



Astronomical League

Observing Program Division

White Paper

Master Observer Progression

Principles

This document is designed to help clarify the principles behind the Master Observer Progression. It lists the principles that were the basis for the development of the Progression and explains their rationale.

A. General Principles:

1. The purpose of the Master Observer Progression is to provide a mechanism to:
 - a) Help guide members through a process of education and skill development that will facilitate and enhance their observing.
 - b) Recognize those members who have made progress along that journey.
2. The Progression is designed to encourage members to:
 - a) Broaden and deepen their understanding of the universe.
 - b) Broaden and deepen their observing skills.
3. The Progression is NOT just an excuse to give members more pins.
4. Observer, Master Observer, Master Imager, Binocular Master Observer, and Advanced (Master) Observer awards are attainable to the members with only the standard equipment:
 - a) Observer – a telescope.
 - b) Master Observer – a telescope.
 - c) Master Imager – a telescope, a camera, and a computer.
 - d) Binocular Master Observer – binoculars.
 - e) Advanced (Master) Observer – a telescope.
5. Master Observer – Silver, Gold, and Platinum awards will require the member to use additional skills equipment beyond the normal.
 - a) Master Observer: Silver – Outreach and Sketching.
 - b) Master Observer: Gold – Hydrogen Alpha Telescope.
 - c) Master Observer: Platinum – Dark Sky Advocate and Radio Telescopes.

B. The Master Observer Award will not be modified from its original form.

C. The current levels of the Progression and their purposes are:

1. Observer – to provide recognition of members who have accomplished the basics of amateur astronomy observing.
2. Master Observer – to recognize those members who have attained a level of mastery of amateur astronomy.
3. Master Imager – to recognize those members who have attained a level of mastery of amateur astronomy through the use of imaging.
4. Binocular Master Observer – to recognize those members who have attained a level of mastery of amateur astronomy using binoculars.
5. Advanced (Master) Observer – to recognize those members who have gone beyond the basic mastery of amateur astronomy and broadened their knowledge and observations of various types of astronomical objects.
6. Master Observer: Silver – to recognize those members who have continued to broaden and deepen their understanding and observing skills of amateur astronomy.
7. Master Observer: Gold – to recognize those members who have continued to broaden and deepen their understanding and observing skills of amateur astronomy.
8. Master Observer: Platinum – to recognize those members who have continued to broaden and deepen their understanding and observing skills of amateur astronomy.

D. Other Considerations

1. Some Observing Programs are specifically designed to enhance basic skills. Some examples of these skills are:
 - a) Dark Sky Advocacy.
 - b) Sketching.
 - c) Manual acquisition of targets.
 - d) Basic navigation of the night sky.
 - e) Dealing with light pollution.
2. Observing Programs will permit the use of Imaging whenever possible and appropriate.
3. Alternatives will be provided to enable southern sky observers to complete the progression.

E. General Philosophical Principles

1. The top levels of the Progression are expected to represent a lifetime of observing. They may require decades of observing to complete.
2. Not all members will achieve the top levels of the Progression. It is not the intention of the Progression to be a goal or target for all members. This may be for a variety of reasons:
 - a) Lack of desire. Astronomy should be fun. Members should only pursue those activities that bring them joy and satisfaction.

- b) Time. The upper levels of the Progression require a significant amount of time to accomplish all of the observations required.
- c) Cost / Lack of Equipment access. Some members will not have access to the special equipment required:
 - i. Larger Telescopes
 - ii. Solar Filters
 - iii. H-Alpha Telescope
 - iv. Astronomy Cameras
 - v. Radio Telescopes
 - vi. Spectroscopes



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