

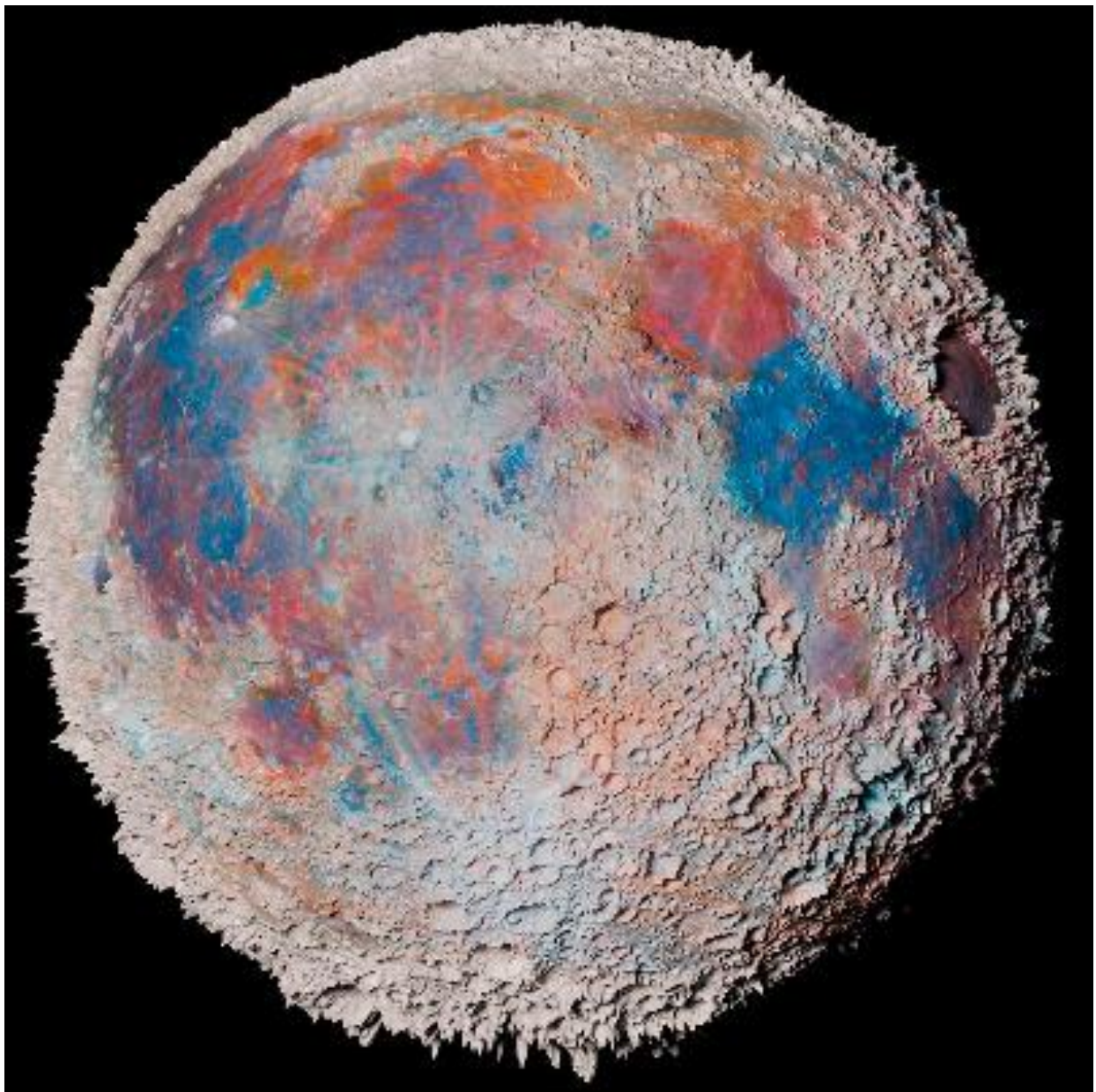
Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday September 29 2024

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Exaggerated Moon



Credit: Data: NASA, Lunar Orbiter Laser Altimeter; Image & Processing: Ildar Ibatullin

Our Moon doesn't really have craters this big. Earth's Moon, Luna, also doesn't naturally show this spikey texture, and its colors are more subtle. But this digital creation is based on reality.

