



# Bill Nye

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**William Sanford "Bill" Nye**<sup>[2]</sup> (born November 27, 1955), popularly known as **Bill Nye the Science Guy**, is an American science educator, television presenter, and mechanical engineer. He is best known as the host of the PBS children's science show *Bill Nye the Science Guy* (1993–1998), and for his many subsequent appearances in popular media as a science educator. Currently, he is the CEO of The Planetary Society.

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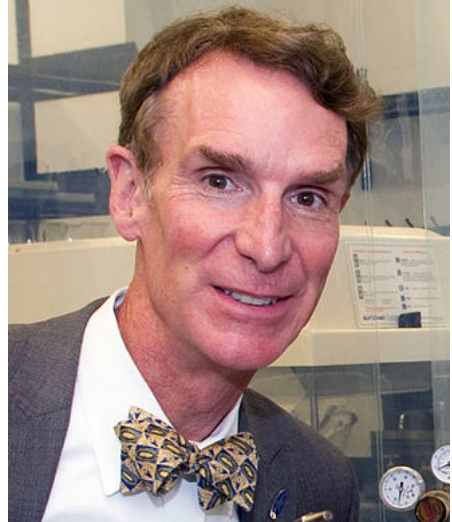
## Early life

Nye was born on November 27, 1955,<sup>[3][4]</sup> in Washington, D.C., to Jacqueline (née Jenkins; 1921–2000), a codebreaker during World War II, and Edwin Darby "Ned" Nye (1917–1997), also a World War II veteran, whose experience without electricity in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp led him to become a sundial enthusiast.<sup>[5][6][7]</sup>

After attending Lafayette Elementary and Alice Deal Junior High in the city, he was accepted to the private Sidwell Friends School on a partial scholarship and graduated in 1973.<sup>[8][9]</sup> He studied mechanical engineering at Cornell University (where he took an astronomy class taught by Carl Sagan)<sup>[10]</sup> and graduated with a B.S. in mechanical engineering in 1977.<sup>[11]</sup> Nye occasionally returns to Cornell as a guest-lecturer of introductory-level astronomy and human ecology classes.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Career

**Bill Nye**



Nye at the Astrobiology Lab during a tour of Goddard Space Flight Center, September 2011

<b>Born</b>	William Sanford Nye November 27, 1955 Washington, D.C., U.S.
<b>Residence</b>	Los Angeles, California; New York City, New York
<b>Nationality</b>	American
<b>Fields</b>	Mechanical engineering
<b>Institutions</b>	Boeing <sup>[1]</sup> Cornell University The Planetary Society
<b>Alma mater</b>	Cornell University (B.S.)
<b>Known for</b>	<i>Bill Nye the Science Guy</i>

**Signature**

Nye began his career in Seattle at Boeing, where, among other things, he starred in training films and developed a hydraulic pressure resonance suppressor for the 747. Later, he worked as a consultant in the aeronautics industry. In 1999, he told the *St. Petersburg Times* that he applied to be a NASA astronaut every few years, but was always rejected.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Bill Nye the Science Guy

Nye began his professional entertainment career as a writer/actor on a local sketch comedy television show in Seattle, Washington, called *Almost Live!* The host of the show, Ross Shafer, suggested he do some scientific demonstrations in a six-minute segment and take on the nickname "The Science Guy".<sup>[14]</sup> His other main recurring role on *Almost Live!* was as Speedwalker, a speedwalking Seattle superhero.

From 1991 to 1993, he appeared in the live-action educational segments of *Back to the Future: The Animated Series* in the nonspeaking role of assistant to Dr. Emmett Brown (played by Christopher Lloyd), in which he would demonstrate science while Lloyd explained. The segments' national popularity led to Nye's hosting an educational television program, *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, from 1993 to 1998. Each of the 100 episodes aimed to teach a specific topic in science to a younger audience, yet it garnered a wide adult audience as well.<sup>[15]</sup> With its comedic overtones, the show became popular as a teaching aid in schools. When portraying "The Science Guy", Nye wears a light blue lab coat and a bow tie.

Nye has also written several books as *The Science Guy*. In addition to hosting, he was a writer and producer for the show. All of it was filmed in the Seattle area.

