

# Information for Schools Seeking School-Nights



Thank you for contacting Brisbane Astronomical Society regarding conducting a telescope observing evening at your school. The following information may be useful for organizing your evening.

Our school night service is available to schools across metropolitan Brisbane, and to a lesser extent, the Sunshine Coast. If your school is located in a region we find difficult to service we may be able to refer you to another astronomy group located closer to your school.

[www.bas.asn.au](http://www.bas.asn.au)  
[www.facebook.com/BrisbaneAstronomical Society](https://www.facebook.com/BrisbaneAstronomicalSociety)

## Which month and day should you book?

In general, the months of May to the end of September are best, however we can extend to March and October but with greater risk of interference by clouds and rain in the warmer months. From May to September there is less chance of cloud or storm interruption and the sky gets sufficiently dark early enough for attendance by young children. While we recommend yellow-shaded dates in the calendar below, schools may inquire about any date in 2022.

### For Primary Schools:

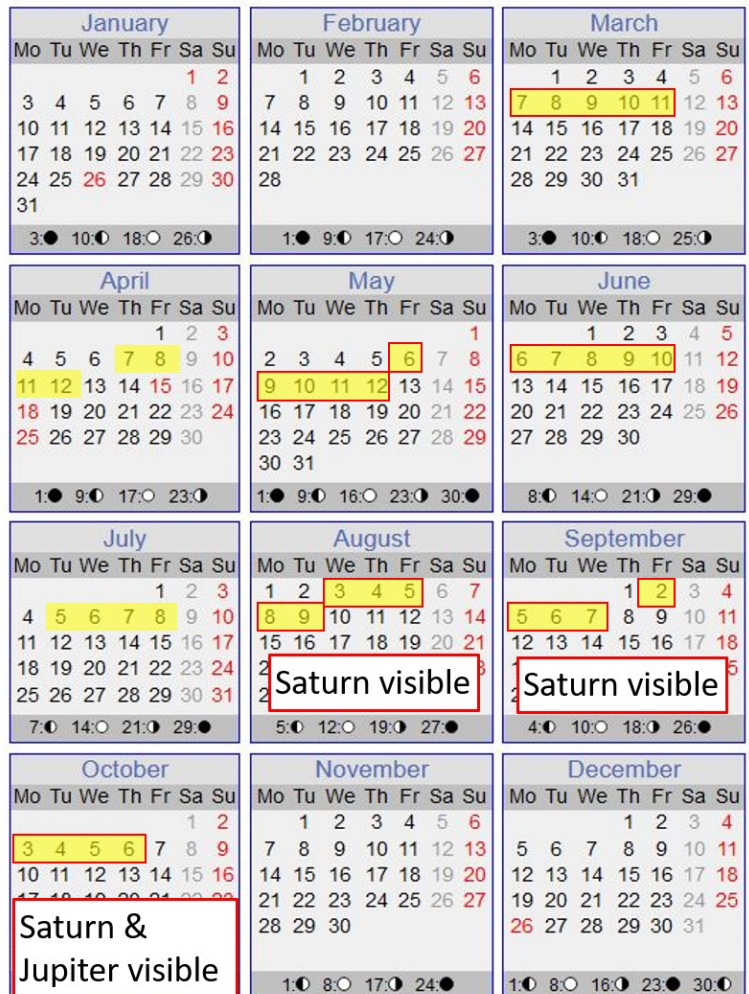
We recommend selecting dates when the moon is visible in the early evening, preferably in the period extending from about 4 days prior to the lunar first-quarter through to about three days before full moon. The brief attention span of younger children tends to limit of telescope attention to just the Moon. We suggest [checking moon rise and set times here](#) to find suitable dates each month.

In 2022 we recommend dates highlighted in yellow on the adjacent calendar. April and July first-quarter Moon dates clash with school holidays.

