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Astronomy (The Textbook)

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PREFACE

Welcome to *Astronomy*, an OpenStax resource. This textbook was written to increase student access to high-quality learning materials, maintaining highest standards of academic rigor at little to no cost.

About OpenStax

OpenStax is a nonprofit based at Rice University, and it's our mission to improve student access to education. Our first openly licensed college textbook was published in 2012 and our library has since scaled to over 20 books for college and AP courses used by hundreds of thousands of students. Our adaptive learning technology, designed to improve learning outcomes through personalized educational paths, is being piloted in college courses throughout the country. Through our partnerships with philanthropic foundations and our alliance with other educational resource organizations, OpenStax is breaking down the most common barriers to learning and empowering students and instructors to succeed.

About OpenStax Resources

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Format

You can access this textbook for free in web view or PDF through openstax.org, and for a low cost in print.

About *Astronomy*

Astronomy is written in clear non-technical language, with the occasional touch of humor and a wide range of clarifying illustrations. It has many analogies drawn from everyday life to help non-science majors appreciate,

on their own terms, what our modern exploration of the universe is revealing. The book can be used for either a one-semester or two-semester introductory course (bear in mind, you can customize your version and include only those chapters or sections you will be teaching.) It is made available free of charge in electronic form (and low cost in printed form) to students around the world. If you have ever thrown up your hands in despair over the spiraling cost of astronomy textbooks, you owe your students a good look at this one.

Coverage and Scope

Astronomy was written, updated, and reviewed by a broad range of astronomers and astronomy educators in a strong community effort. It is designed to meet scope and sequence requirements of introductory astronomy courses nationwide.

- Chapter 1: Science and the Universe: A Brief Tour
- Chapter 2: Observing the Sky: The Birth of Astronomy
- Chapter 3: Orbits and Gravity
- Chapter 4: Earth, Moon, and Sky
- Chapter 5: Radiation and Spectra
- Chapter 6: Astronomical Instruments
- Chapter 7: Other Worlds: An Introduction to the Solar System
- Chapter 8: Earth as a Planet
- Chapter 9: Cratered Worlds
- Chapter 10: Earthlike Planets: Venus and Mars
- Chapter 11: The Giant Planets
- Chapter 12: Rings, Moons, and Pluto
- Chapter 13: Comets and Asteroids: Debris of the Solar System
- Chapter 14: Cosmic Samples and the Origin of the Solar System
- Chapter 15: The Sun: A Garden-Variety Star
- Chapter 16: The Sun: A Nuclear Powerhouse
- Chapter 17: Analyzing Starlight
- Chapter 18: The Stars: A Celestial Census
- Chapter 19: Celestial Distances
- Chapter 20: Between the Stars: Gas and Dust in Space
- Chapter 21: The Birth of Stars and the Discovery of Planets outside the Solar System
- Chapter 22: Stars from Adolescence to Old Age
- Chapter 23: The Death of Stars
- Chapter 24: Black Holes and Curved Spacetime
- Chapter 25: The Milky Way Galaxy
- Chapter 26: Galaxies
- Chapter 27: Active Galaxies, Quasars, and Supermassive Black Holes

Chapter 28: The Evolution and Distribution of Galaxies

Chapter 29: The Big Bang

Chapter 30: Life in the Universe

Appendix A: How to Study for Your Introductory Astronomy Course

Appendix B: Astronomy Websites, Pictures, and Apps

Appendix C: Scientific Notation

Appendix D: Units Used in Science

Appendix E: Some Useful Constants for Astronomy

Appendix F: Physical and Orbital Data for the Planets

Appendix G: Selected Moons of the Planets

Appendix H: Upcoming Total Eclipses

Appendix I: The Nearest Stars, Brown Dwarfs, and White Dwarfs

Appendix J: The Brightest Twenty Stars

Appendix K: The Chemical Elements

Appendix L: The Constellations

Appendix M: Star Charts and Sky Event Resources

Currency and Accuracy

Astronomy has information and images from the New Horizons exploration of Pluto, the discovery of gravitational waves, the Rosetta Mission to Comet C-G, and many other recent projects in astronomy. The discussion of exoplanets has been updated with recent information—indicating not just individual examples, but trends in what sorts of planets seem to be most common. Black holes receive their own chapter, and the role of supermassive black holes in active galaxies and galaxy evolution is clearly explained. Chapters have been reviewed by subject-matter experts for accuracy and currency.

