

Telescope Accessories



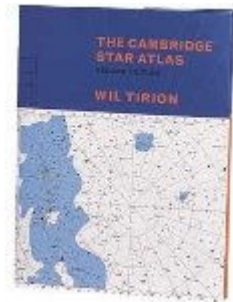
Have you ever wondered what kind of telescope accessories you might need? You aren't the only one! Just what are these astronomical gadgets called and what do they do? Many of them have strange names and even stranger functions.

There are two you need right away and some that can wait. What type of telescope accessories are necessary and which ones are just plain fun? If you've got questions like these, then follow along as we explore the world of telescope accessories...

What Are The Best Telescope Accessories To Start With?

Chances are, your telescope will come equipped with one or more of the following accessories, but if it doesn't these are just a few that are a great place to start! Just remember the necessary things to make a telescope work is a finderscope of some type, an eyepiece of some type and a dark sky...

Books, Star Charts and Sky Atlases: Now where would an astronomer be without them? The very first thing you'll need is a road map to the stars. If you're unfamiliar with the night sky, start with a simple planisphere and work your way up to simple charts. As you progress, you'll find charts and atlases more suited to your needs. Be sure to look for observing guides to help answer your questions and even lunar and planetary charts to help you identify things you see!



Red Flashlight: Just like your charts, this is another telescope accessory that you must have. Using white light to do anything at night will cause you to lose your night vision and blind you to the stars! ALWAYS use red light. While you can adapt a flashlight to have a red beam, you'll find that red flashlights designed specifically for astronomy purposes are a lot more user friendly. Many have adjustable

brightness levels and some models don't even need batteries!

Eyepieces: Chances are your telescope will come equipped with two eyepieces, one low power and one high power. While both of these are very satisfactory, included eyepieces are generally just... well... very general. For those who love wide open, starry vistas and big, picture window views, it is well worth spending a few extra dollars to purchase a low power, wide field eyepiece for your telescope.



If your telescope comes with a 2" focuser, but 1.25" eyepieces, even one full-sized eyepiece will soon become the prize of your collection. For those who love to study details at high magnification, it is also well worth the extra money to invest in a high power eyepiece which offers much great eye relief, such as an ED design.

Optical Finderscope: Perhaps your telescope came with a red dot finder – or a small optical finderscope. You’d be surprised at what stepping up to a large optical finderscope can do for your starhopping abilities! While most 6X30 models reveal a modest amount of stars, the step up to a 7X50 or 9X50 model will blow your mind.

If you’re used to aiming with the non-magnified field of a red dot, now it’s like using a mini-telescope to assist you! Many bright objects are visible in the finder itself and stars that are not visible to the eye – but are on charts – suddenly appear. A large optical finder is a wonderful and useful tool you won’t regret.

Telescope Accessories That Are Fun To Have...

So now we’ve taken a look at some of the premier telescope accessories. What about some of the ones that might not be quite as practical – but could be fun? What are they and what do they do?

Let’s take a look...



GoTo Systems and Digital Setting Circles: If your telescope doesn’t begin compatible with a GoTo system, upgrading can be expensive. However, the rewards can be quite nice. GoTo Systems and Digital Setting Circles range from simple encoders which have countdown style readouts to show you which way to move your telescope in ascension and declination to reach an object to high end models which computer control and slew the telescope mount. If this takes your interest, it is best to consider getting this type of accessory when you

purchase the telescope.

Drive Units: If your telescope did not come with a drive unit, a simple single axis clock drive can be added to your right ascension axis on your telescope mount to allow it to “track” the object as the Earth moves.



This is very handy for high magnification studies and for allowing others to view through your telescope as well... But remember, this only works on an equatorial mount.



Telescope Cover: If you enjoy leaving your telescope fully assembled, you’ll also enjoy having a telescope cover, too.

While there are many simple “home solutions” to a telescope cover, there are specially designed ones that will allow you to store your telescope outdoors and even special ones to resist heat and moisture. Trashbags and sheets are great, but a real telescope cover definitely has its advantages.

More and More and More Telescope Accessories...

The list is endless! Little things, like gloves that fold back to reveal your fingers, hats with red headlamps, green laser pointers, personal planetariums, computer software, digital cameras, observing tents, specialty filters, etc. etc. etc. The list goes on and on!

Always remember that little things that make using your telescope easier, like adding an AC adapter to a DC powered telescope – or an extra counterbalance to a mount when you add a heavy eyepiece are things you learn along the way.

With the additional of a set of star charts and a red flashlight, most telescope packages come fully equipped and ready to use right out of the box. The rest? Is just icing on the cake. Tammy Plotner