

Star Party Etiquette: For Attending RCA Members-Guests-Only Star Parties

RCA has a long tradition of small observing parties—it's part of why the club was formed. RCA Club star parties are for members and their families and guests invited by members. The purpose is have a smaller, quieter event where attendees can spend an entire night observing or imaging without interruption. They are often in remote rural areas where conditions can be primitive at best.

1. Come prepared with everything you will need: warm clothes, fresh batteries, food, first aid kit, driving directions, full tank of gas, cash or credit cards, and anything else that will help ensure a safe and relaxing good time.
2. Arrive before dark so there is time to set up your equipment while you can still see.
3. Set up a couple yards away from your closest neighbor so everyone has room for their telescope as well as tables, chairs, power supplies, and cables.
4. If arriving after dark, turn off your headlights and use only parking lights in the parking area. Turn off all vehicle lights that can be turned off and mask lights that can't be turned off with red tape or cellophane prior to driving into the parking area.
5. Avoid locking your car if locking/unlocking causes your lights to flash or horn to honk. Put your keys in a place where you won't inadvertently activate the locks or set off your car alarm.
6. Use red flashlights dimmed as much as possible while still being able to see. Even red light can be objectionable if it is too bright. Buy a red LED flashlight from an astronomy source or camping or hunting supply shop. Or modify a regular flashlight by covering the lens with red cellophane (thick layers) or red tail-light repair tape.
7. Computer screens, cell phones and any other light emitting devices should be dimmed, masked and shielded to block obtrusive light (low brightness, night mode and red plastic work best).
8. In the event you must give off some light, give a yell so folks can cover their eyes or turn off a camera.
9. Mornings are quiet times. Observers stay up very late at night and may be sleeping.
10. Children are welcome but must be under the supervision of an adult at all times. Club star parties are often in remote areas. Do not let anyone wander off alone, day or night.
11. Pets are best left at home.
12. Smoking and alcohol are not allowed during observing hours in the observing area, or around any telescope equipment at any time.
13. Listen to music through ear buds.
14. It is not considered unfriendly to set up a little apart from others if you wish a more private observing experience. Observers often work together, share views and engage in conversation, but we also respect someone's desire to be quieter if they wish.
15. Practice hospitality to other observers on the field at all times.