

Ellen what led me to  
apply (to



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Ellen Ochoa is a well-made genius.

She exceeds in her studies and got past the preconceptions people had of females' roles all while being part of a minority. Not only is she an example that women or Hispanics can look up to, but she also is a role model for people who believe they cannot accomplish what they dream on the first try. Dr. Ochoa broke barriers, constructing a pathway for people to follow in her footsteps and achieve greater things than she ever will. Like many of the people today she went through a separation of family, people putting her and her dreams down, and having to live up to the stereotypical ideas people have for women in the world.

In an interview, when asked if she had a mentor or role model growing up, Ellen Ochoa answered that it was her mother who had been one of the most important people to encourage her and all her siblings to excel in school. Ochoa states, " My mother had the biggest influence on my life. She always had a love of learning, and encouraged my 4 siblings and me to take advantage of educational opportunities including college and graduate school" (Amazing Mentor! Interview with Dr. Ellen Ochoa"). She goes on to describe how her mother had not received a college education in her younger years yet managed to graduate later all while taking care of kids. Ellen Ochoa explained that when she was younger, becoming an astronaut was not an option for her or specifically any female until years later.

During an event, Ochoa explained that when she was still in school, her teachers and classmates doubted she would succeed in the science field. It was not until the first woman, Sally Rider, made it to space. She once stated

“ When the first space shuttle took off in 1981, Sally Ride flew for the first time, putting all that together with my interest in space is what led me to apply (to NASA). (“ Dr.

Ellen Ochoa: Scientist, Engineer, Inventor, Astronaut & Director of the Johnson Space Center). It had never been her plan to become an astronaut since it was not really a job woman could have at the time. After deciding that she wanted to become an astronaut she applied for the astronaut training program but was rejected. Ochoa was still encouraged to get into the program and continued to work at her current job and managed to get her hands on a piloting license. Her second application in 1987 was also rejected but in 1990 Ellen Ochoa’s third application. She was not discouraged when things didn’t go as planned or when people put her down for her the dreams she had. Dr. Ochoa got through various obstacles with the encouragement of many people and that made her become a role model to many Latinos in the world today.

Ellen Ochoa attended Grossmont High School, graduating at the top of her class and earning a 4-year scholarship that Stanford University had offered which she ended up turning down wanting to stay closer to home. She chose to attend San Diego State University instead. Ochoa knew she had a passion for a science-related career as she once said “ Usually, girls weren’t encouraged to go to college and major in math and science. My high school calculus teacher, Ms. Paz Jensen, made math appealing and motivated me to continue studying it in college” (The New Challenge in Raising Our Girls is Innocent and Well-Intentioned Sexism) but as a flute prodigy, she also fancied majoring in music.

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She decided to major in physics instead after people had discouraged her from enrolling in an engineering major which at the time was just a career path for men. She graduated in 1980 as valedictorian with a diploma in physics. Ochoa then finally made her way to Stanford to complete a graduate course since people would not stop her from getting her education as the gender of a person did not matter in a career field. She earned a master's and later, a doctoral degree in the science field that had interested her from the very beginning, electrical engineering.

Word Upon graduating from Stanford, Dr. Ochoa began working at before she even was accepted into the astronaut training program but was not chosen however she helped out with something else that same year. She contributed to her first patent which an optical device that inspected an object for defects by identifying interruptions in a pattern that continuously repeats itself. In the same year, Ochoa and some of her colleagues worked on two different patents which were approved over the next years. One of the patents was a device that uses optical technology to help identify targets no matter its size and direction.

The third patent was an optical system that helped reduce the distortion of images. At the same time in the year 1988, Ochoa earned her private pilot's license and started working at NASA's Ames Research Division. After entering a new job, Ochoa worked with a team of 35 scientists as they developed optical and computer systems for the exploration of space. The next year she was invited back to Johnson Space Center for another interview and this time, Ochoa was finally selected to become part of the astronaut training program and began reporting to training in July of 1990.

She attended lectures in different astronomy-related topics meteorology, orbital mechanics, and space shuttle navigation all while studying space flight manuals to prepare for what living and working would be like in gravity every day, She practiced scenarios which they hope never to experience but gave an idea of what to do in those types of situations. Ochoa graduated a year later from the astronaut training program and in April 1993 she boarded onto the space shuttle, Discovery, her first ever space mission. On that day, Ellen Ochoa made history by becoming the first Hispanic woman to ever go to space. She returned to space not just two or three times but four times working with robot arms, computer hardware, flight software and just simple training and living in zero gravity for experimental purposes and ended up spending almost 1, 000 hours in space as a flight engineer and mission specialist.

After deciding to retire from space flight, she moved on to work as the chief of the Astronaut Office and eventually as the spacecraft communicator in Mission Control. As of right now, Dr. Ochoa serves as the Director of Johnson Space Center as the first Hispanic director and the second female director of the Space Center.