

Glossary¹

Atmosphere: The mixture of gases that surround an object in space, such as a planet, moon or star, held near it by gravity.

Atom: A basic unit of matter. Every atom has a positively charged center called a nucleus that is surrounded by a number of negatively charged electrons.

Attract: To draw to or toward itself.

Aurora: (plural = **aurorae**) light radiated by ions and atoms in Earth's upper atmosphere in the region of Earth's poles. Aurora can be an extremely impressive spectacle. The Aurora australis, or "Southern Lights" occur near the South Pole while the Aurora borealis, or "Northern Lights" occur near the North Pole.

Boom: A part of a spacecraft that is long and cylindrical to hold instruments far from the satellite bus when it is in space.

Cause: Something that produces an effect.

Compass: A device that determines the presence of a magnetic field and its direction.

Corona: The outer part of the Sun's "atmosphere." In the outer region of the corona, particles travel away from the Sun and stretch far out into space. The corona can only be seen during total solar eclipses, appearing as a halo around the moon.

Coronal mass ejections (CMEs): Huge bursts of solar wind rising above the Sun's corona. These are one of the biggest explosions in the Solar System.

Dipole: Two electric charges or magnetic poles that have the same strength but are opposite in sign or polarity (North versus South) and are separated by a small distance.

Earth: The third planet from the Sun on which we all live.

Eclipse: The blocking of some or all of the light from one object by another.

Effect: Something brought about by a cause; a result.

Electric charge: A physical state based on the amount and location of electrons and protons in matter. Matter with more electrons than protons is negatively charged. Matter that attracts free electrons is positively charged.

¹ This Glossary was adopted from the Helios glossary found at the URL: http://helios.gsfc.nasa.gov/gloss_ab.html. Underlined words represent words that are defined in this Glossary.