



Ellington Field Aircraft

Ellington Field is the heart of Johnson Space Center's flying operations. NASA's primary function at Ellington is the training of astronauts for spaceflight. The field is also a base for administrative, cargo transport and high-altitude aircraft, with many types of NASA aircraft at the hangars.



T-38 Jets

The T-38 is a two-engine jet that can hold two crew members and reach speeds as high as Mach 1.2. The T-38, which can fly to heights of 50,000 feet, is used for aerobatic maneuvers to help the astronauts become adjusted to unusual attitudes that they will experience in the space shuttle. It can also be used to simulate orbiter landings. Each astronaut receives dedicated training in the T-38.

Shuttle Training Aircraft

The Shuttle Training Aircraft (STA) are Gulfstream II business jets modified to perform like the space shuttle during approach and landing. The STAs are used to train shuttle pilots by reproducing the shuttle's characteristics with amazing accuracy from 35,000 feet to touchdown.

One half of the STA cockpit is virtually identical to the shuttle's and has the same guidance and control systems. This high-fidelity trainer provides the astronauts hands-on experience at the actual shuttle landing sites — Kennedy Space Center, Fla., Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., and the White Sands Test Facility in New Mexico.



NASAfacts

