

Our Solar System

Chapter 12: Beyond Earth · Topic 1

Key Concept

Planets are divided into two groups: the inner, rocky planets (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars) which are smaller and closer to the Sun, and the outer, gas/ice giant planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune) which are much larger and farther away. An asteroid belt, made of rocky debris, lies between Mars and Jupiter. Beyond Neptune lies the Kuiper Belt, home to dwarf planets like Pluto, which was reclassified from a full planet to a dwarf planet in 2006.

Quick Revision Notes

- Eight planets orbit the Sun: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune.
- Inner rocky planets: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars. Outer gas/ice giants: Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune.
- Earth is the only known planet to support life.
- Pluto was reclassified as a dwarf planet in 2006.

Practice Questions

- 1 Name the eight planets of the solar system in order from the Sun.
- 2 Explain the difference between the inner rocky planets and the outer gas giant planets.
- 3 Why is Earth considered special among the planets of the solar system?