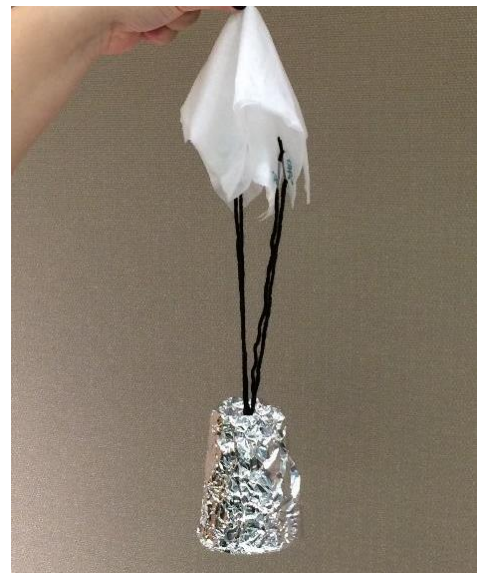# Mercury Spacecraft

## Did you know?

- Alan Shepard became the first American in space when he successfully completed a 15-minute suborbital flight on May 5, 1961, flying at an altitude of 116 miles at 5,036 miles per hour. At 5 feet 11 inches tall, Shepard was almost too tall to be an astronaut.

- Alan Shepard named his own space capsule *Freedom 7*, the number signifying the team of astronauts—the first astronauts were called the "Mercury 7."

- On the day of his flight, Shepard sat in the space capsule for four hours while weather and mechanical problems delayed the launch.

- Shepard was busy during his flight. He reported instrument readings and other activities 78 times.

- Shepard sweat so much during the flight that he lost three pounds!

- He received the Distinguished Service Medal from President John F. Kennedy three days after his flight.

- Unlike the first Soviet flight a few weeks earlier, Shepard's flight was broadcast live on television. For most schoolchildren at the time, this was one of the few times their teachers let them watch television in class!

## Make your own spacecraft!

### Supplies

- Paper cup
- Aluminum foil
- Tissue or plastic bag cut into a square
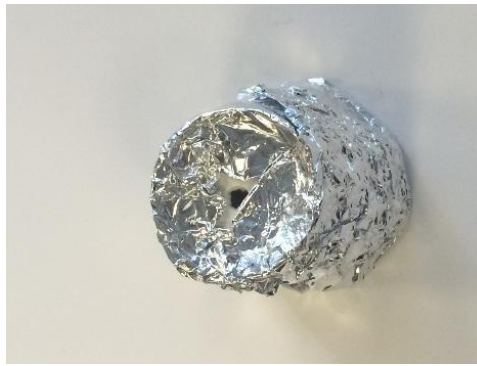- Yarn, string, or dental floss
- Tape
- Pencil

# Mercury Spacecraft

**Steps 1**

- Poke a hole in the bottom of the cut using a **pencil**. Ask an adult for help.

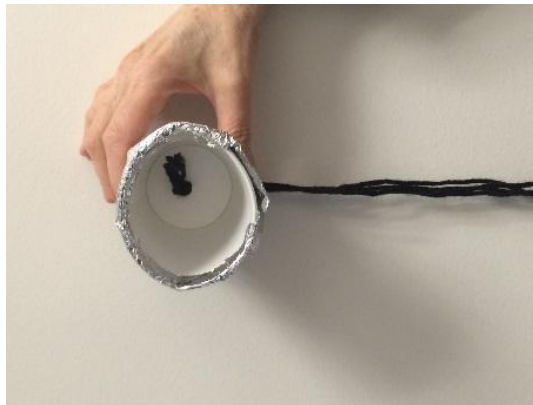- Wrap the **cup** in **aluminum foil**. Leave the hole in the bottom showing.



**Step 2**

Take a **tissue or plastic bag cut into a square** and **tape** the ends of the four pieces of yarn, string or dental floss to the corners of the tissue.





**Step 3**

Push the knot through the hole in the bottom of the cup. Tape the knot to the inside of the cup.



**Step 4**

Name your capsule. You can use one of the original names or make up your own.