

Beginning Stargazing Books for Kids and Adults

Laura Hintz

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We've had several inquiries lately about the purchase of a first telescope, or from youth who have joined the club and want to know how to get started in Astronomy. Since we cannot meet in person due to COVID, or share the resources of our IAS Library at this time, I thought I would post recommendations for a few books that newcomers might find useful. These are available on Amazon.

50 Things to see with a Telescope, a Young Stargazer's Guide, by John A. Read. This is a great introduction to finding objects in the night sky. Good diagrams and descriptions will help you learn basic astronomy facts, find major constellations, and identify many deep sky objects. Great for beginners, from older children through adults. This is my Top Pick for beginning stargazers.

Find the Constellations, by H.A Rey. Legendary constellation finder guide. Written and illustrated for kids, but useful for all ages. Identification of the major constellations is the key to finding other celestial objects. Beginner, children through adults.

Turn Left at Orion, by Guy Consolmagno and Dan M. Davis. One hundred night sky objects and how to find them. Objects are rated by sky conditions and the equipment needed to see them, including binoculars and small to medium telescopes. Arranged by season. Includes many Messier and other non-Messier objects as well as an intro to the moon and planets. This book is a popular general observation book. Beginning to intermediate users, older kids through adults.

The Year-Round Messier Marathon Field Guide, by Harvard Pennington. Designed to guide the user to the 110 Messier objects. The Messier "Marathon" is a challenge to find all objects in the course of one observing night. However, this book is also very useful for finding any of the Messier objects outside of a regular "Marathon." Messier objects include open and globular star clusters, galaxies, and asterisms, and cover the wide range of objects that amateur astronomers enjoy. Highly recommended for anyone that can identify major constellations and is ready to move onto deep sky objects. My Top Pick for intermediate stargazers. Older kids through adults.

Sky & Telescope's Pocket Sky Atlas, Roger W. Sinnott (available in regular and Jumbo edition) Popular edition of sky charts; almost every serious amateur owns this atlas. Beginner, intermediate and advanced users.

Peterson Field Guide to the Stars and Planets, by Jay M. Pasachoff. Packed with astronomy information, including sky charts and maps. Charts are smaller than those from the Sky & Telescope Pocket atlas, and I find the compact size and format to be difficult to use in the field for identification of sky objects. However, this book is a great introduction to general astronomy. Beginning to intermediate users, older kids through adults.

Happy reading!

Laura Keller

IAS Librarian