

How to make a Galilean (“galley-lay-lan”) Telescope

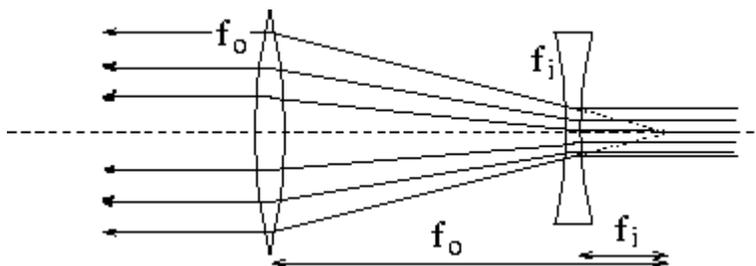


Figure 1 – Diagram of a Galilean telescope – one positive and one negative lens

- Find the focal length of the big lens – the objective lens

Uses: Yardstick, ruler, big lens.

With the Sun overhead, hold the big lens over some concrete or paper on table. (If it is overcast, ask your presenter to use a collimated light source.)

Place the Sun behind you and over your shoulder. Move the lens so the image of the Sun focuses to a point or the smallest possible circle. (Be careful you do not set the paper on fire!) Measure the focal length on the yardstick or ruler.

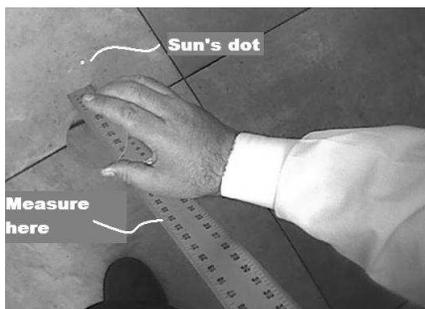


Figure 2 - Finding the focal length (75 cm lens) with a yardstick and the Sun – make the light circle as small as possible

If the Sun is overcast by clouds, use a light bright light source -



Figure 3 - Finding the focal length (20cm lens) with a ruler and light source – make the light circle as small as possible

Use the ruler or yardstick to measure the distance from the middle of the lens to the flat surface. Just estimate – you do not have to be accurate.

A third method to find the focal length of a lens is to sight along a yardstick. Slowly move the lens away from your eye. As the lens approaches one focal length, the image will magnify to infinity and invert.

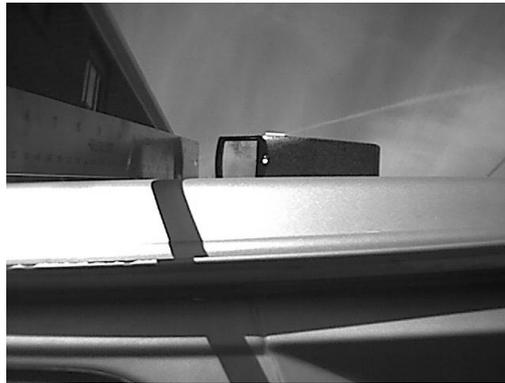


Figure 4 - Finding the focal length (17cm lens) with a ruler and positioning the lens at the point where a distant image first inverts

This third method is sensitive your vision. If you wear eyepieces, the power of your eyeglass lens will change the measurement. In the preceding figure, a tree across the street is seen in the lens upside down.

Again, just estimate the focal length distance. It is not important to be precise.

Big positive lens focal length is _____ inches or _____ centimeters.

The big lens is a positive lens – also called a “convex” lens. It is “positive” because it sticks “out” from the middle.

- **Find the focal length of the small negative lens**

The small lens is different. It is a “negative” lens. The small lens is called negative lens because it sticks “in” towards the middle – instead of “out” from the middle like a positive lens. A positive lens converges light rays to focal point. A negative lens diverges light rays, but still has a focal length.

