

Shared reading: Planet Earth

Have you ever wondered why humans live on Earth and not the other planets in our Solar System? Well, Earth is the only planet in our solar system that has all the things we need to survive: 21% oxygen in the air to breathe, water to drink and all at just the right temperature warmed by the Sun. Scientists call this the 'Goldilocks Zone' because everything is 'just right'...not too hot, not too cold. Its name is derived from the Old English word 'ertha' and the Anglo-Saxon word 'erda' which means ground or soil.

The Blue Planet

Earth, the third planet from the Sun after Mercury and Venus, is referred to as 'The Blue Planet' because of how it looks from space. This is due to the fact that over $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Earth's surface is covered in oceans and seas.



Did you know?

- Age: approx. 4.54 billion years
- Diameter: 13,000 km
- Distance to Sun: 150,000,000 km
- Surface Temperature: 15°C
- Highest point: Mount Everest 8.8 km
- Lowest point: Challenger Deep 10.9 km below sea level

The Earth spins on its axis once every 24 hours – that's what gives us day and night. You wouldn't notice but the Earth's spin is actually slowing down by 17 milliseconds per hundred years. Eventually this will lengthen our days but it will take around 140 million years before our day will have increased from 24 to 25 hours. I wonder if children 140 million years from now will have an extra hour at school.

Whilst it is spinning, the Earth is also orbiting the Sun, which takes $365 \frac{1}{4}$ days to do one full circuit. This gives us the length of our years. Our seasons are also dependent on the orbit of the Earth as our planet is tilted at an angle. This means that around one side of the Sun we are tilted towards it – giving us warmer temperatures and longer days...our summer. However, around the other side of the Sun we are tilted away from it giving us less light and cooler temperatures – so this is our winter. All in all, it's a pretty amazing planet and I, for one, am glad to call it home.

- Approx. What does this mean? Why is there a full stop in the word?
- Where does the name Earth come from?
- What percentage of the air we breathe is NOT oxygen?
- How long does it take the Earth to spin once on its axis?
- Name the two planets between Earth and the sun.
- Write down ONE fact you have learnt from reading this text.
- The author says, 'I for one, am glad to call it home'. What are you glad for on our planet?

