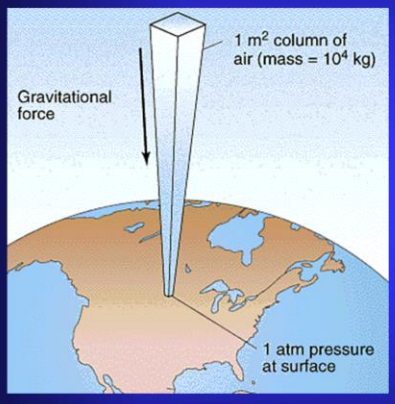
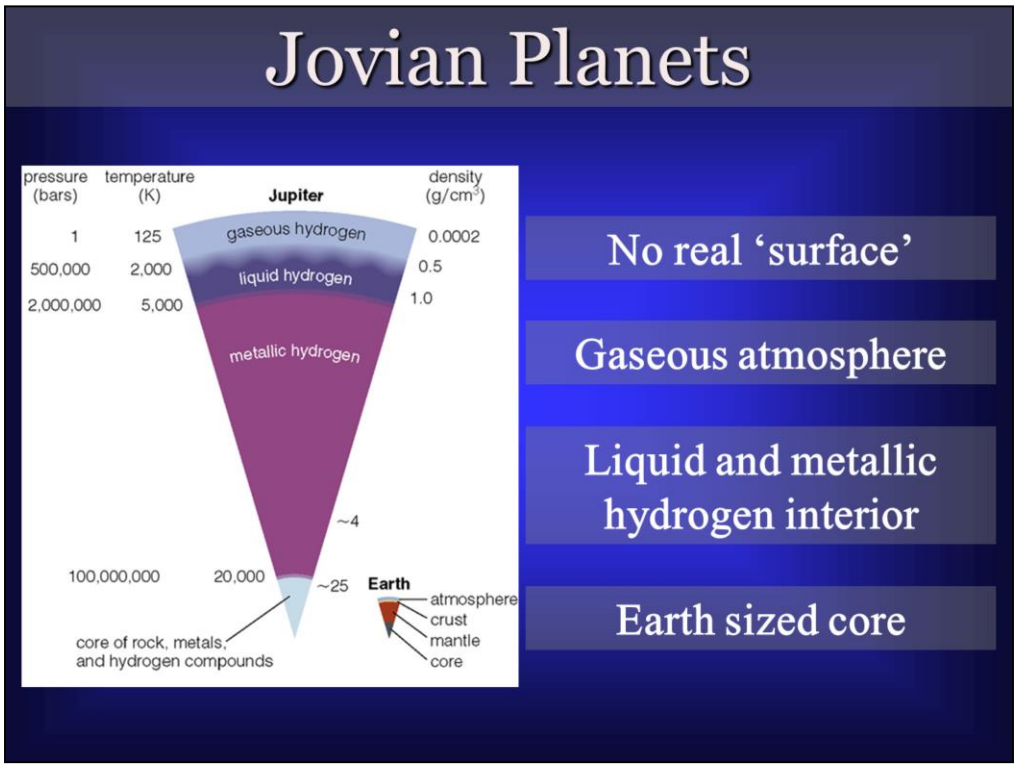
Planetary Atmospheres

Atmospheric Pressure





Temperature, density, and pressure all increase with depth

Jupiter's core is slightly larger than the Earth, but 10 times as massive and 5 times as dense due to the intense pressure from the material stacked on top of it

Metallic Hydrogen

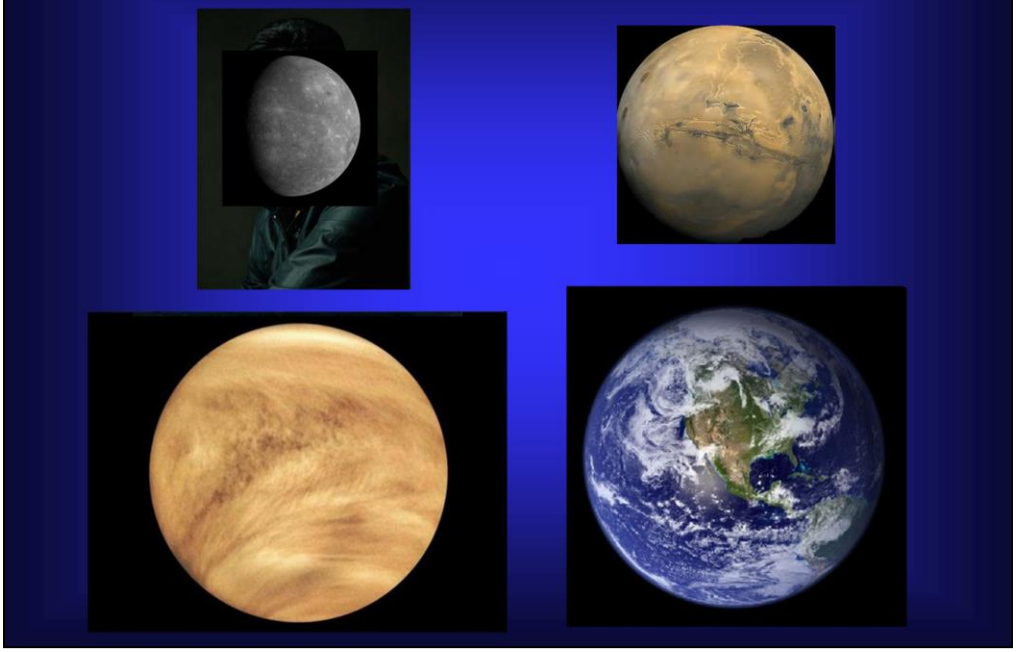
Hydrogen molecules share the same electrons

