

FAQ: VOCABULARY

What is the difference between an asteroid, comet, meteor, meteorite and other space bodies?

ASTEROID: A large, piece of rock occurring from collisions or the early solar system. Many asteroids are found near Mars and Jupiter.



NASA - http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/imgcat/html/object_page/nea_19970627_mos.html

COMET: It consists of an icy nucleus and compounds. A comet is a rock covered in ice, methane and other compounds. As it nears the sun, it releases gasses producing an atmosphere. Sometimes, its tail can be observed.



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METEOR: A small body in outer space. As it enters the earth's atmosphere, there is a streak of light caused by friction and can be incandescent.

A meteor shower



Image :Public domain through wikimedia

METEORITE: This is a meteoroid (debris) which gets to earth when it becomes known as a meteorite which is a piece of rock or metal. This debris itself is known as a **meteoroid**. Most are so small they are vaporised in the atmosphere.



Image CC BY 2.5 through wikipedia

If any of this meteoroid makes it to Earth, it is called a **meteorite**. A meteor can become a fireball or also know as, a shooting star.

3 Categories of meteorite: rock, iron and those made of both rock and metal