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In this NASA image we see Apollo 11's Lunar Module, named "Eagle," on the surface of the Moon. By July of 1969, Apollo 11 was ready for its historic journey to the moon. So were members of its flight crew: Neil Armstrong, Edwin ("Buzz") Aldrin and Michael Collins.

Strapped in their spacecraft, the men blasted into space on July 16th. The launch, by a three-stage Saturn V rocket - powered with five F-1 engines in its first stage - was spectacular.

Aboard command module Columbia, the crew settled in for their long ride to a place where no human being had ever been. Four days later, they were in lunar orbit and, at 4:17 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, the lunar module landed (the link takes you to the exact spot) on the moon's "Sea of Tranquility." Armstrong radioed Mission Control:

*Houston. Tranquility Base here.
The Eagle has landed.*

Unbelievable! People from all over the world were glued to their television screens. Nearly seven hours later, at 10:56:15 p.m. EDT, Neil Armstrong took mankind's first step on the surface of the place which he - like children everywhere - had stared at with wonder when he was a boy. Buzz Aldrin followed soon after.

He almost didn't take those steps. In fact, the lunar module flashed a yellow caution light 6,000 feet above the lunar surface - before it ever landed. Armstrong advised both Collins, in the command module, and Houston:

Program alarm. It's a 1202.

What was a 1202? An "Executive Overflow" or - using non-technical terms - the computer had too many things to do at once.

Should they abort the lunar landing? Quickly, Steve Bales (the Houston flight controller for the lunar module's computer activity) determined everything was fine.

Later, when Apollo 11's crew members received their Medals of Freedom, Steve Bales received one too. Without his fast and accurate input, the lunar landing (these three video links feature historical footage and recreated scenes) would not have occurred.

Buzz Aldrin also walked on the moon during that first trip while Michael Collins, remaining with Columbia,

orbited the moon 30 times. During their 2 hours and 31 minutes of traversing Earth's satellite, Aldrin and Armstrong took pictures of the lunar landscape and of each other. They planted an American flag and left a plaque:

Here men from planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon. July 1969 A.D. We came in peace for all mankind.

After 21.6 hours total time on the moon, Armstrong and Aldrin safely left the surface in the lunar module and docked with Columbia for their return to earth. Astronauts, on later Apollo missions, were able to use a Lunar Roving Vehicle (this is a PDF link) to inspect the terrain, but Armstrong and Aldrin had only their legs to move about the landscape.

The backup commander for Apollo 11, Jim Lovell, was not needed for America's first moon landing. Nine months later, he would make his own trip. He thought he would land on the moon. Instead, Lovell needed all his skills to avoid a space disaster.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

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Media Stream

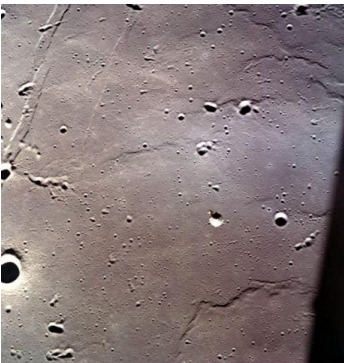


Apollo 11 - Crew Photo

Photo online, courtesy NASA. PD

Biographical information on Apollo 11 crew, online courtesy NASA.

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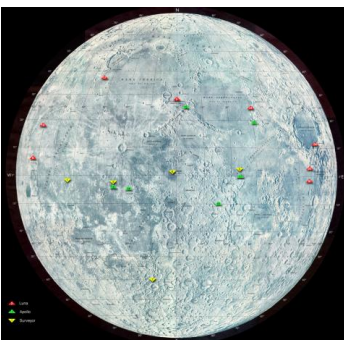


Moon Landing Site

Photo online, courtesy NASA.

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Moon-Landing Sites

Moon-Landing Sites drawing, online courtesy National Space Science Data Center, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center.

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Buzz Aldrin Moon Walk - Armstrong Had Only Camera

Photo online, courtesy NASA.

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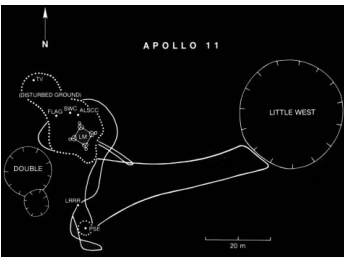
Buzz Aldrin Moon Walk - Armstrong Reflected in Visor

Photo online, courtesy NASA.

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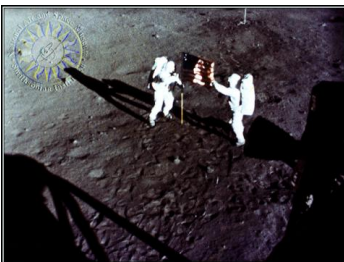


Apollo 11 Mission Track

Image, described above, online courtesy NASA.

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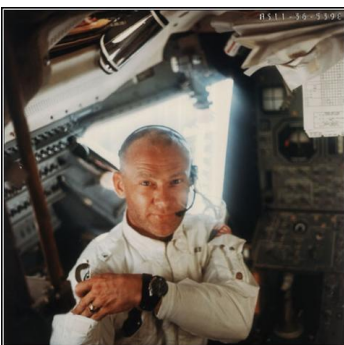
Apollo 11 - American Flag Planted on the Moon

Image online, courtesy NASA.

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Apollo 11 - Buzz Aldrin in the Lunar Module

NASA photo A11-36-5390, online courtesy NASA.

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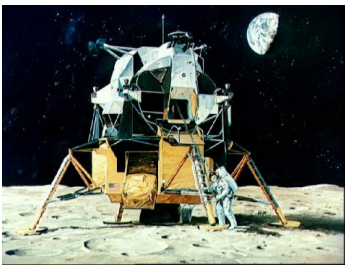
Neil Armstrong After First Moonwalk

NASA photo A11-37-5528, online courtesy NASA.

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APOLLO 11

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Apollo 11 - "We are Go for Launch"

Launch video, online courtesy NASA.

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Apollo 11 - Neil Armstrong Walks on the Moon

Video online, courtesy NASA.

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Apollo 11 - Close-up View of Launch

NASA video online, courtesy NASA.

Quoted passage, from a 14 July 1969 NASA Press Release, online courtesy NASA.

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Apollo 11 - Launch and Journey to the Moon

Clip from the [BBC](#) series, *Days that Shook the World - Moon Landing*.

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Apollo 11 - Lunar Landing and Return to Earth

Clip from the [BBC](#) series, *Days that Shook the World - Moon Landing*.

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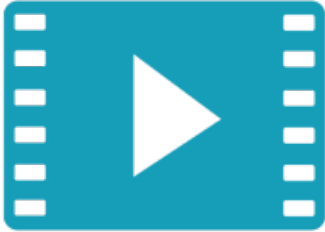
[Apollo 11 - Buzz Aldrin on the Moon](#)

Video online, courtesy NASA.

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[Apollo 11 - Moonwalk Montage](#)

Video online, courtesy NASA.

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[Apollo 11 - Mission Highlights](#)

Video online, courtesy NASA.

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