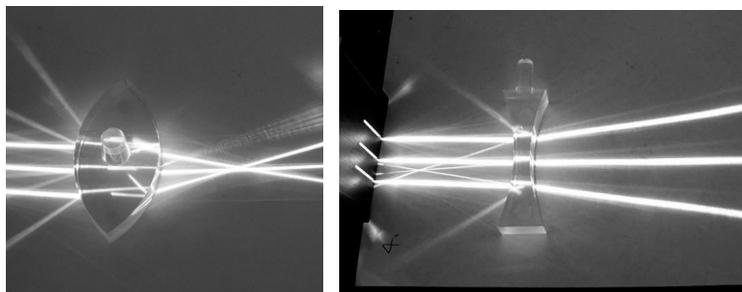


Figure 5 – Light traveling through a positive lens (left) and negative lens (right) compared

The focal length of a negative lens can be measured using the spot test. Take a piece of paper and using a pencil, poke a hole in it. Measure the size of the hole with a ruler in millimeters. Put the ruler on the ground outdoors with the Sun overhead. Now hold the paper and hole over the negative lens with the Sun directly overhead. Move the lens and paper back and forth until the circle of light passing through the lens is twice the size as the hole in the paper.

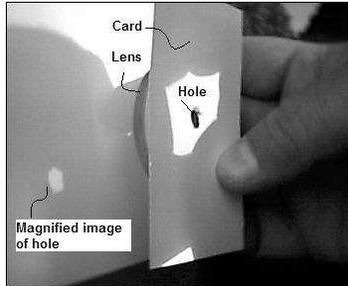


Figure 6 - Measuring the focal length of a small negative lens

The lens is now one focal length from the ground. Measure the distance from the center of the lens to the magnified image of the hole.

Small negative lens focal length is _____ inches or _____ centimeters.

- **What is the difference of the two focal lengths?**

Lens	Focal length
Big lens	
Small lens	-
Difference of the focal lengths	=

- **Make the telescope**

Materials: Yardstick, big lens, small lens, and some way to hold the big lens, e.g. – coffee cap lid, putty, laundry clothes pin.

Gather everything you need.

Put the yardstick on a table with one end at the edge of the table. Make sure you point the yardstick away from the Sun.

Use the coffee cup lid, the dry clothes pin or the putty to hold the big lens upright on the yardstick.

Put the big lens on the yardstick a couple of inches short of the “Difference of the focal lengths” that you subtracted above.



Figure 7 - The telescope set up on the yardstick

Hold the small lens in your hand. At the end of the yardstick, look through the small lens towards the big lens. Move the small lens back and forth towards and away from the big lens.

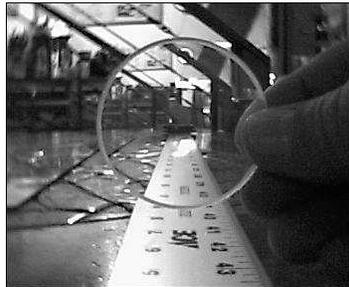


Figure 8 – Looking down the yardstick through the little and big lenses to see telescopic magnification

The telescope will come into focus when you are holding the two lenses apart as the same distance as the “Difference of the focal lengths.”

When the telescope comes into focus, you will see a magnified image.

Or just hand-hold both lenses at just about the right length – the “Difference of the focal lengths” above.



Figure 9 – Or just hand-hold the lenses apart at about the “Difference of the focal lengths” distance you found above – big lens further from your eye – little lens closer to your eye

Although you can hand-hold your lenses to make a telescope, it is easier to hold and point the lenses when they are fixed inside a tube – making the familiar shape of the *refractor telescope* also called a *refracting telescope*.



Figure 10 - A basic refractor hobby telescope – a tube that holds two lenses apart at the “Difference of the Focal Length” distance

- **How much bigger is the image that you see in your telescope as compared to the actual object?**

Lens	Focal length
Big lens (divided by)	
Small lens	/
Magnification	=

- **The image you will see in the telescope is *virtual*. What is a *virtual* image?**

While holding up your telescope, move your head backwards and forwards from the little or eyepiece lens. Notice that the magnified image does not, like most things in the world, get bigger and smaller as you move your head closer to further away from the eyepiece lens.

Images in the world are *real* or *virtual*.

Real images are what we experience for most nearby objects. Ask a friend to stand 10' feet (about 3 meters) away. Look at your friend's head. Move closer and then further away from your friend. The angular size or apparent size of their head will become bigger or smaller.

