Training for a mission is as important for astronauts as the integrity of the
spacesuits they wear to venture into the vacuum of space. One preflight training program called the Crew Equipment Interface Test, or CEIT,
is held at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, prior to every mission. DAVE ANDREWS: CEIT is a test we do every flow and it basically gives the opportunity for the flight crew to
come down to see their actual vehicle they're going to fly in and for the first-time fliers it might
be the first time they've seen the actual shuttle they're going to fly in, or just the shuttle in itself.
NARRATOR: For two days the crew has a chance to get hands-on training with the actual tools,
equipment and hardware they'll be using in while in orbit. DAVE ANDREWS: It's a good training exercise both for the crew, and for the in-flight maintenance folks that
come down here for CEIT as well, and they verify their on-orbit procedures as well.
NARRATOR: Even as the Space Shuttle Program comes to a close,
CEIT remains a mainstay and an essential part of flight preparation,
but every flight requires a specific training that focuses on the mission's objectives.
DAVE ANDREWS: In essence CEIT has been the same. Obviously every mission has been different; the vehicle has been configured differently over all the years.

And so every CEIT is a little unique in that it incorporates the latest changes to the orbiter.

NARRATOR: The crew, often dressed in clean room gear known as bunny suits, has a chance to climb into the vehicle and touch the actual dials, levers and switches they'll be using in flight.

Astronauts from other space agencies also travel to Kennedy for their training.

DAVE ANDREWS: There are times when the astronauts have come down here to KSC for the first time, especially when there's people that are flying in from abroad like from Canada or Japan or some or our partners,

so they come down here. It's an all brand new experience for them.

A lot of times when they come down here they want to look at everything, touch everything,

be involved with everything so they really get a feeling what it is to be in and around a space shuttle.

NARRATOR: From cable routing and tool stowage, to tile inspection and practicing in-flight maintenance tasks,

CEIT makes the crew members better prepared to carry out their mission.
DAVE ANDREWS: Well, one of the unique things of working with this group is we do meet the astronauts
and occasionally we get to know them on a personal level.

When the shuttle goes off we're with them and we say 'Godspeed' and hope to see them back there on the
backside.

Every mission you get that lump in our throat because it's more than just an expendable vehicle,
we got the astronauts on board, which makes it pretty unique.

NARRATOR: Every shuttle crew may be familiar with the vehicle and its equipment, thanks to mock-ups,
virtual reality tools and other hardware training instruments at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston,
but there is no substitute for training with the actual vehicle that will carry them into orbit.

DAVE ANDREWS: We try to do everything here on the ground to make everything, I'll say perfect,
or as close to perfect as we can get it so there's no issues on orbit for the crew to have to go work.

It makes us feel proud when the crew comes back and thanks us, which they do almost after every flight.

We all feel good about that and we give everybody a group hug.