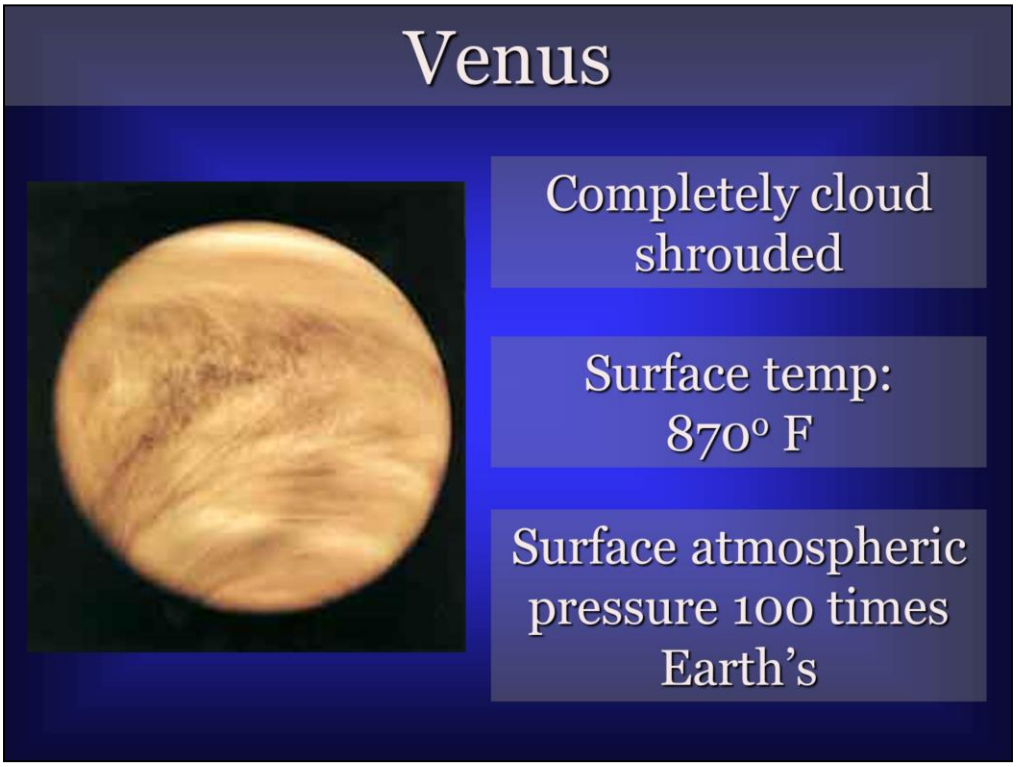
Only one probe has been dropped into Jovian atmospheres

The moon is too small.

Because it has less mass, it's surface gravity is too weak to hold onto any atmosphere at all.

Terrestrial Planets





The PRIMARY reason for the extremely high surface temperature of Venus the accumulation of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere.

Venus for some reason has an extremely thick CO_2 atmosphere that drives a runaway greenhouse effect.

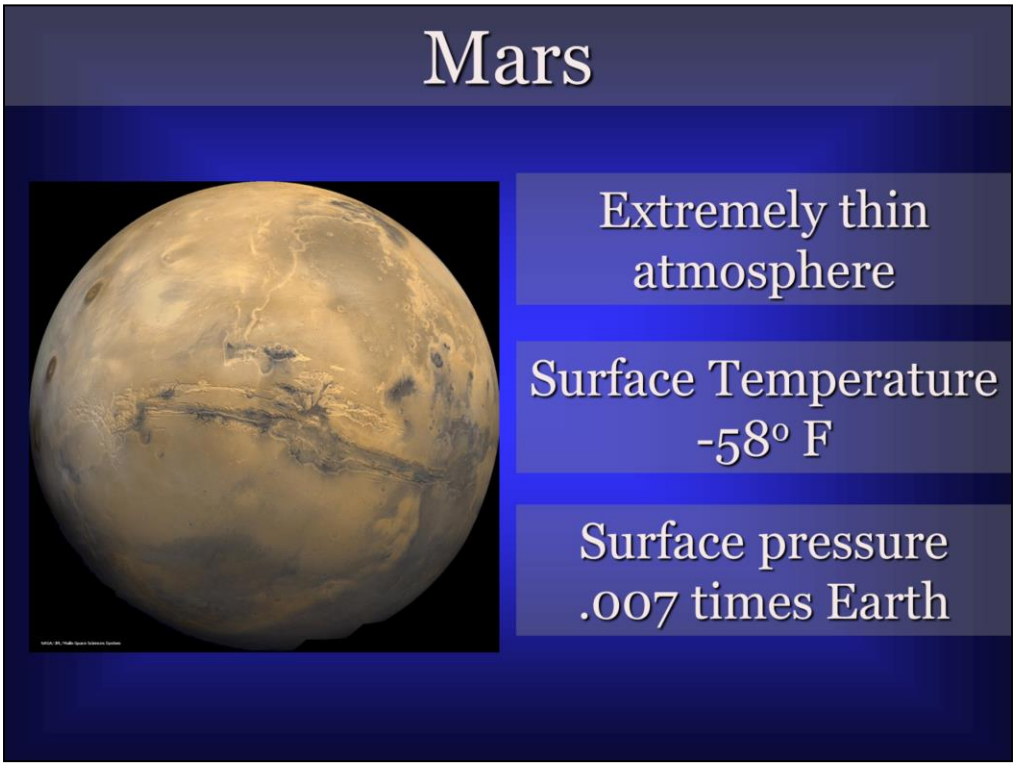
Venus was slightly warmer than Earth because it is slightly closer to the Sun.

