Guglielmo Marconi .

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- **Born:** April 25, 1874
- **Birthplace:** Bologna, Italy
- **Died:** July 20, 1937
- **Place of death:** Rome, Italy

Guglielmo Marconi (1874–1937) was an Italian inventor and businessman. He made important inventions in the field of communications. His second invention led to the development of radio.

Guglielmo Marconi Library of Congress

Electrical engineer/inventor Guglielmo Marconi operating apparatus similar to that used by him to transmit first wireless signal across Atlantic. By Published on LIFE [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Early Life

Marconi was born to wealthy parents. His father was Italian and his mother was from an Irish family. He was educated in both Italy and the United Kingdom . He was taught by tutors and attended a technical institute in Italy.

Inventing Wireless Telegraphy

The telegraph was the primary means of communication over distance before Marconi. While messages could be sent over very long distances, the locations had to be connected by wires. If the connection were broken at any point, the telegraph would fail.

Heinrich Hertz showed that it was possible to transmit radio waves without wires. He had not developed a practical method for doing so, however. Marconi became interested in this field and set up a laboratory on the top floor of the family estate.

Marconi was able to reproduce Hertz's success. More important, he increased the signal range. That made the wireless telegraph open to practical use. He experimented, improving his equipment, until he thought it was ready to be put to use. The Italian government was not interested in his work, however.

Marconi went to the United Kingdom and performed demonstrations, eventually gathering enough support to start a wireless telegraph company. At first, the business focused on demonstrating the possibilities of his invention. Transmissions were sent between ships or between ships and the shore. In 1899, Marconi put his equipment on two ships so that they could report the progress of a yacht race as it took place. The messages were sent to newspapers in New York City. The demonstration was a huge success, boosting Marconi's business.

Inventing the Radio

Marconi continued to work in the field of communications. In 1901, he made the first wireless transmission across the Atlantic Ocean possible. In 1918, he made the first transmission from the United Kingdom to Australia, covering a vast distance.

By 1923, Marconi was developing the beginnings of shortwave radio. The next year, his company was hired to set up shortwave communications between the United Kingdom and the countries that belonged to the British Commonwealth.

Marconi was an able businessman who kept control of his companies and patents . His continued experiments kept him at the leading edge of new technology. His business success ultimately led to charges of corruption, however. A scandal followed. Marconi's role in his business became more limited, and competition began to arise.

Later Life

Marconi continued his experiments even after the scandal. In 1919 he began to live on his personal yacht, which also served as his laboratory. Marconi also served Italy as a diplomat, signing treaties with Austria and Bulgaria in 1919 as a member of the Paris peace conference that ended World War I.

Marconi won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1909. He received many other honors, particularly in the United Kingdom and Italy. The day after Marconi died in 1937, wireless operators all over the world honored him by shutting off their transmitters for two minutes of silence.

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