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Finding and Characterizing Extrasolar Planets with *Kepler*

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NASA's *Kepler* spacecraft launched successfully on 2009 March 6. Its mission is to find the first rocky Earth-like planets orbiting stars other than the Sun. In particular, *Kepler* will measure the frequency of rocky planets in the galaxy, determining whether our solar system is rare, typical, or something in between. I will discuss the current state of scientific knowledge about extrasolar planets, how *Kepler* will contribute, and what we might learn about those planets that we find in the coming years.