

## Explore Space

# Our Solar System

Our solar system is made up of the sun and eight **planets**. A planet is a large ball made of rock or gas. Each planet **orbits**, or travels around, the sun. The sun is at the center of the solar system.



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*The planets in our solar system are all different sizes.*

The **sun** is a star. It is a ball of hot gas. It gives off light and heat. Why does the sun look different from other stars? The sun is the star closest to Earth.

**Mercury** is the closest planet to the sun. It is also the smallest. It has mountains and **craters**. Craters are holes in the ground that were made when space rocks crashed into it.

**Venus** is the hottest planet. It is hot enough to melt a rocket ship. Venus is about the same size as Earth.

**Earth** is our home. It is also the only planet with oceans. In fact, Earth is covered mostly with water. That is why it is called the Blue Planet.

**Mars** is called the Red Planet. It has reddish dirt. It also has mountains, volcanoes, ice caps, and **canyons**. A canyon is a deep, narrow valley with steep sides.

**Jupiter** is the largest planet. It is made of thick gases. Very strong winds blow on this planet.

**Saturn** is the second-largest planet. It has rings around it. The rings are made of rock, dust, and ice.

**Uranus** was the first planet to be discovered using a telescope. It is cold and windy there.

**Neptune** is the coldest planet because it is farthest from the sun. The planet is made of gases.

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

1. What is a planet?

- A. a large ball made of only rock
- B. a large ball made of rock or gas
- C. a ball of hot gas that gives off light

2. The author provides a list of what in the passage?

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

3. The sun is at the center of our solar system. What evidence from the passage 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 star that is closest to Earth.

4. Read the following sentence: "**Uranus** was the first planet to be discovered using a telescope." Based on this information, what conclusion can you make about Uranus?

- A. Uranus is too far away to see with the naked eye.
- B. Uranus is blocked by Saturn so it is hard to see.
- C. Uranus is the planet that is farthest from the sun.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

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

6. Read the following sentences: "Mars is called the Red Planet. It has **reddish** dirt."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**reddish**" mean?

- A. moist and fertile
- B. mostly brown in color
- C. slightly red in color

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Neptune is the farthest planet from the sun, \_\_\_\_ it is the coldest planet.

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

8. What is at the center of 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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