

Getting Started:

First, get to know about your planet. Read as much information about the planet as you can find. Try both the Internet and the library; try the NASA web site, Zoom Astronomy, a good search engine, an encyclopedia, and individual books on astronomy and the Solar System.

As you're reading about your planet, take notes on key information, such as your planet's size, temperature range, its position in the Solar System, moons, atmosphere, any unusual features, when it was discovered, etc. Use your planet report outline to help you organize your information.

The Structure of the Planet Report:

Start your report with **an introductory paragraph** that states the main ideas that you will be writing about. Then write **at least four to five paragraphs** that clearly describe your planet. Each paragraph should cover one topic (for example, you should have one paragraph that covers the planet's location in the Solar System, how far it is from the Sun, and how long its year is). End the report with **a closing paragraph** that summarizes what you wrote and learned.

Finally, cite your references.

Check that your grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct. Make sure to use complete sentences and write neatly! Define any technical terms that you use. Proofread your report for errors before you hand it in -- do not hand in a rough draft.

Essential Questions to guide your research:

You will not just "answer" these questions as you write about them, rather use the information you gather when answering the questions to guide your writing.

- **The Planet's Name:** What does its name mean? Many planets were named after mythological gods.
- **Position in the Solar System:** Where is your planet located (for example, Mars in the fourth planet from the Sun)? How far from the Sun does it orbit. Is its orbit unusual?
- **Rotation on its Axis:** How long does it take for your planet to rotate on its own axis? (This is one day on your planet.)
- **Size:** How big is your planet? How does it rate in terms of the other planets in terms of size (is it the biggest, the smallest)? What is your planet's mass?
- **Gravity:** What is the force of gravity at the surface of your planet? For example, what would a 100-pound person weigh on that planet?
- **Orbit:** How long does it take for your planet to orbit the Sun? (This is one year on your planet.)
- **Atmosphere:** What is the composition of the atmosphere of your planet? Is it a thick or a thin atmosphere?
- **Temperature:** What is the temperature range your planet? How does this compare to the temperature on Earth?
- **Composition of Your Planet and its Appearance:** What type of planet is it (is it rocky or a gas giant)? What is its internal composition? What does your planet look like?

- **Moons:** If there are moons orbiting your planet, describe them and when they were discovered.
 - **Rings:** If there are rings orbiting your planet, describe them and when they were discovered.
 - **How Would a Human Being Fare on Your Planet:** On your planet, would a person choke in the atmosphere, be squashed by the extreme gravity, float with ease, freeze, burn up, or something else?
 - **Something Special:** Is there anything special about your planet? This can often be the best part of the report, taking you off on interesting topics. For example, are there 100-year-long storms on your planet? Are there giant volcanoes? Does your planet have a very tilted axis (giving it extreme seasons)? Have spacecraft visited your planet? If so, what have they discovered? Is your planet in an orbital resonance with another body?
 - **Discovery of Your Planet:** The planets that are not visible using the naked eye were discovered after the invention of the telescope (these are Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto). Tell when your planet was discovered and by whom.
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Your bibliography is a list of the sources you used to find your information. You must list any source from which you gathered information for your report. Remember copying directly from the website is called plagiarizing. If it is not in your words, list it as a quote or summarize it in your own words. The bibliography should contain the list of sources in alphabetical order by author's last name. If no author is listed, alphabetize by the title of the article.

Citing Your References: When you write your bibliography, list all of your references. Formats for each type of publication follows (there are different formats for different media):

- **Web Site:** Author(s) if appropriate. *Title of Site or web page*. URL of site, date of publication (the earliest copyright year listed). Web. Date of Access.
- **Book:** Author(s). *Title of book*. Edition. Location of publisher: Name of Publisher, year of publication.
- **Encyclopedia:** *Title of encyclopedia*, volume of encyclopedia used. Location of publisher: Name of Publisher, year of publication, pages where the article is located.
- **Magazine or Journal:** Author(s). "Title of article." *Name of magazine*, Volume.issue (date): pages where the article is located.

Author(s) are listed last name first, first name or initials (as cited in the publication).