

THE INNER SOLAR SYSTEM

The **inner** solar system is the name of the terrestrial planets and asteroid **belt**. Terrestrial is just a fancy way of **saying** rocky. Like the Earth, terrestrial planets have a **core** of iron and rock.

At the center of the solar system is the **Sun**. The Sun is a big ball of hydrogen **powered** by nuclear reactions. Massive explosions are **going** on all of the time **inside** the Sun. It's what **makes** the light every day and **keeps** our planet warm. Light zips from the Sun to us in about eight minutes. The Sun is the most massive thing in our solar system. It is so big you could fit about a million Earths inside of it!

Closest to the Sun is the planet Mercury.

You could **squeeze** about eighteen Mercury's inside of Earth. It is made of **mostly** rock, but it has a **huge** iron core and it generates a big magnetic field. Speedy little Mercury sails **around** the sun in **only** eighty-eight days. Mercury was the messenger of the **gods** in Roman mythology, known for his speed.

Second in line comes Venus, which is **sometimes** called Earth's twin. It's about the same size as Earth, but that's where the similarities end.

Venus is always **covered** in thick clouds full of **sulfuric** acid. They whip around the planet at more than two hundred twenty mph. **Violent** winds shoot sand **made** of silicate around Venus's very dry, **arid** surface. The temperature averages nine hundred **degrees**, and the pressure's ninety times that on Earth. It **takes** two hundred and twenty four days to orbit the sun. Like Mercury, Venus was **also** named after a Roman Goddess, the Goddess of love.

You know what planet is next. You live on it! **Yup**, the Earth is number three. We have a rocky iron core at the **center** of our planet. We have **liquid** water, and our air is made of **mostly** nitrogen and oxygen. It takes three hundred and sixty-five days for us to circle the sun. We only have one moon. Next to us in is Mars. Mars also has a core of rock and iron. It is a little more than half the size of Earth. The most distinct feature about Mars is its red color. Dust rich in iron oxide covers the planet. It's sort of like the planet is **rusting**. White caps at the **poles** are water, forever frozen because of the colder temperatures **further** from the Sun. The only place the temperature rises above freezing is at the **equator**, or the middle of the planet. Mars has two moons, **Deimos** and Phobos but they are much smaller than our own moon. It takes nearly twice as long for Mars to circle the sun at almost 684 days.



The last part of the inner solar system is called the Asteroid Belt. It's the line between the inner rocky planets and the outer gaseous planets. Unlike the rest of the Inner Solar System, the Asteroid Belt isn't a planet at all. It is a bunch of large rocky chunks, mostly meteoroids. There's also a dwarf planet named Ceres in the asteroid belt. The rest aren't very large.

The Earth is the only planet that we know of with life on it, but universe is a big place. Much of our solar system is still a mystery, there is still plenty to explore.

1 Select the correct answer.

Which of these statements is true?

- a. Venus orbits the sun more quickly than Mercury.
- b. Mercury orbits the sun more slowly than Mars.
- c. Earth orbits the sun more quickly than Venus.
- d. Mars orbits the sun more slowly than Earth.

2 What types of gas make up the majority of Earth's atmosphere?

Nitrogen and oxygen

3 According to the text, where would you find water on Mars?

we can find the water in mars at the
white caps at poles

4 How long does it take for light to travel from the sun to Earth?

It takes eight minutes y twenty seconds

5 Which of the following would be the most appropriate nickname for Venus?

- a. the cold desert planet
- b. the first inner planet
- c. the windy planet
- d. the triple mooned planet