

ASTRO DEFINITIONS hrs

Below is a list of telescope and other astronomy-related definitions, with apologies to Samuel Johnson and Ambrose Bierce.

Achromat	A decent refractor that is not made of weird glasses. Appears nowadays most often in department stores, alas.
Apo fever	The unjustified belief that a small, costly refractor is worth the money it costs.
Apochromat	A refractor that is made of weird glasses. Most of these glasses contain shocking amounts of fluorine, which means that not only do they correct color better, they also prevent cavities.
Astrophotography	Something that seemed like a good idea at the time.
Atlases	Items amateur astronomers continue to neglect buying until about their third telescope.
Better guide	An unreachable goal, a leprechaun's pot o' gold, as in "that picture would have turned out if I only had guided it better."
Cassegrain	Most mirror telescopes with a hole in them. Mr. Cassegrain never made one.
Dall-Kirkham	A series of desperate compromises leading eventually to a bad Cassegrain.
Dob fever	The unreasoning belief you'll actually move that behemoth out of your garage more than twice a year.
Dobson, John	Proof that mirror-making is good exercise.
Eskimo nebula	Any object after you've breathed on the eyepiece at freezing temperatures.
Eyepiece	A mechanism whereby money continues to be extracted from the telescope buyer long after the cash from the original telescope purchase is gone.
Flame nebula	NGC 2024 near Zeta Orionis
Flaming star	IC405 near AE Aurigae
Flamer	An imprecation flung at that stupid person who just dropped your Bino-Vue from atop the sixth rung of a stepladder, shortly before you leap for his throat.
Gregorian	The rest of telescopes with a hole in them. Mr. Gregory tried to make one, but quit in disgust.
Horsehead	A target that will induce the purchase of more and more useless filters and bigger telescopes, at the end of which process maybe, just maybe, you will almost see it.
Horse's other end	...the telescope user.
Houghton-Cass	Houghtons are the best type of small Cassegrain telescope. Naturally, they are not offered commercially.
Maksutov-Cass	A Cassegrain with a deep shell of glass on the front to fix aberrations. A 90 mm Mak is expensive if its name is Questar, inexpensive if its name is Meade.
Marathoning	A practice derived from the absence of Messier objects in the autumn; it coincided with the appearance of the fresh wine harvest in Paris.
Newtonian	The mirror telescope with no odor of quality. As a consequence, it produces the best images. Newton never made a good one.
Refractor fans	Persons who, if they squint their eyes hard enough, actually believe that a 4-inch refractor is better than a ten-inch reflector.
Ritchey-Chretien	Evidence that some people have way too much money.

- Schiefspiegler An extremely long telescope that gives dark fields in eyepieces designed for shorter telescopes. Users attribute the dark fields mistakenly to lack of a central obstruction.
- Schmidt-Cass The workhorse telescope. Unfortunately, this nag is entered in the Kentucky Derby.
- Star-testing A prelude to uncontrolled and inconsolable weeping.
- Zambuto's spot A bruise in the center of the forehead that most amateur mirror makers acquire when they first star-test a mirror made by Carl Zambuto -- it is caused by banging one's head on a door jamb and repeating over and over "I've been wasting my life..."