



# Make

## Caroline's Comet

### Who was Caroline Herschel?

Caroline Herschel was very special, she was the first woman to discover a comet! Her comet is called 35P/Herschel-Rigollet. Because its orbital period is 155 years, 35P/Herschel-Rigollet will next be visible to humans in the year 2092! She was also the first woman to be officially recognised in a scientific position and to receive a salary for her work as an Astronomer (someone who studies objects outside of the Earth's hemisphere). She made a huge contributions to the field of astronomy in her lifetime, both on her own and alongside her brother William Herschel. Our Museum in Bath celebrates the amazing work of both Caroline and William.



### What are Comets?

Comets are big balls of ice, rock and dust left over from the beginning of the Solar System. They are generally thought to come from the Oort Cloud and the Kuiper Belt and orbit the sun the same as planets although this can take 100s of years.

When comets get close to the Sun, they start to release gas and dust forming a head ( or coma ) and a tail. The tail always points away from the Sun. This activity will teach you how to make your own speedy comet using a recycled shopping bag!

### Fun Facts!

- Comets are made of ice, dust and small rocky particles.
- The name comet comes from the Greek word meaning 'hair of the head', it came from the Greek philosopher Aristotle who observed comets as 'stars with hair'.
- Short term comets (also known as periodic comets) have orbital periods of less than 200 years while long term comets have orbital periods of over 200 years.



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### You will need:

- An old plastic shopping bag
- Scissors
- Aluminium foil
- An elastic band, a hair bobble or some string
- a pen



### Instructions

1. Lay your shopping bag flat on the floor
2. Draw a diagonal line across the bag from a bottom corner to a top corner, then cut along this line.
3. Discard the piece with the handle of the bag
4. Take the other piece and cut strips from the cut edge towards the corner, and stop when you get about 10cm away from the corner, these are the tails of the comet.
5. Take a piece of foil and scrunch it into a ball, this is the head.
6. Put the ball of foil into the corner of the bag, then tie your elastic band/hair band/string around the bottom to keep it in place
7. You now have your own comet! Try throwing it around or running with it in your hand, see how the tails help it to glide in the air?



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