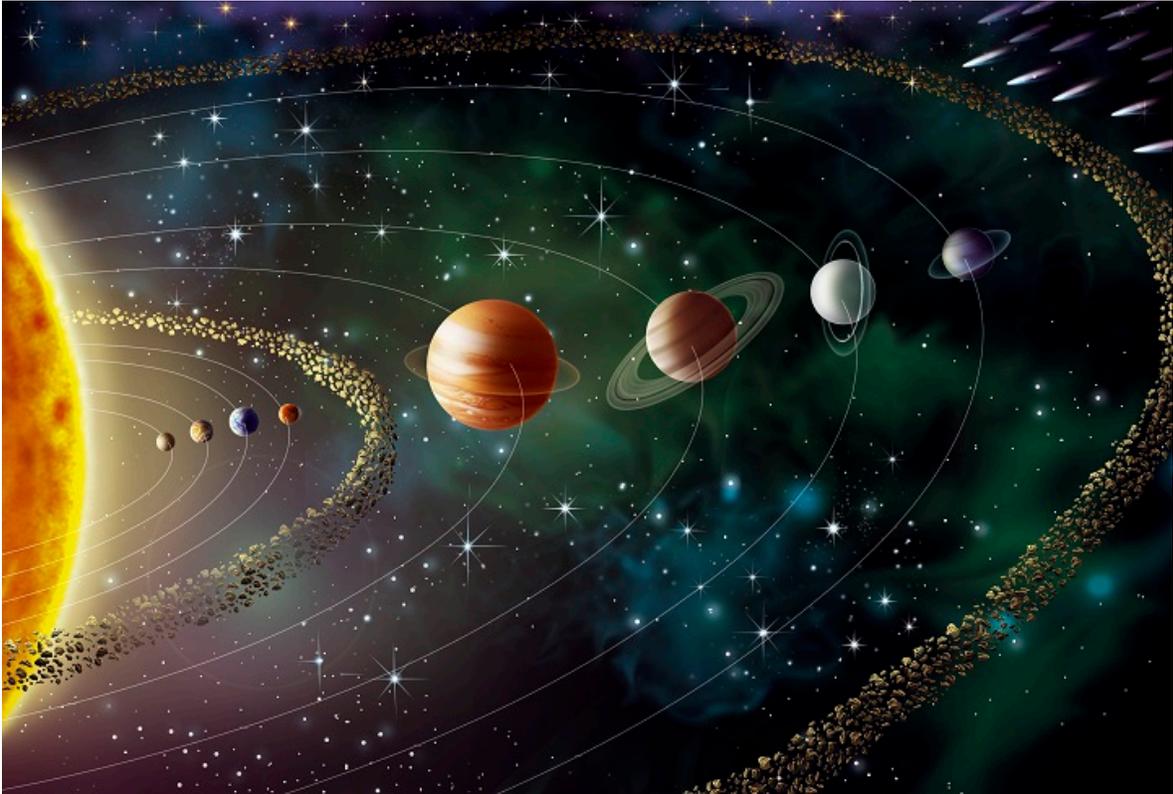


## What Is the Solar System Made Of?



Our solar system is made up of the [sun](#) and all of the objects that [orbit](#) it. This includes the eight planets. But there are many other objects in the solar system as well. Planetary moons, asteroids, and comets are all part of our solar system.

The sun is the [star](#) at the center of our solar system. It is a very large sphere of hot gas. Our sun is made up mostly of two gases. They are hydrogen (70 percent) and helium (28 percent). Planets are large bodies in [space](#) that orbit stars. In our solar system, Earth is one of eight planets that orbit the sun. The other planets are Mercury, [Venus](#), Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. All of the planets in our solar system are roughly spherical in shape.

The planets in our solar system are divided into two main categories:

- There are inner planets. These are Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars. They are all smaller planets. They are made of solid rock. They are found “inside” the asteroid belt.
- There are outer planets. These are Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. They are called “gas giants.” This is because they are very massive and made up mainly of gas. They are found “outside” the asteroid belt.

A moon is a roughly spherical body, too. Planets orbit a star, such as the sun. Moons orbit a planet. Most of the planets in our solar system have moons. Mercury and [Venus](#) are the only planets that do not have at least one moon.

What else is in our solar system?

- Asteroids are small, rocky bodies. They are also called planetoids. They orbit the sun. A large belt of these rocks lies between Mars and Jupiter. It is known as the **asteroid** belt.
- Smaller asteroids that do not stay in their orbit are called meteoroids. When meteoroids enter Earth's atmosphere, we call them meteors. Meteors turn to vapor as they move through the atmosphere. These are the "shooting stars" that you may see. Sometimes a **meteor** survives its fall to Earth. Then it is known as a **meteorite**.
- Comets are different from asteroids. They are made of ice, rock, and gas. When a **comet**'s orbit passes near the sun, some of the ice melts. This causes the comet to leave a long trail of ice and gas. These trails are called "tails."

Past the outer planets is an area called the **Kuiper Belt**. It contains millions of rocky objects. These objects include Pluto. Scientists once considered Pluto a planet. They now consider Pluto a dwarf planet. Comets travel past the Kuiper Belt. They go to the edge of the solar system.

The **Oort Cloud** is found on the very edge of the Solar System and houses many small icy objects. It surrounds the entire solar system in a spherical shape and is made up of two regions. We are currently unable to see the Oort cloud but through analysis of comets, which came from there, scientists and astronomers have come up with many theories of what it is like.