The featured image is a digital composite of a good Moon image and surface height data taken from NASA's Lunar Orbiter Laser Altimeter (LOLA) mission -- and then exaggerated for educational understanding.

The digital enhancements, for example, accentuate lunar highlands and show more clearly craters that illustrate the tremendous bombardment our Moon has been through during its 4.6-billion-year history. The dark areas, called maria, have fewer craters and were once seas of molten lava. Additionally, the image colors, although based on the moon's real composition, are changed and exaggerated.

Here, a blue hue indicates a region that is iron rich, while orange indicates a slight excess of aluminum. Although the Moon has shown the same side to the Earth for billions of years, modern technology is allowing humanity to learn much more about it - and how it affects the Earth.

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Winners of the Milky Way Photographer of the Year Award



"Atmospheric fireworks"
Julien Looten | Dordogne, France

Capturing the Milky Way from a photographer's point of view takes patience, skill, and the right location. These winners of the 2024 Milky Way Photographer of the Year contest give us a sense of just how vast and beautiful this celestial body is.

<https://bit.ly/3ZGVj3E>

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Poetry Corner

Fall Poems



Poetry Foundation

Poems to read as the leaves change and the weather gets colder.

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101590/fall-poems?utm_source=join1440&utm_medium=email&utm_placement=newsletter

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if you ever get an
email about pork,
ham, salt, and
preservatives,
don't open it.
it's spam

Cool Funny Quotes.com

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Sea Lion 'Camera Crews' Capture New Footage of Ocean Floor



Researcher Nathan Angelakis attaches cameras and other equipment to the back of an Australian sea lion.

Angelakis Et Al. 2024

Recordings unveil unseen underwater habitats and previously undocumented sea lion behaviors

Much of the ocean floor remains unknown territory, despite the best efforts of scientists—and James Cameron. What do underwater habitats look like? What sorts of animals are down there? And what impact are humans having?

It could take an army of submersibles years to answer these questions. Now, researchers in

Australia have come up with an unconventional alternative: turning sea lions into camera crews. In a paper published today in *Frontiers in Marine Science*, the team describes how it attached video cameras to the backs of eight Australian sea lions (*Neophoca cinerea*) to help map thousands of square kilometers of seafloor habitat, up to 110 meters down. The research is one of a growing number of projects that rely on animals, from penguins to sharks, to collect scientific data.

<https://bit.ly/46BISsz>

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An Implantable Sensor Designed to Reverse Opioid Overdoses



Credit MIT News

The new device, which can be implanted under the skin, rapidly releases naloxone when an overdose is detected.

In 2023, more than 100,000 Americans died from opioid overdoses. The most effective way to save someone who has overdosed is to administer a drug called naloxone, but a first responder or bystander can't always reach the person who has overdosed in time.

Researchers at MIT and Brigham and Women's Hospital have developed a new device that they hope will help to eliminate those delays and potentially save the lives of people who overdose. The device, about the size of a stick of gum, can be implanted under the skin, where it monitors heart rate, breathing rate, and other vital signs. When it determines that an overdose has occurred, it rapidly pumps out a dose of naloxone.

<https://bit.ly/3WQRaXF>

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Vision for Air Mobility Network in Los Angeles

Archer Aviation's eVTOL aircraft could be flying above Los Angeles as early as 2026, the company announced in a recent [press release](#).



Image above depicts simulated Archer air taxi operations over Los Angeles (Photo: Business Wire)

Midnight, Archer's piloted four-passenger electric aircraft, will be at the forefront of the initiative. Capable of speeds up to 150 mph and designed for back-to-back flights of 20 to 50 miles with minimal recharge time, Midnight operates 100 times quieter than a helicopter at cruising altitude, according to the company.

<https://bit.ly/3WRqar6>

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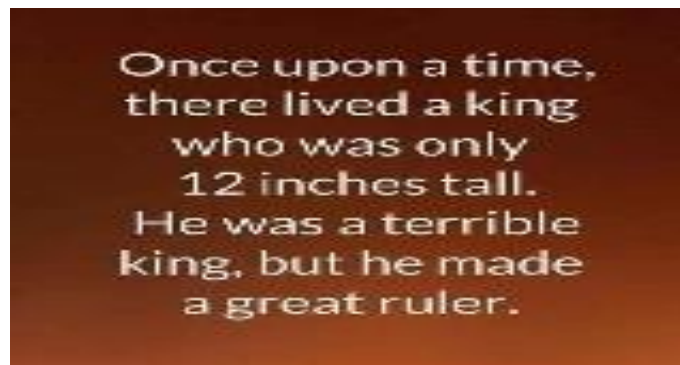
Homefront Dad Shows Mom How He's Caring for the Little Darling



A graphic artist living in Germany works from home while his wife leaves their baby girl with him each day as she goes off to work.

