Space Center Houston

Mission Patch Design Challenge

Competition Guide

2026-2027

Submissions Open: September 14, 2026

Submission Deadline: February 15, 2027

CHALLENGE OVERVIEW

How can you tell the story of an Artemis mission through one mission patch?

NASA's Artemis missions are advancing human exploration of the Moon while building the skills, systems, and technologies needed for future missions. These missions depend on astronauts, engineers, scientists, technicians, mission controllers, and partners working together to solve complex problems and prepare for exploration beyond Earth.

Mission patches give a mission and its crew a visual identity. Through carefully chosen colors, symbols, images, words, and shapes, a patch can communicate the mission's goals, values, people, technology, and place in the larger story of exploration.

In the Mission Patch Design Challenge, student teams will explore the history and purpose of mission patches, research one current or past Artemis mission, and create an original patch that tells that mission's story in a creative and meaningful way. The top overall design will be developed into a physical patch in collaboration with the Space Center Houston graphic artist team.

ELIGIBILITY

Who Can Enter:

Students in **K–12** (public, charter, private, homeschool, and community-based programs are all welcome).

Entry Type	Grade Divisions	Entry Limits
Teams of 2–4	K–5, 6–8, 9–12.	One submission per team.

Original Work

Entries must be the team's **own original work**. Sources and reference materials used for research or inspiration must be properly credited.

PRIZES

Top designs in each division will have their creations displayed in the Education Tent at the 2027 Space Center Houston Moon2Mars Festival, as well as on the Space Center Houston Mission Patch Design Challenge webpage. Award-winning teams in each division will receive two general admission tickets to Space Center Houston.

One Grand Prize design will be selected across all grade divisions. The winning team's design will be developed into a physical patch with the support and collaboration of the Space Center Houston graphic artist team.

OBJECTIVE

For this challenge, students will create an original mission patch inspired by one current or past Artemis mission. Like real mission patches, each design should tell a visual story through symbols, colors, shapes, images, and words.

A strong mission patch should communicate a clear mission identity. Viewers should be able to understand what the selected mission is trying to accomplish, why it matters, and how the design elements work together to tell a story of exploration, STEM, and innovation.

Students will submit two deliverables: a **Mission Patch Design** and a **Patch Description**.

Mission Patch Design Themes

Your patch must include the three Core Design Elements below. The remaining Supporting Design Elements are opportunities to strengthen your visual story; you do not need to represent every theme literally. Judges will look for thoughtful, purposeful integration rather than the number of themes included.

Core Design Elements

- **Mission Title or Patch Name** | Include a short, meaningful title or mission name that helps identify your design and is easy to read as part of the patch.
- **Artemis Mission Connection |** Choose one current or past Artemis mission. Use symbols, colors, images, and words to communicate that mission's goals and purpose.
- **STEM in Exploration** | Include a meaningful STEM connection, such as spacecraft, habitats, robotics, spacesuits, communication systems, scientific tools, engineering design, or another technology that supports exploration.

Supporting Design Elements

- **The Moon, Mars, and Beyond** | Artemis supports a larger vision for exploring the Moon and building capabilities for future missions deeper into space. Your design may use symbols that connect the selected mission to that larger journey.
- **Innovation and Problem-Solving** | Your design may show how creativity, invention, and bold ideas help people solve challenges and create new possibilities for exploration.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork** | Your design may celebrate the people and partnerships that make exploration possible through symbols of unity, communication, diverse perspectives, or shared problem-solving.

DELIVERABLES

Deliverable 1: Mission Patch Design

Students may create their mission patch digitally or by hand. Hand-drawn designs must be scanned or photographed clearly before submission.

Submission Requirements

The mission patch design must meet the following requirements:

1. **File Format**
   The final patch design must be submitted as a JPEG or PNG file.
2. **Approved Shape and Size**
   The patch must use one of the approved patch shapes and dimensions provided in the challenge materials.
3. **Original Student Work**
   The design must be 100% student-generated. Students may not use AI-generated or AI-assisted artwork, copied designs, official NASA mission patch artwork, or third-party artwork they do not have permission to use. NASA mission patches and other reference materials may be studied for research and inspiration but may not be copied into the submission.
4. **Clear Visual Design**
   The patch should be neat, readable, and visually organized. Important symbols, words, and images should be easy to see and understand.
5. **Mission Patch Design Themes**
   The patch must include the Core Design Elements and may incorporate the Supporting Design Elements outlined in this guide.

Deliverable 2: Patch Description

Students will also submit a written description explaining the meaning behind their mission patch design.

Description Requirements

The patch description must:

1. Be 250 words or fewer.
2. Explain the meaning of the major symbols, colors, words, and images used in the design.

3. Describe how the patch connects to the Artemis mission your team selected and explain how that mission contributes to Artemis exploration.
4. Identify the STEM idea or concept represented in the patch.
5. Explain one additional idea or theme represented in the design, such as innovation, creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, or future exploration.
6. Use complete sentences and clear, thoughtful writing.

The description should help judges understand the choices made by the student designers. Students should not simply list what appears on the patch. They should explain why those elements matter and how they work together to tell the story of the mission patch. Writing should reflect the students' grade level and their own thinking and words.

Rubric

Criteria	Description	Percentage
Overall Patch Design	The patch is visually clear, creative, original, and well organized. The design uses symbols, colors, shapes, images, words, and layout to create a strong mission identity and tell a clear visual story. The title or patch name is easy to read and supports the overall design.	40%
Integration of Mission Patch Themes	The patch thoughtfully integrates the required Core Design Elements in a connected and purposeful way. The selected Artemis mission and STEM connection are accurate and meaningful. Supporting Design Elements strengthen the visual story when used. Judges reward thoughtful integration rather than the number of themes included.	40%
Patch Description	The description clearly explains the meaning behind the major design choices and how the patch connects to the selected Artemis mission. It explains the STEM connection and the reasoning behind the team's choices. Writing is clear, appropriate to the team's grade level, and 250 words or fewer.	20%

Resources

About the Artemis Program

- https://www.nasa.gov/humans-in-space/artemis/
- https://www.nasa.gov/mission/artemis-i/
- https://www.nasa.gov/mission/artemis-ii/
- https://www.nasa.gov/mission/artemis-iii/
- https://www.nasa.gov/mission/artemis-iv/

NASA Mission Patch History

- https://www.nasa.gov/gallery/human-spaceflight-mission-patches/
- https://www.nasa.gov/podcasts/houston-we-have-a-podcast/mission-patches/