

Dwarf planet



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Dwarf planet: The coining of the term Dwarf Planet is one of the more recent additions to the dictionary of astronomy. The universe comprises of several millions of galaxies and each galaxy is a conglomeration of stars at different stages in their life cycle. Our own sun is one such star, around which revolve planets and other debris. To this system of nomenclature, greater refinement was added by introducing the term Dwarf Planet. Three conditions must be satisfied in order for a planet to be classified as a dwarf planet. Firstly, they must be large enough to assume the spherical shape and secondly, they have not yet established a debris free orbit in their solar system and thirdly, they must not be satellites for other planets. Further, if the celestial object in question is too small to take the rounded spherical shape, it would probably be classified as a comet or an asteroid.

In our own solar system, there are several objects that fall under this category of planets. The introduction of this new category of celestial objects was prompted by the recent discovery of Eris – a disc shaped cluster of debris that was located far beyond the orbit of Pluto. The other notable dwarf planets in our solar system are Ceres and Pluto. Ceres was for previously recognized as the largest asteroid and Pluto is demoted to dwarf planet status considering that its orbit is not as well established as other planets. It is interesting to note that these three are only the most prominent dwarf planets in our solar system. There could be as many as 200 orbiting in the outer reaches of our solar system.