

Why does the Moon shine?

Look up at the sky at night, and the brightest object you will see is the Moon! But the Moon is not like the Sun or stars. It is made of rock like the Earth, and it cannot make its own light. Instead, the Moon reflects light from the Sun.

Imagine pointing a flashlight at a shiny foil ball. The flashlight represents the Sun, and the foil ball is the Moon. Even though the foil ball is not emitting light, it still seems to shine when you turn the flashlight on.

Although the Moon appears very bright, it only reflects about 7% of the Sun's light!

As the Moon orbits the Earth, sunlight falls on different parts of the Moon's surface. This creates the Moon's "phases", where the shape of Moon seems to change from a full circle to a crescent. What is the shape of the Moon tonight?