

Astronaut Mission Patches

“I know the sky is not the limit, because there are footprints on the moon – and I made some of them!” – Buzz Aldrin (2019)

In July 1969 Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to set foot on the moon as part of the historic Apollo 11 mission.

The Apollo programme was launched as a response to the pressure on the US government to prove their strength against the Soviet Union in a battle known as the Space Race. Both countries fought to be the first to reach this historic milestone, with the Soviet government achieving most of the early victories.

However in 1969 Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins boarded the mighty Saturn V rocket and made the three-day journey to the moon. Armstrong and Aldrin made their way into the lunar module, leaving Collins to orbit the moon alone while they made the journey to the lunar surface.

After they landed and carried out all of the necessary safety checks and tests, Armstrong opened the capsule door and stepped out into another world.

“That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” – Neil Armstrong (1969)

Just like every astronaut, each of the Apollo 11 crew members received a special mission patch commemorating their time in space.



The Apollo 11 Mission Patch
Image credit: NASA

Each mission patch has lots of symbolism and is often designed by the astronauts themselves. The Apollo 11 patch shows the moon's surface at the bottom and the Earth is the background. The eagle represents the USA and it is carrying an olive branch to represent peace.

Apollo Programme Patches

The Apollo 11 astronauts were one of the only crews from the programme that chose not to include their names in the design of their patch. They believed that their mission was one for all humankind, not just them.

Symbolism features heavily in many of the designs. (This list only shows some of the Apollo patches, there are 13 in total, including the unsuccessful Apollo 1 mission and the general Apollo programme patch):

- The Apollo 12 patch features a ship orbiting the moon because all of the crew members had served in the Navy.
- Apollo 13 has three horses and the sun in the background which symbolise the Greek god Apollo and his horse-drawn chariot. It also has some Latin text which reads "Ex luna, scientia", which means "from the moon, knowledge".
- Apollo 14 features the gold pin given to American astronauts who have flown. The pin is seen flying from the Earth to the moon.
- Apollo 15 features the red, white and blue of the American flag, three flights symbols in the centre and the mission landing site in the background.
- Apollo 17 has Apollo, the sun god, in the foreground with the American eagle behind him and three white stars to represent the three astronauts involved in the mission. Apollo 17 was the final mission in the programme, and the last time any human has stepped foot on the moon.



"Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon July 1969, A.D. We came in peace for all mankind." – a plaque left on the moon by the Apollo 11 astronauts



Make Your Own Mission Patch

Now it's time for you to get creative!

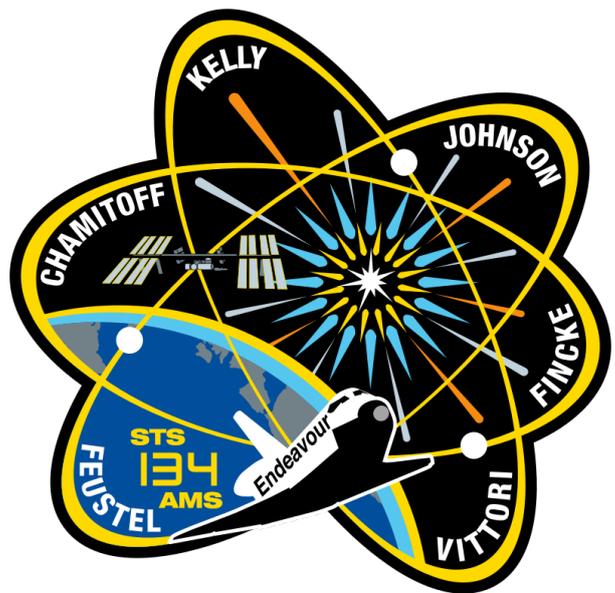
Imagine you are the captain on your own space mission and you have been asked to design a patch for you and your crew.

Things to think about:

- Who is your crew? Will you put their names on the patch like some of the Apollo crews did?
- What kind of symbolism would you use? How about an animal that represents your personality or where you are from?
- Where are you going on your mission? Are you headed to the moon? To Mars? To the edge of the Milky Way? Will your destination feature on the patch?
- What shape will your patch be? Most of the Apollo patches were round, but they can be any shape you want. See below for some inspiration for cool mission patch shapes.



Mission patch from the Principia Mission that involved British astronaut Tim Peake



Crew patch from the STS-134 mission on the Endeavour spacecraft to the International Space Station

You can use anything you have at home to make your mission patch - paper, card, recycling, play doh, Lego... get creative!

We would love to see your patches so please tag us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to show off your skills!

Over and out.

