

# The first lunar landing



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The First Lunar Landing The first lunar landing ever to happen in the history of mankind may be one of the most inspiring events of all time. America and its people went through tremendous amounts of stress dealing with the rivalry between Americans and the Soviet Union on who would be the first to put a man on the moon. The men and women that contributed to making this idea, or even a fantasy come to life will be remembered for hundreds, or even thousands of years. On July 20th, 1969, the world had been changed forever. An event took place that made it clear that nothing is impossible. Two astronauts of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) had set foot on the moon. The world watched in amazement as these men made history. Many factors led up to this event, and without them taking place, the lunar landing would have not even been a possibility. The rivalry between America and the Soviet Union (now Russia) was no little issue. The Soviet Union had been successful in sending multiple satellites into space and even landing a probe on the moon according to Moon Landing by Nadia Higgins. The Soviet Union, in the world's eyes was the most superior country at this time. Vice President, and Chairman of the Space Council, Lyndon Johnson wrote " In the eyes of the world, first in space is first, period. Second in space is second in everything. " according to Moon Landing by Nadia Higgins. This statement is what provided inspiration to the men and women that would make space travel take place. On May 5th, 1961, the question of American space travel was answered. Alan Shepard Jr. became the first American to go into space. Even though he flew in space for a short fifteen minutes, Americans reacted with " overwhelming pride" according to Moon Landing by Nadia Higgins. The stage was set, and John F. Kennedy had announced " I believe this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal,

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before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to Earth. " NASA has now been given a deadline by the president. They had to land a man on the Moon. Nine months after Kennedy's statement, John Glenn became the first American to orbit Earth. This gave NASA more and more hope on a moon landing. NASA had started preparing for lunar landing already. The idea of a lunar module was chosen as the best way to go for getting a man to the moon. Twenty thousand American companies were designing and building the spacecraft and equipment that would be required in space travel, while NASA's staff increased to thirty-three thousand people. Just when America thought they had caught up in this space race, Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov became the first ever man to " space walk" or float free in space while attached to his spacecraft. NASA knew they had to catch up, and three months later, astronaut Ed White became the first American to space walk. Attached to the Gemini 4, Ed White looked down at Earth with American flag across his suit's left sleeve. Project Gemini proved that all the skills that America needed to perform a lunar landing were now there. NASA prepared for the moon landing now by selecting the astronauts that would help make the mission a success. The first selection was a man named Neil Armstrong, who had flown 78 combat missions in the Korean War. Since he was assigned commander, he would be the first to set foot on the moon. His performance on previous NASA missions proved that he would make a great commander in this mission. On January 27th, 1967, the Apollo 1 boarded their spacecraft to perform tests. What happens next was one of the biggest tragedies in NASA history. Three astronauts, named Roger Chaffee, Ed White, and Virgil " Gus" Grissom had climbed inside of their cockpit that was filled with pure oxygen. For about

five-and-a-half hours, tests were being taking with these men squeezed inside this tiny compartment. A fire erupted inside the cockpit and the men were locked inside with a hatch that could only be opened from the outside. By the time technicians opened the hatch, it was too late. The pure oxygen made the inside of the space craft extremely hot. The astronauts were dead and all of NASA felt guilty. This event helped engineers make 1, 300 changes to the design. NASA rose from this event and remained committed to what they had started. The Apollo missions were all a success after the first. On December 24th, 1968, the first ever circle around the moon took place. America watched the broadcast of this event and knew that the “ real” lunar mission was very close. Americans knew that what they had all been waiting for was finally going to become a reality. In January 1969, the men that would be flying the Apollo 11 were finally going to be announced. Neil Armstrong was already appointed commander. Buzz Aldrin would be the lunar module pilot, and Michael Collins who would be in command of the module on moon orbit. These men were honored to take part in such an extraordinary event. However, before for their mission to take place, Apollo 9 and 10 had to go perfectly as planned. In March of that year Apollo 9 performed all of its tasks flawlessly. The mission that would tell NASA whether or not they could perform the Apollo 11 mission came next. The Apollo 10 mission entered moon orbit and had a lunar module land on moon surface. There was only one difference; the men were not to touchdown on the surface. The mission went perfectly and set the stage for the Apollo 11 mission. The launch date of the Apollo 11 was set for July 16th, 1969. On July 16th, 1969, the Saturn V blasted of the launch pad. The rocket had flown through the clouds and into the atmosphere in just a few seconds. The

