

# A SCIENTIST JUST LIKE ME



**Dr Emily Rickman**  
**Astrophysicist**

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**Hi there! I am Dr Emily Rickman – An astrophysicist**



## **Where do I work?**

I work for the European Space Agency. I am stationed at one of their offices at the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, USA.

## **What did I like doing when I was at school?**

I always enjoyed science and maths. I loved anything that involved problem-solving, building with Lego, or fixing things. I dreamt of being an astronaut, and I still do today!

## **What do I like doing in my spare time?**

I love the outdoors – hiking and camping! I enjoy doing yoga, travelling all over the world, playing piano, and hanging out with my dog Nova.

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## What do I do as an astrophysicist?

I use some of the largest telescopes in the world to hunt for planets outside of our Solar System, known as exoplanets. I find them by taking direct images of exoplanets next to their star and I look at their atmospheres to see if I can find things like methane and water.

## How does what I do make the world a better place?

Investigating other planets outside of our Solar System helps us understand our own Solar System and how planets like Jupiter or Saturn formed and evolved. Some of the technology created for these telescopes is also used in medicine, to help diagnose cancer.

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## What I like about my job

I love travelling to exciting places and observing using really big telescopes. For example, many of the telescopes that I use live in the Atacama Desert in Chile which is one of the driest places in the world. And I love discovering new planets!



## Challenges I have faced

Sometimes I was told that I do not belong in science because I am a woman. Well, I have managed to prove those people were wrong and I have now made many discoveries to contribute to our understanding of the Universe. I have learnt not to let anyone ever tell me that I don't belong.

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**If you want to be an astrophysicist, you need:**

- ✱ **to enjoy solving problems** by helping to think of solutions
- ✱ **to be creative** to think of solutions to problems – both technical and scientific
- ✱ **to be curious** and want to **ask questions**
- ✱ **to enjoy thinking** about the stars, the planets, and galaxies and how they formed and evolved



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## Discussion time

✦ Would you like to be an astrophysicist like Dr Emily Rickman?

**Why? Why not?**

✦ What skills and interests do you already have that would help you become an astrophysicist?

✦ What new skills and knowledge would you need to develop?



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## Free supporting resources for astrophysics

[City Science Stars](#) - practical science activities (for 9–11-year-old children), using links to football, other sports and space

[Science At Work](#) – see ‘Gene Cernan’ and ‘Meet two space scientists’

[Science Fun at Home](#) – see ‘World Space Week’

[I bet you didn't know...](#) articles use cutting-edge science research as a context for learning. Teacher Guides can be used as classroom presentations:

- How to play planetary hide and seek
- One of Saturn's moons could be a home for extra-terrestrial life
- Insight into Mars
- Ice giants at the end of the Solar System
- There is a storm coming and it is not going away
- There is lightning at the end of the Solar System

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