The solar system

Earth

Earth is the third planet from the Sun.

This is largely due to its mild, steady temperature and thick, oxygen-rich atmosphere. Earth is also the only planet that has water in flowing form.

It takes the Earth about 365 days to orbit the Sun.

Earth is the largest and densest of the four rocky planets. It has a diameter of approximately 8,000 miles.

Earth is the only planet the solar system that is able to support life.

Almost 75% or three-fourths of the Earth is covered by water.

The solar system

Jupiter

Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system.

Jupiter is called a fluid planet because it is believed to be mostly made up of the liquid form of a gas called hydrogen.

If Jupiter were a fishbowl, it would take 1,000 Earths to fill it up.

Jupiter is surrounded by layers of dense clouds. From space, they look like brightly colored bands, or stripes.

Jupiter is not a solid, rocky planet like Earth.

The “Great Red Spot," a large oval mark on the planet’s cloud covering, is believed to be like a giant hurricane of gas.

The solar system

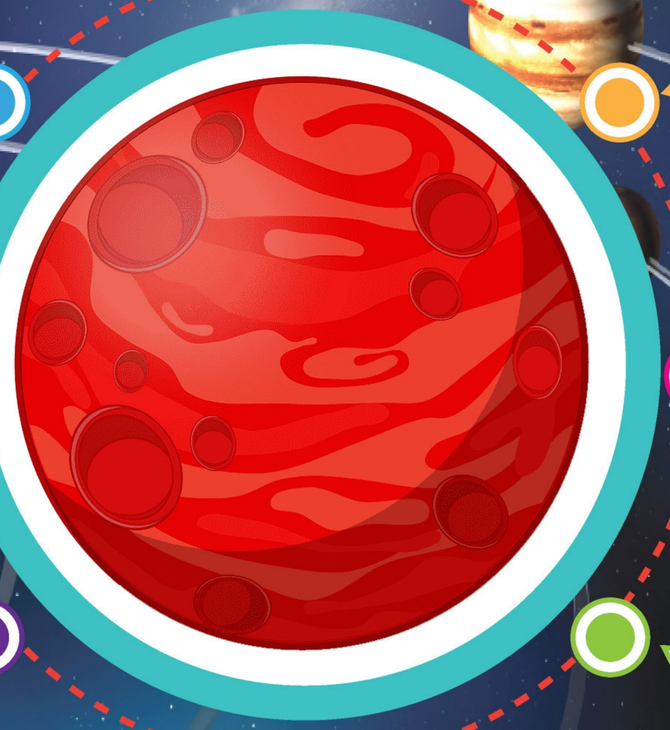
Mars

Mars is called the "Red Planet" because of its red dish surface.

The highest volcano stands twice as high as the highest mountains on Earth.

Much of the planet is covered by red sand dunes and rocks.

Mars is the third smallest planet in our solar system. Mercury and Pluto are the only planets smaller than Mars.



Mars has giant volcanoes located near its equator.

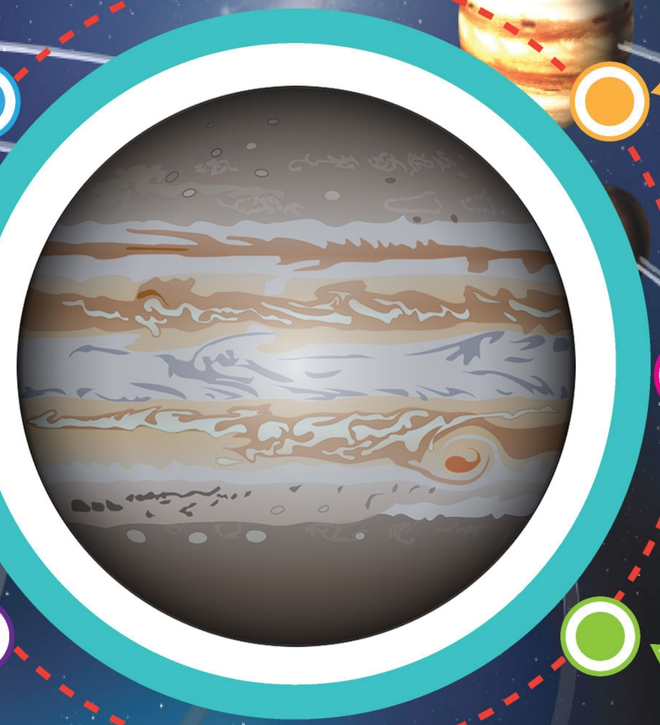
The diameter of Mars is a little more than half the diameter of Earth.

