What is the Best Telescope for Me?

The best telescope for you is the one that you will use!

1. Consider trying binoculars first.
   - Easy to use, easy to store, ultra-portable
   - Can see large sections of the sky at once
   - Can use them for daytime activities
   An excellent size is 10 x 50:
   10 = magnification
   50 = the diameter in millimeters of the front lens.

2. Before you buy a telescope, ask yourself these questions...
   - How well do you know the night sky? Finding objects is not easy without practice. A quality computerized "go-to" telescope is costly and its operation must be mastered.
   - How hard is the scope to assemble? If it is too complicated, you won’t use it.
   - Where will you do most of your observing? A city resident will likely need to cart it to a dark site.
   - Where do you think you’ll be in the hobby in three years? If you really like astronomy, you’ll outgrow a small telescope in six months.
   - Will you eventually pursue astrophotography? You’ll need a sturdy, motor driven mount that tracks accurately.

3. Telescope Diameter Dilemma
   Since most sky objects are relatively dim, a telescope needs to gather large amounts of light. Therefore, larger diameter telescopes are better than smaller ones. However, they are also bulkier — and less likely to make it outside in cold weather!

4. Telescope and observing tips:
   - Magnification — low power is used for most objects.
   - Finderscope — a small one is nearly useless.
   - The larger the scope’s diameter, the better views it gives, but the less portable it is.
   - If the telescope has poor optics or a wobbly mount, it will be frustrating to use.
   - Finding interesting objects requires practice and patience.
   - Focus on learning the stars and constellations.
   - Never point the telescope at the sun without the proper filter installed ON THE FRONT of the scope.
   - Don’t expect what you see in the eyepiece to closely resemble what you see in photographic images.

5. Visit your local amateur astronomy club!
   - You can see and try the various sizes and types of telescopes.
   - Some clubs have programs for lending telescopes.
   - Members will be happy to guide you through the scope selection process.

Common Telescope Designs

- Reflector
  - Easy to use
  - Least expensive telescope design
  - Great for clusters, nebulae, and galaxies
  - Can can be bulky
  - Generally not suitable for astrophotography

- Refractor
  - Easy to use
  - Tend to be costly
  - Not suitable for dim objects
  - Can be used for astrophotography
  - Great for the moon and planets

- Schmidt-Cassegrain
  - Portable, but heavy
  - Tend to be expensive
  - Suitable for astrophotography
  - All-purpose telescope