

Intelligent Robots To Be A Larger Part Of Space Exploration

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Meet Gromit and K-9. They are the two latest robots NASA is using to help improve space exploration. Although they may look similar to the robots already on Mars, Gromit and K-9 have much more complex, built-in intelligence.

Loaded with sophisticated software, cameras and spectrometers, these robots can do in 15 minutes what now takes three days.

Dr. Liam Pederson is a researcher for NASA. "So that robot there can go to one rock every 15 minutes and actually go to a whole bunch of them and really systematically explore Mars and look for life in a manner which we can't yet do with the vehicles there."

The new robots can take samples, gather information and record images. The data can be sent back to Earth almost instantaneously, giving scientists vital information much more quickly. Gromit can even talk with astronauts by voice recognition.

The goal is to develop many more high-tech robots before the next mission to the moon in roughly 12 more years. If successful, the robots will have enough autonomy and artificial intelligence to take space exploration further than ever before.

NASA scientist David Smith explains. "That's really our job here is to do the stuff that's, you know, out a little bit beyond the horizon and demonstrate that we can actually make it work."

The robots will be able to build habitats for future human pioneers, pinpoint promising target regions for joint human-machine exploration and even warn of potentially dangerous areas that might be OK for a machine, but too perilous for humans to approach.

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