Flexibility

Because there are many different ways to teach introductory astronomy, we have made the text as flexible as we could. Math examples are shown in separate sections throughout, so that you can leave out the math or require it as you deem best. Each section of a chapter treats a different aspect of the topic being covered; a number of sections could be omitted in shorter overview courses and can be included where you need more depth. And, as we have already discussed, you can customize the book in a variety of ways that have never been possible in traditional textbooks.

Student-Centered Focus

This book is written to help students understand the big picture rather than get lost in random factoids to memorize. The language is accessible and inviting. Helpful diagrams and summary tables review and encapsulate the ideas being covered. Each chapter contains interactive group activities you can assign to help students work in teams and pool their knowledge.

Interactive Online Resources

Interesting “Links to Learning” are scattered throughout the chapters, which direct students to online animations, short videos, or enrichment readings to enhance their learning. Also, the resources listed at the end of each chapter include links to websites and other useful educational videos.

Feature Boxes That Help Students Think outside the Box

A variety of feature boxes within the chapters connect astronomy to the students’ other subjects and humanize the face of astronomy by highlighting the lives of the men and women who have been key to its progress. Besides the math examples that we’ve already mentioned, the boxes include:

Making Connections. This feature connects the chapter topic to students’ experiences with other fields, from poetry to engineering, popular culture, and natural disasters.

Voyagers in Astronomy. This feature presents brief and engaging biographies of the people behind historically significant discoveries, as well as emerging research.

Astronomy Basics. This feature explains basic science concepts that we often (incorrectly) assume students know from earlier classes.

Seeing for Yourself. This feature provides practical ways that students can make astronomical observations on their own.

End-of-Chapter Materials to Extend Students’ Learning

Chapter Summaries. Summaries give the gist of each section for easy review.

For Further Exploration. This section offers a list of suggested articles, websites, and videos so students can delve into topics of interest, whether for their own learning, for homework, extra credit, or papers.

Review Questions. Review questions allow students to show you (or themselves) how well they understood the chapter.

Thought Questions. Thought questions help students assess their learning by asking for critical reflection on principles or ideas in the chapter.

Figuring For Yourself. Mathematical questions, using only basic algebra and arithmetic, allow students to apply the math principles given in the example boxes throughout the chapter.

Collaborative Group Activities. This section suggests ideas for group discussion, research, or reports.

Beautiful Art Program

Our comprehensive art program is designed to enhance students’ understanding of concepts through clear and effective illustrations, diagrams, and photographs. Here are a few examples.

