

# 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 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.

Katherine worked for NASA for over 30 years before retiring in 1986. She passed away in February 2020 at the age of 101.

Katherine Johnson's career is incredible, especially when you consider that when she grew up her hometown didn't offer schooling to African American children past 8th grade!

### AWARDS

Katherine Johnson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal.

NASA's Katherine G. Johnson Computational Research Facility is named after her.



### ACTIVITY

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

#### You'll need:

Straw  
Paper  
Tape

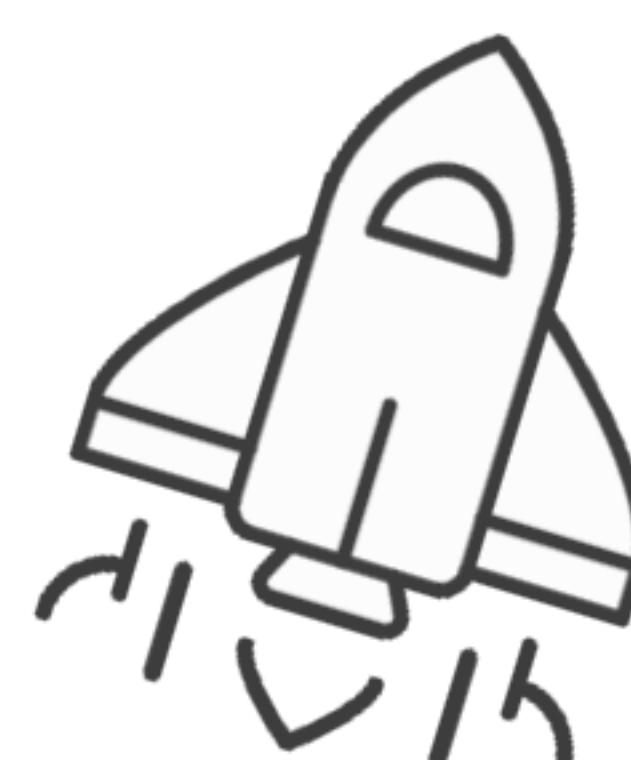
#### Instructions

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

This should fit loosely over the straw.

Place the paper on the end of the straw.

Blow down the straw, the rocket will shoot into the air!



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Adult supervision required. You are responsible for your own safety.  
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