

Planet Mars

The red planet

Mars is our neighbour in the solar system. That's why we know quite a lot about it. Why it's red for example.

Mars is the fourth planet in our solar system, viewed from the sun. That makes Mars our neighbour. She is called the red planet, because to us, Mars looks like a little red dot in the sky.

Mars gets its red colour from the composition of the planet's soil, which consists mainly of iron. The oxidation of the iron particles gives the surface of Mars its distinguishing red-brown colour. Mars is a lot farther from the sun than the earth. That means it takes longer for the sunlight to reach the planet, which makes it a lot colder than here on earth. The average temperature on Mars is 63 degrees below Celsius: about as cold as our own South Pole during winter.

Like earth, Mars has a South and North pole, where there's ice. But unlike our ice, the ice on Mars is not made out of water, but out of carbon dioxide. Although Mars is a cold planet, scientists think that it's been warmer in the past. And it's possible that there used to be water on Mars.

Since Mars is relatively close to the earth, there has been a lot of research to the planet. Small space crafts have been sent to Mars to investigate. Like Curiosity, a small vehicle that drives around on Mars. Curiosity measures the air and the soil, to see if Mars is suitable for life. But it's not likely humans will join him anytime soon. For now it's just Curiosity doing its laps on the red planet. And that makes Mars the only planet in the galaxy, inhabited solely by robots.