Virtual images are different. If you move closer or further away from the object, they stay the same size. Virtual images are all around you. Look at a distant mountain top or a tall building – more than one or two miles (about 2 or 4 kilometers) away. Now take a couple of steps backwards away from the distant object and then a couple of steps closer to the distant object. The *angular size* or *apparent size* of the distant mountain top or building, unlike your friend's head, will not appear to get bigger or smaller.

When you look in the little or eyepiece lens of the telescope, the magnified image that you see is *virtual*. If you move your head back and forth, the apparent size or angular size of the image stays the same.

- **Other things to look for in the magnified telescope image.**

You may see a fuzzy ring around a clear image in the middle. This is called "coma."

You may see color fringes – blue or yellow – around the object in the image. This is called "color aberration."

- **Why is the image in the telescope *virtual* – it doesn't change apparent size when I move my head backwards and forwards from the eyepiece. Why does it do that?**

Telescopic magnification in a Galilean telescope occurs at a special case when the focal lengths of a positive and a negative lens overlap when they are separated at the difference of their focal lengths. Telescopic magnification in a Keplerian telescope occurs at a special case when the focal lengths of two positive lens overlap when they are separated at the sum of their focal lengths.

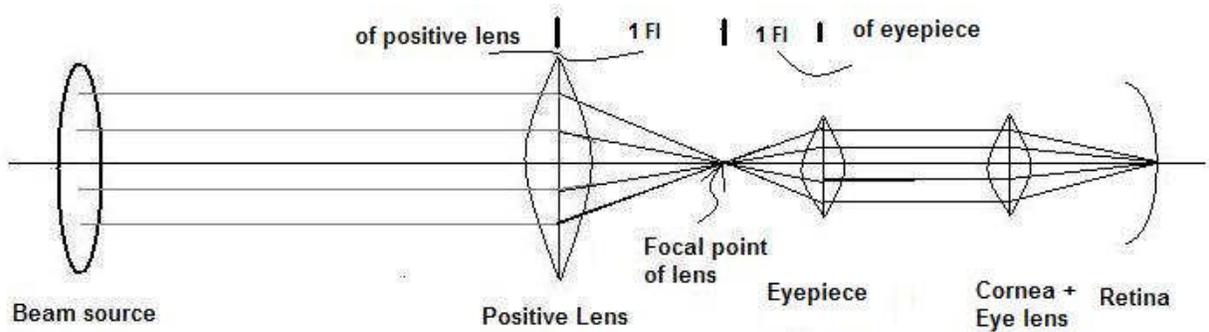


Figure 11 - A Keplerian Telescope - a special case of magnification of a distant object

Light rays from a distant star are parallel. They are called a *beam source* of light.

When the lenses are aligned so their focal lengths overlap and a beam of parallel light rays pass from the left to the right through the telescope shown in Figure 11, most of the light exits the eyepiece also in parallel light rays. So, it does not matter how far you stand behind the eyepiece. The parallel light rays still produce an image with the same apparent size.

You can see this by focusing your telescope on the bright full Moon and using a long focal length lens (more than 20mm). By carefully positioning your eye, you can stand about two feet away from the eyepiece and still see the Moon in the eyepiece.

Not all the light rays take a path through the lens shown in Figure 11. Some travel in the path added to Figure 11 –

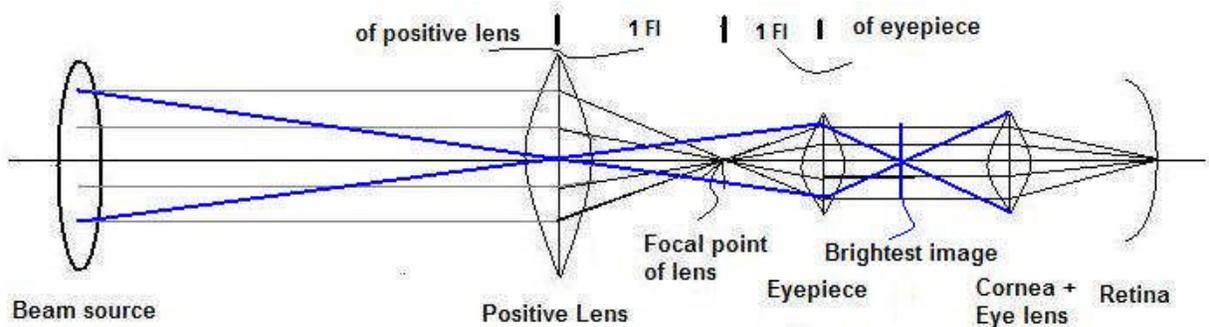


Figure 12 - A Keplerian Telescope – some rays pass through the center of the positive lens and come to a focal point to the right of the eyepiece

