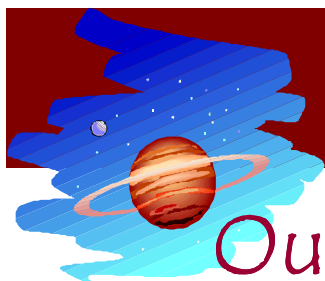


Special Feature



Our Place in Space



You are one of millions of humans that live on Earth.



The Earth is one of nine (ten!) planets that orbit the Sun in our Solar system.



The Sun is one of 100,000 million stars that make up a Galaxy called the Milky Way.



There are roughly 100,000 million galaxies in the whole Universe.

Planet Facts

Mercury – Mercury rotates and revolves around the sun the same way all the time which means the side always facing the sun is bright and hot and the other side is always dark and cold.

Venus – After the sun and moon, Venus is the brightest object in the sky. A good time to see it is just after sunset or just before sunrise.

Earth – This is the third closest planet to the sun and takes one year to revolve around it. As far as we know it is the only planet where life exists.

Mars – This planet is the most similar to earth as it also has different days and seasons but it would not be suitable for humans as there is very little oxygen.

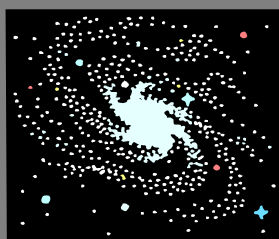
Jupiter – This is the largest planet in our solar system and has 18 moons.

Saturn – Saturn has three rings around it made up of rock and dust particles that are 6,000 miles away from its surface.

Uranus – This planet is in sunlight for 42 years and darkness for 42 years.

Neptune – Since it was first discovered in 1846 Neptune still has not made a complete trip around the Sun.

Pluto – Pluto is so small some scientists think it is a comet or moon and not a planet. It is covered in ice and frozen methane.



The Milky Way

It is believed that a galaxy first begins as a huge cloud of gas that is pulled apart to make lots of stars, these seem really small because they are very far away but are actually often bigger than the sun. We belong to a galaxy called the Milky Way, which constantly moves around in space. It apparently got its name because it

looks like a splash of milk in the night sky but if you saw the Milky Way from space it would actually look like a huge white spiral. Because the earth is inside the Milky Way looking out, we cannot make out the spiral shape but on a clear night, if you look closely enough, you can make out a white patch that looks like a cloud right up amongst the stars. This is the Milky Way. Look around it and you may even be able to make out some of the other planets and constellations of stars that are in this Galaxy with us. Scientists used to think that the Milky Way was the only Galaxy in the Universe but we now know that there are millions of them and we also know that in each Galaxy there are millions of stars. Remember this when you look up at the sky at night and you will suddenly feel very small!

Did You Know...?

It takes the earth 356 days to orbit the sun but it takes the sun 220 million years to orbit around the centre of our galaxy – the Milky Way.



It takes 8 minutes for light from the Sun to reach the Earth and it takes 27,000 years for light from the centre of the Galaxy to reach the Sun.



New Planet

Did you know that we have a new planet in our solar system? The planet, which is roughly the same size as Pluto, has not formally been named but has been given the number 2003UB313. It was first photographed in October 2003 but it was not until January 2005 that it was identified as a planet. It is a very cold and dark planet and is believed to be three times further away from the sun than Pluto.