

Exploring Mars

What's it really like on the Red Planet? With the help of advanced robots, we'll find out soon!

Is there life on Mars? Could people actually live there one day? These are questions that America's space program, called NASA, wants to answer. NASA will send a new **rover** all the way to Mars to explore, an important step before sending humans. In 2020, Mars and Earth will be close to each other as they **orbit** the Sun. NASA's rover, called Mars 2020, will **launch** in July 2020, but won't land on Mars until February 2021!

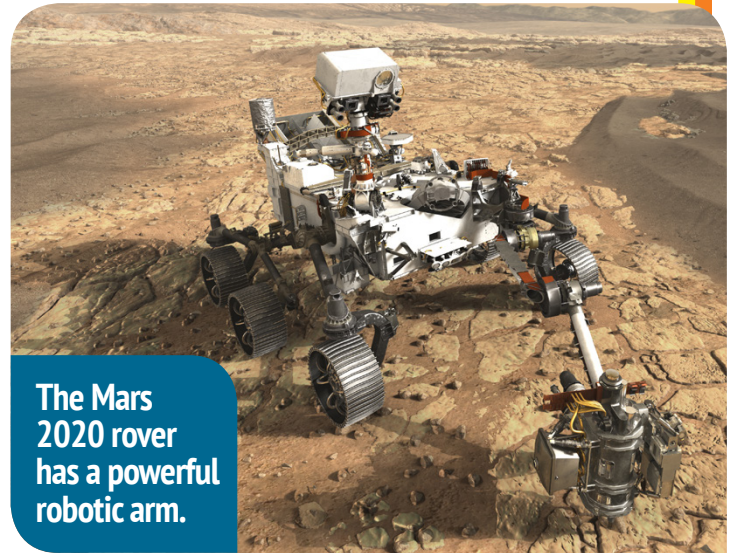
Meet the Red Planet

Why is Mars also called the Red Planet? It is covered in rusty red dust. When the dust blows into the planet's air, the sky looks pink!

What a Rover Looks Like

The Mars 2020 rover is about the size of a car. This rover is strong, which is important. (An older spacecraft got its **probe** stuck while trying to dig into Martian soil.)

Mars 2020 has six tough wheels to take it over Mars' rough, dry land, which is covered with craters (giant holes) and old volcanoes. Its **robotic arm** is the best ever built for a rover. It can work



The Mars 2020 rover has a powerful robotic arm.

in the heavy dust and extreme cold on Mars. The arm also has a drill to dig for soil samples.

The rover has many other tools, such as an advanced camera. It uses **sensors** to test temperature and wind speed. The rover even has a high-tech X-ray tool to figure out what the rocks on Mars are made of.

What's Next?

NASA is also testing its newest spacecraft, called Orion, to take humans to the moon and to Mars in the 2030s. Maybe one day when you're older, you will be one of the people to visit Mars!