

Albert Einstein Biography

Daily Life & Personal Habits

1. Personal Information

- **Birth:** March 14, 1879, Ulm, Kingdom of Württemberg, German Empire
- **Death:** April 18, 1955 (age 76), Princeton Hospital, New Jersey, USA
- **Nationality:** German (1879-1896, 1914-1933), Swiss (1901-1955), American (1940-1955)
- **Family:** Parents (Hermann Einstein, Pauline Koch), Sister (Maja Einstein)

2. Education Timeline

- St. Peter's Catholic elementary school, Munich (age 5-8)
- Luitpold Gymnasium, Munich (age 8-15)
- Argovian cantonal school, Aarau, Switzerland (1895-1896)
- Swiss Federal Polytechnic, Zurich (1896-1900)
- PhD from University of Zurich (1905)

3. Career Progression

- Swiss Patent Office clerk (1902-1909)
- University of Bern lecturer (1908-1909)
- University of Zurich professor (1909-1911)
- Charles-Ferdinand University, Prague (1911-1912)
- ETH Zurich professor (1912-1914)
- Prussian Academy of Sciences, Berlin (1914-1933)
- Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton (1933-1955)

4. Personal Relationships

- **First Marriage:** Mileva Marić (1903-1919)
 - Children: Lieserl (fate unknown), Hans Albert, Eduard
- **Second Marriage:** Elsa Löwenthal (1919-1936)
- **Other Relationships:** Multiple documented romantic relationships
- **Social Circle:** Extensive network of scientists, politicians, artists

5. Scientific Achievements

- **1905 Annus Mirabilis Papers:** Photoelectric effect, Brownian motion, Special Relativity, Mass-energy equivalence
- **General Theory of Relativity** (1915)

- **Nobel Prize in Physics** (1921)
- **Unified Field Theory** attempts
- **Quantum mechanics contributions** and philosophical objections

6. Political and Social Views

- **Pacifism** (early career) to support for Allied cause in WWII
- **Civil Rights activism** in America
- **Zionism** and relationship with Israel
- **Socialism** advocacy
- **World government** supporter
- **Anti-racism** campaigner

7. Personal Interests and Characteristics

- **Music:** Violin playing, love for Bach and Mozart
- **Philosophy:** Influenced by Kant, Spinoza
- **Religion:** "Deeply religious nonbeliever," pantheistic views
- **Vegetarianism:** Adopted later in life
- **Sailing:** Recreational hobby
- **Personality:** Described as humble, curious, with "childlike wonder"

8. Major Life Events and Periods

- **German Period** (1879-1894): Childhood and early education
- **Swiss Period** (1895-1914): Education, early career, major discoveries
- **Berlin Period** (1914-1933): Peak scientific career, General Relativity
- **Emigration** (1933): Fleeing Nazi Germany
- **American Period** (1933-1955): Princeton years, continued research

9. Controversies and Challenges

- **Nazi persecution:** Books burned, property confiscated
- **FBI surveillance:** 1,427-page file
- **Marital difficulties:** Affairs, divorce
- **Son's mental illness:** Eduard's schizophrenia
- **Scientific disputes:** Quantum mechanics debates with Bohr

10. Legacy and Impact

- **Scientific revolution:** Relativity theories
- **Cultural icon:** Symbol of genius
- **Popular culture:** Widely referenced and quoted
- **Institutions:** Hebrew University of Jerusalem co-founder
- **Memorials:** Einstein Memorial in Washington D.C.

Daily Routine (Princeton Years 1933-1955)

Morning (6:30 AM - 10:30 AM)

- Woke up early, usually around 6:30-7:00 AM
- Enjoyed leisurely breakfast while reading daily newspapers
- Often ate simple breakfast: toast, coffee, sometimes eggs
- Spent time in contemplation, looking out the window
- Personal hygiene routine (notably refused to wear socks - "too complicated")

Late Morning (10:30 AM - 1:00 PM)

- Walked 1.5 miles to Princeton office when weather was nice
- Walking was meditative time - often stopped to think, sometimes forgot where he was going
- On bad weather days, took university station wagon
- Worked intensively at Institute for Advanced Study
- Preferred to work alone but welcomed visitors

Afternoon (1:00 PM - 6:30 PM)

