

National Moon Day

Actual Holiday: July 20

First Celebrated: Unknown, possibly 1969

July



Introduction

National Moon Day celebrates Neil Armstrong's historic first walk on the Moon. On that day—July 20, 1969—Neil said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Up until that point, Americans were in a race with other countries to see who could land on the Moon first. Ever since, people have celebrated this great accomplishment and milestone in space history.

Materials

- *Big Steps* activity sheet (page 45)
- pencils

The Activity

- Tell students that today they will be celebrating National Moon Day.
- Ask students what they know and think about space. Have they ever dreamed of being an astronaut? Do they find space scary, mysterious, or something else? Have they ever wanted to go to the Moon?
- Tell students that United States' astronauts were the first to land on the Moon, but it was quite a process to get there. Share this timeline with them:
 - In 1961, President Kennedy said he wanted to see an American on the Moon by the end of the decade. That same year, President Kennedy approved the start of NASA's Apollo space program.
 - In 1964, NASA's unmanned probe, Ranger 7, sent pictures of the Moon's surface.
 - In 1968, American TV viewers watched as the spacecraft Apollo 8 repeated its orbit 10 times around the Moon. This was important because it was the first manned flight.
 - In 1969, Apollo 11's astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to step on the Moon's surface.
- Once you've shared the timeline with students, talk about how there are many things in our lives that we do step by step. Neil Armstrong himself took many steps just to become an astronaut. He went to college, became a pilot in the Navy, and was accepted into the NASA space program. He accomplished all this before he took his first step on the Moon! Share with them that there is no better way to celebrate Neil Armstrong's first steps on the Moon than to describe some steps of their own.
- Have students think about something that they do step by step. Maybe they make their bed the same way every day, know how to cannonball into a pool for the most splash potential, or know exactly how to make the perfect peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
- Distribute the *Big Steps* activity sheet to students. If needed, give students more ideas for steps they could write about (e.g., cleaning their room, writing a story, playing a sport). Have students write their steps in the footprints on the page. Make sure they do not share their papers with their classmates.
- Ask for student volunteers to act out their steps in front of the class without speaking. Once they have finished, have the class guess what they were acting out.
- Once all student volunteers have performed and their actions have been guessed, have the class talk about the step-by-step actions. Is there anything they want to learn as a result of what they saw performed?



Name: _____

Big Steps