A few months ago, he got tired of her texting to check on how he was doing with the baby, so he started photoshopping responses to text back to her. I'll try and include a different one in subsequent Odes.

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A Whale of a Tool



Humpback whales use their blowholes to create 'bubble-nets,' which they can manipulate in sophisticated ways to herd, stun, and catch krill.

Christin Khan, NOAA/NMFS/NEFSC

Many animals use tools to help snag their supper, from rock-wielding sea otters to crocodiles that use sticks as bait to lure nest-building birds. But only a handful of species—including crows, chimpanzees, and orangutans—can make and modify tools the way we humans do. Now, thanks to new research, this elite club may have a new member: the humpback whale.

Scientists have known for a while that these strapping cetaceans use their blowholes to release rings of bubbles underwater, creating specialized “bubble-nets” to herd, stun, and catch krill close to the ocean’s surface. According to a [new study](#), however, solitary humpbacks in southeast Alaska don’t just make nets—they also manipulate them in sophisticated ways. “These whales skillfully blow bubbles in patterns that form nets with internal rings, actively controlling details like the number of rings, the size and depth of the net, and the spacing between bubbles,” study author Lars Bejder explains in a statement. This method helps the animals to maximize their food intake, capturing up to seven times more prey in a single dive. These extra calories are invaluable, since these migratory whales must gorge themselves during the summer and fall to prepare for their 3000 mile journey to Hawai’i in the winter.

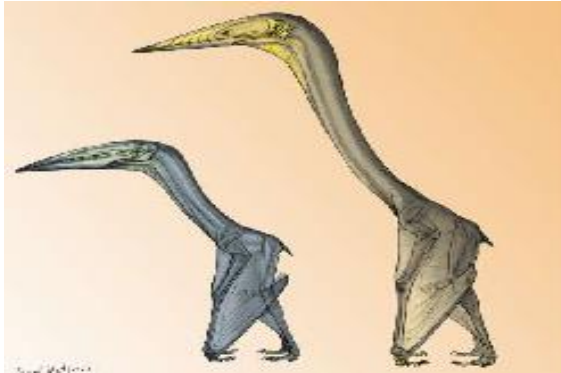
The researchers had to get creative to study humpbacks in their remote habitat, relying on drones and specialized tracking tags outfitted with suction cups to capture evidence of their unique hunting strategy. According to study author Andy Szabo, the whales’ creativity may help them resist the effects of habitat destruction, climate change, and

other threats: "It is this behavioral flexibility and ingenuity that I hope will serve these whales well as our oceans continue to change."

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'Some Pterosaurs Would Flap, Others Would Soar'

New study confirms flight capability of these giants of the skies



Inabtanin alarabia and Arambourgiania philadelphiae.

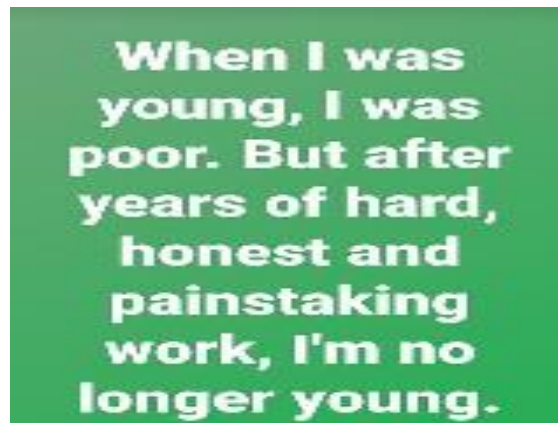
Credit: Teryl Whitlatch

Some species of pterosaurs flew by flapping their wings while others soared like vultures, demonstrates a new study published in the [Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology](#).

Pterosaurs were the earliest and largest vertebrates to evolve powered flight, but they are the only major volant group that has gone extinct. Attempts to-date to understand their flight mechanics have relied on aerodynamic principles and analogy with extant birds and bats.

<https://phys.org/news/2024-09-pterosaurs-soar-flight-capability-giants.html>

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Why Are Airplane Windows Round?

