



Mars

Terrestrial Planet

Year = 687 Earth Days
Day = 24.6 Earth Hours
1.9 times smaller than earth
Radius = 2,106 miles
142 million miles from Sun
Gravity = 12.2 ft/s²

Alien life has long been associated with Mars and has also fascinated humans throughout our history. While there has been no evidence of life found on Mars or any of the other planets in our solar system, that has not stopped humans from fantasizing about what that life may look and act like. In popular culture we frequently see little humanoid creatures, often green or grey, that travel in disc shaped flying saucers. What do you think extraterrestrial life looks like?



Mars is the fourth planet from the Sun and is a dusty, cold, desert planet with a thin atmosphere. It is one of the most explored celestial bodies and has polar ice caps, weather, and seasons like Earth. It is the only planet that NASA has sent rovers to, which are currently exploring the planet's surface. The Curiosity Rover has sent back numerous photographs and data it has collected while roaming the planet for the last eight years. One of the missions of the Mars rovers is to search for evidence of life. The field of Astrobiology, exploring the potential for life beyond Earth, has been intertwined with the study of Mars since 1976 when NASA first looked to the planet for life.



Image Courtesy of NASA

Johannes Kepler, a sixteenth and seventeenth century German astronomer, developed theories he called the laws of planetary motion by observing the movements of Mars. Kepler's laws improved on the heliocentric model developed by Copernicus. Using data collected by astronomer Tycho Brahe, Kepler was able to map out the orbit of Mars and discovered it to be an ellipse (oval), not a circle.



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