

Acadiana Sky



One of the first things to do is to align the finder. Most telescopes will have either a “red dot finder” or a lensed finder that is a small telescope attached to the main one. To align the finder, first insert your lowest power eyepiece into the main scope (that will be the one with the biggest number printed on it, typically 20 to 25 mm, and will give the widest view). Aim and focus your main telescope at something on Earth at least a quarter mile away, and farther is better (communication towers work well for this, but trees waving in the breeze don’t). Center that object in the view, then look through the finder—likely that same object will not be centered in that. A red dot finder will have dials for correcting this, and a lensed finder will have typically three or six adjustment screws. In either case, carefully make the adjustments to center the target in the finder. Check back through the main scope and you’ll probably find that you moved it a bit so the target is no longer centered. Fix that and adjust the finder again. You may have to do this process 2 or 3 times to get both the scope and the finder pointing exactly the same way. Once that’s done, try not to bump or remove the finder to keep that good alignment (in fact, if possible, keep the telescope fully assembled and covered with a clear plastic bag when it’s indoors)! To find something in the sky, use your low power eyepiece, aim along the telescope tube like you are aiming a rifle, and move the telescope/finder combo to center the target in the finder. When you look through the low power eyepiece, you should see your target.

By the way, with a red dot finder, don’t forget to save the batteries by turning it off when you are not actually using it. To keep dew from hazing up the view, cover any kind of finder with its lens covers or a small plastic bag when it’s not actually being used.