You can see this by focusing a Keplerian telescope on the bright full Moon and using a long focal length lens (more than 20mm). The brightest image will be at about the eyepiece's focal length behind (or to the right) of the eyepiece. This is called the eye relief distance of the eyepiece. You can still stand about two feet away from the eyepiece and still see the Moon in the eyepiece, but the image will be dimmer because fewer light rays are reaching your eye.

- **If you drop your lens and the glass breaks, tell an adult and ask them to help sweep the glass up. Do not look at the Sun through a lens. You'll go blind.**
- **Make a microscope – add a lens to a Galilean telescope**

A Galilean can be made into a microscope by adding a second positive lens in front of the first lens. This is how pocket microscopes work.

- Reference table – Inches, Centimeters and Millimeters

Inches	Centimeters	Millimeters
1	2.5	25
2	5.1	51
3	7.6	76
4	10.2	102
5	12.7	127
6	15.2	152
7	17.8	178
10	25.4	254
20	50.8	508
30	76.2	762
40	101.6	1016

- Who invented the telescope?

Hans Lippershey (c.e. 1570 – c.e. 1619), or more properly his children, are usually credited with making the first Galilean telescope in Common Era (c.e.) 1608. Accordingly to an uncertain popular myth, the children of Lippershey, a Dutch eyeglass maker, noticed magnification while playing with their father’s lenses. The Galilean (“Galley-lay-lan”) telescope is made with one positive lens and one negative lens.

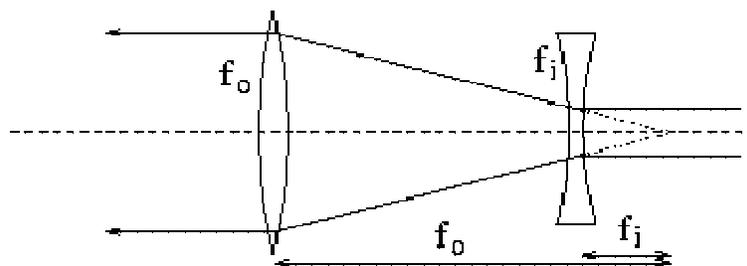


Figure 13 - Galilean Telescope layout

Galileo Galilei (c.e. 1564 – c.e. January 8, 1642) popularized the design of the Galilean telescope and is credited with the first use of a telescope for astronomical purposes in his c.e. 1610 book, *The Sidereal Messenger* also called *The Starry Messenger*.

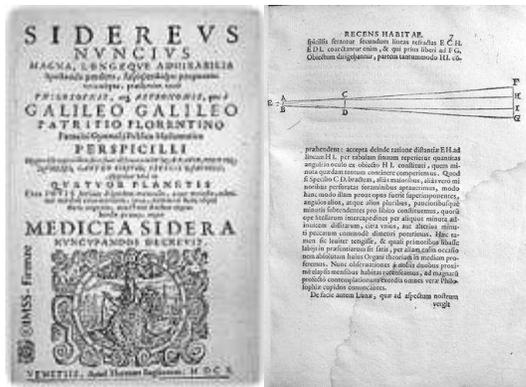


Figure 14 – Cover page from Galileo’s *The Starry Messenger* and his explanation of how a Galilean telescope works

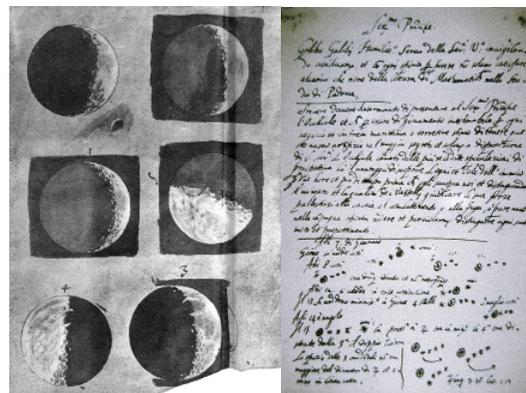


Figure 15 – Galileo’s ink wash drawing of his first views of the Moon through a telescope (left); A page from Galileo’s journal recording his first observations of Jupiter’s Moons (right)

Can you keep a journal of what you have seen through your binoculars or telescope?