This probably drove more CO_2 out of the rocks and into the atmosphere.

The extra CO_2 caused the temperature to increase driving more CO_2 out of the rocks.

And so on and so on and so on…

Could this happen to the Earth? YES! It could!



Mars has a very thin atmosphere, which is also primarily CO_2

Where the atmosphere of Mars went is something of a mystery.

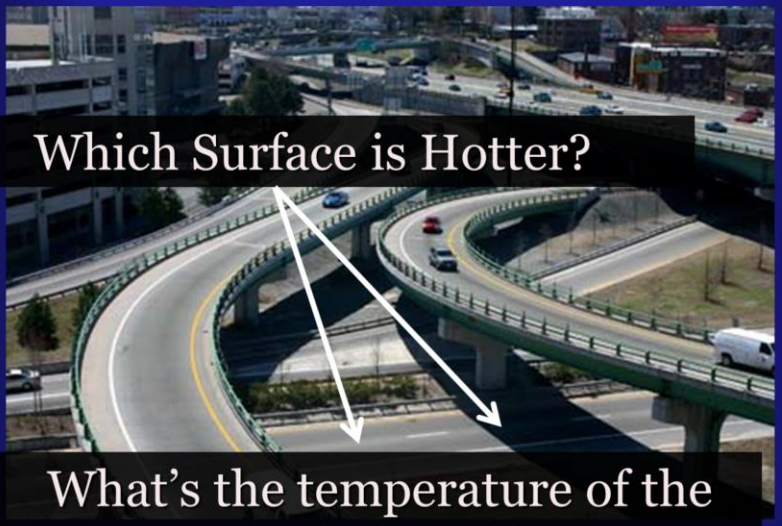
It must have HAD and atmosphere at some point in the past because there is ample evidence for liquid water.

It must be at least partially due to the small size of the planet so that it has a difficult time holding an atmosphere.

A leading hypothesis has impacts in the early solar system driving the atmosphere off.

Temperature

Planetary Temperature



Solar Energy

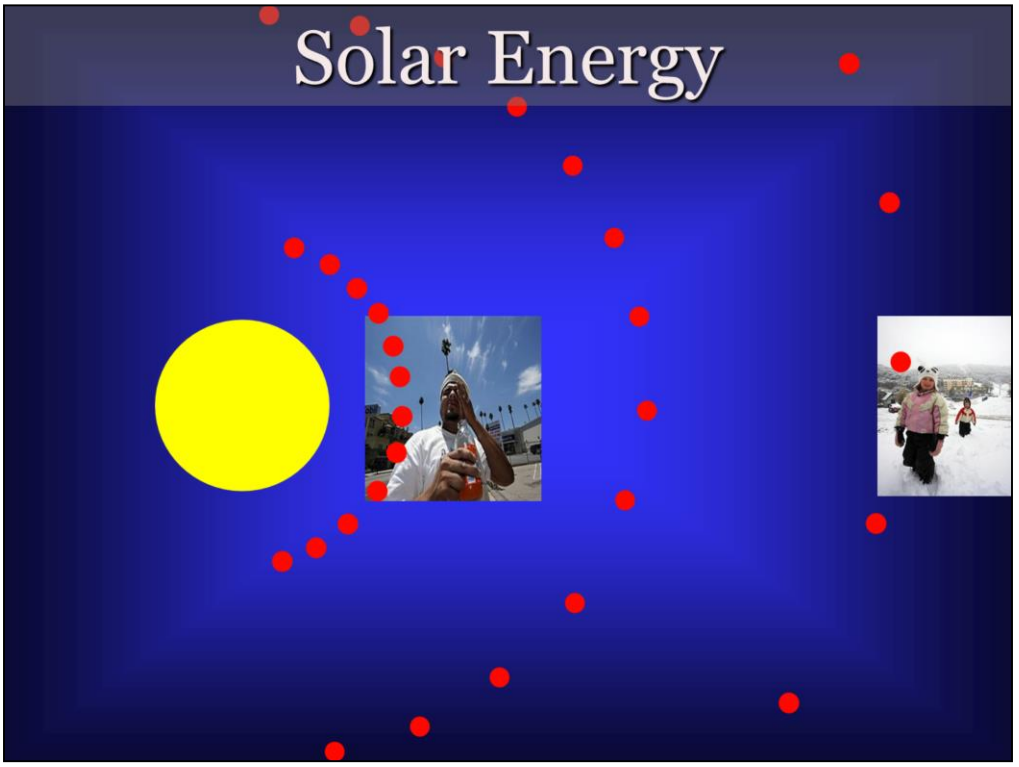
Imagine standing very close to the firehose versus standing far away from it.

If you are very close, you will get very wet because all of the water will hit you.

If you stand very far away, a lot of water will miss you and you won't get as wet.

For you to maintain the same "wetness" while the firehose is still on you, you have to evaporate

as much water as you are absorbing.

