

You really know how important a clean kitchen is if you live in the same small place for weeks. Everyone needs to have a clean kitchen so they are healthy. A dirty kitchen can make people sick. Astronauts are people who travel on space ships. They need to have a very clean home. They travel far from Earth. We need clean kitchens everywhere on earth and in space.

Astronauts have to solve two problems: how to get food and how to keep their spaceship clean. They need to solve them in order to stay alive. They are in a spaceship far from Earth, and they need to take care of everything themselves. They need to be sure they have what they need to live there, because the astronauts may be in space for weeks.

Here is how they solved the food problem. At first, the astronauts took tubes of food with them into space. They would squeeze a tube and eat semi-liquid food. It did not taste great, but since they did not need to take dishes or silverware with them, they had no dishes to wash.

Today's spaceships have a bigger menu. Astronauts can eat from bowls. In fact, they take cereal and other standard foods with them. The foods are packaged in special containers to keep them fresh. They use knives, forks, and spoons. One unusual item on their table is a pair of scissors. They use the scissors to open the food packages. They can eat right from the package.

They have a kitchen on the spaceship. Its oven can heat food to 170 degrees. The kitchen has water and sets of meals that come on trays. The astronauts choose their menu before they go into space. They take a lot of food with them.

The astronauts keep bread and fresh fruits and vegetables in a special food locker. Most flights take tortillas. They package the tortillas in an oxygen-free wrap so they stay safe.

How do they keep the kitchen clean? They do not have to worry about mice or other rodents. They make sure that there are no rodents before the ship leaves. But sometimes mice travel on the ship. Those mice are part of experiments. They live in cages.

How do astronauts keep their trays clean? That is another health problem the astronauts solve. They need to stay healthy in space. To carry a lot of water to wash trays would be a lot of extra weight. They pack wet wipes in plastic bags. They use them to clean trays. So, their kitchen is clean and they stay healthy.

## Infer and Support the Main Idea – Nonfiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

*Choose the best answer for each question.*

1. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?

- a. Astronauts travel in space.
- b. Space ships are small.
- c. It is important to keep kitchens clean.
- d. Astronauts need food.

3. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?

- a. Astronauts prevent health problems.
- b. Astronauts wash their trays every day.
- c. Astronauts have many problems.
- d. Astronauts need clean trays.

2. What is the main idea of the whole passage?

- a. Space travel is challenging.
- b. Astronauts experiment.
- c. Astronauts live in small places.
- d. A clean kitchen is important.

4. What is a better title for this passage?

- a. The Clean Kitchen
- b. Astronauts in Space
- c. Food and Dishes on Spaceship
- d. Experiments in Space

5. *Write your own answer to this question. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?*

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### **TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking**

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

**Answers:** *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	c	d	a	a

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.  
Answers should include that they have to solve problems.