

Vocabulary



asteroids thousands of rocky objects that orbit the Sun

Most asteroids orbit in a belt between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. More than 90,000 asteroids have been identified. Only about 200 are more than 100 kilometers in diameter.

comet object made of frozen gases, dust, and rock, that orbits the Sun

Comets have long, bright tails when they pass near the Sun. The tails always point away from the Sun, no matter what direction the comet is moving.

meteor rock that enters and burns up in Earth's atmosphere

Meteors are often called shooting stars because they flash across the night sky in a bright streak.

meteorite rock that strikes the surface of a planet or moon

Meteorites can cause impact craters where they hit. The Barringer Crater in Arizona was formed by a meteorite. It is about 1.2 kilometers in diameter and 200 meters deep.

planet a large object in space that revolves around a nearby star

There are nine planets in our solar system. In order from the Sun, they are Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto.

scale model a model that correctly shows relationships between size and distance, but is smaller or larger than the objects it represents

Scale models are often used in science to study very large or very small objects.

solar system the Sun and the objects that orbit it, including the nine planets

The solar system formed some 4.6 billion years ago when a cloud of gas and dust contracted into a large, spinning disk. The Sun formed in the hot, dense center of the disk. The rest of the gas and dust eventually formed planets.