

KS3 The Earth and beyond
Classroom-based activity

You are here

The Solar System is an enormous and complicated place so ensure you aim for an achievable degree of accuracy, rather than a fully detailed and exact scale model, when carrying out this activity.

Challenge your pupils to create a model of the Solar System in the form of a mobile. The Sun, which will be the largest body in the model, should be at the middle of the mobile with the various planets, from Mercury to Pluto, arranged in sequence from the centre.

Before construction begins divide the pupils into small groups and give each group the task of investigating a particular planet. Key questions for the groups to consider might include:

- What is it made of?
- How does its surface differ from other planets?
- Do these differences have an effect on the planet's appearance?
- How big is it in relation to the other planets?
- Does it have any of the essentials for life on Earth – liquid water, oxygen, sunlight, carbon containing chemicals?

Use balloons of various sizes covered in papier mâché to create the planets, making certain that the differences in the sizes of the planets is reflected to some degree in the differing sizes of the papier mâché balloons. Once all the planets have been constructed use wire coat hangers to attach them to the “Sun” in the following sequence (from the centre outwards): Mercury; Venus; Earth; Mars; Jupiter; Saturn; Uranus; Pluto.