
Helen Sharman



Helen is a pioneer, role model, science communicator and world-class inspirational speaker. She became the first British Astronaut in May 1991, aged 27, when she spent 8 days orbiting the Earth. A selection of testimonials about Helen appears at the end of this biography.

A superb speaker, Helen Sharman enthuses her audience about Space, STEM and the wonders of science. She takes them on her journey, as she describes aspects of the meticulous training, preparation, launch and landing, how weightlessness feels, her science experiments, the team spirit and readjusting to life back on Earth.

Helen says “We should push forward, not only our individual boundaries, but also the boundaries of what humans believe is possible. People are the biggest limitations in our own lives. There’s a huge amount we can do and we should make the best use of our lives for the benefit of the world.”

Helen Sharman didn’t think she stood the smallest chance of being selected when she applied, after hearing an advert on the car radio on her way home from work. Over 13,000 other people also applied for this one-off opportunity. But Helen was exactly the type of person they were looking for - calm, practical, friendly, professional, a team player. Two people were chosen for the rigorous training but only one - Helen - went into Space.

Before starting her training, Helen underwent the rigorous selection process with psychological and medical assessments, technical understanding and practical skills. This was followed by 18 months of intensive spaceflight training, which included learning Russian, preparing for “feeling weightless” and g-force, learning how to cope inside a cramped space capsule, how to deal with a landing in the sea and training for all possible scenarios (positive and negative) which might happen when in orbit, travelling at 17,500 miles an hour.

Helen Sharman carried out spacecraft operations during the launch. On board the Space Station, her tasks included medical, agricultural and chemical experiments, materials testing, Earth observation work and operating an amateur radio link with British school students. Media interviews were a frequent occurrence.

Coping with risk was a daily activity. Teamwork was a vital element for success.

Helen Sharman has not returned to space. But, like every other astronaut, she would love to go to space again, to experience the feeling of weightlessness, the camaraderie and the amazing and beautiful views of Earth and the stars.

After her successful spaceflight, Helen chose to become a science communicator and speaker. She has won

numerous prizes for radio and TV programmes and for her inspirational talks on teamwork, STEM, science communication and motivation.

She often meets teachers who were inspired to study science after hearing her speak: her speech changed their lives, and now they pass on their passion and expertise to new generations of young scientists and engineers.

On 01 January 2024, Audible released their brand-new podcast “Discover your Inner Astronaut” co-hosted by Helen Sharman and the American astronaut Nicole Stott.