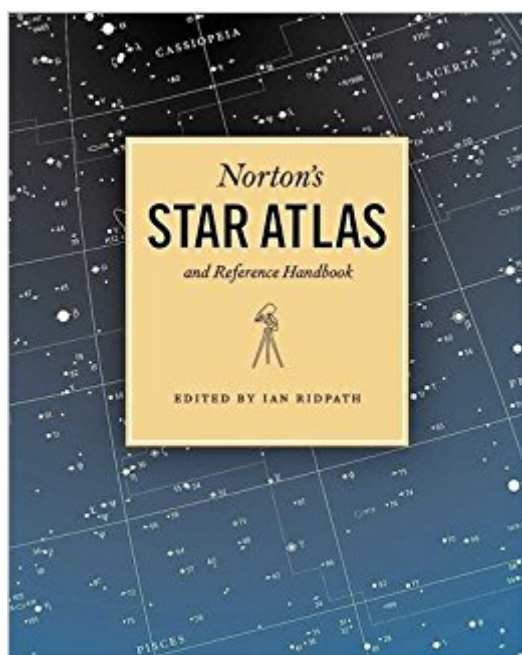


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# Norton's Star Atlas And Reference Handbook: And Reference Handbook, 20th Edition



## Synopsis

First published in 1910, coinciding with the first of two appearances by Halley's Comet during the book's life, Norton's owes much of its legendary success to its unique maps, arranged in slices known as gores, each covering approximately one-fifth of the sky. Every star visible to the naked eye under the clearest skies - down to magnitude 6.5 - is charted along with star clusters, nebulae and galaxies. Extensive tables of data on interesting objects for observation accompany each of the precision drawn maps. Preceding the maps is the unique and authoritative reference handbook covering time-keeping and positional measurements on the celestial sphere; the Sun, Moon and other bodies of the Solar System; telescopes and other equipment for observing and imaging the sky; and stars, nebulae and galaxies. Throughout, succinct fundamental principles and practical tips guide the reader into the night sky. The appendices Units and Notation, Astronomical Constants, Symbols and Abbreviations, and Useful Addresses complete what has long been the only essential reference for the stargazer." Now presented more accessibly than ever before, the text and tables of the 20th edition have been revised and updated to take account of the new and exciting developments in our observation of the cosmos. The redesigned star maps offer outstanding legibility, in the living room or under a red light in the dark outdoors.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Norton's Star Atlas is the most famous astronomical reference in the world, having guided thousands of professional and amateur stargazers in their search of the night skies. The 1998 edition is completely revised and expanded, with maps drawn to standard epoch 2000.0, using

computer techniques to achieve unprecedented accuracy. You'll find every object visible to the naked eye, as well as star clusters, galaxies, and other celestial objects. Norton's also includes indispensable observation hints and technical explanations, with pointers to other information sources. Whether you're using a telescope, binoculars, or just your eyes, Norton's is your guide to what's up there. --Therese Littleton

Now in its 20th edition (the last was published in 1998 by Addison-Wesley), this guide to the stars has been helpfully updated and beautifully redesigned with new data tables and sections on the recently developed computer-controlled telescopes and CCD imaging. In his informative and engaging preface, Ridpath, editor of the Oxford Dictionary of Astronomy, narrates the history of the book and explains its charts. The book opens with a chapter entitled "Position and Time," which clearly explains such physical concepts such as "The Celestial Sphere" and "Daily Rotation." The chapter "Stars, Nebulae and Galaxies" offers tables of constellations with the names, abbreviations, area and size of each. For moon lovers there is a four-page spread that clearly outlines the moon's craters; for stargazers, the highlight comes at the end of the book: 18 sky charts. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

It has both- good star atlas- amateur astronomy handbook in very compact format. With widespread use of Dobsonian reflectors, deep sky objects like clusters, nebulae and galaxies are the center of interest, but they are not so impressive with small refractors. This book is mostly targeted toward solar system objects, double star and variable stars which are good objects for small telescopes. So, this book is not good for owners of Dobsonian reflectors, but especially well suited for owners of small refractors.

I direct my review specifically to those who give this splendid and unique publication less than a 4 star review, and I can summarize my rebuke in two words: twentieth edition. This book, first published in 1910 and updated and republished every half decade since then, is the single most successful and enduring publication (in any language!) for amateur astronomers. Why? The simple answer: if any fact or concept is essential to your understanding and enjoyment of astronomy or to the development for your future expertise, then it is clearly documented or explained in "Norton's Star Atlas and Reference Handbook." Despite a lot of cosmetic changes in formatting, color and typeface, the book has really changed very little. This in itself testifies to the focus on enduring fundamentals. There are concise, clear, authoritative chapters on celestial positions and time, the

