

Could the Solar System Have Ten Planets?



Have you already learned about the nine planets in our solar system? Soon everyone may have to redraw solar system maps to add a planet.

Some scientists think that an icy rock near the edge of the solar system could be a tenth planet. Astronomers first photographed this possible planet in October 2003. For now, they are calling it 2003 UB313.

2003 UB313 is located in a group of rocks and asteroids 9 billion miles from the sun. Some researchers think 2003 UB313 is bigger than the planet Pluto and farther away than Pluto.

NEWS WORD BOX

astronomer
asteroid
solar system
planet

Some other astronomers, though, do not think 2003 UB313 is a real planet. They say it is too different from the other planets in our solar system -- Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto -- to be considered a planet.

An organization called the IAU (short for International Astronomical Union) decides whether or not an object is a planet. It could take the IAU many years to decide if 2003 UB313 is really a planet.

MORE FACTS ABOUT 2003 UB313

- If 2003 UB313 is the tenth planet, it could be the most important news about the solar system since Neptune and its moon, Triton, were discovered in 1846.
- No one saw 2003 UB313 until recently because it is outside the circle around the sun where the other nine planets are.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

If 2003 UB313 is a real planet, what would be a good name for it? How should the name be chosen?