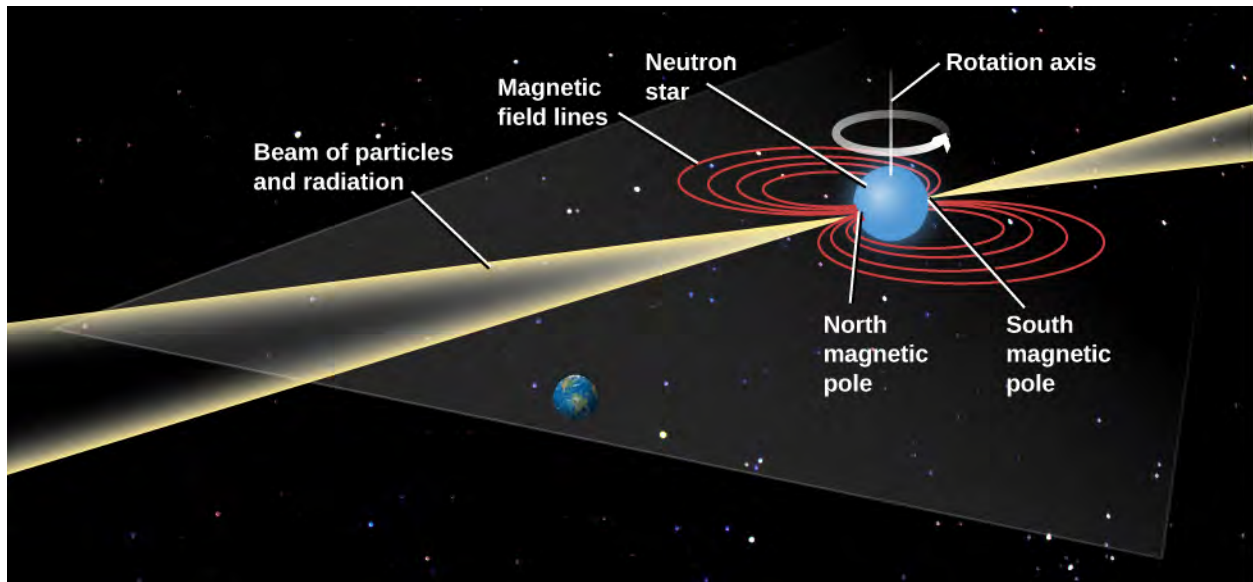


Figure 1. How a Pulsar Beam Sweeps over Earth.

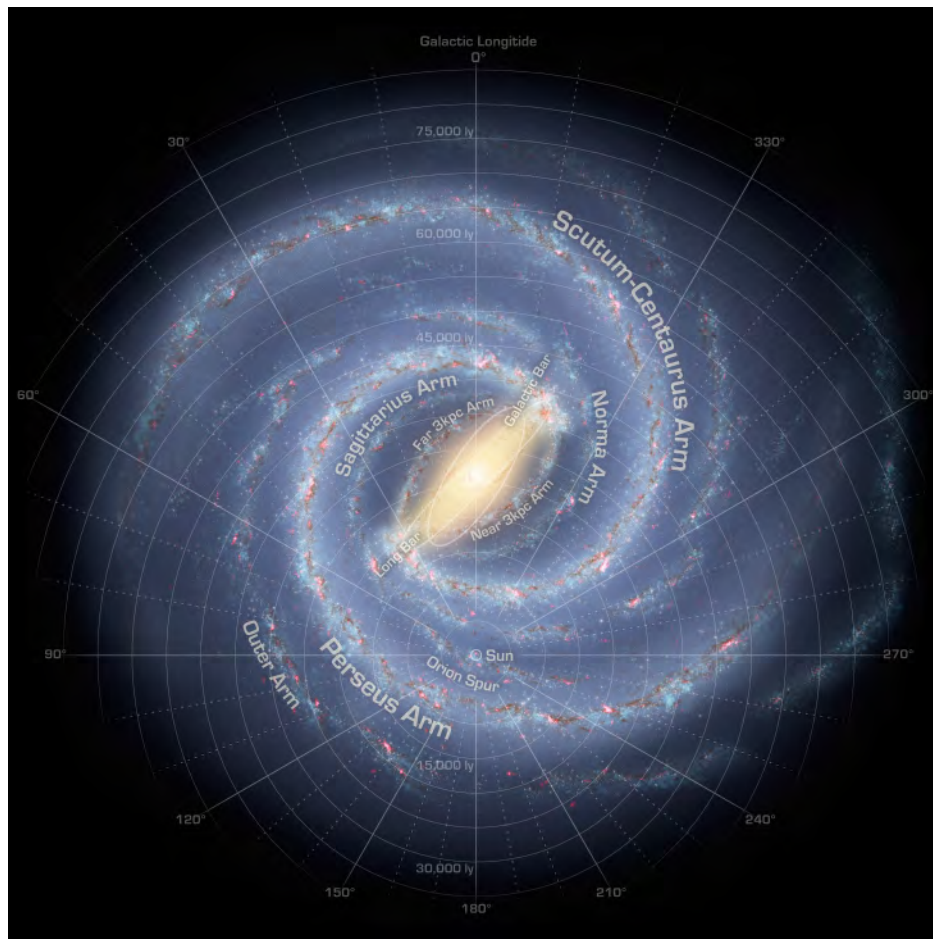


Figure 2. Structure of the Milky Way Galaxy.

