

A few tips for hosting solar eclipse viewing for the public

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Above: Geoffrey White (physics and chemistry lab supervisor, in purple-T-shirt), explaining how to view the sun with an 8-inch telescope and a sun funnel, during the August 21, 2017 solar eclipse. (Credit: Hank Brockett, Joliet Junior College Media Services)

- ★ Start planning well in advance: a year in advance to determine if your location is suitable for viewing the sun during the eclipse, and at least six months ahead if custom eclipse glasses or viewers are being made. Host a free event and give attendees free eclipses glasses or viewers if possible.
- ★ Collaborate with your institution’s media, marketing and public relations staff to help promote, photograph and show live feeds of the event.
- ★ Recruit and train volunteers (students, physical science faculty and lab staff) to use solar viewing equipment and explain astronomical concepts to the public.
- ★ Recruit volunteers to distribute eclipse glasses or viewers and any other materials.
- ★ Plan for inclement weather by (a) having a tent to keep equipment dry in case of very light rain and (b) having access to a nearby indoor space in case of heavier precipitation. Arrange for media to show live feeds from other organizations indoors if you are not in the path of totality and/or weather prevents you from seeing the eclipse. People can cool off or warm up indoors depending on the temperature outside even if the sky is clear. They can use the bathrooms too.
- ★ Have fun preparing for the event even if the eclipse is partial at your location like it was for Joliet, IL in August 2017. And don’t despair if the sky is cloudy; perhaps the clouds will break at around maximum eclipse and everyone will applaud, like at my college’s 2017 event! At least 1500 people attended my college’s event.
- ★ **More information is available in my article “Organizing Viewing of the 2017 Solar Eclipse for the Joliet Junior College Community,”** published in “Celebrating the 2017 Great American Eclipse: Lessons Learned from the Path of Totality,” ASP Conference Series, Volume 516, edited by S. R. Buxner, L. Shore, and J. B. Jensen, San Francisco: Astronomical Society of the Pacific, 2019, page 43



Above: Nick Razo (Joliet Junior College student, in purple-T-shirt), using a Sunspotter to project the sun using during the August 21, 2017 solar eclipse. (Credit: Hank Brockett, Joliet Junior College Media Services)

Right: Members of the public viewing the August 21, 2017 solar eclipse using Joliet Junior College’s free eclipse viewers. (Credit: Hank Brockett, Joliet Junior College Media Services)



Left: A member of the public viewing the August 21, 2017 solar eclipse, through a 4-inch telescope equipped with a solar filter, with physics faculty member, Andrew Morrison’s help (in purple T-shirt). Others eagerly await their turn. (Credit: Hank Brockett, Joliet Junior College Media Services)