

Simple solar system

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The Solar System is about 4.568 billion years old. The Sun formed by gravity in a large molecular cloud. It is mainly hydrogen, which it converts into helium through nuclear fusion. The planets are in a flattened orbiting disk. This disk was partly left over from the cloud that formed the Sun, plus other material as the Sun moved through space. Eventually, the gas and dust of the disk came together into planets. It is thought that almost all stars and their planets form this way.

The Sun is a star. It makes up 99.9% of the Solar System's mass. This means that it has strong gravity. The other objects are pulled into orbit around the Sun. The Sun is mostly made out of hydrogen, and some helium and higher elements. All heavier elements, called metals in astronomy, account for less than 2% of the Sun's mass. Oxygen is about 1% of the Sun's mass. Iron (0.2%) is the most plentiful of the other elements.

There are eight planets in the Solar System. From closest to farthest from the Sun, they are: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. The first four planets are called terrestrial planets. They are mostly made of rock and metal, and they are mostly solid. The last four planets are called giant planets. This is because they are much larger than other planets and are mostly made either of gas or ices.

Six of the planets, and the six largest dwarf planets, are orbited by moons. There are more than 200 moons in the Solar System. Mercury and Venus have no moons, and Jupiter and Saturn have the largest number of moons. The largest moon is Ganymede which is a moon of Jupiter. Titan is one of Saturn's moons. It is the only moon in the Solar System to have an atmosphere, which is mainly composed of nitrogen.

The Solar System also contains other things. There are asteroid belts, mostly between Mars and Jupiter. Further out than Neptune, there is the Kuiper belt and the scattered disc. These areas have dwarf planets, including Pluto, Makemake, Haumea, Ceres and Eris. There are thousands of very small objects in these areas. There are also comets, centaurs, and interplanetary dust.

In Ancient Greece, Aristarchus of Samos proposed the heliocentric model of the Solar System, where the Sun, is at the center of the known universe. He is sometimes known as the "Greek Copernicus".

The formation and evolution of the Solar System began 4.6 billion years ago with the gravitational collapse of a small part of a giant molecular cloud.

Most of the collapsing mass collected in the centre, forming the Sun, while the rest flattened into a protoplanetary disk of loose dust, out of which the planets, moons, asteroids, and other Solar System bodies formed.

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This model, known as the nebular hypothesis, was developed in the 18th (1700s) century by Emanuel Swedenborg, Immanuel Kant, and Pierre-Simon Laplace. It has been adjusted by scientific disciplines such as astronomy, physics, geology, and planetary science. As our knowledge of space has grown, the models have been changed to account for the new observations.

The Solar System has evolved considerably since its initial formation. Some moons have formed from circling discs of gas and dust around their parent planets, while other moons are believed to have formed and were later captured by their planets. Others, such as the Earth's Moon, may be the result of giant collisions.

Many collisions between bodies have occurred, and have been important to the evolution of the Solar System. In the early stages, the positions of the planets sometimes shifted, and planets have switched places. This planetary migration is thought to have been responsible for much of the Solar System's early evolution.

Astronomers now think that the order of the planets was not always as it is today. Knowing what we know today, we can see the Solar System is strange. Most other planetary system we are able to study have their largest planet closer to their star. In the Solar System it is not. Also we have noticed other oddities in the Solar System. Mars is smaller than it ought to be, and the asteroid belt has been disturbed.

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