

INST 154
Apollo at 50
Discussion Questions
Session 13: Gemini Rendezvous and Docking

Today's discussion questions are all about decisions.

1. The Americans designed a rendezvous and docking procedure that required the astronauts to make decisions and manually fly the spacecraft for the procedure to be successful. The Soviet Union, by contrast, designed a fully automatic procedure in which the cosmonauts could intervene if necessary. Is one approach clearly superior to the other? If so, which one and why?
2. When the Gemini 6 Agena target vehicle failed to reach orbit, NASA chose to instead use Gemini 7 as a target vehicle. How did NASA know it was possible? What process did they use to make the decision? What kind of experience did they need to have before they could make decisions like that?
3. The Gemini 8 emergency that led to an early reentry required that a decision be made under very tight time pressure. What process did NASA use to make the decision to land the spacecraft early in a secondary recovery zone? How did they make that decision so quickly?