astronauts were pushed back in their seats with a force of 4 to 5 G's. The men were very quiet; there was no excitement in the cockpit of the ship. After three minutes, the astronauts had been traveling at 6,000 miles per hour. The men had braced themselves for the first staging of the ship and entering space. After hours of space travel, word came from Mission Control saying the astronauts were ready to blast their last part of the rocket off and coast toward the moon. They would leave Earth's gravitational pull, float through space, and then get pulled into the Moon's gravitational pull. Landing on the moon was getting closer and closer. The time had come; it was time to land on the moon. The astronauts only had one shot at entering at the right angle. Since they had to orbit around the moon to land, they had lost radio signal with Mission Control, and they had to land on their own. The manual piloting had been successful and contact with Mission Control had been restored. It was time to take one of the final steps of landing these men on the moon. After 20 hours of orbiting of the moon, Armstrong and Aldrin entered their lunar module named the Eagle. Collins would stay in the ship and orbit around the Moon until the mission was over. Before the lunar module and ship separated, Armstrong and Aldrin said goodbye to Collins until they met again later. They were now three hours away from touching down on the moon. It was almost here. The landing did not start off as perfectly as they had thought. After multiple computer issues, Armstrong had to take control of the lunar module manually. Next, Mission Control told Armstrong that he only had "60 seconds" worth of fuel, 200 feet above the "Sea of Tranquility." "30 seconds" Mission Control said over the radio. The astronauts felt a slight bump; it was clear that the men had landed. On July 20th, 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first men to set foot

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on the Moon and Mission Control went crazy. The mission wasn't over yet though; they still had to gather 50 pounds of Moon rocks. However, the men became more and more used to walking on the Moon. The astronauts would bounce long distances and hop around. No man had done anything like this before, and Mission Control and the people of Earth watched the broadcast of this happening. The men looked back at their list of things to do and got back to work. Two hours and fourteen minutes after the first step on the Moon, it was time to return to the ship. Now it came down to performing a task that hasn't been accomplished before; flying the Eagle off the Moon and docking it back on the ship. Yet again, the astronauts only had one chance to fly at the right angle to perform the task correct. After a successful take off and about four hours of flight, the Eagle had docked with the ship. Now the only task left was flying 240, 000 miles back to Earth. This was the final step to accomplishing the greatest event in NASA history. They had to fly back to Earth in a similar way to how they flew to the Moon; leaving the Moon's gravitational pull, coasting through space, and then being pulled in by Earth's gravitational pull. As the ship flew into Earth's atmosphere the service module was no longer needed and was blasted off the ship. They were coming in at around 25, 000 miles per hour; the temperatures outside reached 5, 000 degrees. And around 10, 000 feet; three parachutes deployed and slowed the men down tremendously. After fourteen minutes of free falling, the men landing in the Pacific Ocean, not far from Hawaii. The men were finally back on Earth's surface. On July 24th, 1969, the Apollo 11 mission had been a success, and the astronauts were heroes. It would be 17 more days until the men would make contact with another human being. The astronauts had to be decontaminated of any "strange moon diseases"

according to Moon Landing by Nadia Higgins. At this point, the mission was complete. The men had accomplished what was required to fill Americans with pride in their country, and NASA, pride with their commitment. This event and all the events leading up to it played a huge role in creating one of the biggest events in American history, and history around the world. Space programs would not have made any progress if it wasn't for the Apollo missions, and all missions before it. To me, the first lunar landing is a big stepping stone in the path of great American events. NASA has created some of the most interesting programs ever. And it all started with landing on the Moon. ~ The End ~

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