

Robot buddy to keep Japan astronaut company

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File picture. Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata (L) will be joined at the International Space Station by a small humanoid robot that can talk to provide conversational company.

A small humanoid robot that can talk will be sent into space to provide conversational company for a Japanese astronaut on a six-month mission, according to new plans.

The miniature robot will arrive at the [International Space Station](#) next summer, a few months ahead of astronaut Koichi Wakata, Japan's Kibo (Hope) [Robot Project](#) office said.

At 34 centimetres (13.4 inches) tall and weighing about one kilogram (2.2 pounds), the little [android](#) is programmed to recognise Wakata's face and to communicate in Japanese, the project office said, adding that it will also take photos during the trip.



This drawing sketched by Japanese robot creator Tomotaka Takahashi and released by Kibo Robot Project on November 29, 2012 shows a small robot which will be taken into space with Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata. At 34 centimetres (13.4 inches) tall and weighing about one kilogram (2.2 pounds), the little android is programmed to recognise Wakata's face and to communicate in

Japanese.

The robot will send information to Earth from the Japanese Kibo laboratory on the space station, where it will spend its time while Wakata is busy carrying out his mission as ISS commander.

A cartoon sketch of the space buddy was released on Thursday and showed a black-and-silver figure with bright red boots.

Mission organisers are asking for suggestions from the public for a name for the robot, which will also have a twin brother on Earth doing public relations.

A team of Tokyo University researchers, leading advertising agency Dentsu and robot creator Tomotaka Takahashi are organising the project.

The project's website can be found at: kibo-robo.jp/

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