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James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) – Key Facts Summary

The Premier Infrared Space Observatory Launched: December 25, 2021 Partners: NASA, ESA (European Space Agency), CSA (Canadian Space Agency) Primary mission duration: 5–10 years (expected lifespan up to 20+ years)

Location & Orbit

- Orbits the Sun at the Earth-Sun L2 Lagrange point
- Distance from Earth: ~1.5 million km (≈1 million miles) — far beyond Hubble's low Earth orbit (~560 km)
- Keeps constant view of the cold, dark side away from Sun/Earth/Moon heat

Massive Mirror & Design

- Primary mirror diameter: 6.5 meters (21.3 feet) — largest space telescope mirror ever
- 18 gold-coated hexagonal segments (folds origami-style to fit in rocket fairing, unfolds in space)
- Collects ~6–7 times more light than Hubble Space Telescope
- Gold coating optimizes infrared reflection

Sunshield Protection

- 5-layer tennis-court-sized sunshield (21 m × 14 m)
- Provides extreme thermal isolation — equivalent to SPF 1 million
- Keeps instruments at ~–370°F (–233°C) to detect faint infrared signals

Infrared Power

- Observes in near- and mid-infrared wavelengths (longer than visible light)
- ~100 times more sensitive than Hubble overall
- Peers through dust clouds where stars and planets form

Current Status (as of early 2026) Fully operational since mid-2022 — delivering groundbreaking discoveries in cosmology, exoplanets, star formation, and more.

- **"Webb is not just looking farther — it's looking deeper into time and through cosmic dust like never before."**