

## **Stephen Hawking - Legendary Scientist**



Stephen Hawking was only 21, when he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, an incurable degenerative neuromuscular disease. None, not even Hawking himself, in the wildest of his dreams could foresee him to not only live on for another 55 years, but even go on to become one of world's most illustrious scientists. Today he is celebrated the world over for his revolutionary work on black holes and relativity. His views on 'artificial intelligence' and 'humanity's yearning to explore' are also widely appreciated.

Born in 1942 to Frank and Isobel Eileen Hawking of Oxford, Hawking was always a bright student. After attending the University of Oxford for his undergraduate degree, Hawking went to the University of Cambridge for a PhD, when he was diagnosed with life threatening disease in 1963. He continued to work despite the disease's progressively disabling effects, as he firmly believed that keeping an active mind was much more vital for his survival. Hawking worked primarily in the field of general relativity and particularly on the physics of black holes. His work greatly spurred efforts to theoretically delineate the properties of black holes, objects about which it was previously thought that nothing could be known.

Even the confines of a wheelchair did not deter young Hawking from his meteorical rise. Impressed by his notable contributions in the field of Physics, the Royal Society elected him as one of its youngest Fellows in 1974. He became professor of Gravitational Physics at Cambridge in 1977, and in 1979 he was appointed to Cambridge's Lucasian Professorship of Mathematics, a post once held by Isaac Newton. Hawking was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1982 and bestowed with a Companion of Honour in 1989. He also received the Copley Medal from the Royal Society in 2006 and the U.S. In 2009, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and in 2008 he accepted a Visiting Research Chair at the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

Despite his achievements, Stephen remained a humble man, eternally grateful for all the bounties of life. A positive person, even with his deteriorating health, he loved leading his life to the fullest. His passing away in 2018 left an intellectual vacuum that would be very hard to fill.

A great scientist and an extraordinary man, Hawking's work and legacy will live on forever!