

# New AL Observing Clubs

So, you have an idea for an observing club that the Astronomical League should offer to its members? And, you are willing to develop and maybe even act as coordinator? You have come to the right place.

The first thing you should do is check out the list to see if someone is already working on a club on that topic. The easiest way to do that is to contact one of the National Observing Program Coordinators: Aaron Clevenson or Mike Benson.

Then understand how the process works...

New clubs are reviewed and approved by the AL Council at an annual convention (ALCON), typically held in July or August. Submissions should be made to the AL officers and the AL National Observing Program Coordinators at least a month before the convention. This gives time for the AL Secretary to add your proposal to the agenda for the meeting of the Executive Council and gives time for members of the Council to review your proposal and to be prepared for the meeting. It also gives them time to ask questions and it gives you time to make any changes that they recommend. A proposed club must be a complete package when it is submitted.

New clubs must add to the existing observing program. This might be a club that explores a new class of objects or one that investigates a new feature of the universe. More advanced forms of existing clubs are also an option (Lunar II, Herschel II, etc.). Some overlap with objects in existing clubs is acceptable, but it should be as small as possible. The new club must also be of interest to a large group of the membership. It should be comprised of objects that would be accessible to members using their backyard telescopes.

The AL National Observing Program Coordinators are available to help you throughout the process. Please contact one of them through email, and they will work with you towards successful adoption of your new club.

Here are the steps involved:

1. Identify your idea for a new AL observing club.
2. Check with a National Observing Program Coordinator to see if that club is already under development.
3. Submit your topic to one of the AL National Observing Program Coordinators. They will add it to the list on the website and will communicate it to the AL Officers.
4. Develop your list of objects. This list varies from club to club, but the typical club has about 100 observations. You should note the object's designation, common name (if it has one), constellation, rights ascension, declination, object type (whatever is appropriate for your list), magnitude, and any other pertinent information about the object (class, classification, color, etc.).

5. Fill in the [Observing Club Proposal](#) form. This form will provide all of the information that is required by the AL Council to make a decision on the new club.
  6. Develop the manual if you plan to have one. See the information on [AL Manual Publication](#). Manuals are a benefit to the participants, the observing club, and the Astronomical League.
  7. Work with the AL National Observing Program Coordinators as needed and desired.
  8. Create the content for your club's page on the AL website.
  9. Submit your proposal to the AL Officers and the AL National Observing Program Coordinators at least a month before the annual convention. This submission should include:
    - The [Observing Club Proposal](#) form
    - Your list of objects
    - The proposed pin design
    - The proposed web page contents.
- This can be submitted through one of the AL National Observing Program Coordinators.
10. The proposal will be reviewed and the AL Council will make a decision at the annual convention. You are encouraged to attend and present the case for the new club at their meeting. If you do not attend, we will try to represent you as best as possible. If you plan to attend, please contact the AL Secretary to coordinate. There are three possible outcomes: They will accept the proposal, they will defer the decision pending additional information or changes, or they will decline to add the new club. Their decision will be given to the AL National Observing Program Coordinators who will forward it on to you. Normally, if additional information or changes are required, the club will be reconsidered at the following annual convention.
  11. After the club is approved, additional information will be provided regarding the ordering of pins and manuals. These are ordered through the Astronomical League's National Office to take advantage of quantity discounts.

We look forward to your submission. Please contact one of us if you have any questions.

**Aaron Clevenson**  
National Observing Program  
Coordinator  
aaron@clevenson.org

**Mike Benson**  
National Observing Program  
Coordinator  
ocentaurus@aol.com

# AL Observing Club Proposal Form

Name of proposed AL Observing Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number (with area code): \_\_\_\_\_

Club affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this an extension of an existing club? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If so, which one? \_\_\_\_\_

Observation types: \_\_\_\_\_ Naked-eye \_\_\_\_\_ Binoculars \_\_\_\_\_ Telescopes

Estimated minimum aperture for telescope if required: \_\_\_\_\_ inches.

Will "go-to" telescopes be allowed? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Will "go-to" vs. manual be noted on certificate? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Will visual vs. imaging be noted on certificate? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Are there multiple levels of certification? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If so, how many levels? \_\_\_\_\_

What will they be called? \_\_\_\_\_

Will each level have a pin, or only the top level? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Are you interested in being the coordinator for the club? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Please provide information on those who will be coordinating this club (other than you):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Will you develop a manual for the program? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Please submit a proposed budget for the first year. Total cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cost of pins: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cost of certificates: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (you will need to design them...)

Cost of postage: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cost of supplies: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cost to produce the manual: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (if there will be one...)

What do you expect the annual costs to be (after the first year)? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Who can review and approve the work (check all that apply)?

- A local astronomy club officer, ALCor, or awards coordinator – an email is then sent to the club coordinator (this is the recommended option).
- Anyone already certified in the observing club – an email is then sent to the club coordinator.
- Copies of observation logs sent to the club coordinator.

Please indicate which of these items will be required in the observation logs:

Recommended for each observation:

- Date (universal time or local time)
- Time (universal time or local time)  
to the:  minute  second
- Object observed
- Observer's latitude
- Observer's longitude
- Observer's altitude (if this is relevant to the observation)
- Seeing (how stable is the air)
- Transparency (the faintest magnitude star naked-eye visible)
- Short description of object observed
- Sketch
- Size of instrument used
- Magnification used
- Filters used (if this is relevant to the observation)

Recommended for each submission:

- Name of recipient
- Address of recipient
- Email of recipient
- Recipient's club affiliation
- Submitter's name
- Submitter's address
- Submitter's email
- Information on where to send the certificate and pin

Please indicate any other special requirements for each observation:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Is there any additional information that the AL Council should know about this club?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Please indicate any special equipment needs for members to do this club:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# AL Manual Publication

This information is related to the considerations and requirements related to developing manuals to be used by observing clubs. If you are developing an observing club for the AL, and you plan to include a manual, please review this information carefully.

