

## Gift Telescope Part 1

When someone wants a telescope, they want a telescope and anything else is just a disappointment.

Binoculars are my recommended entry into astronomy and many households happen to have binoculars but even if you don't, get the telescope. You want a happy kiddo, spouse, friend, so just get the telescope.

But don't buy junk! Oh, and don't buy complicated, unless complicated is asked for. Our club offers help to new telescope owners. [astronomyntx.org](http://astronomyntx.org) or on facebook: Astronomy Friends New Braunfels.

You're not sure how to spot junk?

Spotting junk is easy. Look for the advertisement, description, or display boasting the telescopes high power in very large print, like 300x or higher! Forget it. Just say no.

Here are features to consider:

- Lens (refractor) or mirror (reflector)? Either can be fine but for a first telescope I suggest a reflector. You get more (bigger) for your money and often better quality for the same price with a reflector.
- Reflector (mirror) telescopes can be compact enough to use on a tabletop, have a short tube and focal ratio of f4 to f6 and this is OK, as long as the mirror is *parabolic*, NOT spherical. It should say what so on the box or in its literature. A longer focal ratio, such as f8 gives even better image quality. Reflector telescopes usually start around 4" in diameter.
- If you get a refractor, get one with at least a 76mm (3") objective lens. 80mm refractor telescopes are a good place to start.
- Refractor telescopes should have a longish tube, not a short tube. Their focal ratio should be at least f9. Good ones typically are f10 to f12 and this should be printed on the box. Short refractor telescopes (f5 to f7) likely will not be as good unless they use special glass (ED, Fluorite) in the objective lens, and that = \$\$\$\$.
- The mount I suggest is called an altitude-azimuth (Alt-Az, AZ) mount. It is way easier to use than an equatorial (EQ) mount
- Another good option, for reflector telescopes is called a Dobsonian mount.
- Except with Dobsonian mounts and tabletop mounts, a tripod should be included, and I recommend a tripod over a pier. Tripods are more stable in beginner equipment.
- While there are reasonably priced computerized telescopes that might not be the best option for a beginner unless they are tech savvy.
- Eyepieces and optical accessories should be at least 1.25", NOT .965".

Then there are Catadioptric telescopes. Best of both worlds? See Gift Telescope Part 2.