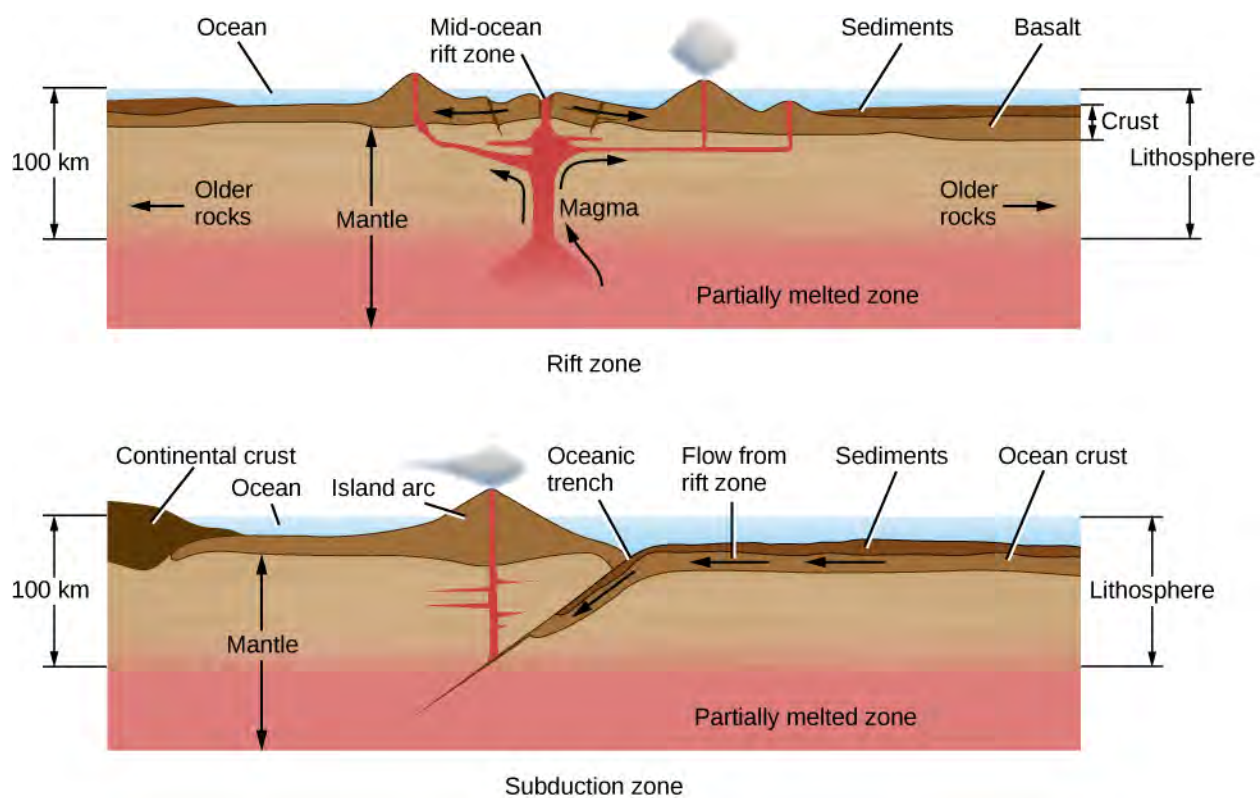


Figure 3. Two Aspects of Plate Tectonics.



Figure 4. Pluto Close Up.

Additional Resources

Student and Instructor Resources

We've compiled additional resources for both students and instructors, including Getting Started Guides, PowerPoint slides, and an instructor answer guide. Instructor resources require a verified instructor account, which can be requested on your openstax.org log-in. Take advantage of these resources to supplement your OpenStax book.

Partner Resources

OpenStax Partners are our allies in the mission to make high-quality learning materials affordable and accessible to students and instructors everywhere. Their tools integrate seamlessly with our OpenStax titles at a low cost. To access the partner resources for your text, visit your book page on openstax.org.

