

# Explore Space: Our Solar System



Our solar system has eight planets.

*NASA*

The sun and eight planets are part of our solar system. The eight planets are Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.

The sun is at the center of the solar system. The planets orbit, or travel around, the sun.

## The Sun

The sun is a star. It is a ball of hot gas. It gives off light and heat. The sun is the closest star to the eight planets of our solar system.

## The Eight Planets

Mercury is the closest planet to the sun. It is also the smallest planet in our solar system. It has mountains and craters. Craters are holes in the ground. A lot of craters on Mercury were made by rocky objects from space crashing into the planet.

Venus is the hottest planet in our solar system. It is hot enough to melt a rocket ship. Venus is about the same size as Earth.

Earth is our home. It is the only planet that has oceans on its surface. In fact, Earth is covered mostly with water. That is why it is called the Blue Planet.

Mars is called the Red Planet. It is covered in dust that looks red. Mars also has mountains, volcanoes, ice caps, and canyons. A canyon is a deep, narrow valley with steep sides.

Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system. Very strong winds blow in this planet. In fact, an area of Jupiter called the Great Red Spot is a very large storm with strong swirling winds.

Saturn is the second-largest planet in our solar system. It has several rings around it. The rings are made of rock, dust, and ice. Some other planets in our solar system also have rings, but Saturn's rings are the brightest and largest.

Uranus is the coldest planet in our solar system. It was the first planet to be

discovered using a telescope, but it is possible for people to see it with just their eyes.

Neptune has weather similar to Uranus. It is cold and windy there. Neptune is the farthest planet from the sun in our solar system. It is the only planet in our solar system that people can't see with just their eyes.

# Vocabulary

## crater

noun

definition: A crater is something on the surface of a moon or a planet. It is an area where the land has been pushed in and forms the shape of a huge bowl. Craters are usually made by very large rocks from space that land hard on the surface. Some craters on the moon are so large that we can see them from Earth.

*The moon has craters, but the earth has craters too. A large crater in the country of South Africa is many miles across.*

Spanish: cráter

## orbit

verb

definition: When one thing in space orbits another, it goes around it, making something like a circle. Our moon orbits the earth. Our earth orbits the sun.

*All of the planets in our solar system orbit around the sun.*

Spanish: orbitar

forms: orbited, orbiting, orbits

## planet

noun

definition: A planet is a large thing in space that moves around a star. Planets are much smaller than stars, and they don't give off light as stars do. Earth is a planet that moves around the star that we call the sun. The other planets that move around the sun are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and Neptune.

*Did you know that Mars is the nearest planet to Earth?*

*Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system.*

Spanish: planeta

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the sun and eight planets part of?

- A. the Great Red Spot
- B. our solar system
- C. Saturn's rings

2. What does the author list in the text?

- A. planets in our solar system
- B. stars in our solar system
- C. rocks in our solar system

3. The sun is at the center of our solar system.

What evidence from the text best supports this statement?

- A. The planets in our solar system orbit the sun.
- B. A star is a ball of gas that gives off heat and light.
- C. The sun is the closest star to the planets of our solar system.

4. Based on the text, how can you describe the size of the planets in our solar system?

- A. The planets are all different sizes.
- B. The planets are all the same size.
- C. Planets farther away from the sun are bigger.

5. What is this text mostly about?

- A. why Earth is called the Blue Planet
- B. what Saturn's rings are made of
- C. the sun and planets in our solar system

6. Read these sentences from the text.

Earth is our home. It is the only planet that has oceans on its **surface** . In fact, Earth is covered mostly with water.

As used in these sentences, what does the word "**surface**" mean?

- A. inside part
- B. middle part
- C. outside part

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Uranus and Neptune have similar weather, \_\_\_\_\_ they are very different planets.

- A. so
- B. but
- C. because

8. What is the hottest planet in our solar system?

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9. Why is Earth called the Blue Planet?

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10. Compare Venus and Earth by explaining how they are similar and how they are

different.

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