

Guide to AAVSO Observing and Reporting

By reporting your visual magnitude estimates to AAVSO, you are providing valuable scientific data for astronomers and researchers, helping to better understand the behavior of variable stars and novae.

Detailed instructions for visual observing can be found in the AAVSO Visual Observing Manual: www.aavso.org/visual-observing-manual . Close study of this manual is recommended before making visual observations. The manual explains object designations, the magnitude scale, how to use the Variable Star Plotter to generate charts with comparison stars, how to estimate brightness of your targets by interpolation, and how to record observations. Paper logs may be kept, or observations can be recorded later as spreadsheet entries.

To report your data, you first must have an assigned Observer Code. Getting a code is a two-step process.

1. Register with AAVSO as a new user. Fill out the form on this page: www.aavso.org/apps/register/ . There is no fee to register and you do not need to become a member of AAVSO to report observations.
2. Once registered, you can request your Observer Code: www.aavso.org/myrequestinitials .

You are now ready to report your results to AAVSO. The basic online reporting tool is called WebObs: www.aavso.org/webobs . The easiest method is to submit observations individually. Click on that link, choose Visual, and fill in the form. For each entry, there are help links to guide you. Note, Universal Time for your observations is required, formats are explained there. Comments are optional. Later, you may want to upload your observations from a file. See the website for descriptions of the file format, and software that can export the data in the proper format.

After reporting your data, you'll want to use the Light Curve Generator (www.aavso.org/lcg) to compare your observations with those of others. Try entering different time periods to see the behavior of the object over the short and long terms. There is a box to enter your Observer Code, so that your particular observations are highlighted.

The AAVSO website has a great deal of other info and advice, including online forums and discussions.