

Astronauts Finish Building Space Station Addition



Astronauts on the space shuttle *Atlantis* have just returned home. They spent their 12-day mission into space attaching a new addition to the International Space Station. The new addition weighs more than 17 tons and is 45 feet long. It enables the space station to collect energy from the sun. The sun's energy will be used to provide power needed to run the space station.

When *Atlantis* arrived at the space station, its crew used a robotic arm to pull the new addition out of the shuttle's storage area. The arm "handed" the addition to the space station's robotic arm. In the days that followed, *Atlantis* astronauts did three spacewalks. They worked in pairs for six or seven hours at a time to hook up the addition -- tasks they did while floating 220 miles above Earth.

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gravity energy mission
storage collect robotic

The astronaut-builders aboard *Atlantis* worked quickly and carefully in space. Because there is no *gravity* in space, they had to be careful their tools didn't float away. Tools and other objects floating in space could harm the shuttle or the space station. In spite of their care, two bolts floated away from astronauts and off into space.

Atlantis carried a crew of six astronauts. For two of them, this mission was the first time they got to walk in space.

MORE FACTS ABOUT THE ATLANTIS MISSION:

- The *Atlantis* crew trained four years for this mission. Astronauts train underwater to prepare to work in space.
- The International Space Station is a project of 16 countries, including the U.S. and Canada. When completed, different teams of astronauts will live and conduct experiments there for several months at a time.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Astronauts practice a long time -- sometimes for years -- to learn to do their jobs. What kinds of skills have you learned by practicing and practicing for long periods?