

SPACE JUNK

1 In 2006 there was a panic at the International Space Station. It occurred when an astronaut was fixing a new part to the outside of the station. As he tried to bolt it on, the nut slipped from his grip. It drifted away. So what? Why did they panic?

2 Well, this was not just an ordinary metal nut. It was a metal nut travelling at more than 28,000 km per hour! That's ten times faster than a bullet. Can you guess what that would do to anything it hit? It would definitely punch a hole in a spacecraft. I don't want to think what it

would do to anyone inside. This is just one example of the thousands of pieces of space junk orbiting the Earth.

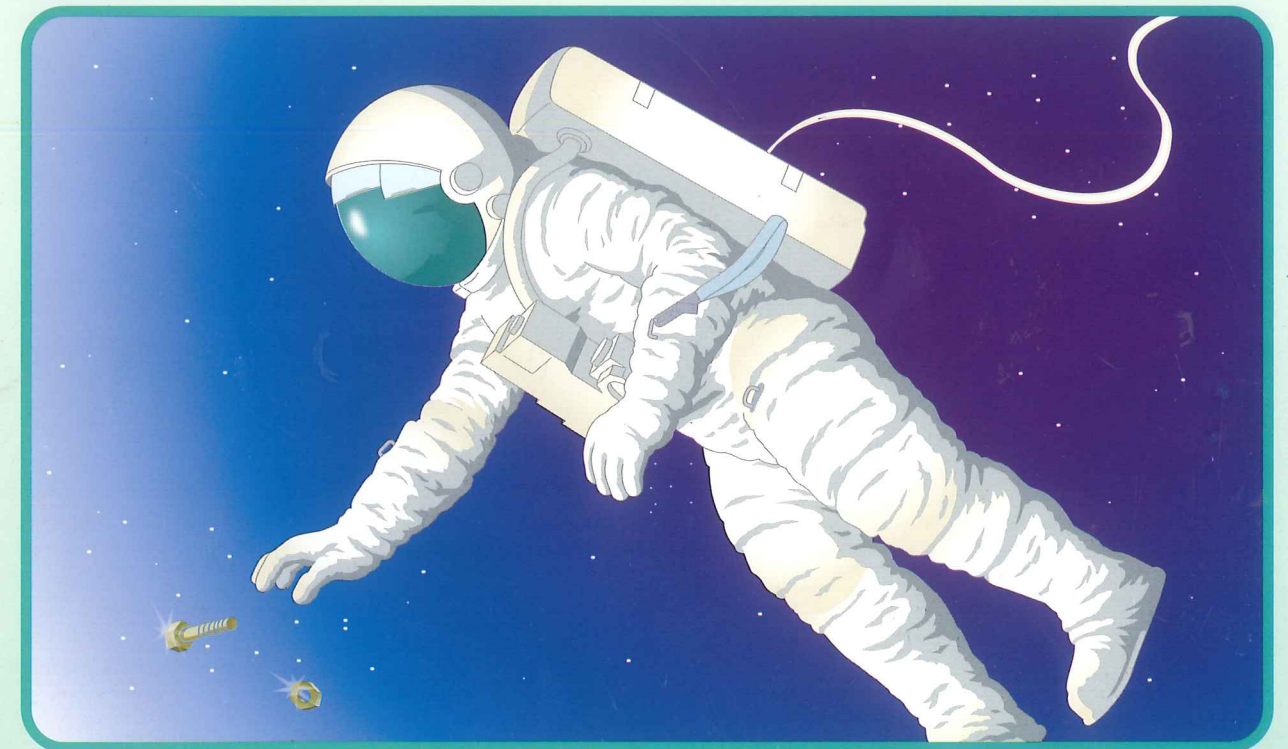
3 In 1965, an American astronaut lost the glove from his spacesuit. This glove stayed in orbit for about a month. For a short time it was the most dangerous piece of clothing in history. That was one glove you wouldn't want to slap you in the face.

4 Space junk is now a major problem. We have so many bits and pieces floating around up there that the space shuttle has to keep changing its course. Even tiny pieces can do a lot of damage. A few years ago a high-speed speck of paint cut a small piece out of a shuttle's window. I wonder what a metal nut could do?

5 So where does all this junk go? Some of it remains in orbit. The oldest piece is the satellite Vanguard 1. It was launched by the US in 1958. Who knows, it might be spinning for another fifty years.

6 Some pieces of space junk crash back to Earth. Now that's a comforting thought! Most burn up as they re-enter the Earth's atmosphere. Others don't. In 1979, the space station Skylab fell from space. Large pieces landed in the Indian Ocean and Australia. Luckily, no one was hurt.

7 Did you know that you can be buried in space? Several companies will send your ashes into space in little jars. They will even send your favourite ring or watch. This just adds to the garbage spinning around up there.



- 8 Any piece of junk larger than a tennis ball is now tracked from Earth. This is to stop crashes when spacecraft are launched. We are now keeping track of about ten thousand pieces.

It's probably time that we tried to keep space junk-free, wouldn't you agree?



Questions

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 What came loose when they were working on the International Space Station?
a a nut
b a glove
c a paint speck | 4 Space junk is most dangerous because of
a the size of it.
b the amount of it.
c the speed it can travel. |
| 2 What is the oldest piece of space junk?
a Skylab
b Vanguard 1
c International Space Station | 5 Why are we tracking the space junk?
a to keep count of the pieces
b to avoid collisions with spacecraft
c to keep track of people's ashes in space |
| 3 Skylab crashed in
a 1965.
b 1979.
c 2006. | 6 Our problems with space junk are
a increasing.
b decreasing.
c remaining the same. |

Vocabulary

Match the words from the text to the clues. The brackets show the text sections ().

course ordinary occurred
launched atmosphere

- 7 Took place or happened (1)
8 Normal or usual (2)
9 The path or direction taken (4)
10 The mass of gases around Earth (6)
11 Took off or departed (8)

Grammar

Find an **adjective** (a word to describe a noun) in these sentences.

- 12 This was not just a metal nut.
13 A large spaceship orbited the Earth.
14 They will even send your favourite ring or watch.
15 The oldest piece is the satellite *Vanguard 1*.

Back To The Text...

- 16 Space Junk is becoming a major problem for spacecraft.
a true b false
17 In which part of the library would you find this text?
a sport b science

- 18 The illustration on page 3 is described in
a section 6.
b section 7.

Cloze

Meteor Moves

Choose from the following words to complete this cloze passage.

asteroids pieces meteorites
damage space

Bits of space junk are not the only items in space that can damage a spacecraft. Meteors can also cause major 19. Meteors are large 20 of iron or rock that have broken away from comets or 21. They fly through 22 at great speed. Pieces of a meteorite that land on Earth are called 23.

Challenge Option

Research: Find and list 5 films set in space.

