

# The History of Space Exploration

For centuries, humans have searched for ways to see the wonders of space close-up. The first steps came out of a struggle for power: German technology developed during the Second World War led to more advanced rockets. The next steps formed a race between the United States and the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.): the “space race.”



**Who Won the Space Race: U.S.A. or U.S.S.R.?**

Length: 4 min 09



**Key Dates in the History of Space Exploration**

Length: 5 min 43

Today, science has taken over. Many discoveries and new technologies are the result of space exploration: improved weather forecasting, cellular communications, GPS, Teflon, disposable diapers, automation, medical devices and more.

Watch these videos, which summarize space exploration from its beginnings to today.

Read this list of key achievements in the history of space exploration. Then complete the timeline on the next page by placing them at the correct points in time.

**Construction of the International Space Station:**

Since the year 2000, after two years of construction, the station has been permanently staffed.

**Creation of NASA:** The United States created their space agency just after launching their first satellite.

**First American satellite:** The Americans entered the space race with their satellite *Explorer 1*. The Soviets had already sent a living thing into space at that point.

**First human in space:** Soviet Yuri Gagarin circled the Earth in 1 h 48 min on board the *Vostok 1*.

**First humans to walk on the moon:** During the Apollo 11 mission, Americans Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin took humans’ first steps on the moon.

**First images of the far side of the moon:** The pictures were taken by the Soviet probe *Luna 3*.

**First landing on another celestial body:** After seven years of hard work on Luna missions, *Luna 9* gently touched down on the moon.

**First living thing in space:** The Soviets sent a dog named Laika into space on board the *Sputnik 2*.

**First space flight:** The Soviets launched the satellite *Sputnik 1* into orbit.

**First space shuttle flight:** Unlike a rocket, the shuttle *Columbia* could land on Earth when it returned from space.

**First space station:** The Soviets launched the *Salyut 1* into orbit not long after the Americans first walked on the moon.

**First spacewalk:** Not long after his colleague Valentina’s achievement, Alexei Leonov exited the capsule *Voskhod 2* and floated in space.

**First woman in space:** Valentina Tereshkova completed a three-day solo flight on board the *Vostok 6*. She is the only woman to have completed a solo space mission to date.

**Launch of the Hubble Space Telescope:** The shuttle *Discovery* placed the telescope in orbit.

**Launch of the James Webb Space Telescope:** This is the most recent and most costly project in the history of space exploration.