A quick lesson in the physics of not dying in mid-air.



There's a reason they're not rectangular.

Peter Cade/Stone/Getty Images

While some passengers might be too terrified (or sedated) to notice, others may wonder why the windows that line airplane rows are round. Windows in the home are rectangular; car partitions are angled, but mostly rectangular. Why don't planes follow suit?

It's not an aesthetic choice. Airplanes used to have square windows. And they wound up crashing because of them.

When commercial airlines graduated to faster and larger jets beginning in the 1950s, planes would sometimes essentially disintegrate midair. Two of them, both de Havilland Comets, fell apart within months of one another in 1954 and killed a total of 56 passengers. Investigators traced the flaw to the squared-off corners of windows, which collect the stress of a pressurized cabin and can be prone to fracture. During one test, the Royal Aircraft Establishment found that up to 70 percent of the airplane's stress was concentrated on the window's sharp angles.

Circular windows, which are able to disperse that pressure more evenly, immediately became the new standard in passenger aviation. And for every one you see, there are actually three panes at work: one bears the burden of pressurization, another inner pane acts as a failsafe in case the outer pane fails—which is rare—and one "scratcher" pane faces the occupant, so that you can smudge and dirty it up to your heart's content.

As for that little hole at the bottom: It's there to make sure the working pane takes the brunt of the air pressure, maintaining the emergency pane for, well, emergencies.

Mystery solved.

By Jake Rosen for Mental Floss

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Watch 100,000-Mile-High Tower of Plasma Erupt from the Sun



*A 100,000-mile (161,000-km) solar prominence photographed by Mark Johnston of Scottsdale, Arizona on Aug. 29, 2024.
(Image credit: Mark Johnston)*

Mark Johnston, a NASA solar system ambassador and vice president of the Phoenix Astronomical Society, was observing the sun in late August with a custom telescope when he captured images of incredible arcs of plasma (super heated gases) known as solar prominences rising to incredible heights above the surface of our star.

Johnston assembled the images he got of the solar spectacle into the stunning video above. "The height of the largest of the two prominences in the video is about 160K km or 100K miles," Johnston told Space.com via email.

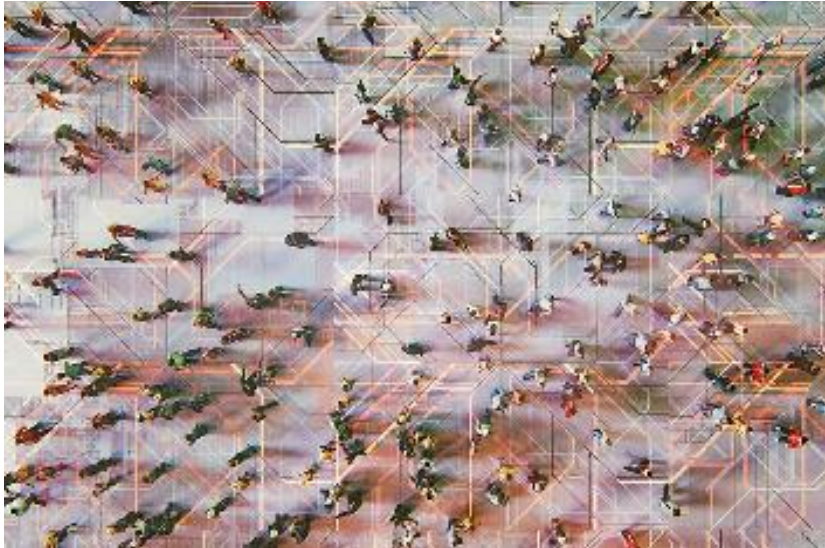
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Dancing Humans Embody Topological Properties



Topological people Interactions between people have been used to simulate a topological insulator.

(Courtesy: iStock/gremlin)

High school students and scientists in the US have used dance to illustrate the physics of topological insulators. The students followed carefully choreographed instructions developed by scientists in what was a fun outreach activity that explained topological phenomena. The exercise demonstrates an alternative analogue for topologically nontrivial systems, which could be potentially useful for research.

“We thought that the way all of these phenomena are explained is rather contrived, and we wanted to, in some sense, democratize the notions of topological phases of matter to a broader audience,” says Joel Yuen-Zhou who is a theoretical chemist at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Yuen-Zhou led the research, which was done in collaboration with students and staff at Orange Glen High School near San Diego.

