Solar System Terminology Reference

Star	A star is a large glowing sphere of gas held together by its own gravity. Our Sun is the nearest star to Earth.
Planet	A planet has the following properties (as defined by astronomers in 2006): 1. It orbits the Sun. 2. It has a large enough mass that its own gravity makes it spherical. 3. There are no other objects in its orbital neighborhood similar to its size.
Dwarf Planet	A dwarf planet meets parts 1 and 2 of a planet definition, but not part 3.
Moon	A moon is an object that orbits a planet.
Asteroid	An asteroid (not shown in the interactive) is a small rocky object that orbits the Sun. Unlike planets and dwarf planets, an asteroid is not large enough to be pulled into a spherical shape by its own gravity.
Meteoroid	A meteoroid is a very small (pebble-sized) rocky object in space.
Crater	A crater is a bowl-shaped hole that has been blasted out of a surface. An impact crater forms when a solid body (for example, a planet, moon, or asteroid) is struck by a smaller object (for example, an asteroid or meteoroid) moving at a very high speed. Volcanic activity can also form craters.
Orbit	An orbit is the path that an object makes when it is traveling around another object.
Orbital distance	Orbital distance is the distance between an object and the body it is orbiting (for example, the distance between a planet and the Sun or between a moon and its planet).
Orbital period	An orbital period is the amount of time it takes for an object to complete one orbit, or **revolution**. (This is the same as a planet's **year**.)
Rotation	Rotation is the spinning motion of an object. The time it takes a planet to complete one rotation is the length of that planet's **day**.
Rotation axis	A rotation axis is an imaginary line around which an object (such as a planet, moon, or the Sun) rotates or spins.
Ecliptic plane	The ecliptic plane is an imaginary flat surface on which you could trace out Earth's path around the Sun.
Extraterrestrial	Extraterrestrial refers to anything that is outside of Earth.