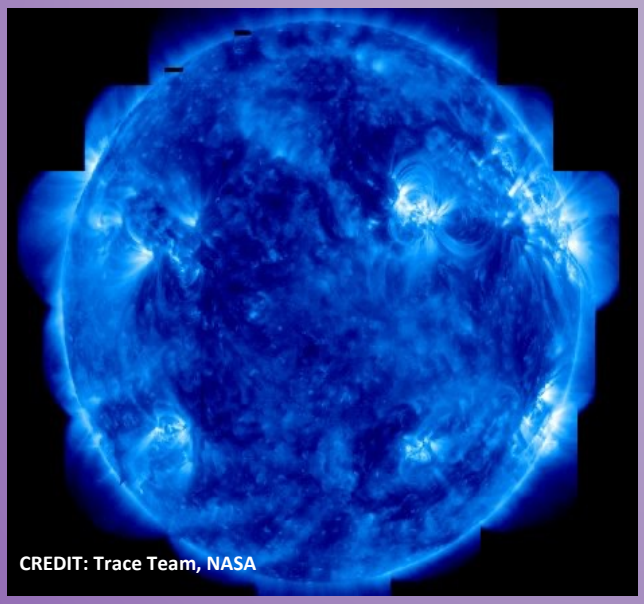
Ultraviolet (UV) light has a shorter wavelength than light we can see with our eyes. It has more energy than visible light and so can be more dangerous.

Ultraviolet light helps us to create vitamin D, but too much of it can damage our skin – that's what sunburn is! Bees can see near-UV light reflecting off plants.

UV light kills germs, so is used to clean equipment and surfaces. It is also used for security purposes and to leave secret messages!



CREDIT: Trace Team, NASA

In astronomy, we use UV light to investigate the very brightest stars, like those that are very young. We also use UV light to study our Sun – STFC is involved in solar observing missions called SOHO and STEREO.

The Diamond Light Source in Oxfordshire uses ultraviolet light to study the structure of proteins.

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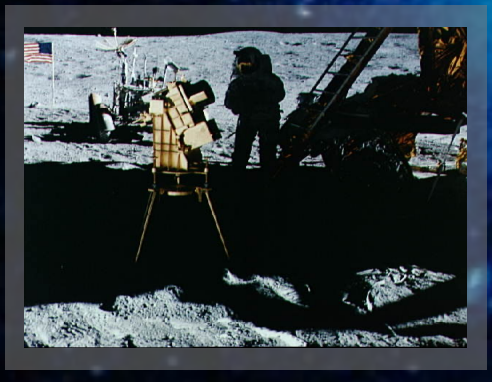
This is a picture of the Earth taken from the Moon. The part of the Earth facing the Sun reflects much UV light. The bands of UV light on the other side of the Earth are the result of aurora and are caused by charged particles expelled by the sun.



In 1972 the crew of Apollo 16 installed the first lunar astronomical observatory. The Far Ultraviolet Camera took pictures that would normally have been blocked by the Earth's atmosphere.

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CREDIT: G. Carruthers (NRL) et al. Far UV Camera, Apollo 16, NASA