

Japanese astronaut tests 'flying carpet' in space

日本太空人測試「太空飛毯」

A Japanese astronaut tested a "flying carpet" in outer space, folded laundry and used eye drops as part of a series of zero-gravity challenges submitted by the public.

Standing on a white sheet, Koichi Wakata was gliding smoothly through a cabin of the International Space Station, as if snowboarding, in a video clip posted online by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

"I flew on this magic carpet by using adhesive tape so that the soles of my feet stayed on it," the 45-year-old revealed, speaking into a microphone during what appeared at times like a variety show.

The experiment was part of 16 **offbeat** tasks selected from ideas sent to the space agency by hundreds of Japanese citizens, from nursery school pupils to a 90-year-old man.

Tackling another challenge, Wakata showed how to use eye drops in zero gravity, squeezing out a tiny ball of liquid and letting it perch at the tip of the container before carefully bringing it to his eye.

Wakata also handled the **awkward** task of folding laundry in zero gravity, struggling with a shirt and then, for added difficulty, the floating arms and legs of a blue space overall.

He performed the **off-the-wall** tasks in the Japanese laboratory Kibo (Hope) of the ISS on May 15, having also performed challenges in April, including push-ups.

Video footage is at http://iss.jaxa.jp/library/video/omoshiro_090515.php.

(AFP)



Above: This NASA handout picture, released from Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) on May 18, 2009 shows Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata demonstrating a "magical flying carpet," as he tackled a series of other offbeat challenges in the International Space Station (ISS) on May 15.

PHOTO: NASA/JAXA

Below: European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut Frank De Winne of Belgium sits in the landing capsule during an examination at the Star City space center outside Moscow on May 6, 2009.

PHOTO: REUTERS

上圖：這張由日本宇宙航空開發局提供、美國太空總署於五月十八日發佈的新聞照片中顯示，日本太空人若田光一五月十五日在國際太空站內示範「神奇飛毯」的操作，並進行其他一系列奇特的挑戰。

照片：美國太空總署/日本宇宙航空開發局

下圖：五月六日，在莫斯科市郊的星城太空訓練中心裡，歐洲太空總署的比利時太空人法蘭克·德·維倪坐在登陸艙中檢測儀器。

照片：路透社



一名日本太空人應民眾要求，在外太空無重力的狀況下挑戰一系列動作，例如實驗「飛毯」、折衣服和滴眼藥水等。

日本宇宙航空開發局在網路上公佈的一段影片中，太空人若田光一在國際太空站的太空艙內，站在一張白色床單上流暢地滑行，就像在玩滑雪板一樣。

這名四十五歲的太空人一面進行這段有時看似雜技秀的表演，一面對著麥克風說話時透露：「我用膠帶把腳底黏在毯子上，讓自己能乘著這塊魔毯飛行。」

從全國幼稚園學生乃至九十歲阿公提交的數百個奇特太空挑戰中，日本宇宙局挑出了十六項任務，飛毯實驗就是其中之一。

若田的另一個挑戰是展示如何在無重力的環境下滴眼藥水，他擠出一小滴液體，讓其附著在眼藥水瓶口的尖端，然後再小心地把這滴眼藥水滴進眼睛裡。

若田還處理了在無重力狀態下折衣服的棘手任務，他努力折了一件襯衫後，又挑戰更高難度的動作，就是折一件飄在空中的藍色太空衣的袖子和褲管。

五月十五日，他在國際太空站上的日本實驗室「希望艙」中，表演了這一系列奇特的任務；他四月時也曾執行伏地挺身等挑戰。

表演影片請見：http://iss.jaxa.jp/library/video/omoshiro_090515.php。

(法新社/翻譯：袁星慶)

TODAY'S WORDS 今日單字

1. gravity / græv t / n.

重力 (zhong4 li4)

例：Astronauts have to get used to doing everything without gravity.

(太空人必須習慣在無重力狀態下做任何事。)

2. offbeat / f,bit/ adj.

不尋常的 (bu4 xun2 chang2 de5)

例：Ivor just sat at the back of the lecture hall and made off-beat comments about the speakers.

(艾佛就坐在講堂的后排，對講者提出一些不尋常的評論。)

3. awkward / kw d/ adj.

棘手的 (ji2 shou3 de5)，尷尬的 (gan1 ga4 de5)

例：Apart from a few awkward moments, my date with Teresa went very well.

(除了幾個尷尬的片刻外，我和泰瑞莎的約會很順利。)

OUT LOUD 對話練習

Bruce: Have you decided what to do for your art project yet?

Ethan: Yes. I'm going to create an empty room with white walls. It will be totally **off-the-wall**.

Bruce: Somebody did that years ago.

Ethan: Really? How about if I put a dead animal in a jar of chemicals?

Bruce: Somebody's done that as well.

Ethan: So what can I do?

Bruce: You could try painting a picture using paint and canvas.

Ethan: What a brilliant idea! You're a genius!

布魯斯：你決定藝術企劃要做什么了嗎？

伊森：嗯，我要打造一個都是白牆的空房間。那一定會很與眾不同。

布魯斯：那個幾年前就有人做過了。

伊森：真的嗎？那把一個動物屍體放在一罐化學溶劑裡面呢？

布魯斯：那也有人做過了。

伊森：那我還能做什麼？

布魯斯：你可以試著用顏料和畫布畫一幅畫。

伊森：這個主意太好了！你真是個天才！

IDIOM POINT 重要片語

off-the-wall 奇特的

If something is **off-the-wall**, it is strange or unusual. In the article, the tasks set for the astronaut are **off-the-wall**.

Examples: "The show featured a number of **off-the-wall** performances, but my favorite was the performing seals."

若用「off-the-wall」形容某事，就表示那是一件奇怪或不尋常的事情。文章中提到，民眾對太空人提出的任務都很奇特。

例如：「這個節目以一些奇特的演出為特色，不過我最喜歡的是海豹秀。」