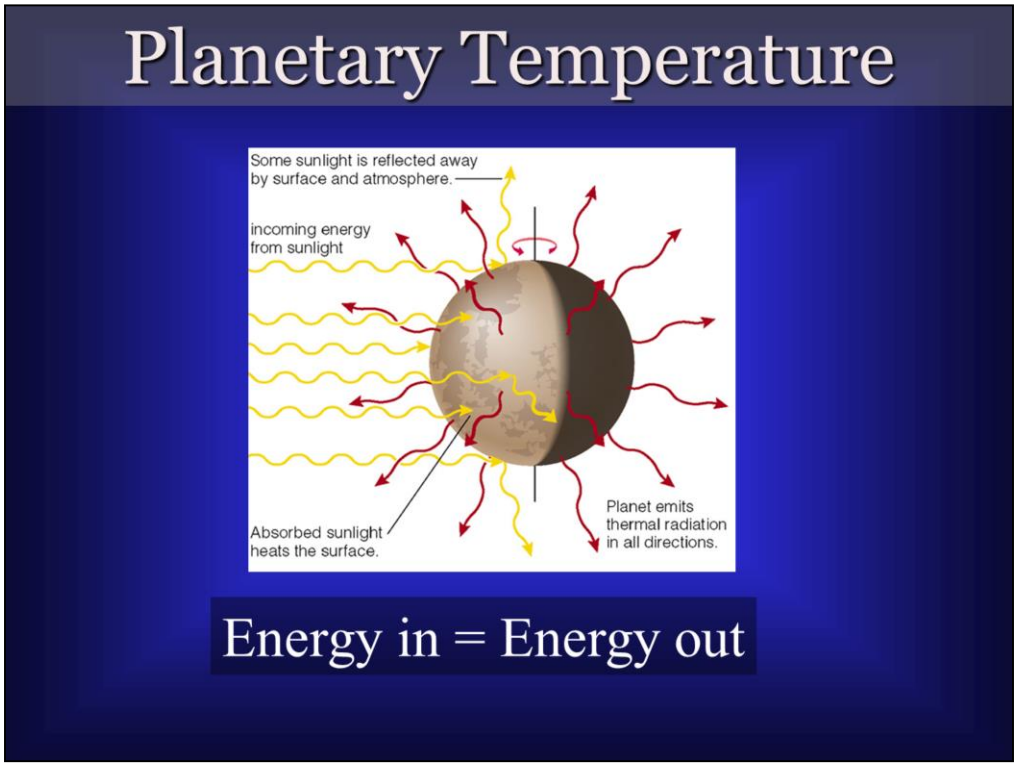


Light works much like the firehose.

Imagine the light particles are little ping pong balls called “photons.”

The Sun spits photons in all directions. If you are standing very close, you will intercept many photons

If you are far away, you will intercept fewer photons.



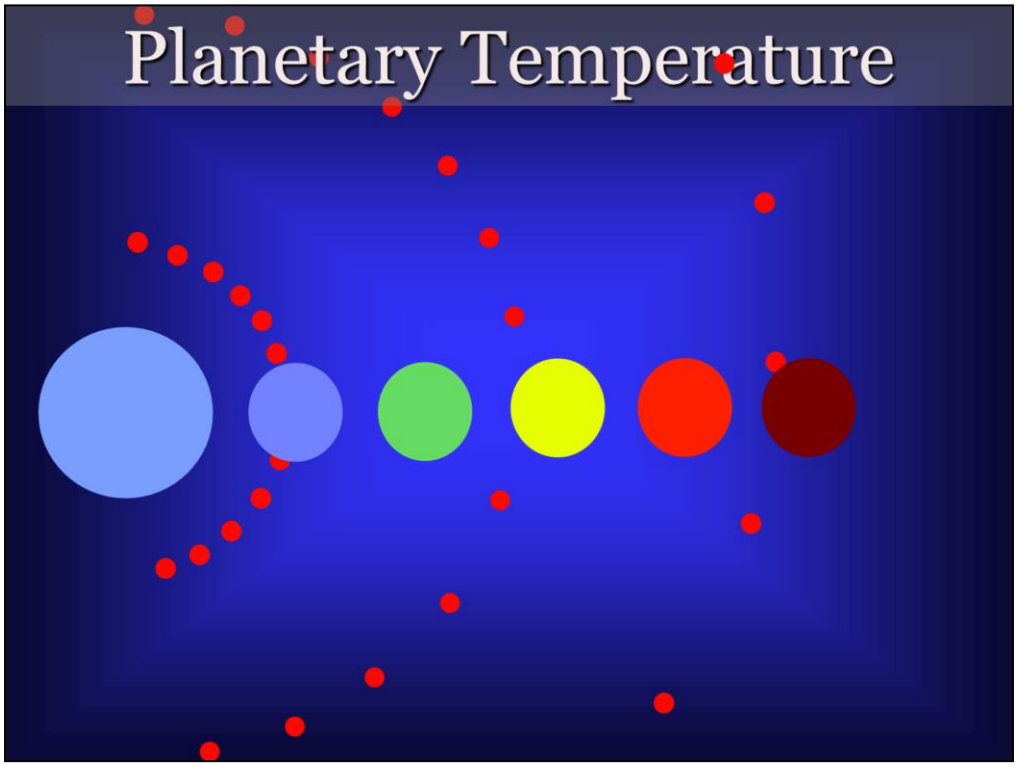
Energy in equals energy out.

