

Table 2.1: The Bortle dark-sky scale.

Class	NELM	Description
1 (Excellent)	>7.6	Rarely seen. Milky Way spectacular; zodiacal band (along ecliptic) plainly visible; no light on ground (cars, telescopes invisible).
2 (Truly dark)	7.1–7.5	Remote western deserts. Milky Way elaborately structured; zodiacal light prominent along ecliptic in the west after end of twilight; M33 and many other Messier objects seen without telescope.
3 (Rural)	6.6–7.0	Some light pollution on horizon, none overhead. Milky Way prominent; zodiacal light easily seen. Good country skies in the eastern U.S. and Britain.
4 (Rural-suburban)	6.1–6.5	Definite domes of light pollution on horizon. Milky Way clearly visible; brightest part (in summer) shows considerable structure. Telescopes and cars are visible from across the field.
5 (Suburban)	5.6–6.0	Milky Way visible but only brightest parts are prominent. Obvious sources of light pollution in several directions. Still good enough for serious observing and astrophotography.
6 (Bright suburban)	≈5.5	Milky Way somewhat hard to see. M31, M44 visible to naked eye but not prominent. Clouds, when present, are bright, illuminated from below. All Messier objects are visible in a 5-inch (12.5-cm) telescope, but more serious deep-sky observing and photography are not feasible.
7 (Suburban-urban)	≈5.0	Entire sky grayish, not black. Milky Way invisible or very hard to see. M44, M31 barely visible without a telescope. Deep-sky enthusiasts should concentrate on multiple stars, clusters, and planetary nebulae.
8 (City)	≈4.5	Gray or orangish sky. Objects on the ground are very clearly visible by reflected skylight. Many constellations unrecognizable because so many stars are hidden.
9 (Inner city)	≤4.0	Only the brightest stars are visible. Planets, Orion, and Ursa Major may still be picked out. Fainter objects can only be found with the help of a computerized telescope.