

Where should we look for aliens?

Have you ever wondered whether there is life out there in the universe? Scientists think there is a good chance we might find something someday. We might find a living organism that is really small, like bacteria, but we may even find intelligent beings, like humans.

One way scientists search for life is to look for planets and moons that are similar to Earth. Remember the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears? Goldilocks tries out many things in the bears' house, such as chairs, food and beds to find one that is **"not too hot"** and **"not too cold"** but is **"just right."** Scientists are doing the same thing—looking for planets that are **not too hot** and **not too cold** but are **just right** for living creatures. They call this the Goldilocks Effect.

The NASA Kepler spacecraft looks for planets similar to Earth—those that have water, are about the same size as Earth, and are not too far or not too close to a star. Kepler has already discovered some! Go to <http://kepler.nasa.gov> to see how many planets have been discovered. You can also design your own planet using NASA's interactive Extreme Planet Makeover at <http://planetquest.jpl.nasa.gov/planetMakeover/index.html>.

Learn about opportunities to participate in upcoming science activities and events at MSU by visiting Montana.edu/outreach

Design your own alien

Answer these questions about your alien then draw it and a picture of where it lives.

- How big is your alien?
- Is it a tiny microbe, a plant, an animal?
- Where does it live? Deep in the ocean, on a beach, in a desert, in mountains?
- What does it eat?