If we move a planet closer to the sun, it intercepts more energy.
It heats up until it's emitting as much energy as it recieves.

This is called Thermal Balance.

Without an atmosphere, Earth would be about 50 degrees Fahrenheit (7 degrees Kelvin).
Venus should be about 145 F and Mars should be about -50 F

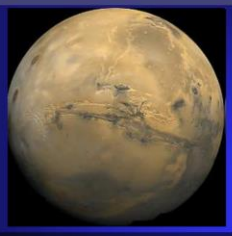
Actually, taking albedo (amount of solar radiation that is reflected back into space) into account, the Earth should be about -1 degrees F (-18 C)



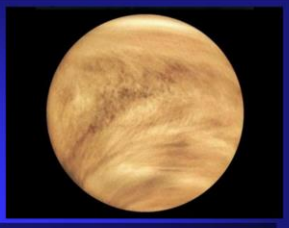
Planets close to the sun are hotter than planets far away.

They heat up so that they are radiating as much energy as they are receiving.

With No Atmosphere



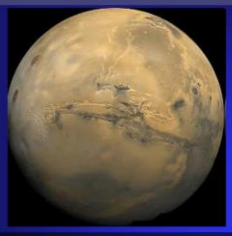
-100° F



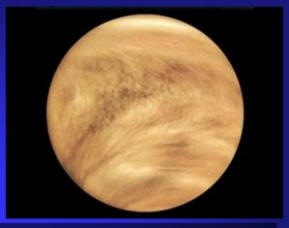
145° F

-20° F

With Current Atmosphere

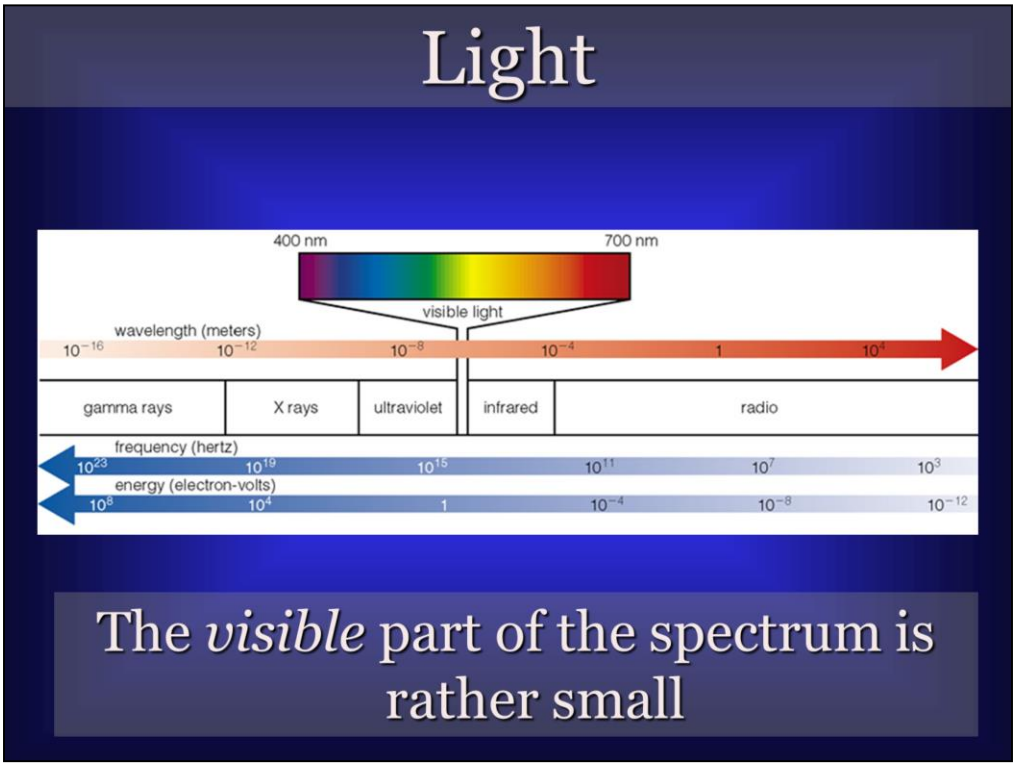


-80° F



875° F

70° F



Visible meaning your eye can see it

But it's ALL light

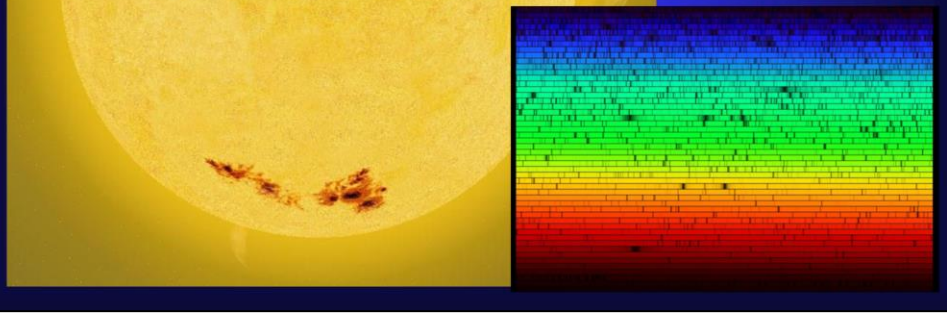
Radio waves are light with a looong wavelength.

X-rays and Gamma rays are short wavelength light.

