

This document is for people new to the ICQ's formatting. Each observation will be inputted in an 80-column format where each column means the following:

- columns 1-3 is name designation for short period comets only.
- 4-9 are the standard comet name designation.
- 10 denotes if the comet has multiple nuclei.
- 11 is always a blank space.
- 12 – 24 is the date of observation in YYYY MM DD.DD format.
- 25 is always a blank space.
- 26 is for “notes on extinction corrections and other special notes.” This column is equivalent as column 75 where the latter being used if column 26 is taken. The meaning of the letters that appear in these columns can be found in the “Special Notes Key” section of the file ICQ website (below).
- 27 is the magnitude method used. The meaning of each letter can be found in the website below.
- 28, if a “[“ is present then the comet was not seen that night. Additionally, a “[“ in this column could represent that the reported magnitude was an upper limit estimate.
- 28 through 32, total visual magnitude estimate
- 33, if a “:” is present then the comet was seen under poor conditions
- 34-35 is the reference catalog used.
- 36-40 instrument aperture in centimeters
- 41 is instrument type. This column is for any telescopes or binoculars used in observations (not CCDs). The proper key to use is the “Instrument Key” section on the website. Special note, if aperture size is 0.0 or instrument type is E then naked eye observations were used.
- 42-43, focal ratio of instrument entered as one or two-digit number flush right (i.e. written in the form AB where B is always the ones place and A is a non-leading zero ten’s place).
- 44-47, magnification used, again written flush right.
- 48, is always a blank space.
- 49, error estimate for coma diameter (i.e. whether given value is an upper or lower bound).
- 50-54, coma diameter in arc minutes.
- 55, special note on physical appearance of central condensation of the comet.
- 56-57, degree of condensation of the comet. If 57 is a “/” instead of a number then it is an approximate value.
- 58 is always a white space.

- 59, error estimate for tail length (see column 49).
- 60-64, tail length in degrees.
- 65-67, direction tail is pointed.
- 68 is always a white space.
- 69-74, ICQ reference publication.
- 75, see column 26.
- 76-80, observer name designation.

Handy references:

<http://www.icq.eps.harvard.edu/ICQKeys.html>

<http://www.icq.eps.harvard.edu/ICQRec.html>