

In my job I ^{might} get to...

fly to the Moon!

Jessica is a member of NASA's 2017 class of astronauts and hopes to explore space one day – possibly as part of the Artemis missions to the Moon!

“Applying to be an astronaut is just like applying for any other job!”

I sent in an application but I didn't hear anything for nine months. Then NASA asked to meet about 500 people in small groups so they could get to know them, run medical tests and see how well we could work together as a team. That's a really big part of what we do. I got a call telling me I'd been selected when I was in bed with a cold! You need relevant education and experience, but ultimately selection is based on your attitude. The astronauts are looking for someone they would be willing to live in a tin can with!

“Geology is the coolest thing ever!”

I started out studying mechanical engineering at university because I thought it was the easiest path to becoming an astronaut. About halfway through my second year, I realised that it wasn't the right fit for me. Then I started studying geology. In my first class, I thought, 'I will definitely be a geologist for the rest of my life!' That passion has never gone away. The path changed, but the goal – becoming an astronaut – didn't.



Jessica is helped into a spacesuit before practising spacewalking underwater.

“I started dreaming about being an astronaut when I was around ten.”

I remember writing a book about a Martian at that age. What intrigued me the most about Mars is how Earth-like it is, and how we're able to use the Earth to understand more about Mars and Mars' history. That desire to explore space and wonder how humans can reach those outer stars has never gone. We can learn so much about who we are by going through that process.

“I trained to be an astronaut in a class of 13 people called 'the Turtles'.”

When we were introduced at the Johnson Space Centre, NASA's Vice President said we were 'like turtles on a fence post' – we didn't get there by ourselves. So many amazing people have helped me get to this point, including my family, friends and colleagues.

“I've recently finished training and now I'm a fully fledged astronaut!”

We've all been given technical roles: one of us is working on the suit, one of us is working on the Orion capsule to take us to the Moon and I'm helping with the logistics around launch and landing from Cape Canaveral in Florida. We still maintain our skills though: we fly a few times a month and do Russian classes.

“NASA's goal is to get to the Moon in 2024, and that will be a stepping stone to going to Mars.”

The first stages of the Artemis programme are about sending the technology that will provide resources for humans to the Moon. Then Artemis III plans to take a woman and a man to Shackleton Crater at the South Pole. There are resources there that will enable us to stay for a very long time, including light and ice that could contain water. After we complete a successful mission on the Moon, we'll head to Mars!

Find out more about Artemis here:
nasa.gov/specials/artemis

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