

## The Solar System

Space is big. Really big. People find it hard to understand just how big space is because we evolved to think about things that we can see, touch, and use. The distance to the moon is enormous – it is six times the distance to travel around the Earth. The distance to the planets in our solar system is larger. The distance to Mars is 140 times the distance to the moon. The Voyager 1 spacecraft, launched in 1977, is now around 400 times further away from us than Mars.

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The largest object in our solar system is the Sun. The Sun is a star, just like all the other stars in the sky, but we think of it differently because it is much, much closer. The largest planet is Jupiter, which is famous for its big red spot. The red spot is actually a storm that is twice the size of the Earth and has lasted for at least 350 years. Eventually that storm will end – it is already shrinking – and the red spot will disappear. Perhaps the most spectacular planet is Saturn, with its giant rings of rock and ice.

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What is the largest planet in our solar system?

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The sun is not a star; is that correct?

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What planet has giant rings of rock and ice?