

A Brief Column for the Beginning Stargazer Introducing a New Astronomical Term Each Month

Astronomy is rich with terminology. This column will help beginning stargazers ease into the world of astronomy by *briefly introducing* a new but *basic astronomical term* (word, acronym or abbreviation) each month. This list, which began January 1999 with the letter *a*, is alphabetical but uses successive letters for each month's entry. (We will return to the beginning of the alphabet after twenty-six months.)

Word of the Month for April 1999

deep sky or **deep-sky object** A nonstellar astronomical object not belonging to the solar system.

This expression is not precisely defined and is used primarily by amateur astronomers to differentiate solar system bodies (planets, satellites, asteroids, and comets) from galactic and extragalactic objects (such as star clusters, nebulae and galaxies). This term does not usually apply to individual stars.

Deep sky objects are best seen under dark skies using large aperture telescopes. Amateurs often prefer Dobsonian reflector telescopes for deep sky objects because large aperture Dobsonian telescopes are relatively inexpensive.

References. J. Mitton 1991, *Concise Dictionary of Astronomy* (Oxford Univ. Press); I. Ridpath 1997, *A Dictionary of Astronomy* (Oxford Univ. Press). ✧