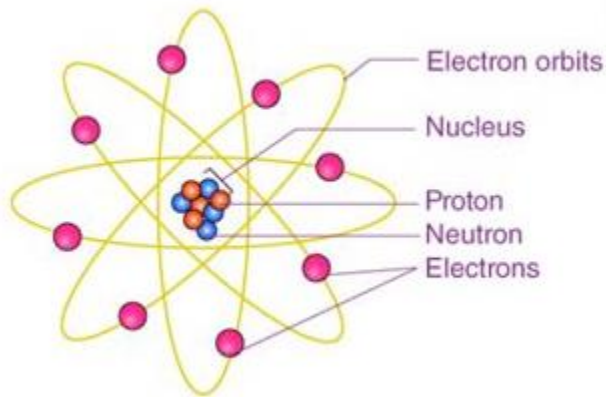
<https://bit.ly/3zIBmob>

Also, a fascinating approach to teaching/

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What An Atom Really Doesn't Look Like

Artistic depictions of the atom have deceived us all.



byjus.com

Do electrons orbit around the nucleus of an atom the same way planets orbit around the star?

If you think about the way we depict atoms in art, we actually have the nucleus in the center. And that the nucleus of course is where you find the protons and neutrons, and then we have electrons in these circular rings around the nucleus. And sometimes in physics, they'll have the rings as sort of nested circles. They are smaller circles and there are bigger circles, and we talk about electrons jumping between those different orbits. Calling what an electron is and where it is around an atom in orbit is actually very misleading.

In truth, electrons don't move around a nucleus the same way the planets move around a star at all. That's very, very different. And part of that has to do with what an electron really is. Elementary particles are not tiny, tiny little balls that are actually moving through space. They're more properly described as waves. And an electron does not exist in only one location around an atom. It actually exists as a wave. And what that means is that there are volumes around the nucleus of an atom that electron will fill in. A single electron can actually be an entire sphere around the nucleus of an atom. Or these orbitals as we call them-- and, again, I caution you nothing's actually moving around like a planet around a star-- some of these orbitals are shaped like dumbbells. And a single electron actually fills out a volume that looks like a dumbbell. Or sometimes they look like a disk.

So, these actually are mathematical solutions which show you where the probability of finding this electron is around an atom. We call these electron shells. And it's not that a single electron is moving around inside the shell, it's in the whole shell all at once. The electron actually fills in that volume, and all you're looking at is a probability area of where that electron may be. So there really isn't any circular motion around an atom. It's true the electrons have angular momentum. They have something that we can actually measure as spin, but they're not actually spinning. They're not actually moving around. You can sort of think of them as clouds that can exist in different locations

around the nucleus based on how much energy they have. So, despite our depictions of atoms with the nucleus in the middle and electrons going around the outside reality is nothing like that.

Electrons form these volumes, and some of those volumes even go through the nucleus. Some of these dumbbells actually have electrons existing inside the nucleus, as well. What an atom really is is far more complicated than our artistic depictions of it far more mysterious. And I think really wonderful. One of the best things to study in quantum mechanics is how electrons form these volumes.

By Michelle Thaler

I don't know about you, but I carried the old vision well after it was discredited.

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Rafael Fernández Caballero: "In the Right Place at the Right Time"

Underwater photographer Rafael Fernández Caballero has just won first place in 2024's Ocean Photographer of the Year competition. In this interview, he speaks about his winning shot of a Bryde's whale and more.



"This image represents a once-in-a-lifetime moment for me. For years, I've visited the Mexican sardine run, always hoping to witness a whale feeding on a baitball. It's one of the most spectacular predation events you can witness, and I was lucky enough to be there with friends to capture it. My friend Mekan, another photographer, was right behind me but missed the shot, yet his generosity and happiness for me made the moment even more special. It's not just about the image itself, but about the shared experience and the thrill of being in the right place at the right time."

<https://bit.ly/4e5UYMa>

A truly impressive gallery of underwater photographs

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New Ultrafast Imaging Provides Insight into Combustion Processes



Yogeshwar Nath Mishra, a co-lead author of a paper describing a new ultrafast imaging technique capable of capturing the fleeting details of combustion at 250 billion frames per second.

caltech

A team of scientists from Caltech's campus and JPL (which Caltech manages for NASA), and the University of Erlangen–Nuremberg, in Germany, have developed an ultrafast imaging technique, called femtosecond laser sheet-compressed ultrafast photography (fsLS-CUP), that can compile videos of those incredibly transient details.