### High Schools:

High school students may be more interested in deeper space objects and any date beyond three or four days either side of the full moon would be suitable. However please be aware of the profound impact that city light pollution has on the ability to observe faint and very distant objects from within metropolitan Brisbane.

## Calendar for Year 2022 (Australia)



## **Start and end times**

We aim to have our volunteer telescopes ready and observing by 6:00pm. However, some computerised telescopes may require additional time to complete their alignment procedure as the sky darkens. We suggest schools promote a 6:00pm start time for their event. In the warmer months the start time should be later to accommodate the later sunset and extended summer twilight. We suggest your event be planned around 90 minutes of telescope time, or a little longer for large groups.

## **Setup location**

Our preference is a sports field away from bright security lighting. We also request vehicle access onto the field to allow easier handling and setup of heavy telescope equipment. We also request the setup location not be equipment with a pop-up automatic irrigation system.

## **School supervision**

Schools are responsible for management of attendee behaviour and crowd control. We request sufficient teacher or P&C representatives be provided by the school to properly and safely manage movement of attendees.

## **Student and public safety**

These events are conducted during hours of darkness. Telescope equipment is often black and can be difficult to see in darkness. Students are requested not to run near telescopes, and no ball games to be played at these events.

A BAS member, trained in laser pointer safety, may utilise a laser pointer during the event to point out the location of celestial objects. In the interest of student and public safety we require participants to stay at least three meters away from the laser pointer operator while in use. Participants must not attempt to grab at the arms, or person, of the laser operator. Participants are also requested to remain stationary during laser pointer usage so that the operator may have a reliable appreciation of where people are located in order to keep the laser beam away from students and public.

## **Student numbers**

If schools expect attendance numbers (students, siblings and parents) may exceed about 60 persons we suggest organising your event in such a way as attendees are ushered to the telescopes in groups perhaps 20 minutes apart. So, schools may need to organise some diversionary activity to occupy waiting groups.

We regularly catered for attendee numbers in excess of 200 persons at school nights. Please liaise closely with our Education Officer as early as possible regarding your attendance expectations. Your estimates will guide us on securing sufficient volunteers and telescopes.

## **Weather**

The winter months are normally more kind to astronomy as skies are more often clear. You might like to keep an eye on the cloud forecast in the day or two leading up to your booking via a specialist cloud forecasting site designed for astronomy, [SkippySky](#). We will liaise with your coordinator in

the days prior to your event and on the morning of your booking jointly make the final Go/NoGo decision on your event.

## **Cost**

Brisbane Astronomical Society offers our outreach service free-of-charge to schools, however any donation made by a school would be greatly appreciated. Our organization does incur costs in conducting this program. We have purchased a number of telescopes and accessory equipment specifically to conduct our school-night program. Additionally, we pay a substantial public liability insurance fee each year to cover this program and other events. We also offer a very modest financial compensation to our volunteers to help defray fuel costs - some of our volunteers can travel several hundred kilometres in a busy week of school nights.

As a result, if schools have budget for extracurricular programs we suggest, and would very much appreciate, a modest donation to our society of about \$1 or \$2 per student that attends an outreach evening. However, we fully understand many schools have no such budget and we seek no donation when this is the case.

The donation mechanism may be via direct transfer by the school administration into our bank account or, at your request, we can deploy a donation bucket on the night seeking a gold coin donation from attending parents.

Our direct transfer account details are:

Account name: Brisbane Astronomical Society Inc

Bank: Bank of Queensland

BSB: 124030

Account Number: 10168155

## **School Checklist**

When contacting BAS to request a school night please provide us with the following information:

- Your preferred dates.
- An estimate of the number of students and parents that may attend.
- The location of your sports field or proposed setup location.
- Approval for vehicle access to and onto the setup site.
- The name and contact details of a school contact that will coordinate and promote the event to students.

## **BAS contact**

The Brisbane Astronomical Society Education Officer will coordinate the planning of your event. Please direct all email correspondence to [education@bas.asn.au](mailto:education@bas.asn.au)