

absorption spectrum

the set of absorption lines that results when radiant energy from a source, such as the sun, passes through a cooler medium where some of the light is absorbed

accretion

a process in which a star gathers molecules of interstellar gas to itself by gravitational attraction

aerobic respiration

a biological process that needs the presence of oxygen to produce energy

amino acid

a nitrogen-containing chemical that makes up proteins; can be made by living cells or obtained in the diet

anaerobic respiration

respiration that occurs in the absence of oxygen

big bang theory

the theory that the universe began at some particular instant and has been expanding ever since

blue shift

the lines in the spectra of galaxies move to shorter wavelengths than they found when spectra are produced here on Earth

catastrophism

the theory that past geological processes were much more rapid than those seen today

climate

the normal weather conditions in an area

cosmologist

a scientist who investigates the origin and evolution of the universe

Doppler effect

the change in frequency that occurs with light or sound when its source moves towards or away from us

electromagnetic radiation

electromagnetic waves that travel at the speed of light but differ in wavelength

emission

the giving out or release of energy by means of electromagnetic waves, such as light from a lamp or star

fermentation

the action of yeast cells on the sugar in fruit juices, like grape, to produce alcohol

Fraunhofer lines

the dark absorption lines crossing a continuous spectrum, such as those from the sun

frequency

the number of times
an event takes place
per unit of time

geocentric

the idea that the Earth was
at the centre of the solar
system and all planets and
stars orbited it

geological time scale

the method of dividing the
history of the Earth into
ages based on fossil and
other geological evidence