Capturing 250 billion frames per second, the new technique is 20,000 times faster than conventional high-speed imaging cameras, and about 100 times faster than state-of-

the-art imaging systems. It has already revealed some of the underlying dynamics involved in the formation of soot particles during combustion.

A [paper](#) highlighting the new technique appeared online on August 29 in the journal *Light: Science & Applications*.

<https://bit.ly/4ehRyG9>

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NASA Needs to Review Its Priorities

NASA suffering from ageing infrastructure and inefficient management practices, finds report



Dark skies ahead A committee discovered that 83% of NASA's facilities are past their design lifetimes.

(Courtesy: NASA/Joel Kowsky)

NASA has been warned that it may need to sacrifice new missions in order to rebalance the space agency's priorities and achieve its long-term objectives. That is the conclusion of a new report – [NASA at a Crossroads: Maintaining Workforce, Infrastructure, and Technology Preeminence in the Coming Decades](#) – that finds a space agency battling on many fronts including ageing infrastructure, China's growing presence in space, and issues recruiting staff.

The report was requested by Congress and published by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. It was written by a 13-member committee, which included representatives from industry, academia and government, and was chaired by Norman Augustine, former chief executive of Lockheed Martin. Members visited all nine NASA centres and talked to about 400 employees to compile the report.

While the panel say that NASA had "motivate[ed] many of the nation's youth to pursue careers in science and technology" and "been a source of inspiration and pride to all Americans", they highlight a variety of problems at the agency. Those include out-of-date infrastructure, a pressure to prioritize short-term objectives, budget mismatches,

inefficient management practices, and an unbalanced reliance on commercial partners. Yet according to Augustine, the agency's main problem is "the more mundane tendency to focus on near-term accomplishments at the expense of long-term viability".

As well as external challenges such as China's growing role in space, the committee discovered that many were homegrown. They found that 83% of NASA's facilities are past their design lifetimes. For example, the capacity of the Deep Space Network, which provides critical communications support for uncrewed missions, "is inadequate" to support future craft and even current missions such as the Artemis Moon programme "without disrupting other projects".

There is also competition from private space firms in both technology development and recruitment. According to the report, NASA has strict hiring rules and salaries it can offer. It takes 81 days, on average, from the initial interview to an offer of employment. During that period, the subject will probably receive offers from private firms, not only in the space industry but also in the "digital world", which offer higher salaries.

In addition, Augustine notes, the agency is giving its engineers less opportunity "to get their hands dirty" by carrying out their own research. Instead, they are increasingly managing outside contractors who are doing the development work. At the same time, the report identifies a "major reduction" over the past few decades in basic research that is financed by industry – a trend that the report says is "largely attributable to shareholders seeking near-term returns as opposed to laying groundwork for the future".

Yet the committee also finds that NASA faces "internal and external pressure to prioritize short-term measures" without considering longer-term needs and implications. "If left unchecked these pressures are likely to result in a NASA that is incapable of satisfying national objectives in the longer term," the report states. "The inevitable consequence of such a strategy is to erode those essential capabilities that led to the organization's greatness in the first place and that underpin its future potential."

Cash woes

Another concern is the US government budget process that operates year by year and is slowly reducing NASA's proportional share of funding. The report finds that the budget is "often incompatible with the scope, complexity, and difficulty of [NASA's] work" and the funding allocation "has degraded NASA's capabilities to the point where agency sustainability is in question". Indeed, during the agency's lifetime, the proportion of the US budget devoted to government R&D has declined from 1.9% of gross domestic product to 0.7%. The panel also notes a trend of reducing investment in research and technology as a fraction of funds devoted to missions. "NASA is likely to

face budgetary problems in the future that greatly exceed those we've seen in recent years," Augustine told a briefing.

The panel now calls on NASA to work with Congress to establish "an annually replenished revolving fund – such as a working capital fund" to maintain and improve the agency's infrastructure. It would be financed by the US government as well as users of NASA's facilities and be "sufficiently capitalized to eliminate NASA's current maintenance backlog over the next decade". While it is unclear how the government and the agency will react to that proposal, as Augustine warned, for NASA, "this is not business as usual".

