

Re: Good starting telescope and book for child

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- *From:* bobg@xxxxxxxxxx (Robert Grumbine)
 - *Date:* Mon, 28 Nov 2005 19:55:10 -0000
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In article <1133203281.622529.96040@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, lifeisgood <paul1brian@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

>Dear all,

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>I could not find exactly what I was after on FAQs mentioned on this >group or a quick google search, so apologies if this is an often >answered question.

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>I have a soon-to-be 8 years old nephew who is interested in astronomy >(and everything else) and I would like to get him a simple telescope >and a good / easy to use reference work. I know next to nothing myself >about this and would like to know

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>1. What is the bare minimum quality of telescope I should look at (40x >or 80X or how does one measure this?) I would prefer not to buy a >fantastic scope and only see it used once, but if he shows real >interest then I (and/or his parents) will be happy to upgrade.

How do you want to define minimum?

My first telescope was a 40 mm refractor on fairly wobbly stand. It opened the universe to me. Ok, Saturn was fat, rather than beringed. But it was gorgeous nonetheless. Jupiter clearly had moons. Stars multiplied incredibly. The sun showed spots (when projected against a sheet of paper! Do warn child and parents). The moon came to life.

That said, what you want to look for today for fairly minimal, if not bare minimum, is a 60 mm refractor on an alt-az (altitude-azimuth) mount. Check that the mount is stable (tapping a leg, as an 8 year old will do regardless of intent, should not cause the image to bounce for tens of seconds). Check that the focus knob moves smoothly. If your nephew is like I was, small, controlled motions are hard enough without the added challenge of knobs that stick. Ditto the controls/knobs for moving the scope in alt and az.

Be sure to get a scope with a finder. For the same reason of coordination and control, it's going to be challenge enough to bring an object into the field of view of the eyepiece.

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To go back a second, what I prefer, greatly, is an equatorial mount. But that's me as an adult and comfortable with coordinate transformations in my head. As a kid, equatorial would have been extremely frustrating. Alt-az is much the way kids think, so go with a mount that won't fight him.

>2. What is a good introduction to using the telescope for children of >his age? I am guessing there might be some book/dvd/pc combo from >patrick Moore but to be honest I am in the dark. (no pun intended)

How to read the Night Sky by W. S. Kals was what started me (mumble) years ago. It's good for the audience. The first edition is 1974, which is 'old'; but with a small scope you're not going to be seeing the 14th moon of Saturn, or Pluto's moon (or even Pluto) anyhow, so such aging doesn't bother me. There was at least one later edition, if I remember correctly.

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Robert Grumbine <http://www.radix.net/~bobg/> Science faqs and amateur activities notes and links. Sagredo (Galileo Galilei) "You present these recondite matters with too much evidence and ease; this great facility makes them less appreciated than they would be had they been presented in a more abstruse manner." Two New Sciences

• **References:**

◆ ***Good starting telescope and book for child***

◇ From: lifeisgood

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