

If the Sun were the size of a basketball,
Earth would be a pea 270 ft (83 m) away.

If the Sun were the size of a basketball, Neptune
would be a strawberry 170 miles (270 km) away.

Asteroid

Asteroids are giant space rocks that drift around the inner Solar System. Most lie in a belt between Mars and Jupiter, but some occasionally come dangerously close to the Earth. The smallest are the size of houses, while the largest are big enough to be classified as dwarf planets. Scientists think asteroids are leftovers from the material that formed the planets. All of them together amount to less than a twentieth of the Moon's mass.



Sun

The Sun is like a vast nuclear power station that produces energy by converting hydrogen into helium. It is the only star we can study close up.

Mercury

The closest planet to the Sun, Mercury is also the smallest planet. Its surface is scarred by ancient craters.

Venus

Though similar in size to Earth, Venus is a hellish world where any visiting astronaut would be crushed and boiled alive.

Earth

Our home planet is the only place known to support life, thanks to the liquid water on its surface.

Mars

Mars is a bitterly cold, desert world. Like Earth, it has mountains, canyons, and icy poles.

Saturn

The second biggest planet is striking for the dazzling system of bright rings that encircle it. It has 62 moons and dozens more moonlets.

Sun
Mercury
Venus
Earth
Mars

Jupiter

Saturn

500 million miles
(805 million km)

1,000 million miles
(1,609 million km)

Orbital distance

The scale bar below shows the relative distances of the planets from the Sun. The distance between one planet and the next increases greatly as we move out through the Solar System.

