

Offered Title: Get Out!

If you ever watched Seinfeld you might remember Elaine's signature exclamation, "Get Out!" while shoving someone really hard. Sometimes my wife, after going outside at night gives me a shove, but not physically, with the exclamation...you have to see the stars tonight, they're beautiful! She is telling me to Get Out!

Living in the Canyon Lake area provides lot of opportunity to get out and enjoy the night sky, our night sky can be very nice. I will take binoculars on night time walks with our dog Frankie, being careful because he will tug at the most inopportune time. I recommend keeping your binoculars handy for nighttime excursions. You get it yet? This is my sneaky segue into night sky observing equipment basics.

EYES

Our eyes are acute instruments, unless you are afflicted by ophthalmic conditions. I have worn glasses since my teachers noticed I kept sitting closer and closer to the classroom front. Glasses were an OMG! moment. Clarity. Fast forward to 2014. Now I had cataracts, making street signs, TV sports scores, and stars fuzzy. Had them removed and prosthetic lenses implanted... OMG! Clarity. Even though not required, I still wear glasses to correct astigmatism...clarity. Once again, I have acute instruments.

Look at the Big Dipper's handle, second star from the end. It's actually a multiple star system. It's great to see both naked eye visible stars. If you can see two stars your vision is acute. With just our eyes, we can see mare on the Moon and the shapes they take. Under dark skies, M31, the Andromeda galaxy, is visible and it's 2.5 million light years away! Keep looking around and you will see meteors, satellites, star clusters, our home galaxy the Milky Way, and when bright enough, comets. You don't need fancy gear to appreciate celestial wonders, but if you want to kick your visual experience up a notch...binoculars.

BINOCULARS

While we do not have a lot of options with our eyes, with binoculars, let's just say the options can be overwhelming. I will keep it simple. Start with good ones, period. What do I mean?

- Good ones will be solid, especially in the focuser. Not loose, no wiggling when you focus.
- Good ones have BAK4 (type of glass) prisms, not BK7.
- Good ones let you see the entire field of view even while wearing eyeglasses.
- Good ones will be properly collimated, comfortable to use, no funny feelings in your eyes.
- Good ones will not produce harsh glare when looking at bright objects like the Moon

Look for 40-50mm diameter objective lenses and 10x magnification. Bigger objectives or higher magnification means the need for a tripod.

\$75 should get you good binoculars. Start there. Good names: Olympus, Pentax, Nikon, Orion, Celestron, Meade, Bushnell.

I suggest staying away from roof prism and zoom binoculars at this price. They require more expensive materials and more precision manufacture.

Now...Get Out!