



RED JENSEN

MASTER UAS TECHNICIAN



**Lexile Ranges**

Level 1: Less than 810

Level 2: 810-1000L

Level 3: 1010-1200L

Level 4: 1210-1400L

Level  
2

Robert “Red” Jensen is a NASA researcher who does a little bit of everything.

Officially, Red works on small model airplanes at NASA’s Armstrong Flight Research Center in California. Many people call these types of airplanes drones, and Red helps NASA learn all it can about operating drones.

Red does a lot of his work at the Armstrong Model Lab. Inside you will hear 3D printers buzzing in one corner, and see shelves full of small drones, spare aircraft parts and raw materials that can be used to build new models.

Other members of Red’s team also work there. It’s the kind of place that when you walk inside and see everyone so busy and having fun, you’ll want to look for a screwdriver, strap on a pair of safety glasses, and join in by getting busy with some hands-on work.

You might think that a guy like Red, who is responsible for so much, and who works with for NASA, could only get his job after spending many years in college.

You would be wrong.

It’s an important truth about life: Not everyone can be hired for their dream job by taking the same path when it comes to school.

Yes, many who work for NASA went to college because that was the best way for them to learn what they needed to know to have careers in science, technology, engineering or math.



# ADVENT



Others might graduate from high school but decide to skip college and go right to work somewhere. Maybe they want to go to college at some point but are not ready. Or they may not be sure what they want to study yet.

For Red, he wound up following his own journey when it comes to school and work. But he never strayed far from his love of flight that started at a young age when he flew model airplanes.

Red was always interested in building things and figuring out how things worked. Like many young people with those interests, he saw himself as growing up to become an engineer.

But after beginning to study engineering in school, he decided that wasn't for him. He needed to find a different way to get involved with aviation.

Red took jobs where he could find them. He swept floors in an auto body shop, and learned to paint cars. He had a great eye for detail. That was something he learned by painting radio controlled airplanes he flew as his hobby.

When he needed parts or supplies for his hobby, he would go to the same hobby store and became a loyal customer. Red met the owner and became friends. When the owner decided to retire, he sold the hobby store to Red.

Running a small hobby shop was fun, but a lot of hard work too. Red used the money he earned to train to become a real pilot. At the same time, he started to work as a test pilot for a company that built drones, and wound up working there for ten years while he also ran his model shop.



His drone test pilot job often took him to Armstrong to fly his airplanes. While there he got to know the people who worked there, and they got to know him.

His expert model making skills soon became obvious to everyone. So, when an opportunity to join the NASA team and get paid to do the very thing he loved most came along, he applied for the job and won it.

Today, Red oversees many different projects in the Model Shop at Armstrong. He also manages the technicians and student interns who work there. They have never been busier.

With millions of drones offered as holiday presents each year, and major companies wanting to deploy their own fleets of drones for jobs such as package delivery, new designs must be designed and tested.

The drones needed to support that research often falls to Red and his team at Armstrong to build.

All of this activity means it is an exciting time for anyone interested in aviation, and Red is thrilled to be a part of it.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

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