

THE BRAINS BEHIND AMAZON.COM

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Amazon.com is a household name, but what do you know about the billionaire entrepreneur, Jeff Bezos, who started it in a garage in 1994?

His ¹ father was a unicyclist

Bezos was born in 1964 when both his parents were still teenagers, and his father was a unicyclist in the circus. They divorced after a year. When Bezos was four, his mother remarried and he was adopted by his stepfather, Miguel Bezos, a Cuban immigrant to the United States. Jeff learnt that he was adopted when he was ten.

He showed an early interest in science and ²

When he was a schoolboy, Bezos made an electrical alarm to keep his younger brother and sister out of his room. Later, he graduated in electrical engineering and computer science. He was working in a well-paid job in New York when he heard about the rise of Internet use by 2,300% in one year. It was 1994, and he decided to start his own Internet business.

His ³ wasn't called Amazon at first

Amazon started as a bookstore in a garage, and grew fast. In its first month of business, orders came in from forty-five countries around the world. At first, the online bookstore was named Cadabra, but it was hard to say, and some people thought it was similar to 'cadaver' (dead body). Instead he chose the name Amazon: firstly, it appeared at the top of lists of website addresses because it begins with 'A'; secondly, Bezos could see the similarity between the world's largest river and the world's largest bookshop.

He survived a ⁴ accident

A helicopter Bezos was travelling in crashed. Bezos and the other passengers were not badly hurt, but the accident put him off helicopters. However, flying objects are still a passion for him. Amazon is working on drones that can deliver orders in thirty minutes.

He's passionate about exploring ⁵

Bezos has dreamt about space travel since he was a child. At high school he said he wanted '... to build space hotels, amusement parks and colonies for two or three million people.' He started a company, Blue Origin, to make space travel more widely available. With Amazon he made shopping easy, and now he wants to do the same for space travel.



He has big ideas for the ⁶ of Amazon

Jeff Bezos is always trying to improve the customer experience. His latest innovation is Amazon Go, or the 'just walk out' store. Amazon Go is a supermarket where you take food off the shelf, put it in your bag and leave. No credit cards, no queues at the checkout desk. All you need is a smartphone and an Amazon account. Bezos sees this as the future of shopping.

7 SPEAKING Discuss the questions.

- 1 How many online shopping stores can you think of?
- 2 Do you like the idea of Amazon Go? Why?/Why not?
- 3 What do you think the future is for the following forms of payment: cash; debit/credit card; smartphone?

8 SPEAKING Complete the sentences with the words in the box to make them true for you. Then compare your sentences with a partner.

billionaire brother businessperson company
customer director employee entrepreneur
immigrant passenger schoolboy sister
stepfather teenager unicyclist wife

- 1 I was/I am a(n) ...
- 2 I will possibly be a(n) ...
- 3 I will never be a(n) ...