

# Katherine Johnson



## FACT FILE

26th August 1918 - 24th February 2020

Katherine Johnson was an African American physicist and mathematician.

She was the first African-American woman to attend graduate school at West Virginia University and is known for her work on the United States' aeronautics and space programs.

Katherine was one of the NASA “human computers”. These were women mathematicians who performed calculations that allowed NASA firstly, to put astronauts safely into orbit then onto the Moon!

Katherine calculated the trajectory for the 1961 space flight of Alan Shepherd and when computers were first used it was Katherine who checked their calculations were correct!!

Katherine also worked on the space shuttle program and in the later part of her career spent time inspiring students to follow a STEM Career.

### AWARDS

Katherine Johnson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. She also has a NASA facility named after her, the Katherine G. Johnson Computational Research Facility.



### ACTIVITY

Design and build a straw rocket. Launch the rocket at different angles to see how the flight trajectory changes.

### STRAW ROCKET

You'll need:

Straw

Paper

Tape

Cut a small strip of paper, fold in half and seal the top and long side opposite the fold with tape.

This should fit loosely over the top of your straw.

Place the paper on the end of the straw and blow, it should shoot into the air!



Katherine Johnson's career is incredible and even more so when you consider she grew up in a time when her hometown didn't offer schooling to Black children past eighth grade!