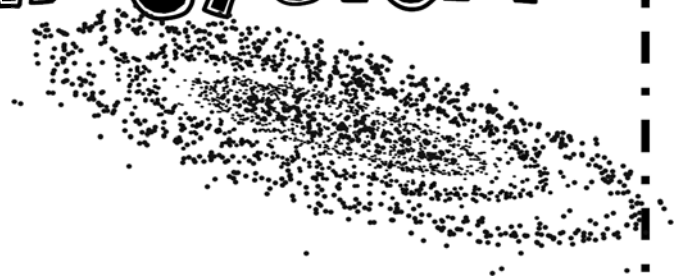


Our Solar System



A solar system will typically have stars, planets, moons, asteroids, comets, meteoroids, gas, dust and lots of empty space. The sun is an integral part of our solar system; but did you know that our sun is actually a star? A solar system is the group of objects that orbit around a star. In our case, our star is the sun. The word solar means '*of the sun*' which is where the solar system got its name. Our sun is part of more than 200 billions of stars that make up a galaxy. The stars, and planets in our solar system are all held within by a force called gravity. In our solar system, the planets move in a consistent way as they circle around the sun. Our solar system will also include, dust particles, gas, comets and asteroids. All of the planets in our system orbit around the sun in the same direction, and our entire solar system rotates around the vast Milky Way. It takes the planet earth 365 days or one full year to orbit the sun completely. However, not all planets take 365 days to orbit the sun, Mercury which is closer to the sun takes only 88 days to orbit the sun and Mars which is farther away takes 687 days. That means, although a year on Earth is 365 days, a year on Neptune is 60,190 days! Neptune is one of the farthest planets from the sun. Our solar system is merely a tiny spec in the Milky Way galaxy! When you look at the star filled sky at night, you are looking at the Milky Way galaxy.