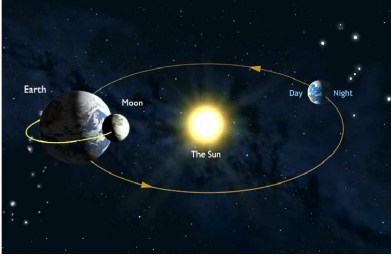
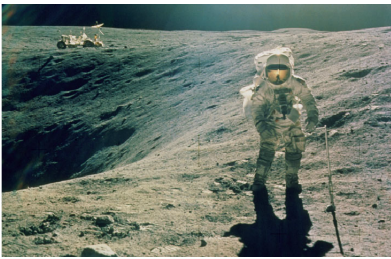


A moon is any natural body that revolves around a planet. Earth's moon is 384,000 km away. While the Earth is revolving around the Sun, the moon is revolving around Earth. Its orbit around Earth takes 29.5 days.



The moon rotates around its own axis, too. Since the moon's rotation also takes 29.5 days, the same side of the moon is always facing Earth. Even though the moon is closest to Earth, conditions on the moon are very different.



The moon has almost no atmosphere, no liquid water and no weather. The temperatures are very extreme and can swing from 100 degrees C during the day to -155 degrees C at night. This astronaut couldn't breathe on the surface of the moon without his gear.



The moon has a rocky surface as you can see in this picture of the moon's surface. When craters fall on the moon, you can see the marks forever.



The part of the moon that is exposed to the Sun reflects the Sun's light and makes the moon appear bright. The moon doesn't produce its own light; it just reflects light from the Sun. Half of the moon faces the Sun, while the other half is in darkness.



As the moon travels around Earth we see different amounts of the lighted half. These are known as the moon's phases; there are 9 of them. You are probably familiar with this phase, called a full moon.



During the waning crescent moon phase, above, only the left sliver is visible.



During the waxing gibbous moon phase, the moon is almost full.



A solar eclipse, pictured here, happens when the moon passes between the Earth and the Sun. The moon casts a shadow on a portion of Earth. Solar eclipses are rare events.