

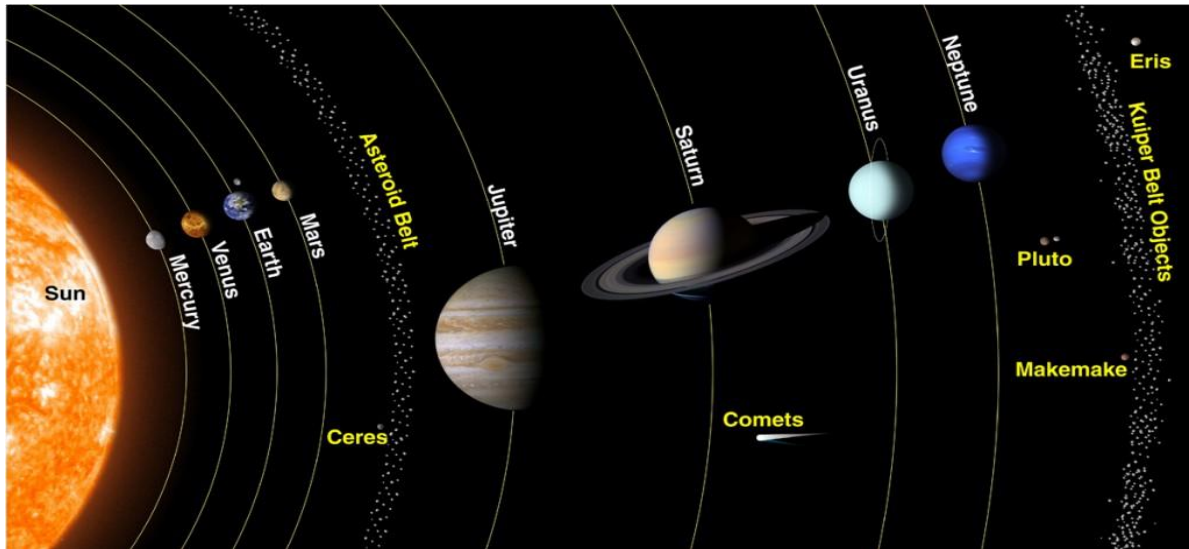
Our Night Sky: Part 2, The Solar System, Galaxies, and the Universe Beyond Us



SECTION 1: The Solar System

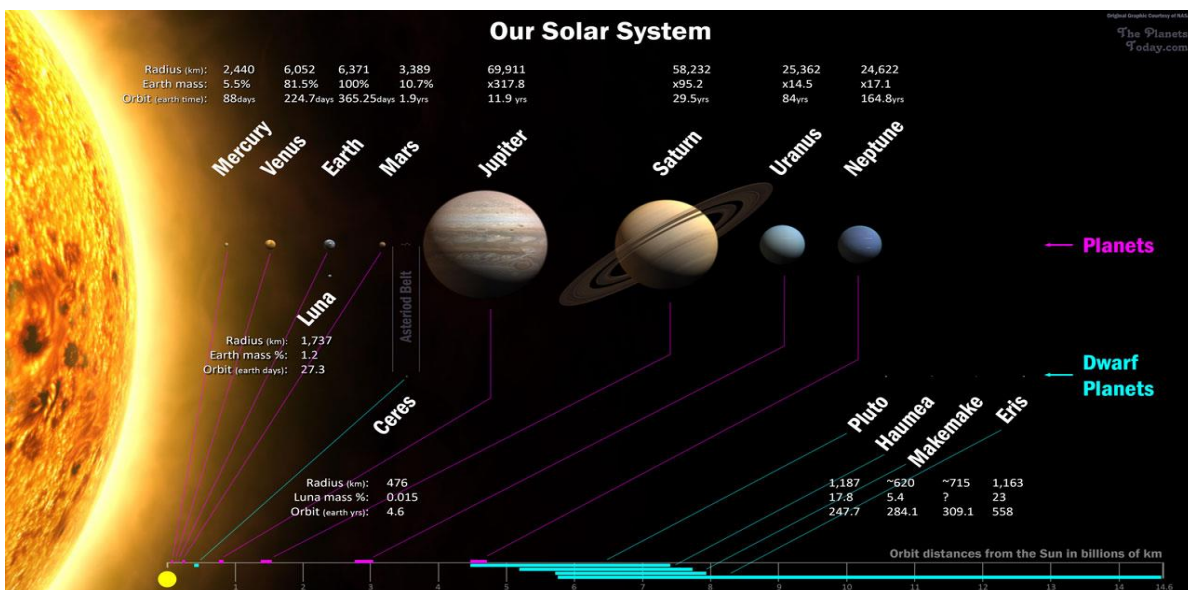
Our solar system is made up a really big star, called the Sun, 8 planets, 5 dwarf planets, over 200 moons, asteroids, comets, and meteoroids.

Look at the photo below and figure out what each planet, including the Earth, orbits around. In other words, what is the center of our solar system?



Answer: Our star, the Sun

The 8 planets in our solar system, starting from the Sun, are Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. The 5 dwarf planets, starting from the Sun, are Ceres, Pluto, Haumea, Makemake, and Eris, shown below.



[Check out this article from NASA about planets and dwarf planets.](#)

SECTION 2: The Galaxies

Beyond our solar system is our galaxy. Basically, our solar system lives within our galaxy. But what is a galaxy? [NASA's definition is this](#), "a galaxy is a huge collection of gas, dust, and billions of stars and their solar systems, all held together by gravity."

Our galaxy is called the Milky Way, but there are over 200 billion galaxies in the Universe. And that number increases the better our technology gets and the more we explore the cosmos.

Below are 2 photos of the Milky Way that were taken from Earth. Try to paint your own Milky Way. You can also get more creative by naming and painting your own unique galaxy!



Want to learn more about galaxies and current discoveries? [Check out this article from NASA](#).



SECTION 3: The Universe

There are so many aspects of space to explore, and even discover! It isn't just us and the Earth. So, let's begin with the universe. If you had to write a definition of "the universe" what would your definition be? Write it below.

Here's a [simple explanation of the universe from NASA](#) - "The Universe is a big, open place. You are in the Universe. Things you can't see are in it, too. The biggest stars are in it. Even the smallest things on Earth are part of the Universe. We don't even know how big the Universe is!"

Basically, the universe is EVERYTHING! Every single living and non-living thing. Things you can see, and things you can't. Even things that we don't know exist from the deepest part of the sea, to the farthest part of space.