

ACTIVITY 11

RECALLING THE PLANETS



Level:
Grades 1-4

Preparation:
easy

Number of students:
**individual or
small groups**

Length:
15 min.

Place:
classroom

Type of activity:
creative activity

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Students create a mnemonic—a sentence where each word starts with the first letter of a planet—to help them remember the planets in order from the Sun.

MATERIALS

- Printable activity sheet (1 per person)

PREAMBLE

Most adults grew up learning that there were 9 planets in our Solar System. A phrase commonly used to remember the planets in order was “My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas”. But in 2006, a new definition of “planet” was adopted, and Pluto was reclassified as a dwarf planet. That means the old mnemonic no longer works, and finding a new one becomes the students’ mission in this activity.

PREPARATION

Print the activity sheet so that each student has one.

STEPS

Ask the students if they know the planets in the Solar System in order from the Sun. To help them remember, explain that it is handy to **invent sentences in which each word begins with the first letter of a planet**. This mnemonic device can also be used to help remember other tricky lists.

Hand out the activity sheets and let the students get creative! Then come back as a class to share ideas. Students could even vote for their favourite sentence.

This activity can be done individually or in groups of 2 or 3 students.



INFORMATION

Our Solar System comprises 8 planets, which are the largest objects orbiting the Sun.

Pluto's category change in 2006 is an event that has brought much confusion to those less familiar with astronomy. It's important to understand that **objects in our Solar System do not come with a label indicating whether they are planets, moons, asteroids, etc.** These categories were invented by scientists in order to group similar objects together.

Sometimes, new observations mean that we have to modify our classifications; **it's science evolving and adapting to new knowledge.** This was the case with Pluto, which is now classified as a dwarf planet. The reclassification of Pluto does not reflect a change to Pluto itself in any way—it's still part of the Solar System and continues to orbit the Sun unchanged.

Although Pluto is no longer classified as a planet, it remains just as fascinating and worth studying. In fact, the New Horizons probe flew past Pluto in July 2015, capturing stunning images of its surface, the first time we've been able to see this distant world up close.

Find out more about this mission on the *NASA* website: <https://science.nasa.gov/mission/new-horizons>

TO LEARN MORE

- [Planets & Dwarf Planets](#), *NASA Science* Webpage.
- [Pluto](#), *NASA Science* Webpage.

Did you know that, if there were a pool big enough the planet Saturn would be the only planet to float on water?

DID YOU
KNOW...?

REMEMBERING THE PLANETS



To help you remember the planets in order from the Sun, invent a sentence with each word beginning with the first letter of each planet name. Let your imagination run wild and come up with a fun, creative sentence!

Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune

M _____

V _____

E _____

M _____

J _____

S _____

U _____

N _____

My sentence: _____