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Andrew Fraknoi is Chair of the Astronomy Department at Foothill College and served as the Executive Director of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific from 1978–1992. His work with the society included editing *Mercury Magazine*, *Universe in the Classroom*, and *Astronomy Beat*. He's taught at San Francisco State University, Canada College, and the University of California Extension. He is editor/co-author of *The Universe at Your Fingertips 2.0*, a collection of teaching activities, and co-author of *Solar Science*, a book for middle-school teachers. He was co-author of a syndicated newspaper column on astronomy, and appears regularly on local and national radio. With Sidney Wolff, he was founder of *Astronomy Education Review*. He serves on the Board of Trustees of the SETI Institute and on the Lick Observatory Council. In addition, he has organized six national symposia on teaching introductory astronomy. He received the Klumpke-Roberts Prize of the ASP, the Gemant Award of the American Institute of Physics, and the Faraday Award of the NSTA.

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David Morrison is a Senior Scientist at NASA Ames Research Center. He received his PhD in astronomy from Harvard, where he was one of Carl Sagan's graduate students. He is a founder of the field of astrobiology and is known for research on small bodies in the solar system. He spent 17 years at University of Hawaii's Institute for Astronomy and the Department of Physics and Astronomy. He was Director of the IRTF at Mauna Kea Observatory. Morrison has held senior NASA positions including Chief of the Ames Space Science Division and founding Director of the Lunar Science Institute. He's been on science teams for the Voyager, Galileo, and Kepler missions. Morrison received NASA Outstanding Leadership Medals and the NASA Exceptional Achievement Medal. He was awarded the AAS Carl Sagan medal and the ASP Klumpke-Roberts prize. Committed to the struggle against pseudoscience, he serves as Contributing Editor of *Skeptical Inquirer* and on the Advisory Council of the National Center for Science Education.

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After receiving her PhD from the UC Berkeley, Dr. Wolff was involved with the astronomical development of Mauna Kea. In 1984, she became the Director of Kitt Peak National Observatory, and was director of National Optical Astronomy Observatory. Most recently, she led the design and development of the 8.4-meter Large Synoptic Survey Telescope. Dr. Wolff has published over ninety refereed papers on star formation and stellar atmospheres. She has served as President of the AAS and the ASP. Her recently published book, *The Boundless Universe: Astronomy in the New Age of Discovery*, won the 2016 IPPY (Independent Publisher Book Awards) Silver Medal in Science.

All three senior contributing authors have received the Education Prize of the American Astronomical Society and have had an asteroid named after them by the International Astronomical Union. They have worked together on a series of astronomy textbooks over the past two decades.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface 1

1 Science and the Universe: A Brief Tour 11

- 1.1 The Nature of Astronomy 13
- 1.2 The Nature of Science 13
- 1.3 The Laws of Nature 15
- 1.4 Numbers in Astronomy 15
- 1.5 Consequences of Light Travel Time 17
- 1.6 A Tour of the Universe 18
- 1.7 The Universe on the Large Scale 23
- 1.8 The Universe of the Very Small 27
- 1.9 A Conclusion and a Beginning 28

2 Observing the Sky: The Birth of Astronomy 31

- 2.1 The Sky Above 32
- 2.2 Ancient Astronomy 42
- 2.3 Astrology and Astronomy 49
- 2.4 The Birth of Modern Astronomy 54

3 Orbits and Gravity 69

- 3.1 The Laws of Planetary Motion 70
- 3.2 Newton's Great Synthesis 76
- 3.3 Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation 81
- 3.4 Orbits in the Solar System 85
- 3.5 Motions of Satellites and Spacecraft 88
- 3.6 Gravity with More Than Two Bodies 91

4 Earth, Moon, and Sky 103

- 4.1 Earth and Sky 104
- 4.2 The Seasons 107
- 4.3 Keeping Time 114
- 4.4 The Calendar 117
- 4.5 Phases and Motions of the Moon 120
- 4.6 Ocean Tides and the Moon 125
- 4.7 Eclipses of the Sun and Moon 129

5 Radiation and Spectra 145

- 5.1 The Behavior of Light 146
- 5.2 The Electromagnetic Spectrum 153

- 5.3 Spectroscopy in Astronomy 161
- 5.4 The Structure of the Atom 166
- 5.5 Formation of Spectral Lines 172
- 5.6 The Doppler Effect 176

