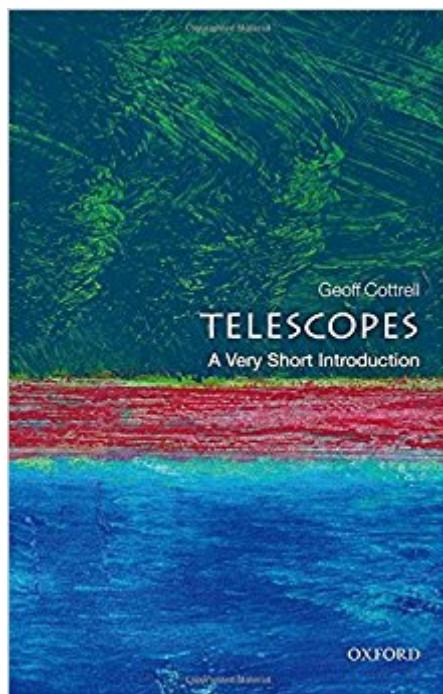


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Telescopes: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

From the first, telescopes have made dramatic revelations about the Universe and our place in it. Galileo's observations of the Moon's cratered surface and discovery of Jupiter's four big satellites profoundly altered the perception of the heavens. Over the past century, the rapid development of computer technology and sophisticated materials allowed enormous strides in the construction of telescopes. Modern telescopes range from large Earth-based optical telescopes and radio arrays linking up across continents, to space-based telescopes capturing the Universe in infrared, ultraviolet, X-rays, and gamma rays. In combination, they have enabled us to look deep into the Universe and far back in time, capturing phenomena from galactic collisions to the formation of stars and planetary systems, and mapping the faint glow remaining from the Big Bang. In this Very Short Introduction, Geoffrey Cottrell describes the basic physics of telescopes, the challenges of overcoming turbulence and distortion from the Earth's atmosphere, and the special techniques used to capture X-rays and gamma rays in space telescopes. He explains the crucial developments in detectors and spectrographs that have enabled the high resolution achieved by modern telescopes, and the hopes for the new generation of telescopes currently being built across the world.

ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The prose is authoritative and insightful * Ben Evans, BBC Sky At Night *

Dr. Cottrell began his career as a radio astronomer at Cambridge. He then moved to plasma physics, working on nuclear fusion at the Joint European Torus (JET), where he discovered a new form of super-thermal radio emission from alpha-particles, and at Culham. He was appointed Director of the Culham International Summer School for Plasma Physics from 2006-2011 where he lectured. He has now returned to his first love, astrophysics, and is working with Chris Lintott at Oxford University on the citizen science project, Galaxy Zoo.

This book tries to cover a lot in relatively few pages. It covers telescopes at all wavelengths, from gamma rays to radio waves. It covers telescope technology. And the astronomy done with telescopes, and the physics behind the astronomy. The author sometimes introduces technical terminology in very brief discussions where it is more of a distraction than an aid in understanding. One case that particularly caught my attention was his introduction of the term "baryonic matter" to refer to visible matter. Not only does the term not add any value over just using "visible matter", his use is not accurate, as there are theories of baryonic dark matter. Reading this book I wasn't sure whether the author was writing a short introduction for lay readers or for astrophysicists. I found it too technical for the former, and probably not informative for the latter. The book would have been stronger with a narrower scope and less jumping between topics.

My grandson requested it and as I read a couple of pages, I saw why. It was great book that he wanted.

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