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Who Was Neil Armstrong? (Grades 5-8)

**NASA STEM
Team**

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 ARTICLE

This article is for students grades 5-8.

Neil Armstrong was the first human to walk on the surface of the moon. He was an astronaut who flew on two space missions. The first was Gemini 8. The second was Apollo 11, which landed on the moon in 1969. Armstrong was also an engineer, a pilot and a college professor.

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An American
Hero and
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What Was Neil Armstrong's Life Like Growing Up?

Neil Armstrong was born in Ohio on Aug. 5, 1930. He had a brother and a sister. His family moved several times when he was young. They settled in Wapakoneta, Ohio, when he was 13. Armstrong first flew in an airplane when he was 6. That flight made him love airplanes. He was an Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America. Armstrong attended Blume High School in Wapakoneta.

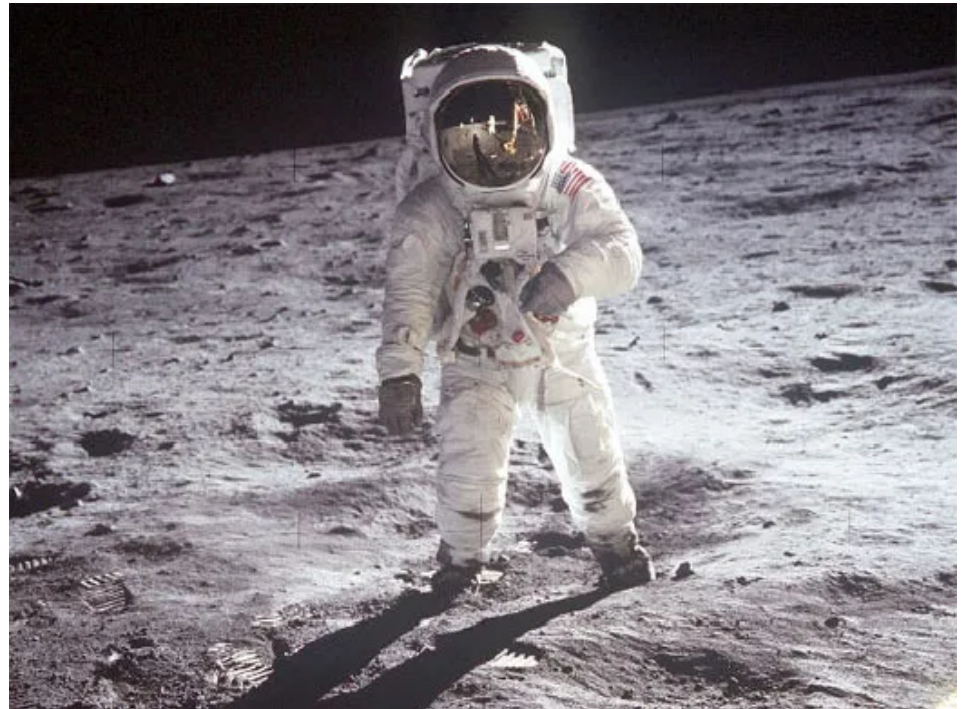
Armstrong went to college at Purdue University. While he was in college, he left to serve in the U.S. Navy. He was a Navy pilot during the Korean War. Afterwards, he returned and finished his bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering. He later earned a master's degree in aerospace engineering from the University of Southern California.

What Did Neil Armstrong Do

Before He Became an Astronaut?

After he graduated from college in 1955, Neil Armstrong went to work for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. NACA was a government agency that researched airplanes. Congress formed NASA in 1958, and NACA became part of this new agency.

Armstrong flew several planes for the agency. He also helped design planes. One of the planes he flew was the X-15 rocket plane. This plane set records for speed and altitude. Some of those records still stand, more than 40 years later.



What Did Neil Armstrong Do as an Astronaut?

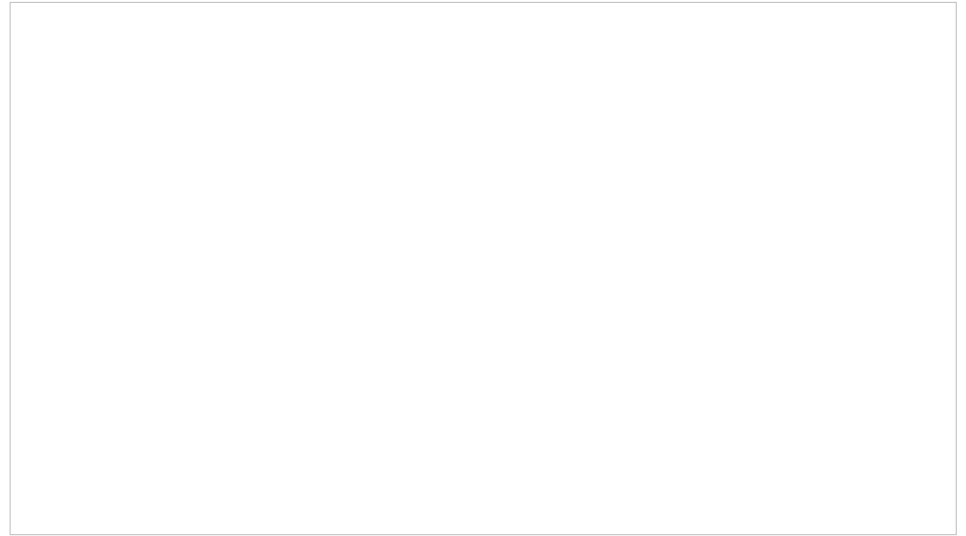
Neil Armstrong was selected as an astronaut in 1962. He was part of the second group of astronauts ever chosen. After finishing his initial training, he was picked to be mission commander of Gemini 8 in 1966. The two-person crew was Armstrong and David Scott. They were the first astronauts to dock two vehicles in space. The Gemini docked with an Agena spacecraft. The Agena, which had no crew, was launched so the Gemini could practice docking with it. After docking, the Gemini had a thruster problem. The capsule started spinning, and the mission ended early. Armstrong and Scott were able to pilot the Gemini safely back to Earth.

What Happened On the Apollo 11 Mission?

Armstrong's second flight was as commander of Apollo 11 in 1969. The other crew members were Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins. Armstrong and Aldrin landed on the moon in the lunar lander named Eagle. They were the first people to land on the moon. Collins stayed in orbit around the moon in the Apollo capsule. After landing, Armstrong and Aldrin walked on the moon. Armstrong took the first step on the moon. He said, "That's one small step for (a) man; one giant leap for mankind."

Armstrong and Aldrin spent more than two-and-a-half hours working outside their spacecraft on the moon. They studied the surface and collected rock samples. The two astronauts were on the moon for 21-and-a-half hours, including time inside the lander. After they blasted off, they docked with the Apollo capsule still in orbit around the

moon. All three astronauts then flew back to Earth in the Apollo capsule.



What Did Neil Armstrong Do After Apollo 11?

Neil Armstrong retired from NASA the year after Apollo 11. Armstrong was a professor at the University of Cincinnati from 1971 to 1979. He taught classes and did research. Armstrong later went into the business world. He stayed active in various groups that studied space and aeronautics.

An American Hero and Explorer

Neil Armstrong died on Aug. 25, 2012. He was 82.

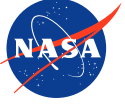
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