

Pluto a Planet No More

Like a lot of kids, you might know the names of the nine planets in our solar system in order of their distance from the sun. Maybe you use the first letters of the words in a sentence such as “My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pickles” to help you remember Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto.



Now you will need to learn a new sentence to remember the planets. A group of scientists has decided that Pluto, which has been called a planet for 76 years, is not a planet after all.

The scientists, called *astronomers*, wrote new rules to help them decide whether an object in space is a planet or something else. The new rules say a planet must

- orbit the sun,
- be large enough to have almost a round shape, and
- have its own clear orbit.

NEWS WORD BOX

astronomers orbit
planet solar system

Pluto’s orbit cuts into the orbit of the planet closest to it, Neptune, so the scientists say Pluto cannot be a planet.

MORE FACTS ABOUT PLUTO

- Scientists have tried for thousands of years to write rules to help them decide what is a planet.
- Pluto also is smaller than the eight planets, so scientists are calling it a *dwarf planet*. The other eight planets are called *classic planets*.
- Pluto was discovered in 1930 by a 24-year-old scientist named Clyde Tombaugh who lived in Arizona.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Write a new sentence that kids can use to help them remember the names of the eight planets.