

ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet passes space exams



The space explorers passed every test!
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ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet has just taken an entire day's worth of exams to make sure he is ready for his mission to the International Space Station!

Along with NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson and Roscosmos commander Oleg Novitsky, Thomas was quizzed over every aspect of operating the Soyuz module that will take the new crew to the International Space Station later in November. The tests were made to be as realistic as possible. Thomas and his colleagues even wore their Sokol pressure suits! Using a detailed full-size replica of a Soyuz, the trio acted out a launch and docking with the Station, as well as returning to Earth. Instructors set up various malfunctions to see how the crew would react and if they could complete the mission.



ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet took the left seat in the Soyuz simulator
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Before docking, the radio and control system stopped working, meaning that commander Oleg and co-pilot Thomas had to dock manually – a tricky procedure! Later on they rehearsed returning to Earth in the Soyuz. The instructors prepared a lot of crises for this part of the test! First there was a leak in the backup oxygen tank, then an engine malfunction when firing the thrusters, and then – just when Thomas thought it could not get any more difficult – there was a breakdown in the Soyuz's computer!



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Thomas and his crewmates passed every test with flying colours, and the instructors were impressed with how they handled each situation. They were all officially cleared to fly in a real Soyuz, all the way up to the International Space Station. Lift-off will be in just under two weeks!

So the next time you are studying for a test at school, remember that you are not alone – even astronauts have to take exams!

Cool fact: Thomas, Peggy and Oleg are now in quarantine at the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. This is so that they stay completely healthy, and do not carry any bacteria or viruses to the International Space Station!

Thomas Pesquet

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