

A student discussion

Listen to two students comparing Mars and Earth to practise and improve your listening skills.

Before listening

Do the preparation task first. Then listen to the audio and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Write the words and phrases in the correct group.

to have in common	but	similar	whereas
both	to share		while

Words and phrases for talking about difference	Words and phrases for talking about things that are the same

Tasks

Task 1

Write the characteristics in the correct group.

Has more air	Is closer to the Sun	Is colder	Has stronger gravity
Is 50 per cent smaller	Has less carbon dioxide	Used to have water	Has a longer day

Earth	Mars

Task 2

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

astronomical	nitrogen	frozen
support	Gravity	same

1. Most people think Mars can human life.
2. We measure distances in space using units.
3. The two planets aren't the colour.
4. Most of the water on Mars is probably
5. The air on Earth is mostly made up of
6. on Mars is just over one third as strong as on Earth.

Discussion

Do you think people will live on Mars one day?

Transcript

Teacher: So you've got a few minutes to discuss with your partner.

Student 1: So, as far as I know, the main similarity between Mars and Earth is that they can both support human life.

Student 2: Yeah, but do we know that's actually true? I mean, Mars is much colder than Earth, isn't it? It says here it's about minus 55 degrees most of the time, whereas on Earth only places like Antarctica get that cold.

Student 1: True. Well then, I suppose you could say both planets are a similar distance from the Sun?

Student 2: No way! Mars is much further away! It says here it's about 228 million kilometres, while Earth is about 150 million.

Student 1: Yes, but in space that's not that far. Jupiter is, like, almost 780 million kilometres. That's why we use astronomical units when we talk about distances in space. Earth is 1 astronomical unit from the Sun and Mars is 1.3. The difference doesn't sound so big when you look at it that way.

Student 2: I see what you mean. Jupiter is 5.2 astronomical units so I guess you're right. What other similarities are there between the two planets?

Student 1: Let's see ... not the colour, obviously!

Student 2: Yeah! Earth is called the blue planet and Mars is called the red planet for pretty obvious reasons!

Student 1: Their sizes are pretty different. Mars is about half the size of Earth.

Student 2: What about this? It looks like the days on both planets are almost the same length. Earth's day is 24 hours but Mars's is about half an hour longer.

Student 1: You're right. OK, any other things they both share?

Student 2: I suppose you could say they have water in common.

Student 1: Could you? How?

Student 2: Well, Earth is 70 per cent water and Mars probably had huge oceans in the past. It's just that most of the water there now is probably frozen.

Student 1: Ah, I see. I don't think we can say the air is the same, though. Most of Earth's air is nitrogen and oxygen, but Mars ...?

Student 2: Mars doesn't really have air, not compared with Earth. It's got about one per cent as much air as Earth.

Student 1: Right, and it's mostly carbon dioxide.

Student 2: Gravity is another difference. I didn't know this, but Mars has higher gravity than the Moon. But it's much less than on Earth, of course.

Student 1: Oh, yes. It says Mars has about 38 per cent of Earth's gravity.

Teacher: OK, let's see what you've found ...

Answers

Preparation task

Words and phrases for talking about difference	Words and phrases for talking about things that are the same
but whereas while	to have in common similar both to share

Task 1

Earth	Mars
Has more air	Is colder
Is closer to the Sun	Is 50 per cent smaller
Has stronger gravity	Used to have water
Has less carbon dioxide	Has a longer day

Task 2

1. support
2. astronomical
3. same
4. frozen
5. nitrogen
6. Gravity