

Meteoroid vs. Meteor vs. Meteorite



A Leonid meteor

A **meteoroid** is a small body made up of dust or debris that travels through the *space vacuum*. The space vacuum is more commonly referred to as outer space. It is the space between celestial bodies that is most empty of matter. Meteoroids are not very big - they can be as small as a speck of dust.

A **meteor** is the visible path of a meteoroid that enters the earth's atmosphere. Meteors occur when the path of a meteoroid and the path of the earth's orbit around the sun collide. Meteors are often referred to as falling stars because they light up as they burn through the earth's atmosphere.

DID YOU KNOW? Millions of meteors occur in the Earth's atmosphere every day.

A *meteor shower* is made up of a large number of meteors that come from a particular region in the sky. Meteor showers occur when the earth passes through a region of space debris, such as dust particles left from a comet's trail.



A bright meteor



Meteorite

A **meteorite** is a former meteoroid that survives its fiery passage through the atmosphere to hit the earth's surface. Most meteors burn away to nothing in the earth's atmosphere.

