

Office of The United States Commissioner General
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ASTRONAUT SPACE COUCHES

The six Mercury couches on display here were individually tailored to fit the particular astronaut who used them. They are actual "flight-ready" couches from the Mercury program. Each couch consists of a crushable aluminum honeycomb material and the glass fiber shell and liner. As with the Apollo couches, each was made in sections so that it could be installed in the spacecraft through the hatch opening.

The couches shown in the center are from the Gemini and Apollo programs. The Gemini couch was made in one complete unit which could also serve as an emergency ejection seat. A survival pack for each Gemini crewman could be stowed in a rectangular-shaped cavity in the back of the spacecraft seat, his personal parachute and survival pack — both being strapped to him — are at the same time pulled along.

The Apollo couch is the center couch from the Apollo 008, the spacecraft used in the critical thermovacuum testing program preliminary to the test launch of the first Apollo flight in February, 1966.

Space couches were carefully designed to protect the astronauts during the launch, reentry and landing phases of the mission. They were designed to prevent loss of consciousness during peak acceleration periods and to avoid injury at impact.