



# WORLD LANGUAGES

## PLANET FACTS

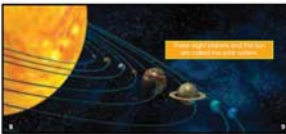
This page provides more detail about the interesting facts found in the book. Simply look at the corresponding page number to match the fact.



**Earth is a planet. It moves in a path around the Sun.** Much can be seen in the sky on a clear night. Some objects in space pass by the twinkling stars and slowly travel across the sky. Moving space objects are usually planets. The word planet comes from the Greek word *planete*, which means "wanderer."



**Seven other planets move around the Sun as well. These planets are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.** The nearly circular path that a planet makes around the Sun is called an orbit. All planets travel counterclockwise. The time that it takes a planet to complete a full orbit is the length of its year.



**These eight planets and the Sun are called the solar system.** It is named this because the Sun is the celestial body around which all of the planets orbit. Solar is a word used to describe the Sun and its energy. The force that keeps the planets in our solar system orbiting the Sun is called gravity.



**Planets look like stars, but they do not twinkle.** Most stars are far away from Earth. Their light has to come through several layers of atmosphere. As it does this, the light bends, or refracts, many times and in several directions. This creates the twinkling effect. Planets are closer to Earth. They appear big enough that their refracting light is not noticeable.



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**Some planets are small. Mercury is the smallest planet. It is also the planet closest to the Sun.** Planet size is measured by diameter. Mercury, Mars, Venus, and Earth are the four smallest planets. Mercury has a diameter of 3,031 miles (4,878 kilometers). Earth's diameter is 7,926 miles (12,102 km).



**Some planets are big. Jupiter is the biggest planet.** There is quite a jump in size between the smallest planets and the largest. Jupiter, for instance, has a diameter of 88,846 miles (142,984 km). Uranus, which is the next largest planet after Earth, has a diameter of 31,814 miles (51,200 km).



**Jupiter, Neptune, Saturn, and Uranus are made up mostly of gas. They are called the gas giants.** These four planets are located on the outer reaches of the solar system. Their atmospheres are thousands of miles (km) thick. It is only at the center of each planet that a rocky, icy core is found.



**Earth, Mars, Mercury, and Venus are made up mainly of rock.** These are the four inner planets, or those closest to the Sun. They share similar characteristics, such as volcanoes and mountains. At their center, they have a core of heavy metal, usually iron. Some of these planets have a thin atmosphere, while others have no atmosphere at all. Earth's atmosphere is mostly made up of gases.



**Earth is different from the other planets. There is life on Earth.** Scientists believe there are two main reasons for this. Earth's distance from the Sun provides it with just enough warmth to support life. The existence of water on Earth also contributes to the survival of life forms.