

The Sun: Our Star

The Sun (also called Sol) is the star at the center of our Solar System. Its gravity holds the solar system together. The Sun's warmth and light make life possible on Earth.

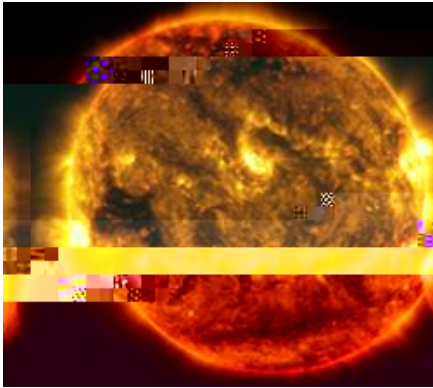


Image: NASA/SDO.

The Sun is a type of medium-sized star called a yellow dwarf. It is about 4.5 billion years old.

The Sun contains 99.8% of the matter in the Solar System.

The Sun is 109 times wider than the Earth and 330,000 times as massive. Over one million Earths could fit inside the Sun.

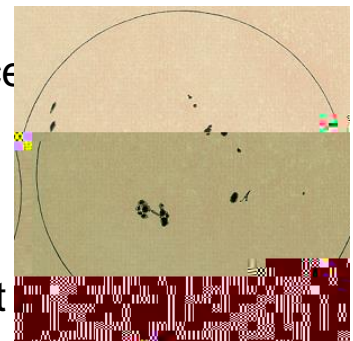
The Sun's gravity keeps everything in the Solar System in its orbit, including eight planets, at least five dwarf planets, tens of thousands of asteroids, and billions of comets.

The Sun is composed of hydrogen (70%) and helium (28%).

The temperature inside the Sun can reach 15 million degrees Celsius (27 million degrees Fahrenheit).

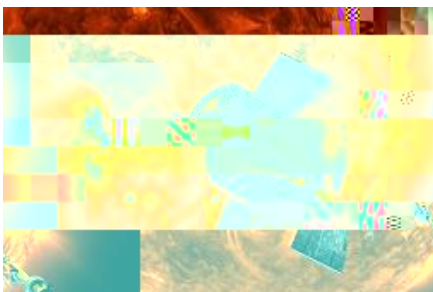
The Sun has a very strong magnetic field. Its surface sometimes has dark sunspots, which are areas of intense magnetic activity.

The Sun generates solar wind: a stream of charged particles traveling through the solar system at about 450 kilometers per second.



One of Galileo's 1613 sunspot drawings.

[Image: Rice University](#)



Many spacecraft constantly observe the Sun, helping us keep an eye on space weather that can affect satellites and astronauts.

Image: NASA.