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Article 1

Looking for a new earth

For thousands of years, humans have explored the Earth. Nowadays, we are exploring space. Astronomers are the modern-day explorers. Currently, many astronomers are looking for new planets and new places for humans to live in the future. But where do astronomers start looking?

First, astronomers look for a star. That's because our own Earth orbits a star (the Sun). More importantly, it is the correct distance from the sun for heat and light. So when astronomers have found a star, they look at the planets around it. In recent years, astronomers have found nearly 400 new planets with stars. Unfortunately, many of these planets are either too near to the star or too far away.

However, if the planet is in a good position, astronomers look for three key things: water, air, and rock. Water is important because all life needs water. Humans drink it and grow plants with it. But plants need air to breathe. So life on other planets will need water and air. Rock is also important because there is often water under it.

After many years of looking, astronomers have found a planet that is similar to Earth. It's Gliese 581g and it's near a star. The astronomers think it has water and rock and the average temperature is cold, but not colder than Antarctica or the Arctic Circle, for example. Gliese 581g is bigger than the Earth and a year there lasts only 37 Earth days instead of 365. Some astronomers think Gliese 581g will be a new Earth. However, Gliese 581g is twenty light years from Earth – a distance of 11 trillion miles.

【From National Geographic Learning】