

How High?

Order these objects
in order of distance
away from the
surface of the Earth

Answers overleaf...



363,000 to 405,000 km
(approx 240,000 miles)

This astronomical body is Earth's only natural satellite. Without this natural satellite life on Earth would be very different indeed as it effects the tides and protects us from meteorites, amongst many other things.

Only twelve humans, all American men, have explored this body, all between the years of 1969-1972. This distance was very important in working out how to achieve this goal before the end of that decade.



250 miles \approx 400 km

At this distance, satellites orbit the Earth once every 90 minutes. This means that astronauts experience 16 sunrises and sunsets every 24 hours.

This distance is known as *low Earth orbit* and is important as it is the smallest distance at which human spacecraft can safely orbit the Earth.

This spacecraft is the size of two football pitches and has been permanently manned since 2000.



50 miles

This figure is actually rather arbitrary and disputable as there is no definitive line or marking, instead rather more of a blurring.

It will however be important to private space companies seeking to claim to be able to provide trips into space.

Beyond Earth's environment there is no air or pressure meaning that aeroplanes or jet engines would no longer function.



35,000 feet = 6.62 miles

This distance is important as it is the optimal height at which aeroplanes fly.

In the higher altitudes the air is thinner so there is less drag on the aeroplane meaning greater fuel efficiency and increased speeds (shorter travel time). However, this is negated by the need for air intake into the jet engines so a compromise is reached at this altitude.

How High?

These objects are ranked by distances from Earth's surface (from the bottom up)



2,537,000 light years

1 light year $\approx 5.879 \times 10^{12}$ miles

1 light second $\approx 186,000$ miles

Of the 100 billion galaxies in the universe, this is the closest to us.

This distance is important because this galaxy is travelling towards our own and will one day collide with ours.

This galaxy is a spiral galaxy and contains around 1 trillion stars.



4.367 light years

1 light year $\approx 5.879 \times 10^{12}$ miles

1 light second $\approx 186,000$ miles

Beyond the solar system, this is the nearest star to Earth.

This distance is important because it is the smallest distance that light from the stars has to travel to reach us. It is also the shortest time in which light has travelled from any star to reach us on Earth.



93,000,000 miles = 1AU

AU = Astronomical Unit

This is the distance to our Sun and is important as it enables us to work out much of the science of life here on Earth.

This distance is a standard unit in astronomy and provides a guide to other distances relative to our Earth and Sun.

This distance was unknown until the 1761 Transit of Venus across the face of the Sun.



**48,000,000 to
234,000,000 miles**

These distances are the closest and farthest between this planet and the Earth. The distance varies as the Earth orbits our Sun much faster than this planet, consequently they are sometimes closer together and sometimes further apart.

These distances are extremely important in planning any space mission to this planet, and will be particularly so for any manned mission.

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