## **The Process:**

All new manuals and all revisions for existing manuals must be submitted to the AL National Observing Program Coordinators. They will be reviewed by them and will be reviewed by the AL Publications Committee. You will likely be contacted by the Publications Committee to discuss copyright issues for all new and revised manuals.

## **General Information:**

If you plan to publish a manual for the new club, either online or in the form of a book, it is important that you read these instructions carefully. You must also send a copy to the AL Publications Chairman by June 1. A copy of your manual should also be made available to the Council members for their consideration at the annual meeting.

Decide if you want an online or a printed manual. The AL sells printed manuals. Their profits provide seed money for the next observing club and money for purchasing pins and certificates for your club. Having both print and online manuals is not recommended. The Sales Office sets the price of printed manuals.

Costs must be included in the documentation sent. You can contact other club coordinators to get information on the most economical printing methods and the most economical number of copies to make (if hardcopy). Remember to include the big cost: Having the printer mail the manuals to the AL Offices in Kansas City and two copies to the Publications Chairman for the copyright application.

You will likely be asked for complimentary copies of your manual. The AL recommends no more than 5 complimentary copies. These go to the author. Do not promise a complimentary copy to every contributor.

## **Copyrights:**

You, as the author, will be asked to assign the copyright of your manual to the Astronomical League. You will not receive any payment or any royalties from your manual. The AL will not consider manuals that are currently being considered by other publishing houses. The AL, however, will promptly notify you after ALCON if they are not able to publish your manual so that you can submit it to other publishers if you wish.

If you use graphs/ photos created by other people, get their permission in writing. Keep these letters in your file. If the AL publishes the work, it will copyright their material in the AL's name. However, contributors are free to submit the same material to other organizations later. There is no fee, but the AL asks that any other publication place a credit line under the work with the words "Copyright Astronomical League. Used with permission."

If you are using photos or charts from federal agencies, ask if you can print their material. Usually tax-supported agencies have no fees, but some cooperative ventures do. Even if they would ordinarily charge fees, explain it is for educational purposes and that only xxxx number of copies will be printed, and most important, the AL is not selling the manual for a profit and is a non-profit group. Offer to send them a copy of the finished manual. Be sure to send that copy.

If you want to use charts or photos from commercial publishing houses, ask for permission. . Even if they would ordinarily charge fees, explain it is for educational purposes and that only xxxx number of copies will be printed, and most important, the AL is not selling the manual for a profit and is a non-profit group. Offer to send them a copy of the finished manual. Be sure to send that copy.

Whenever you send a request to either a government agency or a commercial publishing house, include the quote: "If I do not hear from you by (date)\_\_\_\_\_, I will assume that you are granting permission for this item, without fee." Keep records of all letters, date mailed, etc.

Use the following words on the copyright page:

© Copyright 20xx by the Astronomical League. All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing from the Astronomical League. Limited permission is granted for the downloading, reproducing, and/or printing of the material for personal use.

Astronomical League  
9201 Ward Parkway, Suite 1000  
Kansas City, MO 64114  
816-DEEP-SKY  
www.astroleague.org

### **Organization of the Manual:**

The manual should contain these sections.

Cover

Back of Cover (blank)

Title Page (right-hand page)

Copyright page (back of title page)

Preface (right hand page), no page number

Acknowledgements can follow the Preface. Don't start a new page for Acknowledgements.

Contents Page (starts right hand), no page number. Contents Page is not necessary in a small manual.

First chapter (starts right hand page), begin with the number 1 and paginate to the end of the book.

Observations sheet.

## **Manual Guidelines:**

Typeface is important. Do not use a typeface with curved quotes, called Smart Quotes (“). They don’t work for minutes and seconds. Use a straight quote typeface such as Arial. If Arial gives you curved quotes and you are using Word, change your smart quotes by Tools>Autocorrect>Autoformat as you type>unclick smart quotes.

Some questions to think about as you write your manual:

- Do you really need chapters?
- If you do, how small a type can you use that still looks nice?
- Do you need all that space below the chapter title?
- Can you use smaller margins at the top and the bottom?
- Is the introduction short and to the point?
- Do you really need Appendices?
- Can you call them Chapters?

Remember that this is an observing manual, not a treatise on the beauty of the stars. If this is a manual for advanced observers, don’t waste their time on describing magnitude. Decide what your particular audience needs. Give them no more, no less.

Keep quotes to a minimum. If you use a quote, it is better to say, “John Jones likes an HII filter,” than to say, “John Jones said, ‘I like an HII filter.’” For long quotes, copyright permission may be necessary. Avoid having to get permission for quotes.

Be sure every photo and every graph is necessary and shows something important. Don’t put photos in just to show something pretty. Don’t use graphs if you can say, “magnitude decreases proportionally.”

For the cover, use a light colored, high-quality cover stock. Do not use a dark color. Dark colors often bleed in the field and in the Sales Office storeroom. Use a binding that lies flat when used in the field.

For the paper, note that high-gloss papers reflect red light back into the eyes.

Observing sheet: Discuss with the AL Observing Program Coordinators what should be included...site, date, time, etc. Do not use a full 8 \_ x 11 sheet for one observation if possible. Reduce the margins to \_ inch, put 4 observations/page, etc. Fewer sheets to mail to coordinators, or to duplicate, mean lower costs for our observers.

Good luck and remember that the Publications Committee is available to answer any questions you may have about the process.

Sue Wheatley  
Publications Chairman  
MSWheatley@consolidated.net  
October 2008