

Discovering Mars - Activities (Ages 8-11)



Today we are going to investigate:

- How to find Mars in the sky
- What gives Mars its colour
- Features on the Martian surface

Activities

- 1 Start up Night Sky and use your finger to move around the sky. Look for the Sun and planets. Find the planet Mars (Tip: If you can't see it, type Mars into the Search box at the top of the menu).

Question: How would you describe the colour of Mars?

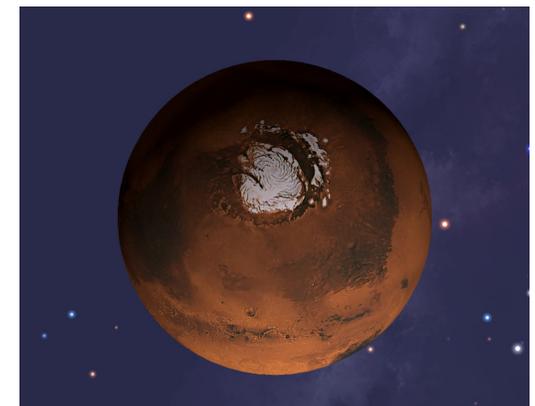
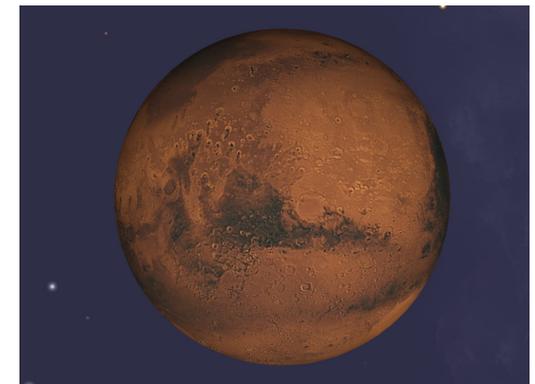
Question: Do you know what the nickname for Mars is?

- 2 Double tap on the planet Mars. This will bring up a 3D view of the planet which you can rotate with your finger. When you do this, see how one side of the planet is bright while the other is in darkness.

Question: Why is one side bright while the other is dark?

- 3 Use your finger to spin Mars around and explore the surface. Find two white areas (Tip: One is much smaller than the other)

Question: What do you think covers the ground to make these areas white?



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- 4 You can see that most of Mars looks orange. The planet is this colour because the rocks and dust on its surface are full of iron oxide. You probably know a common type of iron oxide we get on Earth.

Question: What is iron oxide better known as (Tip: you may get it on your bike if you leave it outside in the rain!)

- 5 You can see that Mars does not have any oceans or lakes on its surface. Its surface is a dry desert. However, it does have a group of four large extinct volcanoes. One of them is the tallest volcano in the Solar System. It is called Olympus Mons.

Question: Can you can find Olympus Mons?



Tip: If you can't find the volcano it may be on the dark side of the planet. To fix this open the Space Travel tab and select the hour number by tapping on it. Swipe your finger along the bottom row of numbers to change the time of day. Watch Mars as you do this and you will see the sunlight move across, revealing the rest of the planet.

What we have discovered:

- Mars is orange because it has iron oxide on its surface
- Mars has day and night just like Earth
- Mars has two polar ice caps
- Mars has the largest extinct volcano in the Solar System

Well done!
You're a Night Sky
Superstar!