

Moons

As well as the planets, there are many smaller objects in the Solar System. The most well known group of small objects are moons. A moon is an object that orbits a planet and accompanies the planet on its own orbit around the Sun. Not all planets have a moon. Everyone is familiar with Earth's Moon that is clearly visible in the sky. The other planets with moons are Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. Some moons are large and spherical like Earth's Moon, such as the four largest moons of Jupiter (the Galilean moons – Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto; see Figure 3). These moons are thought to have formed alongside their parent planets. Many other moons, such as the two moons of Mars (Phobos and Deimos), are smaller and have a more irregular shape. Smaller moons, like those of Mars, are thought to be asteroids which were 'captured' by the planet at a later time (Figure 3).



↑ Examples of moons in the Solar System. The images shown here are not to scale.