



If you came across me on a walking trail, there is a pretty good chance that I would be looking through a pair of binoculars, or at the very least, have a pair hanging around my neck.

I am a passionate Bird Watcher. So it goes without saying, that I have done my fair share of research when it comes to binocular basics.

Although my advice here is based on my experience buying and using binoculars suitable for bird watching, many of the points are relevant to a number of activities in which you may need binoculars.

Let's start with the most common binocular question.

## **What do the numbers mean?**

- The two numbers eg 10×32 relate to the magnification and objective diameter.
- 10 x means the image appears 10 times closer than when viewed with the naked eye.
- 32 is the size of the objective lens in millimetres, this lens is the one farthest from your eyes, the larger the lens the greater the light gathering ability (read: brighter image), also the weightier the binoculars.



Choosing which magnification and objective diameter becomes a bit of a trade-off in the end. Ask yourself these questions:

- How close do you want to get?
- How much weight do you want hanging around your neck?
- How much do you want to spend?

I personally like 10×32, this gets me close enough to the subject, 32 gives reasonable light gathering and a big enough field of view that makes it easy to find my target, which can be difficult at times with 25mm especially for beginners or those with poor sight.

## What about Price?

- The overall performance does depend on the quality and therefore how much you pay.
- Binoculars range from \$20 to well over \$2,000. I once had a \$2,500 pair, I had to replace these and could only find a \$50 pair at the time, these have served me well for a number of years.
- I do miss my expensive Leica's though, they had much better optics than my \$50 pair.



## Do you wear glasses?

- If so, make sure you purchase binoculars with the correct 'eye relief'.
- Eye relief refers to the ideal distance your eye should be from the eyepiece.
- Trying before you buy is a good idea to find the pair that works best for you.

## Which ones are for me then?

- The final decision may relate to how serious you are, and what sort of environments you are going to use your binoculars in. I was willing to spend the money on my passion for bird watching.
- If you intend to use them while kayaking, you may want to make sure the binoculars are waterproof.
- If going out at low light or after dark to observe wildlife you may want to consider the trade off and go for larger objective diameter for greater light gathering ability.

## Get the most out of your binoculars?

Have the binoculars around your neck, if you have to get them out of your pack, the subject



you just spotted will most likely be gone.

Focus on the subject with the naked eye, then raise the binoculars to your eyes while keeping that focus. You should then be straight onto the subject unless of course, it has moved.

Many people find a subject and then look at the binoculars, put them to their eyes and circle around trying to find the subject again. It's a bit like a racket sport, eye on the ball, or in this case the subject, not on the racket.



Use both hands when using binoculars, not only will this enable you to remain steady but you can use an index or middle finger to adjust the focus knob, keeping the subject in focus if it moves.

Once you have mastered finding the subject quickly, you will also get used to remaining focused and utilising your peripheral vision. This is useful, for example, to follow a bird that flies the coup, and quickly refocus.



What're your preferred binocular specs? Do you have any advice for first-time users of binoculars? Feel free to share your expertise below.

If you have any further questions, leave a comment, or give us a call 1300 914 007.

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