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First Uncrewed Balloon Flight to the Edge of Earth's Atmosphere

Space Perspective's luxury balloon-lifted space capsule has completed a full flight to the edge of the atmosphere.



*Space Neptune Excelsior is hoisted from the deck of MS Voyager.
(Image credit: Space Perspective)*

Florida-based space tourism company Space Perspective has successfully completed the first full, uncrewed test flight of its luxury balloon-lifted capsule to the edge of Earth's atmosphere.

Spaceship Neptune Excelsior, the first of the company's teardrop-shaped pressure pods, lifted off from Space Perspective's Marine Spaceport (MS) Voyager vessel off the coast of Saint Petersburg, Florida, on Sept. 15. and completed its first full flight test from takeoff to landing. Over the course of six hours, Space Perspective's trademarked

"SpaceBloon" ascent system carried Excelsior to an altitude of approximately 100,000 feet (30,480 meters) before its slow descent to a safe ocean splashdown and recovery.

<https://bit.ly/4dhaYK1>

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High School Math Students Used a GPT-4 AI Tutor. They Did Worse.

A study of nearly a thousand high school math students found that using AI tutors didn't add up to success.

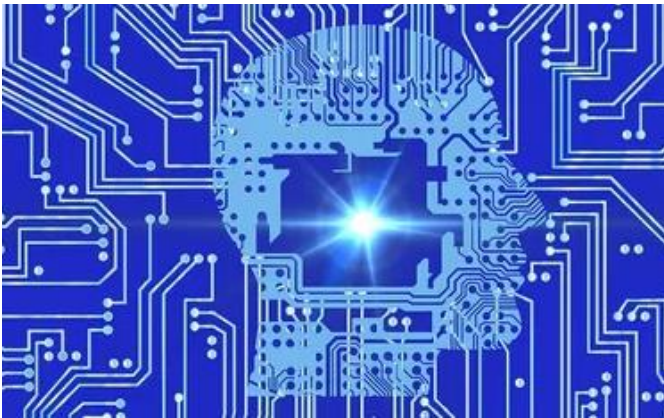


Image credit: Image by Vicki Hamilton from Pixabay)

Students who had access to an AI tutor for practice exams did better than students without access in these practice exams. However, on a subsequent exam, when none of the students had access to an AI tutor, the students who worked with an AI tutor did worse than other students.

"The one-sentence punchline summary of the paper is, 'We find that generative AI could hurt learning because students potentially use it as an answer machine, as opposed to a tool that is conducive for learning,'" says Alp Sungu, one of the paper's co-authors and a professor at the Wharton School.

<https://bit.ly/4eCoVmX>

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How to Work More Efficiently, According to a Neuroscientist

In her new book, neuroscience researcher Mithu Storoni breaks down how to best structure your work sessions and increase your productivity.



[Source Illustration: Pixabay]

Working on something continuously without a break for more than about ninety minutes feels tiring for most of us. When people resume intense mental work after taking a refreshing break, they stay alert and focused for about ninety minutes before returning to the same state of fatigue as before they took the break. As mental tiredness kicks in, your mind drifts and your performance starts to sink, but your brain tries to compensate for its waning performance. A Florida-based research team has identified at least one brain region that may be involved in this compensatory mechanism, it swings into action when other brain regions start to slow down.

In a 2003 paper, Poland-based researchers conjectured that a ninety-minute rhythm is wired into our brains to protect the mind from information overload and give it a chance, at regular intervals, to wander and process what it has imbibed.

<https://bit.ly/3zzhwGc>

I'm going to check it out and let you know my experience.

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Chords & Riffs

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)



es.paperblog.com

Isaac Albéniz flourished during a period of simultaneous imperial decline and cultural florescence in Spain, one in which Spanish music, literature, and visual arts re-entered the mainstream of European culture for the first time since the 1600s, even as the H

His assorted collections of piano and guitar pieces evoke with vivid color Spain's many regional styles of folklore, especially of Andalusia, he himself spent most of his career as an expatriate, first in London and then in Paris.