- 1:30 PM lunch at home - substantial meal, often with guests
- Post-lunch tea and conversation
- Famous "spoon nap" ritual: held spoon over metal plate, would wake when spoon dropped
- Napped 15-20 minutes to avoid sleep inertia
- Returned to work: writing, correspondence, meeting visitors
- Often worked in his home study surrounded by papers

Evening (6:30 PM - 10:00 PM)

- 6:30 PM supper with family
- Played violin for relaxation (Bach and Mozart favorites)
- Read philosophy books (Kant, Spinoza)
- Wrote letters to friends and colleagues
- Sometimes walked around Princeton, stopped to chat with locals
- Went to bed early, around 10:00 PM
- Slept 10+ hours nightly - considered sleep essential for creativity

Personal Quirks & Characteristics

Physical Appearance & Habits

- Wild, unkempt hair (often forgot to comb it)

- Never wore socks ("too complicated" - would get holes anyway)
- No suspenders or belts - preferred simple clothing
- Often wore the same sweater for days
- Had a "lost in thought" expression that made him instantly recognizable
- Frequently forgot to eat when absorbed in work
- Chain-smoked pipe (later gave up for health reasons)

Food Preferences

- Simple, unpretentious meals
- Loved Italian food (pasta, especially spaghetti)
- Enjoyed vegetarian diet in later years
- Favorite drinks: coffee, tea, occasional wine
- Sweet tooth: loved chocolate and pastries
- Often ate while working, absent-mindedly

Personal Mannerisms

- Hummed or whistled while thinking
- Played violin when stuck on problems
- Talked to himself when working through complex ideas
- Had habit of twirling hair around finger when concentrating
- Would suddenly stop mid-conversation when struck by idea
- Often forgot social conventions (showed up in pajamas to important meetings)

Intimate Relationships & Emotional Life

First Marriage: Mileva Marić (1903-1919)

Courtship & Early Marriage

- Met at Swiss Federal Polytechnic - she was only woman in physics program
- Intellectual partnership: discussed physics problems together
- Love letters reveal passionate romance: "When I read Helmholtz for the first time, it seemed so strange that you weren't sitting next to me"
- Secret daughter Lieserl born 1902 - gave up for adoption or died of scarlet fever
- Einstein later felt guilty about abandoning daughter

Marriage Dynamics

- Initially supportive relationship - Mileva helped with calculations
- Einstein became increasingly distant as fame grew
- Marital strain: "I am living a very withdrawn life, have few close friends"
- Arguments over Einstein's affairs and neglect of family duties
- Divorce settlement: Einstein promised Nobel Prize money to Mileva

With Children

- Hans Albert (born 1904): Had complex relationship, wanted son to be engineer not physicist
- Eduard "Tete" (born 1910): Einstein's favorite, devastated by son's schizophrenia diagnosis
- Often absent father, prioritized work over family time
- Wrote tender letters to children but struggled with emotional availability

Second Marriage: Elsa Löwenthal (1919-1936)

Relationship Dynamic

- Married his first and second cousin (maternal first cousin, paternal second cousin)
- More of a caretaker relationship than passionate romance
- Elsa managed Einstein's daily life, protected him from distractions
- Einstein: "I am generally regarded as a sort of petrified object, rendered blind and deaf by the years"

Daily Interactions

- Elsa would bring him meals to his study
- She handled all correspondence and appointments
- Protected Einstein from unwanted visitors
- Would gently scold him for forgetting to eat or dress properly
- Their conversations often about practical matters rather than intellectual topics

Other Romantic Relationships

Affairs During Marriage to Mileva

- Relationship with cousin Elsa began while still married to Mileva
- Einstein: "I live in that solitude which is painful in youth, but delicious in the years of maturity"

Relationships During Marriage to Elsa

- Betty Neumann (secretary) - ongoing affair in 1920s
- Margarete Lebach (married Austrian woman)
- Estella Katzenellenbogen (wealthy florist owner)
- Toni Mendel (wealthy Jewish widow)
- Einstein accepted gifts from these women, caused tension with Elsa

After Elsa's Death (1936-1955)

- Margarita Konenkova (Russian spy suspicion) - deepest post-Elsa relationship

- Letters reveal loneliness: "The essential in the being of a man of my type lies precisely in what he thinks and how he thinks, not in what he does or suffers"

