



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Neptune: The Windy Blue Planet

Neptune is the eighth and farthest planet from the Sun in our solar system. It's a deep blue color and is known for having some of the strongest winds of any planet! Like Uranus, Neptune is an ice giant and has a cold, icy atmosphere. Let's dive in and explore this mysterious, distant planet.

Neptune has a beautiful blue color because of a gas in its atmosphere called methane. This gas absorbs red light and reflects blue light, giving Neptune its bright blue color. The planet's atmosphere is also made of hydrogen and helium, similar to Uranus.

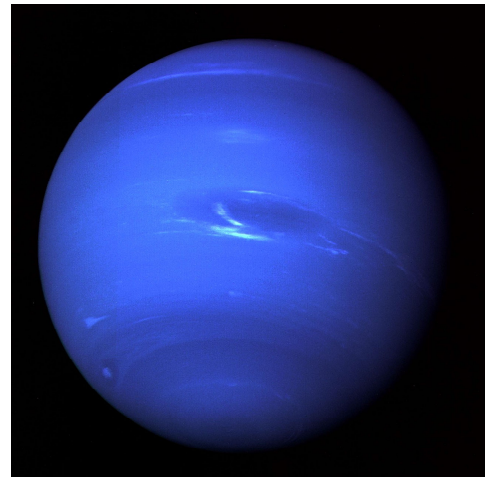
Neptune is famous for its powerful winds, which can blow at speeds over 1,200 miles per hour! That's faster than any storm on Earth. Neptune has huge storms, too. One famous storm, called the Great Dark Spot, was as big as Earth! The Great Dark Spot was a dark, swirling storm, similar to Jupiter's Great Red Spot, but it eventually disappeared. New storms sometimes appear on Neptune, showing that the planet's weather is always changing.

Since Neptune is so far from the Sun, it's very cold. Temperatures on Neptune can reach -373 degrees Fahrenheit! It takes a long time for sunlight to reach Neptune, which makes it one of the coldest places in our solar system.

Did you know that Neptune has rings, too? Neptune has five thin rings made of dust and ice particles. The rings are faint and hard to see, so scientists use special telescopes to study them. These rings aren't as bright or visible as Saturn's, but they are still an exciting part of Neptune.

Neptune has 14 known moons. Its largest moon, Triton, is very cold and has geysers that shoot icy material into space! Triton is unusual because it orbits Neptune in the opposite direction of Neptune's rotation. Scientists think Triton might have been a dwarf planet captured by Neptune's gravity long ago.

Because Neptune is so far away, only one spacecraft has visited it. In 1989, Voyager 2 flew by Neptune, sending back the first close-up pictures of this blue planet. Thanks to Voyager 2, we learned a lot about Neptune's atmosphere, moons, and rings.



Picture of Neptune from Voyager 2



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### Fun Facts About Neptune

Neptune is four times wider than Earth.

A day on Neptune is about 16 hours long.

Neptune takes 165 Earth years to orbit the Sun, so one year on Neptune is incredibly long!

Neptune was discovered in 1846, and it's the only planet discovered using math before it was actually seen.

1. Why is Neptune blue in color? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why has only one spacecraft visited Neptune? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Create and answer a question about Neptune.

question: \_\_\_\_\_

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answer: \_\_\_\_\_

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