Though his musical style was thoroughly grounded in the traditional music of his native land, he showed in concert works the influence of French impressionism, particularly of Debussy. Albéniz summarized his international brand of nationalism in the dictum that "Spanish composers should make Spanish music with a universal accent"

Oriental Stefano Grondona <https://youtu.be/czQVOcgkCwY>

Leyenda Andres Segovia <https://youtu.be/lCeebWgjrrU?t=4>

"Sevilla" Adam del Monte <https://youtu.be/4l8qWTCNpQY?t=4>

"Torre Bermeja," Op. 92 No. 12, <https://youtu.be/s2WxczGcmD8>

Rumores de la Caleta <https://youtu.be/tAUxZFsAmww>

Albeniz Classics: https://youtu.be/k_bk7WRRTfA

00:00:00 Isaac Albéniz: Suite Española No. 1, Op. 47: No. 6, Fantasia. Aragon

00:05:36 Isaac Albéniz: Cantos de España Op. 232: No. 2, Oriental

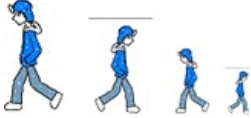
00:10:15 Isaac Albéniz: Suite Española No. 1, Op. 47: No. 3, Sevillanas. Sevilla

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My Walking Thoughts



For Sunday September 29 2024

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T-28 Formation Training: Parades in the Sky

In last week's Walking Thoughts I cited the insights of Monseur Ron D' Voo for his role in getting individuals flyers into the proximity of their mates before a thundering hoard of Huns made mincemeat of them. Thereafter it was up to the skill, daring, and mutual support tactics of the friendlies to prevail in the aerial fisticuffs.

When these stalwarts were not engaged in life-and-death combat, however, what was the purpose in getting them and their aircraft together in something more utilitarian and pleasing than a senseless gaggle?

Enter parade formation activities that are more artistically pleasing, safer, good for enhancing aerial skills, and in the end able to elicit appreciative ooh's and ahh's at airshows from taxpayers who pay the bill so that the smiling Jacks and Jills can strut their stuff?

Parade formations come in several forms, Two plane Section, Four plane Fingertip, Four-plane Echelon, Four plane Diamond, and Line Abreast. There are countless others –essentially failed attempts to accomplish one of the above.

So much for the pantheon of formation maneuvers. At Whiting we were limited to Section, Fingertip, and Echelon get-togethers, leaving Diamond and Line Breast maneuvers to the Blue Angels

For starters, an instructor had to risk life and limb by luring a student to move to a point 30 degrees aft, 5 feet abeam, and 5 feet below his aircraft.

I had heard stories of midairs under such conditions, but to my certain knowledge none happened while I was at Whiting and more uncertainly ever in the T-28s there. The bird was just too responsive, if by no other means than yanking the throttle to the aft stop, which would bring the bird almost to a halt, allowing it to clear the leader's tail with no further action required other than to add some hitherto unknown words to one's vocabulary.

To achieve the 30 degree setback required, the student had to align the aft wingtip of the leader's aircraft with the instructor's head. After this he was coaxed to achieve a 5-foot wingtip separation through a trial-and-error process governed by the instructor's

"Come on, dufus, close it up," until at last he got the picture. Once the setback and separation were handled, the stepdown was pretty much in the bag.

Tucked in as the wingman you would be good to go, responding to never ending pleas for you to "close it up," or while following hand signals directing you to shift from one side to the other via a maneuver known as a 'crossunder.' Here you would scootch the power back a smidgen before adding a little stick and rudder in the required direction, reversing things when you emerged on the other side. You could then tell but the volume of the "close it up, dufus," response how well you were doing. Louder did not usually mean better.

After you'd satisfied your instructor you had this process under control, it was time for him to introduce you to turns both into and away from the section. If you were on the outside of the turn, you had to add power to maintain your position since you had farther to travel. Turns into you were different since instead of maintaining stepdown as before, here you had to fly down to maintain your sightline of the wingtip and leaders head, a maneuver that required you to lower the nose and reduce power to maintain the sightline, then by repositioning the nose and adding power to lock in the new position.



Echelon

Finger Four

An hour's flight in close quarters was a genuine workout, both physically and mentally, but at about the third session, not only were you prepared for the effort, but coming to look forward to it. But never fear, pain returned on the fourth hop when you were joined by another instructor/student section creating a golden opportunity for chaos and double the number of questions regarding your parentage. It was here however that you learned the importance of maintaining the proper wing position, because quite often you would find yourself way out at the end of the line as number four in Echelon being driven all over the place by mistakes by your fellow student in the number two slot.

At the completion of formation stage I felt I had crossed some unseen but magical line in my quest for Wings of Gold. Others I spoken with felt the same way.

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