

All About the Space Shuttle

- ✈ When the Space Shuttle takes off, it weighs about as much as 300 elephants!
- ✈ The first Space Shuttle flew in April 1981. The first few missions only included two crew members.
- ✈ A typical mission today carries between 5 and 7 astronauts which include a mission commander, a pilot, a flight engineer, and mission specialists.
- ✈ Three of the six original Space Shuttles are still flying -- Discovery, Atlantis and Endeavour.
- ✈ There are more than two million parts on the Space Shuttle.
- ✈ The Wright brothers' first flight was shorter than the length of the Space Shuttle's External Tank.
- ✈ The pump on the Space Shuttle's main engine is very strong. It could empty a pool in half a minute!
- ✈ Most of the exhaust from the Shuttle's engines is water.
- ✈ The Space Shuttle takes off like a rocket. It flies like an aircraft. And, it lands like a glider.
- ✈ The Space Shuttle Main Engines can be reused from one mission to the next. No other rocket engine can claim that!
- ✈ The Space Shuttle flies about 330 kilometers above the Earth. That's as tall as the state of Iowa up on its side!
- ✈ A ready-to-launch Space Shuttle is as tall as the Statue of Liberty, but it weighs three times more.
- ✈ The longest the Shuttle has stayed in orbit on a mission is 17.5 days on mission STS-80 in November 1996.
- ✈ NASA is retiring the Space Shuttle in 2010, after the International Space Station is completed. It will bring a new "shuttle" on line – the Orion Crew Vehicle and the Ares Launch Vehicle. Like the Shuttle, the Orion is reusable. Unlike the current Space Shuttle, they can be used to us get to the Moon and, eventually to Mars!