basics of astronomical observing and photography, detailed information on the solar system, an extensive discussion of "deep sky" objects (double stars, star clusters, nebulae, galaxies), and finally the evergreen star charts. much of the detail information is organized as compact, easy to consult tables, including lists of the messier objects (p. 131), types of variable stars (pp. 124-127), orbital characteristics of major double stars (pp. 121-122), physical parameters of various stellar luminosity or spectral types (p. 117), the nearest stars (p.111), the brightest stars (p.111), the proper names of stars (p.105), principal meteor showers (p.92), the major named features on mars (p.77), the planetary satellites (p.69-70), all the lunar named craters, facing detailed maps of the moon's surface (pp. 56-63), greenwich siderial time and global time zones in relation the universal time (pp.19-20) -- along with many charts and diagrams. there is a glossary of astronomical terms, tables of measurement units and symbols, a bibliography of star catalogs, a directory of astronomical societies worldwide ... the list goes on and on.and all that is only the "handbook" side of the bargain. the "star atlas", laid out as two page "gores" of the sky (from 60 degrees north to 60 degrees south, along with two circular polar maps from 60 to 90 degrees), were innovative and remain unique in their ability to convey the big picture, grand panorama spectacle of the night sky as it appears during different seasons of the year, while at the same time including all stars visible to the naked eye, marking all variable stars as concentric circles of minimum and maximum magnitude, and marking all double stars with a thin line through the star dot. open star clusters, globular clusters, planetary nebulae, diffuse nebulae and galaxies are all indicated by distinctive symbols and the labeling is clear but small enough to minimize visual clutter. following each two page atlas panorama is a two page summary of the most important, interesting and downright spectacular variable stars, double stars and deep sky objects to be found in that part of the sky -- catalog name, popular name, celestial coordinates, magnitudes, positional statistics and descriptive notes. these summaries exemplify the vast trove of catalogs and detailed descriptions of all variety of celestial objects that are available in more scholarly publications.the essential point is that all the objects located in the star atlas represent both a century's worth of observer experience as to what is memorable and important to observe in the night sky, and also what is practical and relatively easy to observe with small (4" - 6") amateur telescopes -- the kind any youngster or teenager might receive as a gift.while i pity the poor souls who lacked sense enough to return for exchange a book with an obvious printer's error, i can state that my copy of norton's shows all stars on chart #13 perfectly clearly; that the charts are perfectly legible when consulted at night with a red flashlight; that the binding is robust and the paper (semigloss, heavy) withstands dew, cold and frequent use.and while norton's cannot be compared to the many exemplary star atlases available today (the

cambridge star atlas or sky atlas 2000), it has always easily assumed a supporting role -- for example, alongside the magnificent "atlas coeli skalnate pleso" star atlas published by antonin becvar in the mid 20th century (the atlas on which all wil tirion's atlas designs are based).life is full of regrettable errors and lapses. on topic here, those would include letting misguided reviews confuse your choice of astronomy books -- or gifting a youngster with a new telescope without also giving him or her a copy of "norton's" to guide their learning. it is a timeless, stimulating and indispensable reference.

The content of this atlas is superb. Having started with a 13th edition in 1959, I have learned to love the layout of the charts and in this edition they show up beautifully under red light. The reference notes in the 20th edition are still have the same idiosyncratic style as the old edition, even though the content has been completely changed to reflect the advances in astronomy over 50 years. It is a delight to browse through the reference notes and use the atlas when observing. Now for the bad news. You shouldn't really use it, except as a coffee table exhibit. My 13th edition is still in good condition after extensive use, but after less than a year of not very robust use, the 20th has now cracked at the spine and pages have started coming out. It astounds me that the publishers can invest so much effort in producing a product with such high quality content and then proceed to use an inferior binding. Star atlases have to be taken into the field and roughed up a bit and get a little damp with dew. If they can't handle this, there is no point in buying them.

In a previous review I expressed disappointment that a printing error seriously marred the usefulness of the latest edition of this updated classic. Well, the publisher tracked me down and sent a copy of the second printing. I am delighted to report that all the errors have been fixed and this new edition is a wonderful addition to any amateur astronomer's bookshelf (or eyepiece case). The text begins with excellent discussions of time and celestial coordinate systems (often confusing to beginner and long-timer alike). The new higher contrast moon maps are a major improvement over the washed-out maps in some previous editions. The heart of the atlas are the 16 starcharts, presented in the two-disk/six gore format familiar to lovers of the previous editions of the Norton's. These maps are more readable than ever, giving visual precedence to the stars themselves rather than labels, grid lines, etc. A thoughtful touch was to print the charts with a generous gutter margin so that stars near the celestial equator don't get trapped out of sight down in the spine of the book. As a matter of style I differ (perhaps) with another reviewer who would have liked to have seen color photographs--I guess I am nostalgic for the familiar "Norton's Green" and appreciate that editor

Ridpath and designer Nix have continued the tradition in what is otherwise a major update of the classic. They are to be commended for this beautiful, useful, and authoritative book.

In the Late 1950s, in Junior High School, I had a 6" f/8 Cave Astrola reflector that I used virtually all the time. The only star guide I had was a hard bound copy of Norton's Star Atlas. I have no idea what edition it was but it was about 1/3 as thick as the 20th edition. The star maps are still there, black stars on a white background, thank goodness, but there is the huge addition of editorial material that I am finding to be a great resource for information, both current and historical. I'm pleased with the purchase. If you are looking for star maps only, this probably isn't the one for you. But if you like to have a handy information resource on hand while star gazing, this can prove to be very useful. Check out the table contents and see what you think.

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