6 **Astronomical Instruments 189**

- 6.1 Telescopes 190
- 6.2 Telescopes Today 196
- 6.3 Visible-Light Detectors and Instruments 206
- 6.4 Radio Telescopes 210
- 6.5 Observations outside Earth's Atmosphere 217
- 6.6 The Future of Large Telescopes 222

7 **Other Worlds: An Introduction to the Solar System 233**

- 7.1 Overview of Our Planetary System 234
- 7.2 Composition and Structure of Planets 246
- 7.3 Dating Planetary Surfaces 251
- 7.4 Origin of the Solar System 254

8 **Earth as a Planet 265**

- 8.1 The Global Perspective 266
- 8.2 Earth's Crust 270
- 8.3 Earth's Atmosphere 278
- 8.4 Life, Chemical Evolution, and Climate Change 283
- 8.5 Cosmic Influences on the Evolution of Earth 288

9 **Cratered Worlds 303**

- 9.1 General Properties of the Moon 303
- 9.2 The Lunar Surface 310
- 9.3 Impact Craters 315
- 9.4 The Origin of the Moon 320
- 9.5 Mercury 322

10 **Earthlike Planets: Venus and Mars 335**

- 10.1 The Nearest Planets: An Overview 335
- 10.2 The Geology of Venus 342
- 10.3 The Massive Atmosphere of Venus 347
- 10.4 The Geology of Mars 350
- 10.5 Water and Life on Mars 359
- 10.6 Divergent Planetary Evolution 371

11 The Giant Planets 379

- 11.1** Exploring the Outer Planets 379
- 11.2** The Giant Planets 385
- 11.3** Atmospheres of the Giant Planets 391

12 Rings, Moons, and Pluto 407

- 12.1** Ring and Moon Systems Introduced 408
- 12.2** The Galilean Moons of Jupiter 409
- 12.3** Titan and Triton 418
- 12.4** Pluto and Charon 423
- 12.5** Planetary Rings 431

13 Comets and Asteroids: Debris of the Solar System 449

- 13.1** Asteroids 450
- 13.2** Asteroids and Planetary Defense 460
- 13.3** The “Long-Haired” Comets 463
- 13.4** The Origin and Fate of Comets and Related Objects 473

14 Cosmic Samples and the Origin of the Solar System 489

- 14.1** Meteors 490
- 14.2** Meteorites: Stones from Heaven 495
- 14.3** Formation of the Solar System 501
- 14.4** Comparison with Other Planetary Systems 506
- 14.5** Planetary Evolution 512

15 The Sun: A Garden-Variety Star 523

- 15.1** The Structure and Composition of the Sun 524
- 15.2** The Solar Cycle 535
- 15.3** Solar Activity above the Photosphere 540
- 15.4** Space Weather 544

16 The Sun: A Nuclear Powerhouse 559

- 16.1** Sources of Sunshine: Thermal and Gravitational Energy 559
- 16.2** Mass, Energy, and the Theory of Relativity 562
- 16.3** The Solar Interior: Theory 572
- 16.4** The Solar Interior: Observations 578

17 Analyzing Starlight 591

- 17.1 The Brightness of Stars 591
- 17.2 Colors of Stars 595
- 17.3 The Spectra of Stars (and Brown Dwarfs) 598
- 17.4 Using Spectra to Measure Stellar Radius, Composition, and Motion 605

18 The Stars: A Celestial Census 621

- 18.1 A Stellar Census 621
- 18.2 Measuring Stellar Masses 625
- 18.3 Diameters of Stars 632
- 18.4 The H-R Diagram 637

19 Celestial Distances 655

- 19.1 Fundamental Units of Distance 655
- 19.2 Surveying the Stars 659
- 19.3 Variable Stars: One Key to Cosmic Distances 669
- 19.4 The H-R Diagram and Cosmic Distances 675

20 Between the Stars: Gas and Dust in Space 687

- 20.1 The Interstellar Medium 688
- 20.2 Interstellar Gas 692
- 20.3 Cosmic Dust 700
- 20.4 Cosmic Rays 707
- 20.5 The Life Cycle of Cosmic Material 710
- 20.6 Interstellar Matter around the Sun 712