The solar system

Mercury

Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun.

It takes Mercury just 88 Earth days to orbit the Sun.



If you lived on Mercury, the Sun would look twice as large in the sky than it does on Earth.

Mercury has almost no air, so there is no protection against the Sun's heat during the day.

Mercury travels around the Sun faster than any other planet.

The Sun's rays are about seven times stronger on Mercury than they are on Earth.

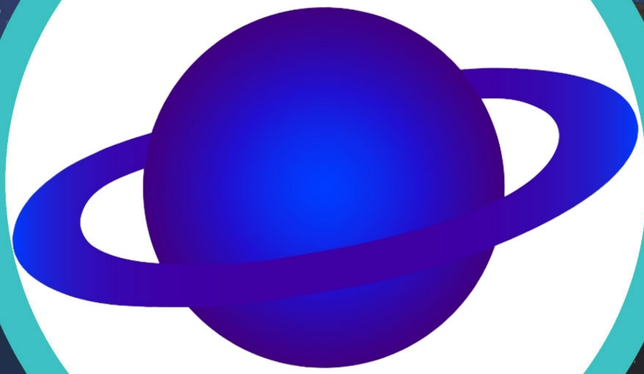
The solar system

Neptune

Neptune is one of the planets farthest away from the Sun.

Neptune orbits the Sun once about every 165 Earth years.

Neptune has rings that are fainter and darker than Saturn's rings.



Neptune's rings are made up of dust.

The fastest winds in the solar system are found on Neptune.

These winds can reach speeds of more than 1,000 miles per hour.

The solar system

Pluto

Pluto is one of the farthest planets from the Sun.

Pluto is less than one-fifth the size of Earth and much smaller than Earth's Moon.

It takes Pluto about 248 Earth years to orbit the Sun.

Pluto is one of the coldest places in the solar system.

Pluto is the smallest planet in our solar system.

Scientists believe that Pluto's surface is partly covered with frozen gas.

The solar system

Saturn

Saturn is the second largest planet in our solar system.

If you could find a large enough body of water to hold the planet, Saturn would float on it.

Saturn's diameter is about equal to 10 Earths lined up side by side.

Saturn is surrounded by rings around its equator.

Saturn is less dense than water.

The rings are made up of pieces of rock and ice. Each piece moves around the planet like a tiny moon.

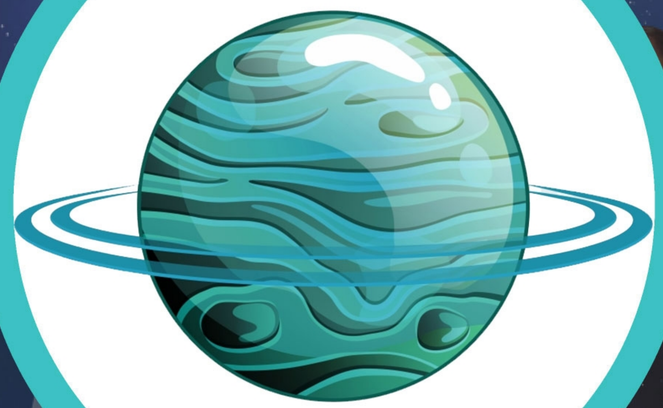
The solar system

Uranus

Uranus is the seventh planet from the Sun.

It takes Uranus 30,685 Earth days (84 years) to travel around the Sun.

Uranus is surrounded by rings that run parallel to its equator.



The rings of Uranus are thinner and fainter than Saturn's rings. They are made up of chunks of an unknown black material.

Uranus spins differently from the other planets.

Most planets turn from side to side, much like a ball spinning on a person's finger. Uranus turns "over and over" —more like a ball rolling along the ground.

The solar system

Venus

Venus is the closest planet to Earth.

Venus looks bright because it is so close to the Sun and because it is covered by clouds that reflect much of the Sun's light.

Venus is sometimes called Earth's twin because the two planets are about the same size.

The surface temperature of Venus is about 896°F (480°C)—hotter than that of any other planet.

When seen from Earth, Venus appears brighter than any star.

The planet's thick clouds and dense atmosphere trap the Sun's energy, keeping much of it from escaping.