

Re: Starter scope for 9 year old: StarBlast or SkyQuest?

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- *From:* LurfysMa <[invalid@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:invalid@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Thu, 14 Dec 2006 05:26:41 -0800
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On Thu, 14 Dec 2006 02:31:24 -0700, W. H. Greer <[sendnomail@xxxxxxx](mailto:sendnomail@xxxxxxx)> wrote:

LurfysMa wrote:

I'm not sure I fully understand the difference between the StarBlast and the StarBlast EQ. The magnifications are different (26x, 75x vs 39x, 75x) but I think that's because they come with different eyepieces (Explorer II 17.0mm, 6.0mm vs 3-Element 15.0mm, 6.0mm).

Ah-ha! You caught something I missed.

I just did a search (on the Orion website) for "StarBlast" then checked the "compare" box for the two StarBlast and then clicked on Compare. I got a side-by-side comparison chart. From there, it was easy to spot the differences.

The Expanse eyepieces that the EQ comes with provide wider fields of view and better (at least with the 6mm) eye-relief. Such eyepieces are easier for beginners to use with any telescope.

But I can buy other eyepieces for either scope, no?

The big difference seems to be the mount type (altazimuth vs equatorial). According to Wikipedia, the altazimuth mount is simpler to build and use, but more difficult for tracking moving objects because tracking must be done on two axes. The equatorial mount is more complex, but eliminates the earth's spin as a variable. It then goes on to say that altazimuth are more appropriate for dobsonian scopes.

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The differences you mention are accurate.

A Dobsonian is (by definition) essentially a low-budget Newtonian on an inexpensive, altaz mount. A Newtonian on an EQ mount is no longer (by most definitions) a Dobsonian.

Would you only get the EQ if a sturdy platform is NOT available?

That was my original intent. My reasoning had to do with the use of the standard (non-EQ) StarBlast. Without some kind of solid, raised platform (picnic table, etc.) to rest it on, a child would end up having to lie on the ground in order to use it. The EQ version is on a raised tripod — placing the eyepiece at a more convenient height.

The Expanse eyepieces make the EQ a bit more attractive; but if a sturdy platform is available for the other scope, the final decision would depend heavily on the specific child. I suggest using both scopes (actually pointing them at a variety of targets) with their supplied eyepieces while at the Orion store so that you can better see the differences in the mounts as well as the eyepieces.

OK. Will I be able to tell how well these things will work at night on celestial objects by looking at telephone poles from the store in the day?

I suspect that most 9-year olds would be more comfortable using the alt-az version; but both are good first telescopes.

I going to the store today.

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