Nye's Science Guy personality appears alongside Ellen DeGeneres and Alex Trebek in a video at *Ellen's Energy Adventure*, an attraction that has been playing since 1996 at the Universe of Energy pavilion inside Epcot at Walt Disney World. His voice is heard in the Dinosaur attraction in Disney's Animal Kingdom park, teaching guests about the dinosaurs while they queue for the ride. He appears in video form in the "Design Lab" of CyberSpace Mountain, inside DisneyQuest at Walt Disney World, where he refers to himself as "Bill Nye the Coaster Guy." His Science Guy persona was also the on-air spokesman for the Noggin television network during 1999.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Entertainment/edutainment

Nye remained interested in science education through entertainment. He played a science teacher in Disney's 1998 TV movie *The Principal Takes a Holiday*; he made a hovercraft to demonstrate science in an unusual classroom manner. From 2000 to 2002, Nye was the technical expert in *BattleBots*. In 2004 and 2005, Nye hosted *100 Greatest Discoveries*, an award-winning series produced by THINKFilm for The Science Channel and in high definition on the Discovery HD Theater. He was also host of an eight-part Discovery Channel series called *Greatest Inventions with Bill Nye*. He created a 13-episode PBS KCTS-TV series about science, called *The Eyes of Nye*, aimed at an older audience than his previous show had been. Airing in 2005, it often featured episodes based on politically relevant themes such as genetically modified food, global warming, and race. Nye guest-starred in several episodes of the crime drama *Numb3rs* as an engineering faculty member. A lecture Nye gave several years ago on exciting children about math was an inspiration for creating *Numb3rs*.<sup>[17]</sup> He also made guest appearances on the VH1 reality show *America's Most Smartest Model*.<sup>[18]</sup>

Nye appeared numerous times on the talk show *Larry King Live*, speaking about topics such as global warming and UFOs. He argued that global warming is an issue that should be addressed by governments of the world in part because it could be implicated in the record-setting 2005 Atlantic hurricane season.<sup>[19]</sup> On UFOs, he has been skeptical of extraterrestrial explanations for sightings such as those at Roswell and Malmstrom Air Force Base in 1967.<sup>[20]</sup>

Nye appears in segments of *The Climate Code* on The Weather Channel, telling his personal ways of saving energy. He still makes regular appearances on the show, often asking quiz questions. In the fall of 2008, Nye also appeared periodically on the daytime game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* as part of the show's reintroduced "Ask the Expert" lifeline. In 2008, he also hosted *Stuff Happens*, a show on the then new Planet Green network. In November 2008, Nye appeared in an acting role as himself in the fifth-season episode "Brain Storm" of *Stargate Atlantis* alongside fellow television personality and astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson.<sup>[21]</sup>

In 2009, portions of Bill Nye's shows were used as lyrics and portions of the second Symphony of Science music education video by composer John Boswell. Nye recorded a short YouTube video (as himself, not his TV persona) advocating clean-energy climate-change legislation on behalf of Al Gore's Repower America campaign in October 2009.<sup>[22]</sup> Bill joined the American Optometric Association in a multimedia advertising campaign to persuade parents to get their children comprehensive eye examinations.<sup>[23]</sup> Nye made an appearance in Palmdale's 2010 video "Here Comes the Summer";<sup>[24]</sup> the band's lead singer Kay Hanley is his neighbor. Nye (as his TV persona) also made a guest appearance on *The Dr. Oz Show*.

In September 2012, Nye claimed that creationist views threaten science education and innovation in the United States.<sup>[25][26][27]</sup> In February 2014, Nye debated creationist Ken Ham at the Creation Museum on the topic of whether creation is a viable model of origins in today's modern, scientific era.<sup>[28][29][30]</sup> In reaction to the debate, Nye published *Undeniable: Evolution and the Science of Creation* in 2014.<sup>[31]</sup> In July 2016, Ham gave Nye a tour of the Ark Encounter.<sup>[32]</sup>

On February 28, 2014, Nye was a celebrity guest and interviewer at the White House Student Film Festival.<sup>[33]</sup>

On August 31, 2016, Netflix announced that Nye would appear in a new series titled *Bill Nye Saves the World*, which is set to premiere in 2017.<sup>[34]</sup>

## Scientific work



Nye orating in October 2010.

