

Re: In orbit, on orbit?

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.space.policy/2007-07/msg00100.html>

- *From:* Len <len@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Mon, 02 Jul 2007 19:49:55 -0700
-

On Jul 1, 8:53 pm, Sylvia Else <syl...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

NASA seems to talk about its craft being on orbit, rather than in orbit.
Anyone know the derivation of this usage?

Sylvia.

Here's my take on "in" and "on."

The Russians got to space first. Accordingly, Russian language peculiarities got there first as well.

"Idt'i" means to go, but it also means to walk. So "to go" in space somehow came out as "to walk." Similarly, the preposition "na" can mean "in" or "on." I think the idea of "space walks" and "on orbit" sounded more interesting at the start of the space age. So they kind of stuck.

I tend to use "on orbit" out of respect to the fact that the Russians got their first—even though, 50 years ago, I was heavily involved in the IGY satellite program, and therefore rooting for Vanguard and Jupiter.

Len

.