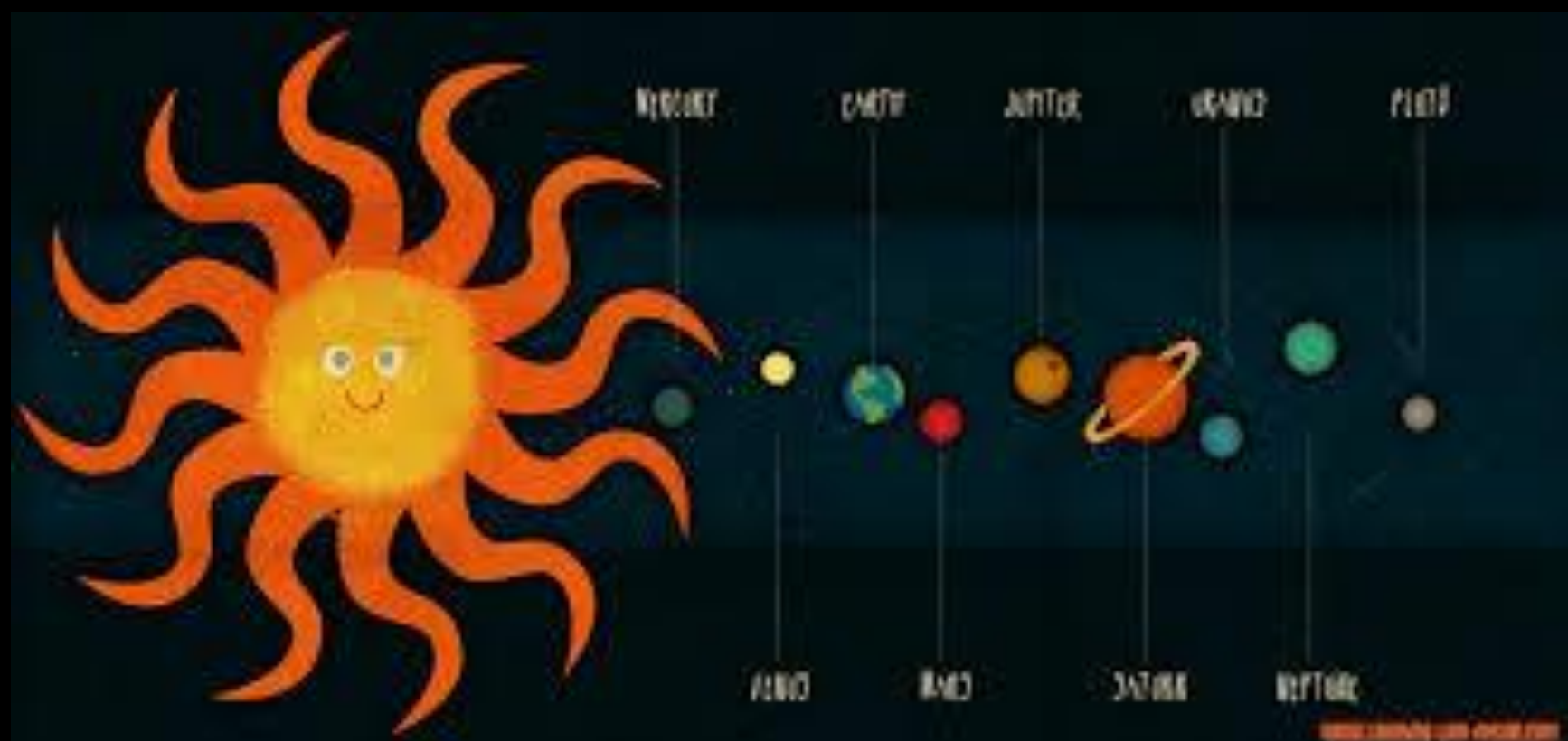


The Solar System & Planets



Mercury



Key Facts

Size/Diameter: 3100 miles

Orbit: 88 days

Distance from Sun: 36 million miles

Distance from Earth: 57 million miles

Temperature: Mercury's sunny side has a temperature rising to 400° Celsius. Mercury's dark side, however, is very cold indeed, with the temperature going down to -200°

The surface of Mercury is covered with craters and completely dry. There is no possibility of life on Mercury.

