

HELEN SHARMAN CMG OBE

The first British Astronaut

Helen Sharman is exclusively available through DBA Speakers.

Helen Sharman is a pioneer, role model and world-class inspirational speaker. She became the first British Astronaut in May 1991, when she launched into Earth orbit as part of a space station crew.

A superb and engaging speaker, Helen shares her own experiences of astronaut training, rocket launch and life in space to discuss teamwork and leadership, communication and collaboration, motivation and resilience, risk, problem solving and the benefits and challenges of spaceflight. (*Note to Event Planners: not all these topics can fit into just one speech, in detail.*)

Invited to speak worldwide at company, public, industry, association, government, academic and school events, her presentation may include slides, some of which she took herself during her training and spaceflight.

Helen says *“Challenges and uncertainty are part of daily life for astronauts. The right preparation and a good understanding of teamwork saves lives and enables people to push through individual boundaries to make fantastic achievements for everyone”*.

Biography

Helen didn't think she stood a chance of being selected when she applied to go into space, after hearing an announcement on the car radio on her way home from work. Over 13,000 other people also applied for this one-off opportunity to become the first British astronaut as part of a multi-national programme. But Helen was exactly the type of person they were looking for - calm, practical, friendly, professional, and a team player.

Before starting her training, Helen underwent a 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 high-g, mastering spacecraft operations inside a cramped spacecraft and a roomier space station, managing emergency situations and how to carry out particular scientific investigations.

Helen launched on a Soyuz rocket to the Mir Space Station in May 1991. Acting as part of a crew for spacecraft operations and conducting experiments in space, Helen also communicated with British school students via an amateur radio link. Media interviews were a frequent occurrence. Coping with risk was a daily activity and teamwork was a vital element for success.

She would love to go into space again, to experience the feeling of weightlessness, the camaraderie and the amazing and beautiful views of Earth and the stars.

After her 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, and our future with an increasingly commercial space economy.

In his Foreword to Helen's book *Seize the Moment*, Arthur C Clarke wrote *"Her account of the hours before the launch and the actual sensations during ascent into orbit is so gripping that any reader will feel a vicarious involvement. This is exactly what it must be like."*

Following a degree in Chemistry at the University of Sheffield, Helen started her career in industry in research and development of display screens at GEC before moving to Mars Confectionery as a Research Technologist to work on chocolate and ice cream.

Later she enjoyed operations management at the UK's National Physical Laboratory, Kingston University and Imperial College London, where she is now the UK Outreach Ambassador.

Helen is also President of the IST (Institute of Science and Technology) and she sits on the Science Museum's Advisory Board. She is an active member of the Association of Space Explorers.

Helen hosts the **Zero Pressure** podcast series, a relaxed conversation with people on the cutting edge, looking at how science and technology can contribute to solving complex, interrelated global challenges of today and tomorrow. [Zero Pressure Podcast - Listen on Spotify - Linktree](#)

With the American astronaut Nicole Stott and with evidence from well-being experts and other astronauts, Helen discusses how lessons learned from space exploration can influence our lives on Earth. **Discover your Inner Astronaut** features episodes including fear, loneliness, the art of a good rest and the power of awe and is an Audible podcast series. [Audible.com | Listen and Escape the Everyday](#)

Accolades

Awards

- CMG – In the New Year Honours List 2018, Helen was made a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) for services to Science and Technology Educational Outreach
- OBE – awarded in 1993 for her pioneering work
- A star on the Sheffield Walk of Fame
- Member of the Association of Space Explorers
- Chartered Chemist and Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry (CChem (Hon)FRSC)
- Member of the Society for Chemistry & Industry (MSCI)
- Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society (FRAeS)

- Fellow of the British Interplanetary Society (FBIS)
- Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (FRGS)
- Fellow of the Institute of Science & Technology (FIScT)

As an inspiring role model for young people, numerous schools have named Houses and buildings after Helen and some have an annual Sharman science event.

The spacesuit worn by Helen is on display at the Science Museum in London.

Her flight suit, worn in space, is on display with some of her other space-flown artefacts in the National Space Centre in Leicester.

Honorary Degrees and Fellowships

British Science Association; Brunel University; Kingston University London; Plymouth University; Robert Gordon University; Science Museum; Sheffield Hallam University; Southampton Institute; Staffordshire University; University of Birmingham; University of Exeter; University of Hull; University of Kent; University of Leicester; University of Sheffield; University of Surrey.

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**For diary dates and fees, please call Diana Boulter
on 07554 440537 or email diana@dbaspeakers.com**