Private Thoughts & Inner Life

Personal Philosophy & Worldview

On Solitude

- "I live in that solitude which is painful in youth, but delicious in the years of maturity"
- Preferred intellectual conversations to small talk
- Found social gatherings draining, needed alone time to recharge

On Life Purpose

- "Try not to become a person of success, but rather try to become a person of value"
- Believed his purpose was to understand universe's secrets
- Felt responsibility to use intelligence for humanity's benefit

On Mortality

- "Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come"
- Not afraid of death but regretted unfinished work
- Wanted to be cremated without ceremony

Daily Emotional Patterns

Morning Mood

- Most optimistic and creative in early morning
- Breakfast reading time put him in good spirits
- Walking to office was meditative, cleared mental clutter

Work Absorption

- Could become completely absorbed, forgetting time and surroundings
- Colleagues described him as entering "trance-like" states
- Would emerge from deep thought appearing surprised by reality

Evening Reflection

- Often melancholy in evenings, especially after Elsa's death
- Violin playing was emotional outlet
- Late-night letter writing revealed vulnerabilities and doubts

Social Anxiety

- Despite fame, remained shy and somewhat awkward socially
- Uncomfortable with attention, preferred authentic conversations
- Would escape social events early when possible

Personal Interests & Hobbies

Music

- Played violin from age 6 - called it his "greatest joy in life"
- "If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician"
- Practiced daily when not traveling
- Preferred chamber music - played with friends and colleagues
- Mozart was "greatest composer" - played Mozart violin sonatas frequently
- Bach was daily inspiration: "What I have to say about Bach's life work: listen, play, love, revere—and keep your mouth shut"
- Used music to solve physics problems - rhythm helped his thinking

Sailing

- Loved sailing despite never learning to swim
- Found sailing meditative and peaceful
- Would take notebook on sailing trips to jot down ideas
- Enjoyed the solitude and connection with nature
- Sailing boat named "Tinef" (Yiddish for "junk")

Reading Preferences

- Philosophy: Kant, Spinoza, Hume were favorites
- Literature: Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Kafka
- Detective novels for relaxation: Arthur Conan Doyle
- Scientific journals and papers from colleagues
- Poetry, especially Heinrich Heine
- Avoided reading after certain age to preserve original thinking

Conversational Style & Social Interactions

Speaking Patterns

- Spoke slowly and thoughtfully
- Often paused mid-sentence to think
- Mixed German, English, and Italian phrases
- Used simple analogies to explain complex concepts
- Gentle, rarely raised voice even when disagreeing

With Students & Colleagues

- Patient teacher, enjoyed explaining concepts
- Would say "I don't know" when uncertain - unusual for academics
- Encouraged questioning and original thinking
- Informal approach - students could visit home
- Remembered personal details about people's lives

With Strangers

- Initially shy but warmed up quickly
- Enjoyed talking to children - spoke to them as equals
- Patient with autograph seekers and photographers
- Would pose for pictures but often looked distracted
- Kind to service workers - always said please and thank you

Private Conversations

- Deep philosophical discussions with close friends
- Shared doubts and uncertainties about his work
- Discussed personal struggles with family relationships
- Revealed sense of humor - enjoyed wordplay and gentle teasing
- Could be surprisingly emotional when discussing music or ethics

Personal Struggles & Vulnerabilities

Family Guilt

- Deep regret about abandoned daughter Lieserl
- Sadness over failed relationship with son Eduard
- Guilt about putting work before family responsibilities
- Complex feelings about Jewish identity and assimilation

Social Isolation

- Fame created barrier between him and normal human connection
- Felt misunderstood by public who saw him only as genius
- Longed for simple friendships but found them difficult to maintain
- Described himself as "truly a lone traveler"

Professional Doubts

- Later in life, questioned whether unified field theory was possible
- Worried that quantum mechanics might be correct despite his objections
- Concerned about nuclear weapons development after WWII

- "I made one great mistake in my life... when I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made"

Physical Health Issues

- Stomach problems throughout life - often related to stress
- Abdominal aortic aneurysm in final years
- Refused surgery: "I want to go when I want. It is tasteless to prolong life artificially"
- Smoked heavily until health concerns forced him to quit