

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

Mercury has hardly any atmosphere at all. Its surface is covered with crater like Earth's moon. It is covered with rocklike dust. The main gases are helium, hydrogen and oxygen.

Scientists think that **Venus** has a rocky core and surface. Pictures of its surface show mountains, rolling plains and what may be active volcanoes. There is no water on Venus. The main gases are carbon dioxide and nitrogen.

Mars' surface is covered with red dust red dust red dust. The atmosphere of Mars is thin and consists mainly of carbon dioxide gas. Mars also has volcanoes, canyons, craters and sand dunes.

Jupiter's well known feature is the Jupiter's **Great Red Spot**. This is believed to be a swirling storm in the atmosphere. Jupiter is made mainly of hydrogen and helium gases.

Saturn's rings are thought to be made up of ice. The main gases in Saturn's atmosphere are hydrogen, helium and methane.

Uranus is the planet that rotates on its side. The atmosphere consists of the gases hydrogen, helium and methane.

Neptune is a pale blue planet with an atmosphere of methane, hydrogen and helium. The atmosphere has a **Great Dark Spot** that is believed to be a huge storm system the size of earth.

Pluto, which is no longer considered to be a planet, was recorded as being made mostly of frozen gases and the coldest of all the planets. The atmosphere is thin and made of methane.

Earth's atmosphere consists of about Earth's (4/5) four fifths nitrogen gas and the remaining one fifth (1/5) is mostly oxygen gas. Earth is the only planet with that amount of oxygen. Oceans of liquid water cover nearly three quarters of the surface of earth. Clouds of tiny droplets of water or ice crystals hang above Earth's surface. Ice covers the poles (North Pole and South Pole). Mountains, valleys and deep canyons are found on Earth. Earth seems to be the only planet that has living things on it.

EXPLORING THE UNIVERSE and SURVIVING IN SPACE

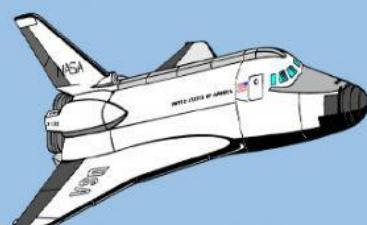
Scientists use special crafts to explore space. The crafts are pushed into space by powered rocket engines.



Three types of space crafts are presently being used.

The **space probe** does not carry humans. It gathers **data** (information) about objects in space and sends that information back to earth to be processed.

One of the most useful space crafts is the **space shuttle**. A space shuttle is a vehicle composed of giant fuel tank, large rocket (engine) and an orbiter. The orbiter can be launched into space and returned to earth. It carries passengers and equipment.



A **space station** is a space craft in space at all times. This is where scientists live while working in space. The two countries that have done the most work in space are the **U.S.A.** and **Russia**. Other countries involved in space exploration are China and a group of European countries



Here's a quick way to remember the names of the planets.

My Very Excellent Mother Just Served Us Noodles

Mercury Venus Earth Mars Jupiter Saturn Uranus Neptune