

A woman with long brown hair in a ponytail, wearing a light blue polo shirt, is shown in profile, looking towards the left. She is in a space station module, surrounded by various pieces of equipment, cables, and a computer monitor. Her hands are near her face, possibly holding a small object. The background is filled with the complex, cluttered interior of a spacecraft.

Living on the Space Station

by Susan Schott Karr

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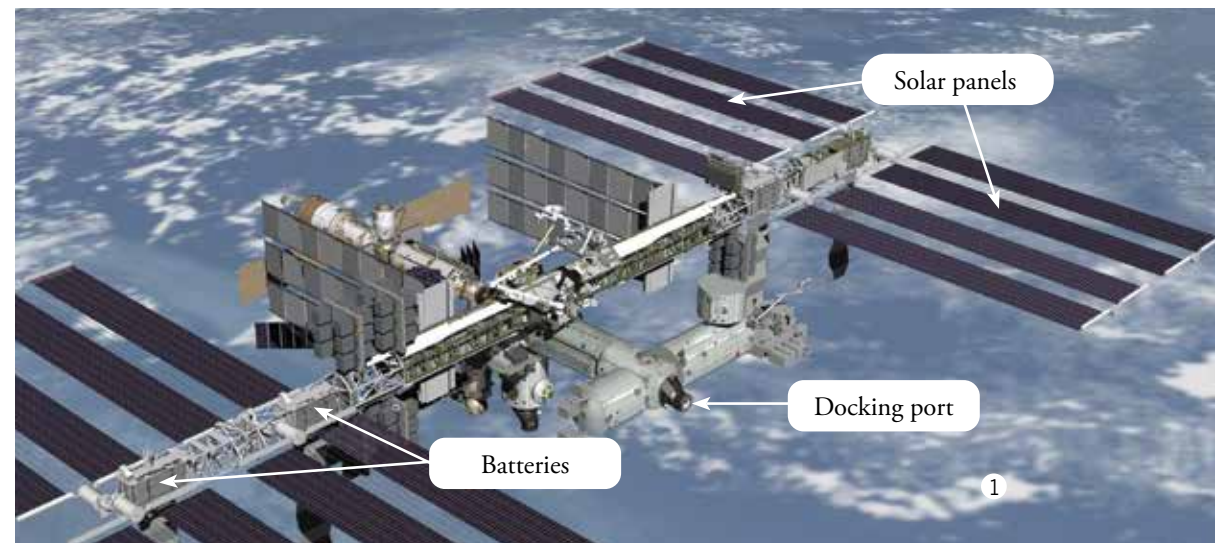
Amplify Atlas™

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The International Space Station is a laboratory 260 miles above Earth where **astronauts** from around the world live and work. While in space, the astronauts' job is to conduct **experiments**. They try to discover and record how living in space with very little **gravity**, the force that pulls us down, affects humans. While living and researching in outer space, astronauts must also adapt to their new **environment**, finding new ways to work, exercise, sleep, eat, and play.

The International Space Station



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Exercising

The astronauts exercise two hours every day to maintain a healthy body weight and strong muscles. That way, when the astronauts finish their work and return to Earth, they are healthy and strong.

The exercise equipment astronauts use is different from the equipment we use on Earth. Sometimes the astronauts strap themselves to the equipment. Otherwise, they would float away due to very little gravity.

This astronaut is running on a treadmill.



This astronaut eats his oatmeal out of a package in space.

Eating

Eating in space is a different experience from eating on Earth. Astronauts eat solid foods, including beef, chicken, seafood, fruits, and peanut butter just like us. They drink tea, coffee, water, orange juice, and lemonade just like on Earth. The difference is that astronauts don't use forks, knives, or plates. They eat out of small packages using spoons and drink liquids out of bags using straws.

When astronauts want salt or pepper, they don't reach for shakers like we do. The astronauts' salt and pepper come in a liquid form. Why? If the astronauts used the shakers, the spices would float away and might clog the vents and equipment. They could also get into the astronauts' noses, mouths, and eyes.

Sleeping and Relaxing

Astronauts typically go to sleep at 9:30. They have their own sleep stations where they get into sleeping bags that have a slot for each arm. Some astronauts sleep strapped to the wall so they don't float around, but others don't mind floating as they sleep! Sleep stations are also where astronauts brush their teeth, take sponge baths, and work on their computers.

When it's time to relax, the space station has something for everyone. Some astronauts use computers to watch television, read, send email, and even order presents for people back home. Other astronauts enjoy using the two instruments onboard: a keyboard and a guitar. There's even a tiny basketball hoop.

Although nothing can replace the coziness of our own homes, the International Space Station was built with the comfort of the astronauts in mind. It is truly an amazing home away from home.

Astronauts rest in sleep stations.



Glossary

astronauts (n.): people trained to travel and work in space

environment (n.): surroundings

experiments (n.): tests used to find out something or prove that something is true

gravity (n.): the invisible force that pulls people and objects toward Earth's center

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Informational

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