Venus

Key Facts



Size/Diameter: 7520 miles

Orbit: 262 days

Distance from Sun: 67 million miles

Distance from Earth: 26 million miles

Temperature: Venus is the hottest planet in the Solar System, even hotter than Mercury, which is closer to the Sun. The temperature on the surface of Venus is about 860° Celsius.

There is no life at all on Venus and life could never be supported there because of the extreme heat and the atmosphere.

Earth



Key Facts

Size/Diameter: 7928 miles

Orbit: 365 days

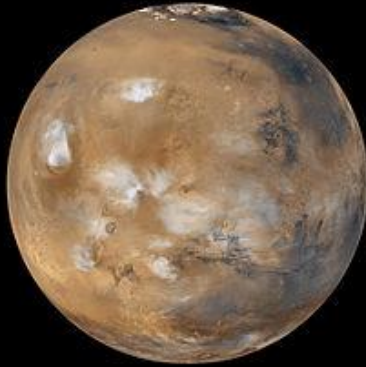
Distance from Sun: 93 million miles

Distance from Earth: 0 miles

Temperature: Varies

As the Earth orbits round the Sun it tilts very slightly and so gives us the seasons. When the Earth has tilted so that the northern half of the Earth is a little away from the Sun, the northern hemisphere (meaning half of the Earth's sphere) has winter.

Mars



Key Facts

Size/Diameter: 4200 miles

Orbit: 687 days

Distance from Sun: 141 million miles

Distance from Earth: 34 million miles

Temperature: The temperature on Mars regularly drops to -87 degrees Celsius in the winter and only rises to -5 degrees Celsius in the summer.

Mars is covered by craters from objects like asteroids and meteorites hitting the planet. Today, 43,000 such craters have been found and that only includes the large ones!

Jupiter



Key Facts

Size/Diameter: 88,846 miles

Orbit: 12 years

Distance from Sun: 483 million miles

Distance from Earth: 390 million miles

Temperature: - 145 Celsius

The largest planet in the solar system, the gas giant Jupiter is approximately 318 times bigger than Earth. If the mass of all of the other planets in the solar system were combined into one "super planet," Jupiter would still be two and a half times as heavy.

Saturn

Key Facts



Size/Diameter: 75,098 miles

Orbit: 29 and a half years

Distance from Sun: 886 million miles

Distance from Earth: 793 million miles

Temperature: - 168 Celsius

The rings all orbit Saturn at different speeds and have gaps between them. In 2010 a spacecraft from the NASA (US National Aeronautics and Space Administration) Cassini mission went between rings F and G and is now orbiting Saturn.

Uranus



Key Facts

Size/Diameter: 31000 miles

Orbit: 84 years

Distance from Sun: 1782 million miles

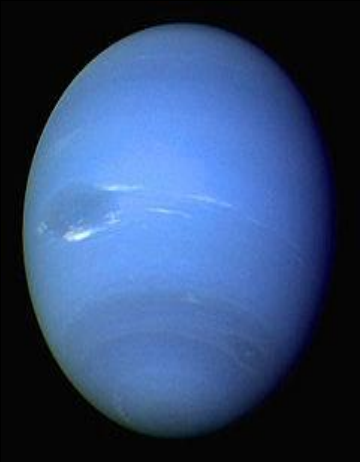
Distance from Earth: 1689 million miles

Temperature: - 224 Celsius

Most of the centre of Uranus is a frozen mass of ammonia and methane, which gives it the blue-green colour. The atmosphere also contains hydrogen and helium.

Neptune

Key Facts



Size/Diameter: 29000 miles

Orbit: 165 years

Distance from Sun: 2793 million miles million miles

Distance from Earth: 2700 million miles

Temperature: - 218 Celsius

Neptune is one of the four “gas giants”. Like Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus, it is composed only of gas. Neptune is a great ball of hydrogen and helium.