

# Neil Armstrong

**Occupation:** Astronaut

**Born:** August 5, 1930 in Ohio (USA)

**Died:** August 25, 2012

**Best known for:** First man to walk on the Moon



## Early Life

Neil was born on August 5, 1930 in a state of the USA called Ohio. His love for flying started at a young age when his father took him to an air show. From then on his goal was to become a pilot. At the age of 15, he got his pilot's license. Armstrong went to Purdue University to learn about aerospace engineering. During college, Neil was called up by the Navy and became a fighter pilot. He fought in the Korean War where he flew fighter jets from aircraft carriers. At one point his plane was hit by enemy fire, but he was able to eject and was safely rescued.

## Becoming an Astronaut

After finishing college, Armstrong became a test pilot. He flew all sorts of different experiment planes and tested them out to see how well they flew. It was a dangerous job, but very exciting. He flew over 200 different types of aircraft. Armstrong applied to become an astronaut and in September 1962 he was selected for the NASA Astronaut Corps. This is a training group to help people learn how to be astronauts. He had to go through lots of very hard physical tests on his body, but he passed and was soon part of the "new nine"- this was a second group of nine NASA astronauts.

## The Gemini 8

Armstrong's first trip into space was aboard the Gemini 8. He was the command pilot of the space capsule – this means he was in charge of telling the space capsule what to do. He piloted the first successful docking of two

vehicles in space. However, the mission went wrong and had to be stopped, when the capsules began to roll.

## **Apollo 11 and Walking on the Moon**

On December 23, 1968 Neil was offered to be in charge of the Apollo 11 mission to the moon. This would be the first manned landing on the Moon. This was an exciting time for the entire country. The United States was in a race with Russia to put the first man on the Moon. If the flight was successful, Armstrong would be that man.



After months of practice and preparation, the Apollo 11 spacecraft launched from Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on July 16, 1969. There was one scary moment in the flight where Armstrong had to take over manual control of the landing – this means he controlled it himself instead of the spacecraft following its programmed instructions. This was not the plan and, if the landing took too long, they would run out of fuel and crash. The landing was successful though and they had around 40 seconds of fuel left. When the spacecraft landed on the moon, Armstrong said "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed."

After landing, Armstrong was the first to leave the spacecraft and walk on the Moon. The historic date was July 21, 1969. His famous words upon being the first man on the Moon were "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind". Buzz Aldrin also walked on the Moon during this trip. They collected Moon rocks and were on the Moon for over 21 hours. While the lunar module, named the Eagle, was on the Moon, the third astronaut, Michael Collins, orbited the Moon in the command module. The three pilots arrived back on Earth on July 24th. They landed in the Pacific Ocean and when they returned they were heroes.