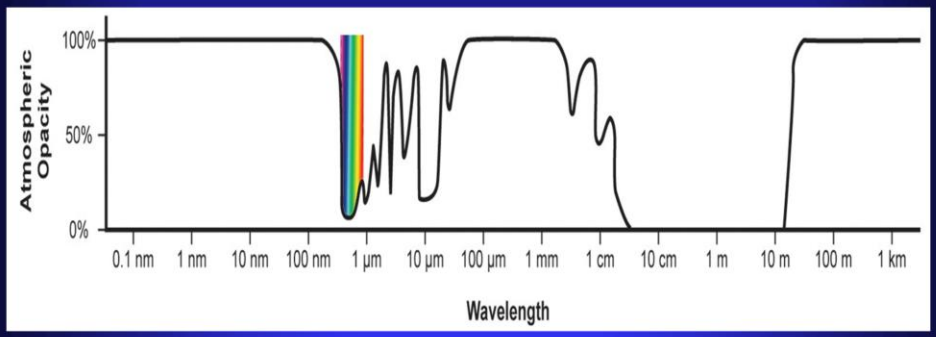
The characteristic of light that we call "color" is our eye's response to the wavelength of the light.

The Sun

Emits light in all parts of the spectrum

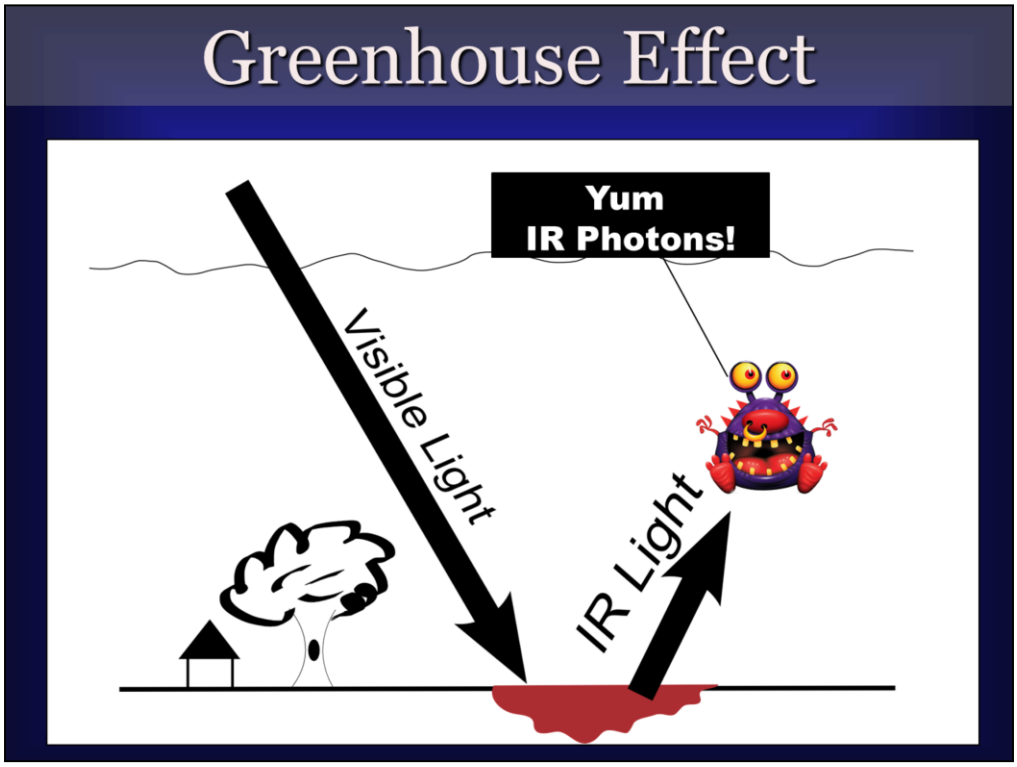


The Atmosphere



The atmosphere passes visible light

And absorbs infrared light



The greenhouse effect is, in general, a GOOD thing. Remember, without it the average global temperature would be -1 degrees.

Visible light passes through the atmosphere and is absorbed by the planet.

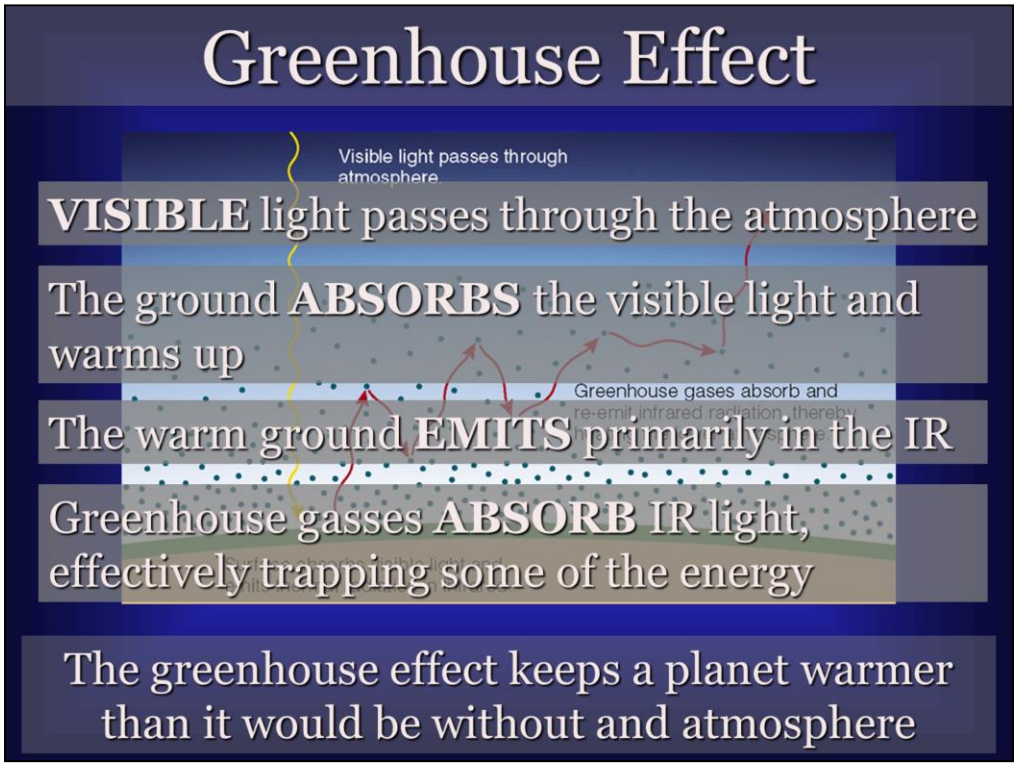
The planet responds by warming up.

