



SET UP FOR THE
WHOLE NIGHT,
NOT JUST FOR THE
FIRST OBJECT

SETTING UP IN THE FIELD

Setting up a telescope is usually straightforward. The challenge is arranging the equipment and choosing its position so that you can observe comfortably as targets move across the sky and conditions change.

PRACTICAL ASTRONOMY GUIDE #6

This guide is designed to help you establish a safe, comfortable and practical observing area that will work throughout the night.



BEFORE SETTING UP

CHOOSE YOUR POSITION

Before unpacking, take a moment to look at the observing area and the sky. Choose firm, stable ground with enough space for the telescope, chair and equipment. Flat ground covered in concrete, tarmac, level paving stones or compacted earth is best. Consider nearby obstructions such as trees, buildings and lights, but don't assume that the darkest corner is automatically the best position; see Practical Astronomy Guide #1 for general tips on finding a suitable site.

THINK AHEAD

The sky won't stay in the same place for long. As the night progresses, targets will move and the most comfortable position for the telescope and observer may change. Moving your observing chair and reposition an accessories table shouldn't be too problematic, however moving the telescope to maintain a good observing position should be avoided.

Don't optimise the entire setup around the first target of the evening. Instead, think about how the setup will work an hour or several hours from now. If you're using a large telescope, consider where the eyepiece will be when observing targets at different altitudes. If you're using a tracking or GoTo mount, make sure the telescope has enough clearance to move through the positions you expect to use. A good setup gives you room to adapt.

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TIP ...
BE PARTICULARLY
VIGILANT ABOUT
POTENTIAL TRIP
HAZARDS.

YOUR OBSERVATION SPACE

ORGANISE YOUR EQUIPMENT

Once the telescope is positioned, arrange everything else around it. Keep frequently used accessories within easy reach and establish a clear place for eyepieces, tablets, laptops, charts and other small equipment. Keep cases and bags out of walking paths and avoid placing equipment directly on wet ground. If you're using powered equipment, think about cable routing before connecting anything. Cables should allow the telescope to move freely without becoming a trip hazard or being pulled from their connections. The aim isn't perfect tidiness. It's to create a workspace that remains easy and safe to use once darkness has fallen.

COMPLETE YOUR SETUP ROUTINE

Once the telescope is assembled:

- Double-check that the mount and telescope are secure.
- Balance the telescope in both RA and DEC where appropriate.
- Check that everything moves freely while slewing through its expected range; check of potential cable snag points.
- Attach and check the alignment of your finder or other alignment equipment.
- Once dark, complete any required polar and GoTo alignment.
- Allow the optics to acclimatize where necessary.

If your telescope needs time to reach ambient temperature, take it out of the carry case / bag and place it somewhere safe. The telescope start acclimatizing while you setup the tripod and mount. A consistent sequence reduces the chance of overlooking something and makes setup progressively quicker as you become more familiar with your equipment.

ABOUT NSO

Our Vision

We envision a world where anyone with an interest in astronomy can begin their journey with confidence and enjoy rewarding first light experiences. Where choosing equipment is exciting rather than overwhelming, expert guidance is always within reach, and every astronomer has a trusted partner throughout their journey under the stars.

Our Commitment

We believe our responsibility doesn't end with a sale. We are committed to supporting our customers throughout their astronomy journey.

- Expert Guidance
- Carefully Selected Stock
- Accessible Value
- Long-Term Partnership

