

Discovered in 1930, Pluto was long considered our solar system's ninth planet. But after the discovery of similar intriguing worlds deeper in the distant Kuiper Belt, icy Pluto was reclassified as a dwarf planet.

The smallest planet in our solar system and nearest to the Sun, Mercury is only slightly larger than Earth's Moon. From the surface of Mercury, the Sun would appear more than three times as large as it does when viewed from Earth, and the sunlight would be as much as seven times brighter.

Our solar system consists of our star, the Sun, and everything bound to it by gravity - the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune; dwarf planets such as Pluto; dozens of moons; and millions of asteroids, comets, and meteoroids.

Saturn is the sixth planet from the Sun and the second-largest planet in our solar system. Like fellow gas giant Jupiter, Saturn is a massive ball made mostly of hydrogen and helium. Saturn is not the only planet to have rings, but none are as spectacular or as complex as Saturn's.

While Earth is only the fifth largest planet in the solar system, it is the only world in our solar system with liquid water on the surface. Just slightly larger than nearby Venus, Earth is the biggest of the four planets closest to the Sun, all of which are made of rock and metal.

Some astronomers argued that location (context) is important, especially in understanding the formation and evolution of the solar system. One idea is to simply define a planet as a natural object in space that is massive enough for gravity to make it approximately spherical.

Dark, cold, and whipped by supersonic winds, ice giant Neptune is the eighth and most distant planet in our solar system. More than 30 times as far from the Sun as Earth, Neptune is the only planet in our solar system not visible to the naked eye.

Jupiter is the fifth planet from our Sun and is, by far, the largest planet in the solar system - more than twice as massive as all the other planets combined. Jupiter's stripes and swirls are actually cold, windy clouds of ammonia and water, floating in an atmosphere of hydrogen and helium.

The Sun is the largest object in our solar system. Its diameter is about 865,000 miles (1.4 million kilometers). Its gravity holds the solar system together, keeping everything from the biggest planets to the smallest bits of debris in orbit around it.

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Planet of the solar system

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