

## SPACE Reading Comprehension – Key Stage 2 – Year 4

### The Planets of Our Solar System

Our solar system is made up of eight planets that orbit around the Sun. Each planet is unique and has its own special features.

The closest planet to the Sun is Mercury. It is small and rocky, and because it has no atmosphere to protect it, Mercury can be extremely hot during the day and freezing cold at night.

Next is Venus, often called Earth's "sister planet" because it is similar in size. However, Venus is covered in thick clouds that trap heat, making it the hottest planet in our solar system.

Earth, our home planet, is the third from the Sun. It is the only planet where life has been found so far. Earth has water, land, and air, which make it perfect for supporting living things.

Mars, known as the "Red Planet" because of its reddish soil, comes next. Scientists are very interested in Mars because they believe it might have once had water and could have supported life.

Further from the Sun are the gas giants: Jupiter and Saturn. Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system, and it has a huge storm called the Great Red Spot. Saturn is famous for its beautiful rings, which are made of ice and rocks.

Uranus and Neptune are the farthest planets from the Sun. Uranus is unique because it spins on its side, while Neptune has very strong winds that blow across its surface.



Each planet has something special about it, making our solar system an exciting place to learn about.

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1. How many planets are there in our solar system?
2. Why does Mercury experience such extreme temperatures?
3. Which planet is referred to as Earth's "sister planet," and what is the reason for this?
4. What unique feature makes Earth different from the other planets?
5. Why do scientists find Mars particularly interesting?
6. What does the Great Red Spot on Jupiter tell us about the planet?
7. What materials make up Saturn's rings?
8. What might the unusual rotation of Uranus suggest about the planet?
9. How are Neptune's winds described, and what does this imply about its weather?
10. Why is learning about the planets in our solar system considered exciting?

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### MARK SCHEME

1. There are eight planets in our solar system.
2. Mercury experiences extreme temperatures because it has no atmosphere to protect it. This means it gets very hot during the day and freezing cold at night.
3. Venus is referred to as Earth's "sister planet" because it is similar in size to Earth. However, it is covered in thick clouds that trap heat, making it much hotter.
4. Earth is unique because it is the only planet where life has been found. It has water, land, and air, which are necessary for supporting living things.
5. Scientists find Mars particularly interesting because it is believed to have once had water and could have supported life in the past.
6. The Great Red Spot on Jupiter is a massive storm that has been raging for hundreds of years. It indicates that Jupiter has very strong winds and a dynamic atmosphere.
7. Saturn's rings are made of ice and rocks.
8. The unusual rotation of Uranus, which is on its side, suggests that it has a unique axial tilt compared to other planets.
9. Neptune's winds are described as very strong, which implies that Neptune has a very windy and turbulent atmosphere.
10. Learning about the planets in our solar system is considered exciting because each planet has its own special features and mysteries, making space exploration fascinating.