



St. Louis Astronomical Society

Library Telescope Program

“Star Party” and “Educational Program” Scheduling Guide

Visit us at <http://www.slasonline.org>

The St. Louis Astronomical Society is excited to support your library under our SLAS Library Telescope Program. In addition to providing general maintenance for your Library Telescope and serving as a resource to you and your staff for questions about astronomy, we can also provide support for “star parties” and “educational programs” for your staff and patrons.

Don't have a “Library Telescope” at your location? No problem. SLAS regularly provides star parties and educational programs to the community including cities, libraries, parks, hospitals, colleges, scout groups and more.

“Star Party” and “Educational” Programs

Star Party events are telescope viewing sessions using SLAS volunteer's time, equipment and knowledge. If a library telescope is available, we can also show your patrons and staff how to operate the telescope.

“Educational Programs” are events where we speak to your patrons or staff on a variety of topics related to astronomy including how to use the library telescope and how to navigate the night sky. The program can be classroom based or outside using the night sky.



“Star Party” events and “Educational Programs” can be scheduled together or separately. If scheduled together, the classroom training might be scheduled for sunset with the group convening outside for a star party when the skies grow dark.

What is the best night to have a Star Party?

When scheduling a “star party”, one of the favorite targets of the public is viewing the Moon. The best time to view the Moon is the two weeks following the “new Moon.” This date is found on most calendars. During this time, the Moon is available in the early evening. Once the Full Moon passes, the Moon rises later each night such that, within a few days of the Full Moon, the Moon will not rise until past most Star Party times. For utterly fantastic views of the moon, plan for nights around first quarter phase.

Want a handout for your event? Visit <http://www.skymaps.com> to download a PDF showing a map of the current month's sky. A great one page handout!

Of course, the Moon is not the only object in the sky. Planets, particularly Saturn and Jupiter, are always favorite targets. Planets do not appear the same time every year. You can consult your library resources or get our “Observing Guide” to see when planets will be available for particular month/year. To download a pdf version of our “Observing Guide”, visit our website located at <http://www.slasonline.org> and click on the “Library Telescope” link. On the library telescope webpage, you will find an “Observing Guide” link to download an observing guide in PDF format. Once downloaded, scroll to the last pages of this guide to find the section on planets.



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Other astronomical objects such as constellations, double stars, nebulae and galaxies can be a real treat for star party attendees. Many of these objects can be seen even in the bright lights of the city. However, the best views will be away from bright overhead lights and where trees/building are not blocking the horizon.

Another factor to consider in planning is how late or early sunset occurs. In the summer months, sunset can happen as late as 8:30pm, with the sky not getting dark enough to see any planets or stars until 9pm and after.

When scheduling, the 1st and 3rd Fridays are always reserved for SLAS activities. The weekend nights closest to New Moon are also reserved for SLAS member-only activities. Too many star parties in a given week can also be a challenge for SLAS volunteers. Check our SLAS website at <http://www.slasonline.org> to see what competing activities are on our calendar.

SLAS members enjoy supporting our community with our volunteer time. But we cannot make any guarantees that we'll be able to provide enough volunteers for any given event. What we can do is post a requested event on our official calendars and notify our membership of the event and see what kind of response we get. For that reason, we need at least six weeks advance notice to arrange volunteers.

How to schedule a “Star Party” or “Educational Program”

To request a “Star Party” or “educational program”, visit our website located at <http://www.slasonline.org> and click on “Request a Star Party” (use this link even if you are requesting a staff or patron “educational program”). Completing your request in this manner will take advantage of our scheduling system which is supported by a team of people.

Cancellations

Importantly, star parties and educational programs are contingent upon Mother Nature’s cooperation. Star parties should always be publicized that they are subject to cancellation due to weather. In particular, a cloudy, windy or particularly cold night can make the event unworkable.

While educational programs scheduled for inside are more weather resistant, these events can also be cancelled due to road conditions.

Still have Questions? Email us at librarytelescope@slasonline.org

The St. Louis Astronomical Society (SLAS) is a non-profit organization established in 1936. SLAS is devoted to the interest and advancement of the science of astronomy. SLAS has a rich tradition of serving the community through public outreach and educational programs.

SLAS does not charge for events free to the public but donations to SLAS are also not discouraged. Donations for past events have ranged from \$25 to \$750. The average is \$100. SLAS participation in any event is not contingent upon said donation. For any event that requires an admission fee to those attending, SLAS by-laws require SLAS Executive Board approval of an appropriate service fee to be charged to the requester for such an event.