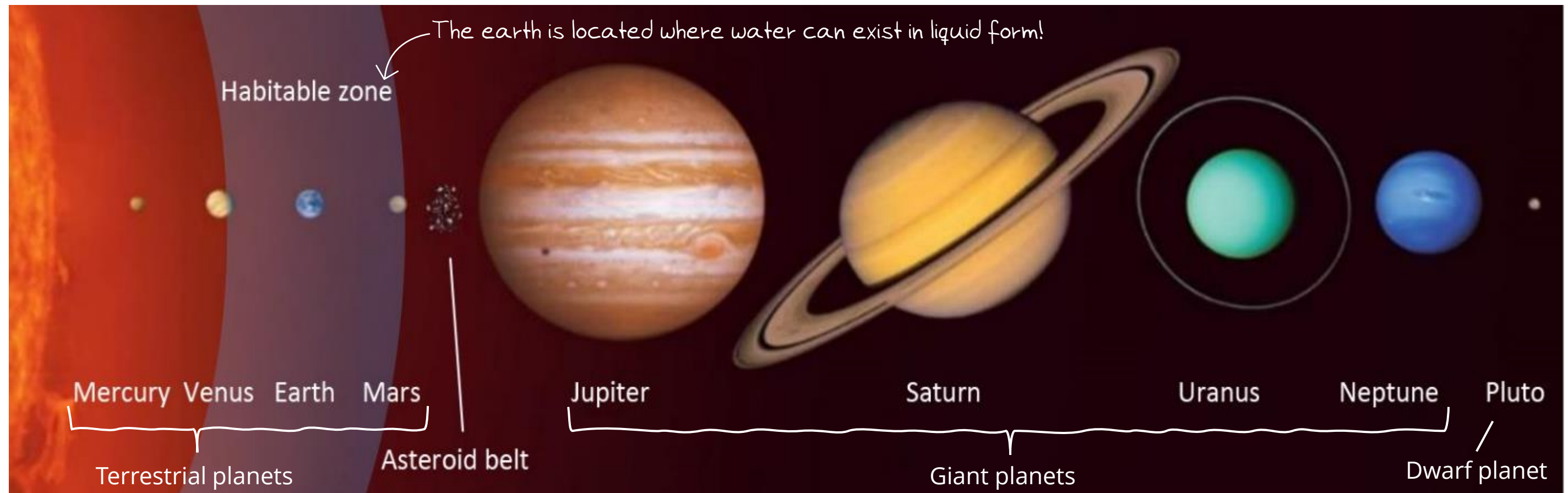


1. The earth in the solar system

What makes our Earth a habitable planet?



The planets of our solar system in scale. The distances between the planets, however, are shown here clearly too small! (Credits: Scorza); Water on Earth: Perlman&Cook; Magnetic Shield: NASA; Earth and Moon: NASA

Background:

The Earth, like Mercury, Venus, and Mars, is one of the inner rocky planets of the Solar System. The inner rocky planets are followed by the asteroid belt (with about 650,000 asteroids) and the four gas giants Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune and Uranus as well as many dwarf planets such as Pluto. Around all stars, and thus also around our Sun, there is a so-called habitable zone - an area where water can exist in liquid form. The Earth and Mars are situated in the habitable zone, but only the Earth is habitable. Why?