In the early 2000s, Nye assisted in the development of a small sundial that was included in the Mars Exploration Rover missions.<sup>[3]</sup> Known as MarsDial, it included small colored panels to provide a basis for color calibration in addition to helping keep track of time.<sup>[35]</sup> From 2005 to 2010, Nye was the vice president of The Planetary Society, an organization that advocates space science research and the exploration of other planets, particularly Mars.<sup>[36]</sup> He became the organization's second Executive Director in September 2010 when Louis Friedman stepped down.<sup>[37][38]</sup>

In November 2010, Nye became the face of a new permanent exhibition at the Chabot Space & Science Center in Oakland, California. Bill Nye's Climate Lab features Nye as commander of the Clean Energy Space Station and invites visitors on an urgent mission to thwart climate change. Beginning with a view of Planet Earth from space, visitors explore air, water, and land galleries to discover how climate change affects Earth's connected systems, and how to use the Sun, wind, land, and water to generate clean energy. In an



Nye received the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry's "In Praise of Reason" Award at CSICON 2011 in New Orleans

interview about the exhibit, Nye said, "Everything in the exhibit is geared to showing you that the size of the problem of climate change is big. Showing you a lot about energy use ... It's a huge opportunity ... We need young people, entrepreneurs, young inventors, young innovators to change the world."<sup>[39]</sup>

Nye gave a solar noon clock atop Rhodes Hall to Cornell on August 27, 2012, following a public lecture that filled the 715-seat Statler Auditorium. Nye talked about his father's passion for sundials and timekeeping, his time at Cornell, his work on the sundials mounted on the Mars rovers and the story behind the Bill Nye Solar Noon Clock.<sup>[40]</sup> Bill Nye conducted a Q&A session after the 2012 Mars Rover Landing.<sup>[41]</sup>



Nye speaking to a group about Mars in June 2016

Nye holds several United States patents,<sup>[42]</sup> including one for ballet point shoes<sup>[36][43]</sup> and another for an educational magnifying glass created by filling a clear plastic bag with water.<sup>[44][45]</sup> From 2001 to 2006, Nye served as Frank H. T. Rhodes Class of '56 University Professor at Cornell University.<sup>[11][46]</sup> Nye supported the 2006 reclassification of Pluto from planet to dwarf planet by the International Astronomical Union.<sup>[47]</sup>

Nye is a fellow of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, a U.S. non-profit scientific and educational organization whose aim is to promote scientific inquiry, critical investigation, and the use of reason in examining controversial and extraordinary claims.<sup>[48]</sup> Interviewed by John Rael for the Independent Investigation Group IIG, Nye stated that his "concern right now ... scientific illiteracy ... you [the public]

don't have enough rudimentary knowledge of the universe to evaluate claims."<sup>[49]</sup> In November 2012, Nye launched a Kickstarter project for an educational Aerodynamics game called *AERO 3D* but it was not funded.<sup>[50]</sup> His book, *Undeniable: Evolution and the Science of Creation*, was released on November 4, 2014.<sup>[51]</sup> His second book, *Unstoppable: Harnessing Science to Change the World*, was published in 2015.

On Earth Day 2015, Nye met with U.S. President Obama to visit the Everglades National Park in Florida and discuss climate change as well as science education.<sup>[52][53][54]</sup>

In March 2015, Bill Nye announced he changed his mind and now supports GMOs. In a new edition of *Undeniable: Evolution and the Science of Creation*, Nye rewrote a chapter on GMOs reflecting his new position.<sup>[55]</sup> In a radio interview with Neil deGrasse Tyson, Nye stated "compared to all of the other herbicides, Glyphosate is pretty benign... there's no difference between allergies among GMO eaters and non-GMO eaters... organic farming takes a lot more water... I've changed my mind about genetically modified organisms".<sup>[56]</sup>

### ***Dancing with the Stars***

Nye was a contestant in the 17th season of *Dancing with the Stars* in 2013, partnering newcomer Tyne Stecklein. They were eliminated early in the season after Nye sustained an injury to his quadriceps tendon on Week 3.<sup>[57]</sup>



Nye with the Chief of Naval Research Rear. Adm. Nevin Carr following the presentation of a "Powered by Naval Research" pocket protector during the Navy Office of General Counsel Spring 2011 Conference.