Johannes Kepler (c.e. 1571 – c.e. 1630) is credited with later inventing the Kelperian telescope, which uses two positive lenses.

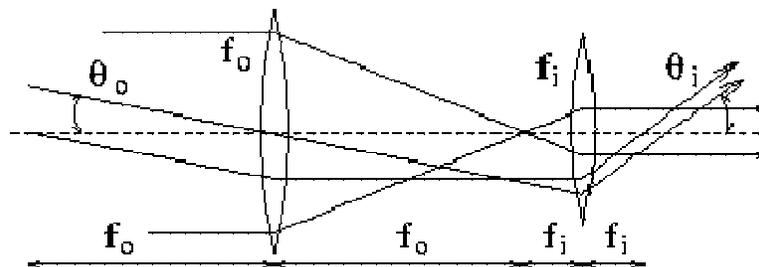


Figure 16 – Keplerian telescope diagram

The Galilean telescope was probably invented before the Keplerian telescope because of the way early lenses were made - by grinding two pieces of flat glass together. The natural result of grinding two flat glass plates together is the creation of one-half of a positive lens and one-half of a negative lens.



Figure 17 – Grinding two flat pieces of glass together to make the halves of a Galilean telescope

The lens that Galileo used to make his 1609-1610 drawings of the Moon and Jupiter still exists and is stored in the Institute and Museum of the History of Science in Florence, Italy. [A picture of his original lens can be viewed online.](#)

[Photographs of telescopes attributed to Galileo are also stored at the Institute and can be found online.](#)

- **Why wasn't the telescope invented earlier? The Romans used glass extensively.**

Prior to the 14th century, the quality of glass was primitive. Ancient glass was softer and contained bubbles and dirt.



Figure 18 – Roman hanging glass bowl from 300 c.e. made of a cloudy glass

Lenses were found in a 10th century c.e. grave on a Scandinavian island near the town of Visby. The Visby lenses are thought by some to show that the Vikings invented the telescope. Because of the poor quality of lenses, it is not generally accepted that the Vikings could have used or knew how to use them to make a telescope.



Figure 19 – The Visby Lenses from the 10th century c.e. showing bubble imperfections

In the 1500's, artists in Venice invented a new high-quality and harder glass by adding flint as an ingredient.



Figure 20 - Venetian glass goblet from about 1500 c.e. made of a clear, bubble-free, hard glass

Dutch spectacle-maker Lippershey is thought to have received one of the first shipments of this new high quality Venetian glass to have been allowed out of Venice and into Europe.

- **The next step – Plans for and resources for making your own refractor telescope**

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- **Further reading**

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Watson, Fred. 2005. Stargazer: The Life and Times of the Telescope. De Capo Press. ISBN: 0306814323

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Institute and Museum of the History of Science. 2006. Online Exhibition Room V – Beginnings of telescopic astronomy

<http://brunelleschi.imss.fi.it/genindice.asp?appl=SIM&indice=54&xsl=listaspazi&lingua=ENG&chiave=600005> accessed May 2006 (Photographs of telescopes attributed to Galileo)

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<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~mpeterso/classes/phys301/geomopti/lenses.html>

Peterson, M. 2001. Lens combinations: Telescopes. Java Ray Tracing Applet for Physics 301.

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~mpeterso/classes/phys301/geomopti/twolenses.html>

- **Materials source**

Edmund Scientific Online. 2006. Bag of Lenses. Product No. 3082272. Count #20 per bag. (2 bags yields a mixture of about 10 Kelperian and Galilean telescopes)

<http://scientificsonline.com/>
<http://scientificsonline.com/product.asp?pn=3009445>

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