



The Sun is the largest object in our solar system. Its diameter is about 865,000 miles (1.4 million kilometers). Its gravity holds the solar system together, keeping everything from the biggest planets to the smallest bits of debris in orbit around it.



There are more than 200 known moons in our solar system and several more awaiting confirmation of discovery. Of the eight planets, Mercury and Venus are the only ones with no moons. The giant planets Jupiter and Saturn lead our solar system's moon counts.

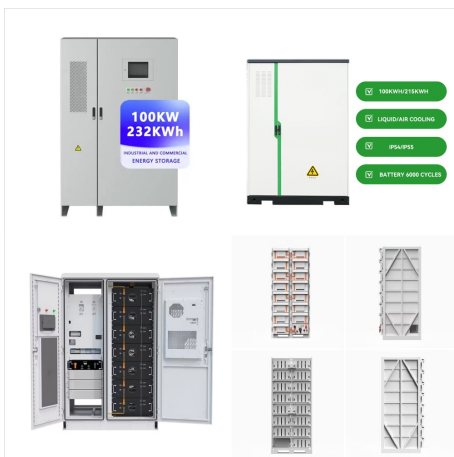


A planet is a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape, and (c) has cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST PLANET IN SOLAR SYSTEM



Saturn is the sixth planet from the Sun and the second-largest planet in our solar system. Like fellow gas giant Jupiter, Saturn is a massive ball made mostly of hydrogen and helium. Saturn is not the only planet to have rings, but none are as spectacular or as complex as Saturn's.



Jupiter is the fifth planet from our Sun and is, by far, the largest planet in the solar system ??? more than twice as massive as all the other planets combined. Jupiter's stripes and swirls are actually cold, windy clouds of ammonia and water, floating in an atmosphere of hydrogen and helium.



While Earth is only the fifth largest planet in the solar system, it is the only world in our solar system with liquid water on the surface. Just slightly larger than nearby Venus, Earth is the biggest of the four planets closest to the Sun, all of which are made of rock and metal.

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Charon, the biggest of Pluto's moons, is about half the size of Pluto itself, making it the largest satellite relative to the planet it orbits in our solar system. It orbits Pluto at a distance of just 12,200 miles (19,640 kilometers).



Jupiter's menagerie of moons includes the largest in the solar system (Ganymede), an ocean moon (Europa) and a volcanic moon (Io). Many of Jupiter's outer moons have highly elliptical orbits and orbit backwards (opposite to the spin of the planet).