

What are some of the objects we can see from Earth? – I

Read the text.

Think about what these words have in common—clouds, stars, the sun, the moon, aircraft, rainbows and birds. Can you guess? They are some of the objects we can see from Earth. Some, like the clouds, are closer to us in the atmosphere. Others, like the stars, are far away in outer space.

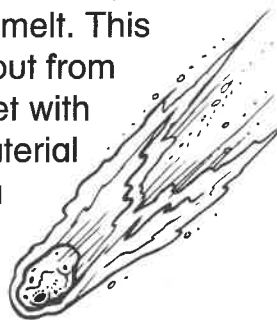
Outer space is made up of space bodies such as the sun, stars, moons, planets, dwarf planets, comets, asteroids and meteors. Except for the stars, all of these space bodies are found in our solar system. That is the name we give to the sun and all the space bodies that orbit (travel around) it. To see many of these objects, we need to use a powerful telescope.

The **sun** is the centre of the solar system and is actually a star. It is made up of extremely hot burning gases. It gives Earth heat and light. Although the sun is enormous compared with Earth, it is only a medium-sized star. It looks bigger and brighter than the other stars because it is so much closer to Earth.



There are eight **planets** in our solar system: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune and Uranus. All the planets orbit the sun at different distances from it. Those like Mercury and Venus that are closer to the sun are much hotter than those like Neptune and Uranus that are much further away.

Comets are chunks of dirty ice, dust and gas. When a comet gets too close to the sun, the ice starts to melt. This pushes out from the comet with other material to form a 'tail'.



Plutoids and dwarf planets orbit the sun like the planets. Like planets, they have enough gravity (force) to pull themselves into a round shape. But they don't have enough gravity to control other space bodies around them. Examples of plutoids are Pluto and Eris. Ceres, found in the asteroid belt, is a dwarf planet.

Most of the planets have one or more **moons**. A moon is a space body that orbits a planet as it orbits the sun. All of a planet's moons are smaller than it. Earth has one moon. Jupiter has the most discovered so far—63!

Asteroids are chunks of rock which orbit the sun, mainly in a belt between Mars and Jupiter. They can be as small as a grain of sand or as large as a small planet.

The twinkling **stars** we see are far beyond our solar system. They are not all the same as our sun—they can be bigger, smaller, hotter or cooler.

Meteors are pieces of rocky or metal material which come into the Earth's atmosphere and burn up. They look like bright streaks of light. Sometimes we call them falling stars or shooting stars, but they are not really stars.