

Important Planetary Characteristics

In this Exploration, you will learn about some of the key characteristics of the planets and various moons in the solar system. As you proceed, keep in mind the following Essential Question:

What planetary characteristics are most important, and why?

First Thoughts—Making Claims

To begin this Exploration, you will make claims about the planets in our solar system.

1. Of the planets in our solar system, which do you think is:

hottest?

coldest?

biggest in diameter?

smallest in diameter?

most massive?

least massive?

2. Which have rocky surfaces?

Liquid?

Gaseous?

3. Which have atmospheres?

4. Which is the closest and which is the farthest from the sun?

5. In what ways are each of these characteristics important?



Figure 1-1: Montage of images of the planets and some of the other objects in our solar system (NOT to scale. The sizes of the planets and other astronomical objects are not to scale; the placement of the bodies is purely decorative.)