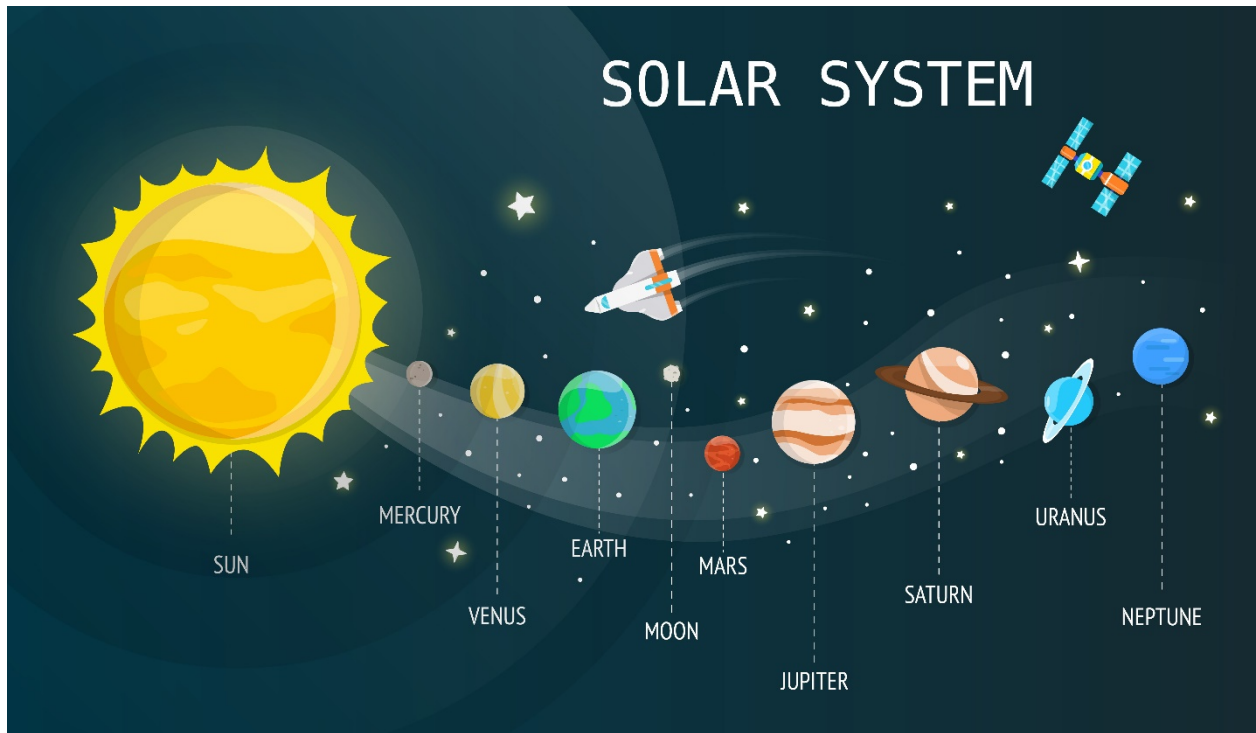


## S2 The Solar System



### ***What is the Solar System?***

The Solar System is made up of the Sun and all the planets, asteroids and other objects that orbit the Sun. The Sun is the largest object in the Solar System. In fact, its mass makes up over 99.8% of the mass of the entire Solar System.

### ***What are the planets?***

There are eight planets in our Solar System. Starting with the closest to the Sun, they are Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. The first four (Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars) have a hard rocky surface and are called terrestrial planets. The other four (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune) are much larger and are composed of gases (mostly hydrogen). They are called gas giants. All the planets orbit the Sun in the same anticlockwise direction.

### ***What else orbits the Sun?***

- Dwarf planets – these are similar to the other planets, but they are much smaller. Pluto is an example of a dwarf planet. In fact, it was once considered a planet like the other eight, but in 2006 it was redefined as a dwarf planet.
- Comets – comets are made up ice, dust, and rocks. It is common for comets to have a visible tail of gas.
- Asteroid belt – this is a region that lies between Mars and Jupiter, where thousands of rocky objects orbit the sun.

### ***What is a galaxy?***

Our Solar System is part of a bigger grouping of stars called a galaxy. Our galaxy is the Milky Way. It is estimated that there are around 200 billion stars in the Milky Way.