



Bill Nye

Biography

Bill Nye, scientist, engineer, comedian, author, and inventor, is a man with a mission: to help foster a scientifically literate society, to help people everywhere understand and appreciate the science that makes our world work. Making science entertaining and accessible is something Bill has been doing most of his life.

“My family is funny,” he says, “I mean funny in the sense that we make people laugh, not just funny looking.” Bill discovered that he had a talent for tutoring in high school. While growing up in Washington, DC in the 1970’s, he spent afternoons and summers de-mystifying math for his fellow students. When he wasn’t hitting the books, Bill was hitting the road on his bicycle. He spent hours taking it apart to “see how it worked.” Now, he commutes by bike in both Los Angeles and New York.

Bill’s fascination with how bicycles, airplanes and other things work led him to Cornell University and a degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1977. Soon after, Boeing recruited him as an engineer, so he went to Seattle. “I’ve always loved airplanes and flight. There’s a hydraulic resonance suppressor “Quinke” tube on the 747 horizontal stabilizer drive system that I like to think of as my tube,” he says.

It was in Seattle that Bill began to combine his love of science with his flair for comedy, when he won the Steve Martin look-alike contest and developed dual careers as an engineer by day and a stand-up comic by night. Eventually, Bill quit his engineering day job and made the transition to a night job as a comedy writer and performer on Seattle’s homegrown ensemble comedy show “Almost Live” in 1986.

This is where “Bill Nye the Science Guy®” was born. The show appeared before Saturday Night Live and later on Comedy Central, originating at KING-TV, Seattle’s NBC affiliate. With fellow KING-TV alumni Jim McKenna and Erren Gottlieb, Bill made a number of award-winning shows, including the show he became so well known for, *Bill Nye the Science Guy*.

While working on the Science Guy show from 1992-1998, Bill won seven national Emmy Awards for writing, performing, and producing. The show won 18 Emmys in five years. In between creating the shows, he wrote five kids’ books about science.

"Big Blast of Science"

"Bill Nye's Consider the Following"

"Bill Nye The Science Guy's Big Blue Ocean"

"Bill Nye The Science Guy’s Great Big Dinosaur Dig"

"Bill Nye The Science Guy’s Great Big Book of Tiny Germs"

After a debate with a creationist who believes the world is only 6,000 years old, Bill wrote his first book for a general audience, *“Undeniable – Evolution and the Science of Creation.”* He considers it a primer on the discoveries and principles of evolution. With this book and all his writing, Bill hopes to change the world.

Bill is working on his next book for a general audience on the subjects of energy and climate change. His next kids’ book will be about space exploration. With over 7 billion people breathing and burning an atmosphere that is barely 100 miles thick, humankind is changing the Earth’s heat balance faster than ever in the planet’s history. Climate change is the biggest challenge we face, and finding ways to do more with less energy is a key to our future.

Bill strongly believes the most effective way to reduce the world’s population of people over the next several decades is to raise the standard of living for women and girls. To do that, he says, we need to educate people as effectively as possible. So with his former partner Disney, Bill wrote and produced *“Solving for X,”* a series on DVD where he shows us how to do algebra along with the P, B, & J - the Passion, Beauty, and Joy - of math. It turns out that algebra is the most reliable indicator of whether or not a student will end up pursuing a career in science. With more kids, girls especially, engaged in math, Bill hopes we’ll have more scientists and especially engineers to make the world healthier for all of us.

Along with big picture thinking about global issues, Bill remains involved in a good-natured rivalry with his neighbor, actor and fellow environmentalist, Ed Begley. They compete to see who can save the most energy and produce the smallest carbon footprint. Bill has 4,000 watts of solar power and a solar-boosted hot water system. There’s also the low water use garden and underground watering system.

After joining as a regular member in 1980, Bill is now the CEO of the Planetary Society, the world’s largest space-interest group. Under his leadership, the non-for-profit Society is growing and becoming more influential. He wants to empower the world’s citizens to advance space science and exploration and to know the cosmos and our place within it. Space exploration brings out the best in us, because we solve problems that have never been solved before. *“If we were to discover evidence of life on another world such as Mars or Jupiter’s moon Europa, it would utterly change this world. People everywhere would think hard about what it means to be a living thing and our responsibilities as stewards of our unique planetary home,”* Bill says.

On the subject of Mars, Bill is very proud of the MarsDials, three sundials mounted on the robotic rovers exploring Mars. Along with calibrating the cameras and reckoning the Sun’s position in the martian sky, these small instruments are fitted with the only message to the future carried on spacecraft since the Voyager missions launched almost 40 years ago: *“To those who visit here, we wish a safe journey and the joy of discovery.”* Bill says, *“This is the essence of the scientific enterprise, the Joy of Discovery. That’s what the process of science is all about.”*

Bill still visits Cornell regularly. From 2001-2005, he served as a Professor as part of the Frank

H.T. Rhodes Visiting Professorship. As a thankful alumnus and as a tribute to his parents and their strong belief in the value of education, Bill designed and funded a 4-meter (12 foot) diameter clock installed on Rhodes Hall at Cornell in 2012.

Bill, the inventor, has a few unusual patents – an improved toe show for ballerinas, a device to help people learn to throw a baseball better, a magnifier made of water, and an abacus that does arithmetic like a computer.

Along with his Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Cornell, Bill joined his astronomy professor Carl Sagan when he was elected the American Humanist Association's Humanist of the Year in 2010. He was also honored by the American Society of Chemical Engineers with the Ralph Coates Roe Medal in 2012. Bill holds Honorary Doctorate degrees from six universities: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Goucher College, Johns Hopkins University, Quinnipiac University, Willamette University, and Lehigh University. He has delivered commencement addresses at most of these schools along with the University of California Santa Barbara, University of Massachusetts Lowell, Harvey Mudd College, and Caltech.

Bill currently speaks at colleges regularly, appears on news and television about a variety of topical science matters and remains the CEO of the Planetary Society. He fights to raise awareness of climate change and the value of critical thinking, science, and reason. Through all his work, Bill hopes to inspire people everywhere to change the world.

Find Bill on his [website](#) and on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).