

Earth's Brother

As everyone knows, Earth is one of eight planets slowly moving around the sun within our solar system. Today, let's look at the fourth planet from the sun, sometimes called the "Red Planet" – Mars!

Mars has North and South polar ice caps, just like Earth. These ice caps are made mostly of frozen water. With so much water, something may have lived on Mars before!

A year on Earth is 365 days, but on Mars it's much longer. Can you guess how long? One year is 687 days! Now imagine how many hours are in a Martian day. Amazingly, it's about the same – 24 hours and 29 minutes – only a little bit longer than a day on Earth. With these similarities, maybe we can call Mars a "brother of Earth." But, don't forget that there are many surprising differences, too.

Mars has the same seasons as Earth. Don't try to wear a T-shirt and sandals in summer, though – on the hottest day on Mars it is only five degrees Celsius below zero! That is not very good for a summer holiday.

While many planets are bigger than Earth, Mars is actually much smaller. If Earth were the size of a basketball, Mars would be no bigger than a softball. However, Mars has the largest volcano in the solar system, Olympus Mons. It's more than 21 kilometers high, three times higher than Mount Everest, and it's so big that people could see it through telescopes in the 19th century, almost 200 years ago!

So you see, Mars is a very interesting place. It's like Earth in many ways, but it's also strange and mysterious – just like a brother. Maybe one day humans will visit or even live there, but, until then, we can continue to learn about our brother, Mars, a special part of the family of planets in our solar system.