

# Boeing to launch astronaut capsule

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**Online Desk:** After years of delays and stumbles, Boeing is finally poised to launch astronauts to the International Space Station for NASA.

It's the first flight of Boeing's Starliner capsule with a crew on board, a pair of NASA pilots who will check out the spacecraft during the test drive and a weeklong stay at the space station, according to an AP report.

NASA turned to US companies for astronaut rides after the space shuttles were retired. Elon Musk's SpaceX has made nine taxi trips for NASA since 2020, while Boeing has managed only a pair of unoccupied test flights.

Boeing programme manager Mark Nappi wishes Starliner was further along. "There's no doubt about that, but we're here now."

The company's long-awaited astronaut demo is slated for liftoff Monday night.

Provided this tryout goes well, NASA will alternate between Boeing and SpaceX to get astronauts to and from the space station.

## THE CAPSULE

White with black and blue trim, Boeing's Starliner capsule is about 10 feet (3 meters) tall and 15 feet (4.5 meters) in diameter. It can fit up to seven people, though NASA crews typically will number four. The company settled on the name Starliner nearly a decade ago, a twist on the name of Boeing's early Stratoliner and the current Dreamliner.

The first, in 2019, was hit with software trouble so severe that its empty capsule couldn't reach the station until the second try in 2022. Then last summer, weak parachutes and flammable tape cropped up that needed to be fixed or removed.