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## Mercury Facts

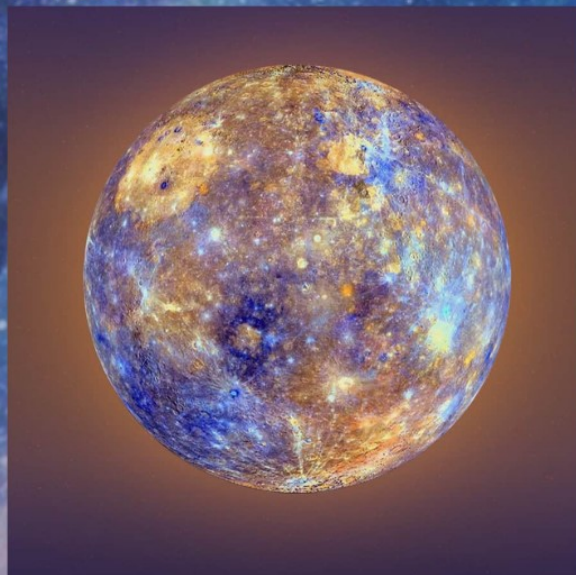
The planet closest to the Sun, Mercury is the smallest and fastest planet in the solar system whipping around the Sun every 88 Earth days.

Mercury is named after the Roman god of commerce, travel, and thievery. In Greek mythology, Mercury was known as Hermes, the messenger of the gods. It probably received this name because it moves very quickly across the sky.

### Key Facts & Summary

- Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun at a distance of 57 million kilometres / 35 million miles.
- Despite being so small, Mercury is the second-densest planet in the Solar System after Earth. This means it is very compact.
- Mercury does not have any satellites or ring systems.
- The surface of Mercury is similar to the Moon. It is the most heavily cratered planet and this means that it hasn't been geologically active for many years.
- Mercury has a radius of 2.439 km / 1.516 mi and a diameter of 4.879 km / 3.032 mi.
- Though it is the closest planet to the Sun, temperatures on Mercury are both hot and cold.
- During the day, Mercury's average surface temperatures can reach up to 430 degrees Celsius.
- At night, Mercury's surface temperatures can drop to as low as -180 degrees Celsius.
- Mercury's changes in temperature are the most drastic in the Solar System.
- Mercury formed around 4.5 billion years ago after gravity pulled swirling gases and dust together.
- After Mercury was formed, scientists believe that it suffered heavy bombardments by comets and asteroids shortly after. Another event called the Late Heavy Bombardment which ended around 3.8 billion years ago, may also be responsible for Mercury's cratered surface.
- Almost 85% of Mercury's radius is represented by its enormous iron core.
- Due to the core's unusual size, Mercury began to shrink as the core cooled and contracted pulling the surface inward.
- Mercury is the smallest planet in the Solar System and the closest planet to the Sun. Though it is very close to the Sun, it is not the hottest planet, that title belongs to Venus, but Mercury is the second-hottest nonetheless.

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