

**"Astronomers Discover New White-Dwarf Binary System."**

**By Raphael Rosen**

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Astronomers have a great new laboratory for testing the predictions of Einstein's general theory of relativity. Warren Brown (Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory) and a team from Texas and Spain have discovered two white dwarf stars locked into a tight mutual orbit.

The stars, located 3,000 light-years from Earth, form a binary system in which they orbit each other every 12.75 minutes, at a speed of 370 miles (600 kilometers) per *second*. They are separated at an average distance of 120,000 kilometers (75,000 miles), a hair's breadth in astronomical terms. Because they orbit in a plane edge-on to Earth, they periodically eclipse each other, letting astronomers make more precise measurements of the system. By closely observing changes in the stars' orbits, astronomers will be able to test whether Einstein's theory accurately describes the universe.

For the full article, go to:

<http://www.skyandtelescope.com/community/skyblog/newsblog/126116758.htm>

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