

## Vocabulary: Unit 2: The Formation of the Solar System

<b>nebula</b>	An interstellar cloud of gas and dust.
<b>nebular hypothesis</b>	The hypothesis that our solar system formed from a spinning cloud of gas and dust (a nebula).
<b>accretion</b>	The process of growth or increase, typically by the gradual accumulation of additional layers or matter.
<b>planetesimal</b>	A minute planet; a body that could come together with many others under gravitation to form a planet.
<b>asteroid</b>	Small, rocky bodies that orbit the Sun.
<b>meteor</b>	A chunk of space debris that enters Earth's atmosphere and burns up, creating a streak of light.
<b>meteoroid</b>	A chunk of space debris, smaller than an asteroid, that has not reached Earth's atmosphere.
<b>meteorite</b>	A large meteoroid that strikes Earth's surface.
<b>comet</b>	Small, icy objects that have very elliptical orbits around the Sun.
<b>geocentric model</b>	Model used by ancient Greeks and puts Earth at the center of the universe.
<b>heliocentric model</b>	Model proposed by Copernicus that puts the sun at the center of the universe.
<b>revolution</b>	A planet's movement around a star in an elliptical path.
<b>perihelion</b>	The point in the orbit of a planet, asteroid, or comet at which it is closest to the sun.
<b>aphelion</b>	The point in the orbit of a planet, asteroid, or comet at which it is farthest from the sun.
<b>rotation</b>	The action of rotating around an axis or center.
<b>oblate spheroid</b>	An object with a shape that looks like a flattened sphere.
<b>precession</b>	The slow movement of the axis of a spinning body around another axis due to a torque (such as gravitational influence) acting to change the direction of the first axis.
<b>nutation</b>	A periodic oscillation of the earth's axis that causes the precession of the poles to follow a wavy rather than a circular path.
<b>solstice</b>	Either of the two times in the year, the summer solstice and the winter solstice, when the sun reaches its highest or lowest point in the sky at noon, marked by the longest and shortest days.
<b>equinox</b>	The time or date (twice each year) at which the sun crosses the celestial equator, when day and night are of equal length (about September 22 and March 20).
<b>craters</b>	Large, bowl-shaped cavities in the ground or on the surface of a planet or the moon caused by explosions, the impacts of meteorites, etc.
<b>maria</b>	Large, level basalt plains on the surface of the moon, appearing dark by contrast with highland areas.
<b>terrae (highlands)</b>	Light-colored, rough upland or mountainous regions of the moon.