decided I could afford more aperture. Looked at 8" SCT's and 10" Reflectors. Decided I'd really like to get a GoTo scope if I could swing it because it was only about \$150 more than the mount setup I decided I wanted as a minimum.
5. Visited some more with SDAA and looked through a LOT more scopes.
6. Visited with OPT and, after listening to them, found I was able to get rid of some of the "extras" I thought I wouldn't be able to live without and get the GoTo mount. I decided to move up to the 9 1/4 with some of the money I saved (entirely my idea. It was never even suggested by the OPT people.)

I ended up choosing a good scope for me. It is portable enough that I can lug it around my property and out to dark sky sites with little problem. The GEM is more complex, but I have it down to a 20 minute setup (although the guys with the dobs laugh at me with their "pull it out of the car and start observing" setups) and a 30 minute breakdown. I've had it out 31 times since I bought it (not including some Star Parties at local schools).

The most important thing you can do is look through a lot of scopes first and decide on the setup YOU want. What is right for me, or Jon (who still thinks I should have gone the reflector route) or anybody else won't be right for you. Look through a lot of telescopes and ask questions before you buy. Some clubs even have "loaner" scopes that people can borrow. Take advantage of such programs if you can. Decide what is the best setup for you, try it out, and only THEN should you plunk down your money.

Clear, Dark Skies

Mark

> *From the little bit of research I have done on
>telescopes, I have come to the conclusion that I should definitely go
>with a Newtonian. But where to start? What type of mount, what
>manufacturer, etc.....?*