

Alexander Gerst chosen to be commander of the International Space Station



Alexander Gerst
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ESA astronaut Alexander Gerst will be commander of the International Space Station during his mission there in 2018! The announcement was made at the European Astronaut Centre in Cologne, Germany.

As commander, Alexander will need to make sure that his fellow astronauts work well as a team and are fully prepared for their mission. It is a very important position!

Alexander is understandably excited about this announcement. He says, “I am delighted by the prospect of continuing the scientific work that has been conducted on the ISS for many years. I am particularly looking forward to contributing to one of humanity’s greatest exploration adventures: discovering new horizons.”



Tim Peake using Mares on the ISS
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During Alexander’s mission he will work on lots of different experiments. These will likely include research with ESA’s Mares muscle measurement machine, researching plasma crystals in weightlessness, and testing new technologies to help future astronauts.

Experience of working and living onboard the ISS is an important consideration when choosing commanders. Alexander has been into space before, spending 166 days on the ISS in 2014. His mission then was called “Blue Dot” and he conducted experiments to improve life on Earth and prepare for further human exploration of our Solar System. On his return to Earth Alexander was awarded Germany’s Order of Merit!

Cool fact: Before becoming an astronaut, Alexander was a geophysicist and volcanologist.