

## Dr. Galloway Personal Recommendations for *What Scope to Get?*

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Refractors

Reflectors

Schmidt  
Cassegrains

Go-To

Aperture

\$

First, avoid the 2-3 inch scopes purchased most commonly through department stores.

Any inquiry about the BEST telescope(s) for home use is a tough question. **There is no "BEST" even for home use** although I have my preferences. It would be like asking what is the best car or vehicle for driving in the city. It still depends on the interests and activities of the person using it.

No matter what choice is made, certain features are realized and others are compromised. These features do not necessarily relate to whether the scope is "home" usable or not. Amateurs work out of their home. All around the world, the most wide-spread use of any sort of telescope is by amateurs - and virtually all operate out of their home in some fashion.

One might classify scopes based on...

- Optics: refractor, reflector, or catadioptric.
- Price: which is relative to the technological features. Scopes for so-called home use (not like a physics university) range from \$100 to about \$17,000 and more. This does not take into account "extras" in the hobby and use of the scope... just the scope itself.
- A particular feature: For example, the computerized GO-TO technology. Some have it. Some don't. Any price and quality is possible within either group.
- The level or age of the user: adult male, teenage female, adolescent, young child, whole family.
- Aperture (size of the opening or lens): Of course, while bigger is larger, bigger might not be "better" - because that's still a value judgment.

**My approach** is to identify the best visual view relative to things like price, size, portability, weight, ease of use, while still having a GO-TO capability which I value for convenience. In other words, what one might call the **best scope for money**... I would choose the **Meade LX90-8 inch**. I have one and take it on airplanes and cruise ships. I can see planetary detail as well as deep space. Meade also makes it in a 10" and 12" but those will be heavier and less portable and cost more.

**For the larger and heavier**, I would go ahead and move up to the Meade LX200 10/12/14 inch scopes. If money is literally no object and bigger is desired then the Meade RCX400 series is the best thing out there in my opinion. I use an LX200GPS-14 inch (\$6000) mounted on a pier in my own observatory. It's too big to be portable. A 16 or 20 inch version of these scopes is so large as to be unrealistic for most amateurs in any setting.

**On average... the best scope** for the money is still the **LX90-8inch** (less than \$2000). But, I would not recommend this for children working alone. An adult would be necessary.

**For children**, ready to use a scope on their own, I would recommend Orion's SkyQuest XT8 Classic Dobsonian Reflector. It is a simple *point-&-look* scope. It's cheap (\$400?) and easy to use as any you'll find. The nice thing is that it is still an 8 inch aperture and decent focal length so you will actually get to see things when you find them.

My granddaughter has one on a kind of trolley for easy mobility without needing her parents. At 11 years old and she could show her friends the rings around Saturn.

Generally, I prefer "GO-TO" scopes to reduce the frustration of finding things. I believe GO-TO systems are still a little touchy and less than perfect and I don't trust any GO-TO systems that cost less than \$1000, more or less. Of course, this takes me back to the Meade LX90-8 inch again.

Finally, you'll still need to plan on including a red flashlight, a small tool kit, a Baader-film Solar Filter, an extra eyepiece or two, and maybe a low/no power "Rigel" finder. Maybe include a book or two with simple seasonal sky charts and a subscription to Astronomy or Sky & Telescope magazines. For kids, use "Night Sky" magazine instead.

**Bottom line:**

- Skip the scopes below \$350 completely.
- You cannot get by for less than \$400 - an 8" Dobsonian is a reasonable starter.
- You'd best spend at least \$1000 - perhaps after some experience.
- If you are getting serious and can afford it, then \$2000 and up.

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