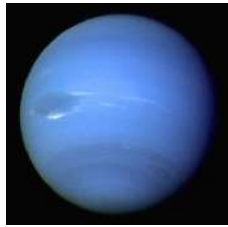


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ABOUT NEPTUNE ♆



Neptune is the eighth and farthest planet from the Sun in the Solar System. Named for the Roman god of the sea, it is the fourth-largest planet by diameter and the third largest by mass. Neptune is 17 times the mass of Earth and is slightly more massive than its near-twin Uranus, which is 15 times the mass of Earth but not as dense. On average, Neptune orbits the Sun at a distance of 30.1 AU, approximately 30 times the Earth–Sun distance. Its astronomical symbol is a stylized version of the god Neptune's trident.

Neptune was the first planet found by mathematical prediction rather than by observation of a telescope. Unexpected changes in the orbit of Uranus led astronomers to deduce that its orbit was subject to gravitational pull by an unknown planet. Neptune was subsequently observed on September 23, 1846 by Johann Galle within a degree of the position predicted by *Urbain Le Verrier*. Neptune's largest moon, *Triton*, was discovered shortly thereafter, though none of the planet's remaining 12 moons were located by a telescope until the 20th century. Neptune has been visited by only one spacecraft, *Voyager 2*, which flew by the planet on August 25, 1989.

In 1989, the *Great Dark Spot*, a storm system spanning 13000×6600 km, was discovered by NASA's *Voyager 2* spacecraft. The storm resembled the *Great Red Spot* of Jupiter. Some five years later, on November 2, 1994, the Hubble Space Telescope did not see the Great Dark Spot on the planet. Instead, a new storm similar to the Great Dark Spot was found in the planet's northern hemisphere.

Questions about Neptune

1. What was Neptune named after? What does Neptune's symbol represent?

2. How far away is Neptune from the Sun compared to the Earth?

3. How was Neptune discovered?

4. How many moons does Neptune have? What is the largest?

5. What is the name of the large storm on Neptune? What space probe discovered that storm? When was it discovered?
