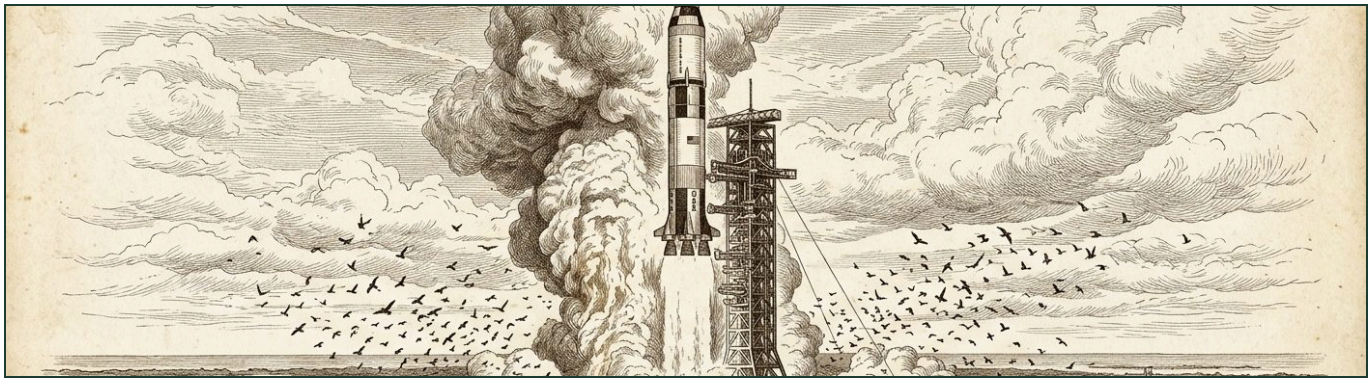


1957 – 1969

Space Race Timeline

The Space Race was a Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union to achieve milestones in space exploration, culminating in the Apollo 11 moon landing.

1957 — **Sputnik — The First Satellite**

The Soviet Union launches Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite, on October 4.

> **Why it mattered:** *Sputnik shocked the United States — it proved the Soviets had rockets powerful enough to reach space, and possibly to deliver nuclear weapons anywhere on Earth.*

1957 — **Laika in Space**

The Soviet Union sends a dog named Laika into orbit aboard Sputnik 2, proving a living creature can survive a rocket launch.

> **Why it mattered:** *Laika's flight showed that living organisms could survive spaceflight — a crucial step toward sending humans into space.*

1958 — **NASA Founded**

The United States creates the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to lead its space program.

> **Why it mattered:** *NASA gave the US a dedicated agency to compete with the Soviet program — it became one of the greatest scientific organizations in history.*

1961 — **Gagarin — First Human in Space**

Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin completes one orbit of Earth on April 12, becoming the first human being in space.

> **Why it mattered:** *Gagarin's flight stunned the world — the Soviets had pulled ahead again, and President Kennedy responded by committing the US to landing on the Moon.*

Space Race Timeline *continued*

1961 — **Kennedy's Moon Pledge**

President John F. Kennedy pledges before Congress that the United States will land a man on the Moon and return him safely before the end of the decade.

> **Why it mattered:** *Kennedy's bold commitment focused the entire US space program on a single goal — and gave NASA the funding, urgency, and national will to achieve it.*

1962 — **John Glenn Orbits Earth**

Astronaut John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit the Earth, completing three orbits on February 20.

> **Why it mattered:** *Glenn's flight gave America its own orbital hero and demonstrated that the US was closing the gap with the Soviet space program.*

1965 — **First Spacewalk**

Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov becomes the first person to walk in space, floating outside his spacecraft for twelve minutes.

> **Why it mattered:** *The spacewalk proved that humans could work outside a spacecraft — an essential capability for any future lunar mission.*

1967 — **Apollo 1 Fire**

A fire during a launch rehearsal kills three Apollo astronauts — Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee — and halts crewed flights for 20 months.

> **Why it mattered:** *The tragedy forced NASA to redesign the Apollo spacecraft, adding critical safety improvements that ultimately made the Moon landing possible.*

1968 — **Apollo 8 Orbits the Moon**

Astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders orbit the Moon on Christmas Eve, broadcasting a reading from Genesis watched by millions.

> **Why it mattered:** *Apollo 8 showed humans could reach the Moon and return safely — and produced the iconic Earthrise photograph, one of the most influential images ever taken.*

1969 — **Moon Landing**

Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin land on the Moon on July 20; Armstrong becomes the first person to walk on the lunar surface.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Moon landing was one of humanity's greatest achievements — the United States had won the Space Race, fulfilling Kennedy's pledge with five months to spare.*