

Sky Puppy Program Chair:

Grace Aikman
5704 Belle Point Road
North Little Rock, AR 72116
(501) 944-8584
graceaikman@yahoo.com

Introduction:

While the vast majority of the observing programs are geared to beginning and advanced adult observers, the Sky Puppies Program is designed just for the younger observer. The Astronomical League encourages young observers to hone their skills early since most hobbies and vocational interests begin at an early age.

The purpose of the Sky Puppies Program is to familiarize young observers with the night sky and whet their appetite to eventually graduate from a Sky Puppy to a Sky Hound. This process is usually begun when a parent takes their child along on observing trips. Unfortunately, many of the observing programs are somewhat too abstract, even esoteric, to hold the attention of the younger observer. In addition many observing parents can't justify the expense of a second telescope necessary for the child to use when both parent and child are observing together. The Sky Puppies Program was created to fill just that gap. To fulfill the goals of this program and receive the Sky Puppies pin and certificate, the young observer must use only their eyes, a pair of inexpensive binoculars, pencil & paper, and charts or a planisphere. A Sky Puppy will learn the rudiments of observing, how to read a chart or planisphere, how to find and identify constellations, stars, and deep-sky objects.

In addition, a Sky Puppy will learn that the night sky is not just about dots and fuzzy blobs, but about history, culture, and stories. Their goal will be to draw, identify, and describe 15 IAU constellations. Know the difference between an asterism and a constellation. Be able to tell at least two traditional stories implied by the constellations (stories may originate from any documented cultural tradition.) And, be able to use a pair of binoculars to locate 5 deep-space objects and identify what they are.

Membership Requirements:

To qualify for membership in the Sky Puppies Program, the observer must be 10 years of age or younger. Either they or their parent must be an Astronomical League member through either an affiliated club or as a Member-at-large. They must complete all of the Sky Puppy Projects with each project's completion substantiated through log notes,

drawings, or other appropriate documentation. To receive the Sky Puppy pin and certificate, copies of all documentation must be signed by a parent and submitted with a letter stating the date-of-birth of the candidate to the Sky Puppies Program chair OR reviewed by a society officer who must then forward a letter stating that the observations have been properly completed and that the candidate meets the age requirement. The young observer must complete all projects prior to his/her 11th birthday and must submit their club membership request no later than their 12th birthday. The young observer should also state in their membership request whether the pin and certificate should be sent directly to him/her, or to his society officer for formal presentation (please provide address.)

Sky Puppy Manual:

Each Sky Puppy candidate is encourage to purchase the Sky Puppy Manual. The special edition manual includes a variety of projects tailored specifically for the Sky Puppy. The workbook style enhances learning through hands-on projects, matching word exercises, coloring, word games, and includes a make-your-own planisphere project. Included with the manual is an audio cd-rom with a variety of constellation stories artfully re-told. Order the Sky Puppy Manual from Astronomy League Sales.

Sky Puppy Projects:

Sky Puppy Projects:

1. Must draw by freehand 15 constellation patterns (with or without stick-figures and not necessarily from memory)
2. Without aids or assistance, must be able to positively identify in the night sky the same 15 constellations
3. Must be able to identify and briefly describe any major stars or naked-eye objects in each constellation (i.e. "Betelgeuse is a red super-giant star", or, "that fuzzy patch is the Andromeda galaxy")
4. Must be able to tell 2 different traditional constellation stories from a cultural tradition of the child's choice.
5. Must be able to use binoculars to locate and identify 5 deep-space objects from this list suited to binocular observing.
 - o M42, the Orion nebula
 - o M31, the Andromeda galaxy
 - o Albireo, a double star in Cygnus
 - o The large and/or small Magellanic Clouds
 - o The Pleiades
 - o The Hyades
 - o a Globular cluster
 - o The Beehive
6. Must be able to identify and describe the Milky Way
7. Must be able to find the North Star (or the Southern Cross)

8. Must keep a log of all observations. Each entry must provide object, date, naked-eye or binocular, and notes.
9. Must draw a rough sketch of one of the following:
 - Jupiter with as many of the 4 Galilean moons as you can see
 - The sun with sunspots
 - A crater on the moon

Useful Observing tools for an aspiring Sky Puppy:

Necessary, but not required (borrow a friend's):

- Planisphere (DIY kit in the Sky Puppy Manual)
- red flashlight
- binoculars (preferably 7x50, though a 4-power will suffice)

Nice, but not necessary:

- Log sheets as found in the Sky Puppy Manual
- Charts or observing software
- Observing chair (foldable lounge chair)

Reference List:

- The New Patterns in the Sky (Myths and Legends in the Stars): by Julius D. W. Staal
- The Night Sky Planisphere: by David Chandler
- Sky Atlas for Small Telescopes and Binoculars: By David Chandler
- NightWatch: A Practical Guide to Viewing the Universe, 3rd: by Dickinson
- The Stars: A New Way to See Them: by Hans Augusto Rey
- Find the Constellations: by Hans Augusto Rey
- Turn Left at Orion: by Guy Consolmagno

Web Sites:

Astronomical League: www.astroleague.org
Sky & Telescope Magazine: www.skypub.com
Astronomy Magazine: www.astronomy.com
Orion Telescope: www.telescope.com
Space.com: www.space.com

The Nine Planets: <http://nineplanets.org/>