Dance	Score	Music	Result
Cha-cha-cha	14 (5-4-5)	"Weird Science"—Oingo Boingo	No Elimination
Paso Doble	17 (6-5-6)	"Symphony No. 5"—Ludwig van Beethoven	Safe
Jazz	16 (6-5-5)	"Get Lucky"—Daft Punk feat. Pharrell Williams	Eliminated

## Personal life

Since 2014, Nye has divided his time between the Encino neighborhood of Los Angeles and the Chelsea district of Manhattan,<sup>[58]</sup> though he has also owned a house on Mercer Island near Seattle.<sup>[59]</sup>

Since July 2007, Nye and environmental activist Ed Begley, Jr. have engaged in a friendly competition "to see who could have the lowest carbon footprint," according to Begley.<sup>[60]</sup> In a 2008 interview, Nye joked that he wants to "crush Ed Begley" in their environmental competition.<sup>[61]</sup> Nye and Begley are neighbors in Los Angeles and sometimes dine together at a local vegetarian restaurant.<sup>[61]</sup> Nye often appeared on Begley's HGTV/Planet Green reality show *Living with Ed*.



Nye with Barack Obama aboard Air Force One, 2015

Nye enjoys baseball and occasionally does experiments involving the physics of the game. As a longtime Seattle resident before becoming an entertainer, he is said to have been a fan of the Seattle Mariners, although recently he has voiced his preference (as a D.C. native) for the Washington Nationals.<sup>[8]</sup> He also played Ultimate while in college and for a period of time while living in Seattle.<sup>[62]</sup>

In July 2012, Nye endorsed President Barack Obama's reelection bid.<sup>[63]</sup>

Nye announced his engagement during an appearance on *The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson* and was married to his fiancée of five months, musician Blair Tindall, on February 3, 2006. The ceremony was performed by Rick Warren at The Entertainment Gathering at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles. Yo-Yo Ma provided the music.<sup>[64]</sup> Nye left the relationship seven weeks later when the marriage license was declared invalid.<sup>[65]</sup> In 2007, Nye received a protective order against Tindall after an incident in which she came onto his property and used herbicide to damage his garden. Tindall admitted this but denied being a threat to him.<sup>[66]</sup> In 2012, Nye sued Tindall for unpaid attorney's fees he incurred while he went to court in 2009 to enforce the protective order against Tindall after she allegedly violated it. According to Nye's court filings, she was ordered to pay these fees; to date, she has not paid any of it.<sup>[67]</sup>

Nye is an avid swing dancer<sup>[68]</sup> and describes himself as agnostic.<sup>[69]</sup>

## Awards and honors

In May 1999, Nye was the commencement speaker at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute where he was awarded an honorary doctor of science degree.<sup>[70]</sup> He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Johns Hopkins University in May 2008.<sup>[71]</sup> In May 2011, Nye received an honorary doctor of science degree from Willamette University<sup>[72]</sup> In May 2015, Rutgers University awarded him an honorary doctor of science degree and paid him a \$35,000 speaker's fee for his participation as the keynote speaker at the ceremony.<sup>[73][74]</sup> In addition, Bill Nye also received an honorary doctor of pedagogy degree from Lehigh University on May 20, 2013, at the commencement ceremony.<sup>[75]</sup> Nye

received the 2010 Humanist of the Year Award from the American Humanist Association.<sup>[76]</sup> In October 2015, Nye was awarded with an honorary doctorate of science from Simon Fraser University.<sup>[77]</sup> In 2011, the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSICOP) presented Nye their highest award *In Praise of Reason*, Eugenie Scott stated: "If you think Bill is popular among skeptics, you should attend a science teacher conference where he is speaking" it is standing room only. She continues by saying that no one has more fun as Nye when he is "demonstrating, principles of science."<sup>[78]</sup> In 1997, CSICOP also presented Nye with the *Candle in the Dark Award* for his "lively, creative... endeavor".<sup>[79]</sup>

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- Time magazine has interviewed him for *12 Questions With Bill Nye*.<sup>[80]</sup>

## See also

- Bill Nye–Ken Ham debate

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## External links



- Official website (<http://www.billnye.com/>)
- Bill Nye (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0638557/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- "Bill Nye, one of my favorite shows". *Archive*. Love Line. March 25, 2003. Archived from the original (podcast) on 2006.
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- Rahner, Mark (April 26, 2005). "Eye to eye with Bill Nye the Science Guy". The Seattle Times.
- "100 Greatest Discoveries" (video clips). *Science Channel*. Discovery.
- Bill Nye interview video (<http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/bill-nye>) at the Archive of American Television

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