

Sun, Moon, and Stars Glossary Definitions CR 2009

Astronomer A scientist who studies objects in the universe including the stars, planets, and moons. (TG, SRB)

Axis An imaginary line around which a sphere, like a planet, rotates. (SRB)

Big Dipper A group of seven bright stars in the shape of a dipper. (SRB)

Black hole A region in space without light that has a strong gravitational pull. A black hole is caused by the collapse of stars. (SRB)

Cardinal directions The four main points on a compass: north, south, east, and west. (TG)

Compass A tool used to determine directions. (TG)

Constellation A group of stars humans observe in a pattern and give a name. (TG, SRB)

Crescent A word used to describe the curved shape of the visible part of the Moon before and after a new Moon. (TG, SRB)

Cycle A set of events or actions that repeat in a predictable pattern. (TG, SRB)

Day The time between sunrise and sunset on Earth when it is light. (TG, SRB)

East One of the four cardinal directions. The point where the Sun rises. (TG)

First-quarter Moon A phase of the Moon in the lunar cycle halfway between a new Moon and a full Moon. The Moon appears to be a “half Moon” as seen from Earth. (TG, SRB)

Full Moon A phase of the Moon in the lunar cycle when all of the sunlit side of the Moon is visible from Earth. (TG, SRB)

Galaxy A group of billions of stars. Earth is in the Milky Way galaxy. (SRB)

Gibbous A word used to describe the Moon when it appears to be more than half but less than full. (TG, SRB)

Gravity A force that pulls objects toward each other. (SRB)

Horizon The apparent boundary between Earth’s surface and the sky. (SRB)

Lunar cycle The 4-week period during which the Moon orbits Earth one time and goes through all of its phases. (TG, SRB)

Magnify To make an object appear larger in size. (TG, SRB)

Matter Anything that takes up space and has mass. (SRB)

Milky Way One of the billions of galaxies that make up the universe. The Sun is one of the billions of stars in the Milky Way galaxy. (SRB)

Moon Earth's natural satellite. (TG, SRB)

New Moon The phase of the Moon in the lunar cycle when the sunlit side of the Moon is not visible from Earth. (TG, SRB)

Night The time between sunset and sunrise on Earth when it is dark. (TG, SRB)

North One of the four cardinal directions. (TG)

Observatory A building that protects telescopes. Observatories are often found on mountain peaks above the dust and pollution in the air. (SRB)

Orbit To move or travel around an object in a curved path. Earth orbits the Sun. The Moon orbits Earth. (TG, SRB)

Phase The shape of the visible part of the Moon. (TG, SRB)

Planet A large, celestial body orbiting a star. (TG, SRB)

Planetarium A theater with a dome-shaped ceiling that represents the sky. Planets, stars, and galaxies can be projected on the inside of the dome. (SRB)

Predictable To estimate accurately in advance based on a pattern or previous knowledge. (TG, SRB)

Reflect To bounce off an object or surface. Light reflects from the Moon. (SRB)

Rotate To turn on an axis. (TG, SRB)

Satellite An object, such as a moon, that orbits another object, such as a planet. (SRB)

Season The four times during the year that bring predictable weather conditions to a region on Earth. The four seasons are spring, summer, fall, and winter. (TG, SRB)

Shadow The dark area behind an object that blocks light. (TG, SRB)

Solar system The Sun and the planets and other objects that orbit the Sun. (SRB)

South One of the four cardinal directions. (TG)

Star A huge sphere of hydrogen and helium that radiates heat and light. The Sun is a star. (TG, SRB)

Sun The star around which Earth and other planets orbit. (TG, SRB)

Sunlight Light from the Sun. (SRB)

Sunrise The time of day when the Sun is coming over the horizon in the east. (SRB)

Sunset The time of day when the Sun is going below the horizon in the west. (SRB)

Telescope An optical instrument that makes objects appear closer and larger. (TG, SRB)

Third-quarter Moon The phase of the Moon in the lunar cycle halfway between the full Moon and the new Moon. The Moon appears from Earth to be a “half Moon.” Unaided eyes Looking at something without the use of a telescope or microscope. (TG, SRB)

Unaided eyes Looking at something without the use of a telescope or microscope. (SRB)

Waning Getting smaller. (TG, SRB)

Waxing Getting larger. (TG, SRB)

West One of the four cardinal directions. The point where the Sun sets. (TG)