

FOSS Sun, Moon, and Planets Module

Glossary

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asteroid a small, solid object that orbits the Sun (SRB, IG)

asteroid belt a band of orbiting rubble that separates the gas giant planets from the terrestrial planets (IG)

astronomer a scientist who studies objects in the universe, including stars, planets, and moons (SRB, IG)

astronomy the study of the universe and the objects in it (SRB)

atmosphere the layer of gases surrounding Earth (SRB)

axis an imaginary line around which a sphere, like a planet, rotates (SRB, IG)

Big Dipper a group of seven bright stars in the shape of a dipper (SRB)

black hole a region in space without light that has a strong gravitational pull (SRB)

comet a mass of ice, rock, and gas orbiting the Sun (SRB, IG)

compass an instrument for determining directions, as by means of a freely rotating magnetized needle that indicates magnetic north (IG)

constellation a group of stars that humans see as a pattern and give a name (SRB, IG)

crater a hole formed by an object hitting a surface (SRB)

crescent Moon the curved shape of the visible part of the Moon just before and after a new Moon (SRB, IG)

cycle a set of events or actions that repeat in a predictable pattern (SRB)

day the time between sunrise and sunset on Earth (SRB, IG)

diameter the straight-line distance through the center of an object, one side to the other side (SRB)

dwarf planet a round object that orbits the Sun but does not orbit a planet (SRB, IG)

Earth the third planet from the Sun (SRB)

extraterrestrial beyond Earth (SRB)

first-quarter Moon a phase of the Moon in the lunar cycle halfway between a new Moon and a full Moon (SRB, IG)

force a push or pull that can change the speed and direction of a moving object (IG)

full Moon the phase of the Moon when all of the sunlit side of the Moon is visible from Earth (SRB, IG)

galaxy a group of billions of stars. Earth is in the Milky Way galaxy. (SRB)

gas giant planet one of the four planets that are made of gas. These are Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. (SRB, IG)

gibbous Moon the shape of the Moon when it appears to be more than a quarter but not yet full and when it is less than full but not quite a third quarter. (SRB, IG)

gravitational attraction the mutual force pulling together all objects that have mass (SRB)

gravity the force of attraction between two objects (SRB, IG)

Kuiper Belt a huge region beyond the gas giant planets, made up of different-size icy chunks of matter (SRB, IG)

lens a transparent, curved surface that bends light as the light passes through the surface (IG)

lunar cycle the 4-week period during which the Moon orbits Earth one time and goes through all of its phases (SRB, IG)

lunar eclipse when Earth passes exactly between the Moon and the Sun (SRB)

magnify to make an object appear larger (SRB)

mass the amount of material in something (SRB)

matter anything that takes up space and has mass (SRB)

Milky Way the galaxy in which the solar system resides (SRB)

Moon Earth's natural satellite (SRB, IG)

new Moon the phase of the Moon when the sunlit side of the Moon is not visible from Earth (SRB, IG)

night the time between sunset and sunrise on Earth (SRB, IG)

night sky the time when the sky is dark and certain astronomical objects can be observed, such as the Moon, stars, and planets (IG)

North Pole one of the ends of an imaginary axle, called an axis, on which Earth rotates. The North Pole always points towards the North Star. (IG)

North Star the star positioned directly over Earth's North Pole; also known as Polaris (IG)

observatory a building that protects telescopes (SRB)

orbit to move or travel around an object in a curved path (SRB, IG)

orientation the direction something points (IG)

phase the shape of the visible part of the Moon (SRB, IG)

planet a large, round object orbiting a star (SRB, IG)

planetarium a theater with a dome-shaped ceiling that represents the sky (SRB)

predict to estimate accurately in advance based on a pattern or previous knowledge (SRB)

reflect to bounce off an object or surface (SRB)

revolution to travel around something else in a circular path; orbit (IG)

rotate to turn on an axis (SRB)

rotation turning around on an axis (IG)

satellite an object, such as a moon, that orbits another object, such as a planet (SRB)

season a time of year that brings predictable weather conditions to a region on Earth (SRB)

shadow the dark area behind an object that blocks light (SRB, IG)

solar eclipse when the Moon passes exactly between Earth and the Sun (SRB)

solar system the Sun and the planets and other objects that orbit the Sun (SRB, IG)

solar wind the regular flow of particles from the Sun (SRB)

star a huge sphere of hydrogen and helium gas that radiates heat and light (SRB, IG)

Sun the star at the center of the solar system around which everything else orbits (SRB, IG)

sunrise the point between night (darkness) and day (daylight). The time at which day first happens. (IG)

sunset the point between day (daylight) and night (darkness). The time at which night first happens. (IG)

telescope an optical instrument that makes objects appear closer and larger (SRB, IG)

terrestrial planet one of the four small, rocky planets closest to the Sun. These are Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars. (SRB, IG)

thermonuclear reaction a change in atomic structure that creates heat and light energy, such as the reactions that occur on the Sun (SRB)

third-quarter Moon a phase of the Moon in the lunar cycle halfway between the full Moon and the new Moon (SRB, IG)

unaided eyes looking at something without the use of a telescope or microscope (SRB)

waning getting smaller (SRB, IG)

waxing getting larger (SRB, IG)