

The Selection Criteria of Korean Astronauts

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Ministry of Science & Technology(MOST) and Korea Aerospace Research Institute(KARI) are preparing for the first Korean Astronaut Program based on the mid and long-term basic plan for space development of Korea from the year of 2002. Major aspects taken into consideration are psychological suitability, scientific and technical competence, linguistic ability and fulfillment of medical criteria.

Astronauts must be in good physical and psychological condition. Perfect vision and hearing are not required, but an astronaut's body needs to be strong and physically fit. The stress of g-forces during liftoff and reentry takes a toll on the body, as does the effect of prolonged weightlessness. For these reasons, it can be an unpleasant and dangerous experience for anyone not in top physical condition.

Astronauts need to be hard workers. And getting in to space involves a tremendous amount of preparation. Many physical skills, such as moving about in a space suit, need to be learned. Many technical skills, such as operating the experiment equipments in the manned spacecraft or space station, need to be mastered.

The first Korean astronaut selection is based on the following criteria:

● General Suitability

The general suitability decision process for Korean astronauts involves an assessment of the candidate's past and present conduction in order to predict probable future actions that may adversely impact a space flight. The following list defines some of the factors that would be considered as a basis of disqualification:

- (a) delinquency or misconduct in prior employment/military service;
- (b) criminal, dishonest, infamous, or notoriously disgraceful conduct;
- (c) intentional false statement or fraud in examination or appointment;
- (d) habitual use of intoxicating beverages to excess;
- (e) abuse of narcotics, drugs, or other controlled substances;

(f) membership or sponsorship in organizations which adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of, or reflecting unfavorably in a public forum on, any Space Program Partner or Cooperating Agency.

For Korean astronauts, general suitability is determined in the first stage of selection with another background review.

● Medical Suitability

The candidate must meet the agreed-upon medical criteria as established by the Korean astronaut program medical board for space flight. This includes the medical aspects of behavioral assessments.

● Behavioral Suitability

Korean astronaut program board, in accordance with the internal procedures, will determine if candidate has the interpersonal and communication skills necessary to function as a successful member of a space flight team in a multicultural environment and has the ability to demonstrate situational awareness to conduct himself or herself effectively in the space environment.

● Linguistic Ability

Oral and reading fluency in the English language is a requirement for all candidates. In addition, the ability to communicate effectively in other languages may be required. Candidates must possess both the capacity and the interest to learn a foreign language.

If most of these qualities describe you, then you may have qualification to become a first Korean astronaut someday. Then you can begin your training at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City, Russia.