

## Life on board the International Space Station



Have you ever wondered what it's like to be on board the International Space Station? The ISS is a laboratory, 220 miles above Earth. Astronauts Julia Schwartz and Dan Carrasco describe daily life on board the spacecraft.

**Julia:** The first time you experience microgravity - the feeling of having no weight - it's so amazing, you can't believe you will ever get used to it. And you can't imagine how you will ever be able to do basic things, such as eat or wash yourself, quite apart from all the things you'll need to do as part of your job. But, you do get used to it and it's actually surprising how quickly you learn to manage.

**Dan:** Something that people are always asking us about is food and our eating habits on board the ISS. I think people have a picture in their minds of us reaching out to grab meals as they float past us and of course, that's not the case! But eating is a little different in space. Generally, it's not as much fun as it is on Earth. For a start, most astronauts find that they lose their sense of taste so everything we

eat - even if it's the most delicious chocolate cake - tastes like paper. Also, certain foods, for example dry food in powder form, are no good in space because they'd just float away. So we mainly eat foods that are wet so they stick to the spoon.

**Julia:** Also, there are no refrigerators on board the ISS, so obviously, we can't take a lot of fresh food with us but the food is very healthy. Our diets are carefully planned to give our bodies everything we need. Having said that, we are allowed to choose a few extra items - a favourite chocolate bar, for example. It's important when you're 220 miles out in space to have a few things that remind you of home!

**Dan:** Sleeping is pretty challenging too. Being in space is extremely tiring so it's really important that we get enough rest - we all try to get eight hours' sleep a night. We all use sleeping bags which we attach to the wall in our cabins so that we don't float around. Of course, in conditions of microgravity, you can find yourself sleeping in strange positions but we try to make going to bed as normal as possible. Each of the crew has their own little cabin - a bit like a cupboard - so we can have some privacy. Some astronauts attach pillows to their heads so they feel a bit more comfortable, and we all have our own little routines to help us get to sleep - reading and so on.

**Julia:** Everyone works hard on board the ISS so it's important to spend time relaxing. Of course we all get time off, just as we would at home. Most of my colleagues spend their free time watching movies, listening to music and doing the sort of things you would expect people to do. Personally, I prefer to spend my free time looking out of the window. The views of Earth from this distance are just amazing - especially the sunsets and sunrises - and I never get tired of them. I wish I could describe the experience to you - it's just unbelievable.

**1** Read the article quickly. Are these sentences true or false?

- 1 In the article, Julia and Dan describe mainly the things that they do as part of their job. TRUE/FALSE
- 2 According to the article, eating and sleeping in space are different to eating and sleeping on Earth. TRUE/FALSE
- 3 The astronauts never get any free time. TRUE/FALSE

**2** Read the article again and choose the correct options to complete the sentences.

- 1 According to Julia, the condition of having no weight ('microgravity')
  - is something that you never get used to.
  - starts to feel normal quite soon.
  - feels normal immediately.
- 2 Dan says that food in space
  - has very little flavour.
  - tastes the same as it does on Earth.
  - tastes better than it does on Earth.
- 3 The type of food that is most convenient in space
  - is sticky food.
  - is dry food.
  - makes astronauts think of home.
- 4 An astronaut's diet
  - is completely different from on Earth.
  - contains nothing that is unhealthy.
  - is mainly healthy.
- 5 The astronauts sleep
  - while floating around the spacecraft.
  - in a sleeping bag, in a normal position.
  - in their own little room.
- 6 Sleeping on board the ISS is not easy
  - but the astronauts do what they can to make it possible.
  - so the astronauts do other things instead, such as reading.
  - so the astronauts only sleep for a few hours every night.
- 7 In her spare time, Julia
  - watches movies and listens to music.
  - looks out of the window.
  - does the same things that she does on Earth.
- 8 Julia seems to find the experience of being on board the ISS
  - wonderful and very special.
  - strange and difficult.
  - uncomfortable and inconvenient.