21 The Birth of Stars and the Discovery of Planets outside the Solar System 723

- 21.1 Star Formation 724
- 21.2 The H-R Diagram and the Study of Stellar Evolution 733
- 21.3 Evidence That Planets Form around Other Stars 736
- 21.4 Planets beyond the Solar System: Search and Discovery 740
- 21.5 Exoplanets Everywhere: What We Are Learning 749
- 21.6 New Perspectives on Planet Formation 755

22 Stars from Adolescence to Old Age 767

- 22.1 Evolution from the Main Sequence to Red Giants 768
- 22.2 Star Clusters 774
- 22.3 Checking Out the Theory 778
- 22.4 Further Evolution of Stars 785
- 22.5 The Evolution of More Massive Stars 794

23 The Death of Stars 805

- 23.1 The Death of Low-Mass Stars 806
- 23.2 Evolution of Massive Stars: An Explosive Finish 811
- 23.3 Supernova Observations 818
- 23.4 Pulsars and the Discovery of Neutron Stars 826
- 23.5 The Evolution of Binary Star Systems 832
- 23.6 The Mystery of the Gamma-Ray Bursts 835

24 Black Holes and Curved Spacetime 853

- 24.1 Introducing General Relativity 853
- 24.2 Spacetime and Gravity 859
- 24.3 Tests of General Relativity 862
- 24.4 Time in General Relativity 865
- 24.5 Black Holes 867
- 24.6 Evidence for Black Holes 875
- 24.7 Gravitational Wave Astronomy 878

25 The Milky Way Galaxy 891

- 25.1 The Architecture of the Galaxy 892
- 25.2 Spiral Structure 901
- 25.3 The Mass of the Galaxy 905
- 25.4 The Center of the Galaxy 907
- 25.5 Stellar Populations in the Galaxy 914
- 25.6 The Formation of the Galaxy 917

26 Galaxies 931

- 26.1 The Discovery of Galaxies 932
- 26.2 Types of Galaxies 935
- 26.3 Properties of Galaxies 941
- 26.4 The Extragalactic Distance Scale 944
- 26.5 The Expanding Universe 948

27 Active Galaxies, Quasars, and Supermassive Black Holes 963

- 27.1 Quasars 963
- 27.2 Supermassive Black Holes: What Quasars Really Are 971
- 27.3 Quasars as Probes of Evolution in the Universe 979

28 The Evolution and Distribution of Galaxies 991

- 28.1 Observations of Distant Galaxies 992

- 28.2** Galaxy Mergers and Active Galactic Nuclei 999
- 28.3** The Distribution of Galaxies in Space 1006
- 28.4** The Challenge of Dark Matter 1020
- 28.5** The Formation and Evolution of Galaxies and Structure in the Universe 1027

29 The Big Bang 1043

- 29.1** The Age of the Universe 1044
- 29.2** A Model of the Universe 1051
- 29.3** The Beginning of the Universe 1060
- 29.4** The Cosmic Microwave Background 1066
- 29.5** What Is the Universe Really Made Of? 1074
- 29.6** The Inflationary Universe 1080
- 29.7** The Anthropic Principle 1085

30 Life in the Universe 1097

- 30.1** The Cosmic Context for Life 1098
- 30.2** Astrobiology 1101
- 30.3** Searching for Life beyond Earth 1110
- 30.4** The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence 1119

- A** How to Study for an Introductory Astronomy Class 1137
- B** Astronomy Websites, Images, and Apps 1139
- C** Scientific Notation 1145
- D** Units Used in Science 1149
- E** Some Useful Constants for Astronomy 1151
- F** Physical and Orbital Data for the Planets 1153
- G** Selected Moons of the Planets 1155
- H** Future Total Eclipses 1159
- I** The Nearest Stars, Brown Dwarfs, and White Dwarfs 1163
- J** The Brightest Twenty Stars 1167
- K** The Chemical Elements 1169
- L** The Constellations 1175
- M** Star Chart and Sky Event Resources 1181
- Index** 1183

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