

# MEET THE MOON

If someone asked whether you know about the Moon, you would probably say, "Yes!" Knowing its name or seeing it in the sky can make it seem familiar, but how well do you really know our closest neighbor?

## WHAT IS THE MOON?

A ball of rock!

The Moon is made of volcanic rocks very similar to what we find on Earth. Like other rocky bodies in the solar system, the Moon reflects the light of the Sun; it does not shine with its own light. The Moon is also the only natural satellite of the Earth. A satellite is any object that orbits around another object because of gravity. The word "satellite" usually makes you think of spacecraft, like GPS satellites, but those are human-made objects known as "artificial satellites."

## HOW BIG IS THE MOON?

About one quarter the size of the Earth.

If the Earth were the size of a basketball, the Moon would be as big as a tennis ball. The Moon is not the biggest [satellite](#) in our solar system. Three of Jupiter's moons (Ganymede, Callisto, and Io) and one of Saturn's moons (Titan) are larger. However, our Moon is bigger than Pluto.

## HOW FAR AWAY IS THE MOON?

About 30 Earths all lined up.

If you were to model the Earth and Moon to scale using a basketball and tennis ball, they would need to be 30 feet apart. It would take you more than two weeks flying in a commercial airplane to get there. That may seem far, but the Moon is still the closest object to Earth in our solar system.

## HOW FAST IS THE MOON?

Fast!

The Moon moves through space at a speed of 1 kilometer per second as it orbits around the Earth. That's fast enough to cross the continental United States in less than one hour! Like most big moons, our Moon always orbits with the same side facing toward its planet, the Earth. We only know what [the far side](#) looks like because humans have sent spacecraft to orbit the Moon and take pictures.

## GETTING TO KNOW THE MOON

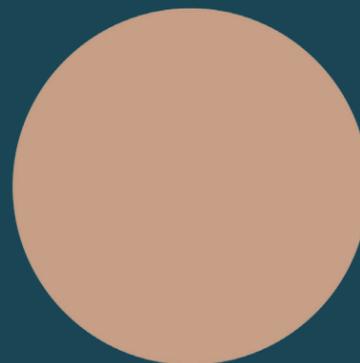
Did you learn something new about the Moon? The Moon belongs to everyone. You can observe it from anywhere on Earth, from the city or deep in the country. The next time you study the Moon, try to find something that you never noticed before!



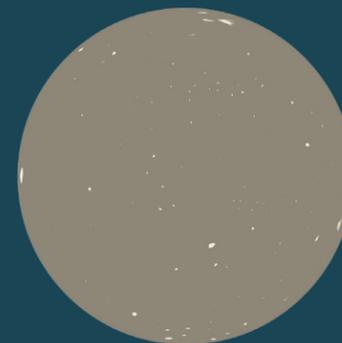
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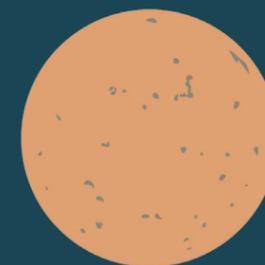
GANYMEDE



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