The peak of the planet's blackbody (at 281 K) is in the infrared (around 10 microns)

Greenhouse gasses (such as CO_2 and water vapor) absorb infrared radiation raising the atmospheric temperature.

The atmosphere causes the planet to radiate less efficiently so it has to get hotter to stay in thermal balance.

The Greenhouse effect on Venus is whacky out of control. The surface temperature is nearly 900 degrees F.



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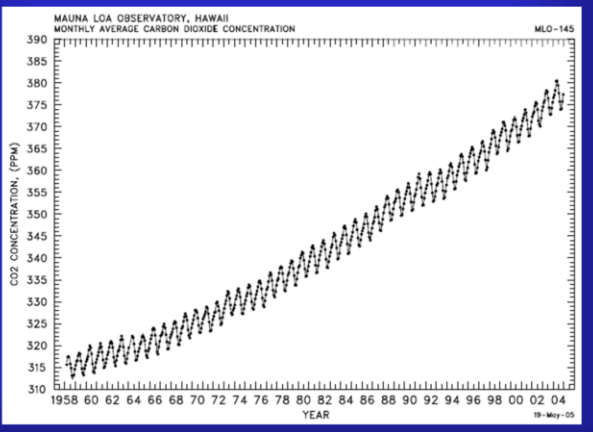
Atmospheric CO_2



Rising carbon dioxide levels are not under dispute.

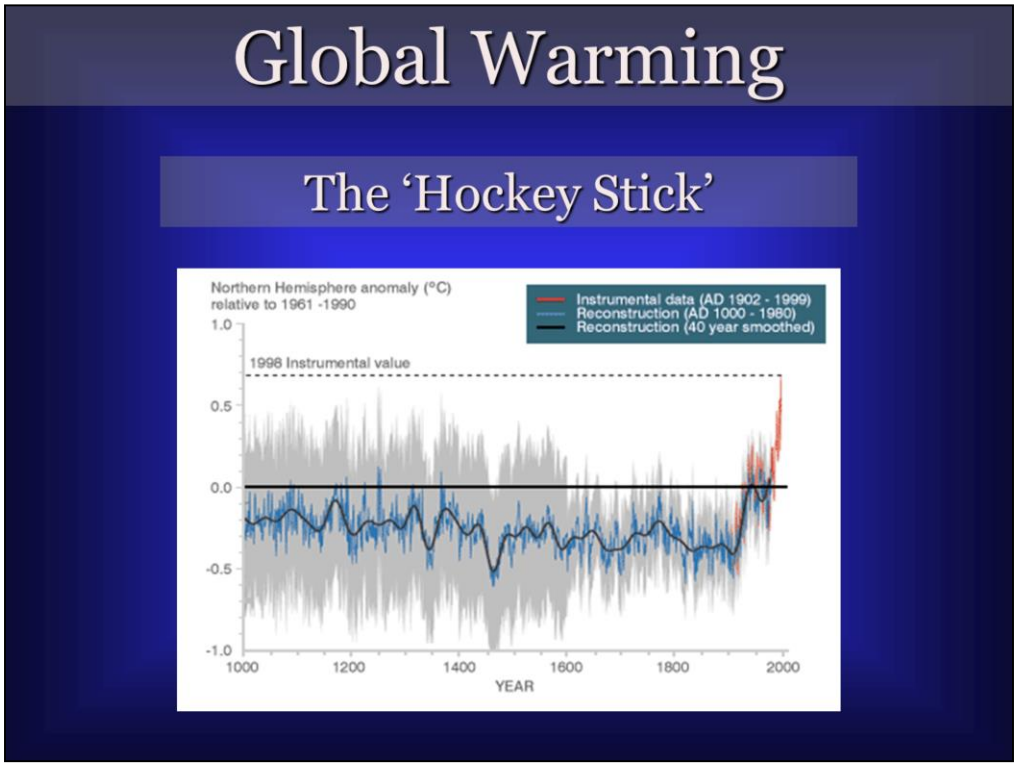
Nor is the fact that global temperature rises with increasing levels of carbon dioxide.

The average global temperature IS rising. That's a fact.

The question is why are co2 levels rising?

The ice shelf pictured above is the Larson B shelf in Antarctica.

The area that has shattered is several times the size of Rhode Island. (2700 square kilometers)



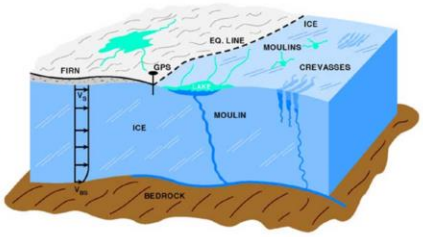
Past climate data (pre late 1800's) is reconstructed from tree ring growth and ice cores.

There is a lot of potential room for error in this type of analysis.

Shows a sharp increase in global average temperature since the industrial revolution.

This plot is somewhat controversial due to uncertainty of data based on tree rings and ice cores.

Moulin



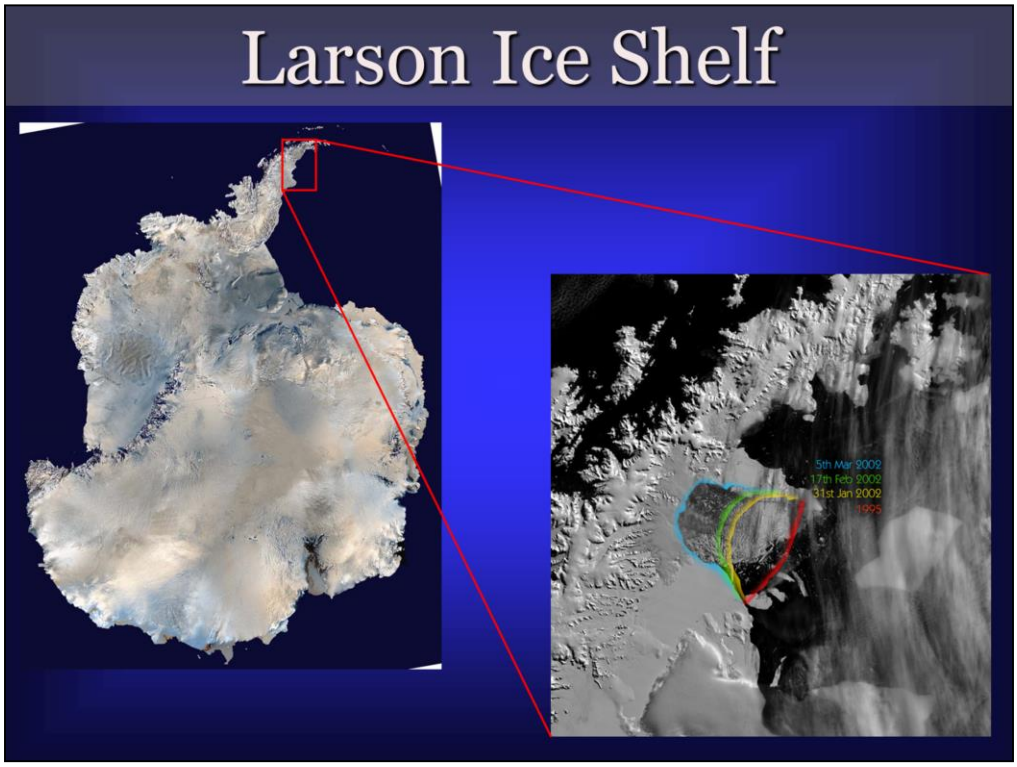
This is a moulin in Greenland.

Moulin's are lakes of melt water that form on the surface of a Glacier.

The warm water works its way through the ice to the bedrock below lubricating the ice sheet.

The ice sheet is then free to slide down and into the ocean.

Greenland's Ice sheets are melting.



The larson B ice shelf in Antarctica

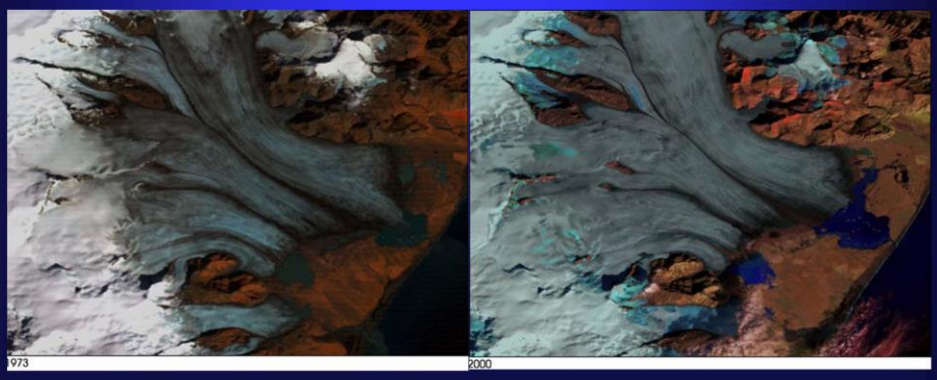
The ice shelf pictured above is the Larson B shelf in Antarctica.

A chunk about the size of Rhode Island disintegrated in 2002

Breidamerkurjökull

This glacier in Iceland has receded 2km since 1973

1973 2000



Pasterze Glacier

1875

2004

In the picture on the left, the gentleman is pointing to where the ground level used to be.
As the permafrost melts and the peat thaws, methane gas and carbon dioxide are produced.
The ground sinks eroding riverbanks and ruining roads and buildings.

In Abisko National Park, wetlands have increased by 50% since 1970.
The resulting mires have increased methane emissions by 2/3.