

Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances

Guiding question

Concrete → interfaces → measurement → calculation → failure → recovery.

Course map

The real phenomenon → Vocabulary and problem boundary → Course-specific system view → Mathematical relationship and reading the symbols → Worked calculations and interpretation

1 — The real phenomenon

A base site is not a point on a map. It connects landing ellipse, terrain, slope, access to ice, power, communications, dust, mobility, science, construction and separation between hazardous zones. A site that is excellent for one function can impose permanent costs on every other function.

The guiding question is: How do we choose a site that works for landing, living, working and expanding? Reasoning starts with the physical or operational function before introducing the mathematical relationship. The goal is not to accumulate terminology, but to know which quantity changes, why it changes and what becomes hazardous when it leaves its domain. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, the first task here is therefore to identify the mechanism specific to this subject before searching for an equation or reference value.

2 — Vocabulary and problem boundary

In “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, distinguish the phenomenon, available measurement, any command, the margin and the success criterion. The calculation boundary states what is included and excluded; without that boundary, a percentage, mass or time may be mathematically correct but wrong as an engineering conclusion. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, the chosen boundary also states what would otherwise be double-counted or omitted from a mission budget.

distance, network flow, power, pressurized volume, travel time, interface state and backup capacity
broken line, blocked logistics route, isolated zone, incompatible interface or backup capacity concentrated in the same location

layout mockups, segmented-network testing, rover campaigns and reconfiguration exercises

Equation - evidence - decision

$$T_{\text{total}} = \Sigma(d_i / v_i) + \Sigma t_{\text{op}}$$

Failure to test: The reference failure is not a vague “broken component.” For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, test in particular broken line, blocked logistics route, isolated zone, incompatible interface or backup capacity concentrated in the same location. Diagnosis asks which symptoms appear first, which are only consequences and which action preserves the most options.

Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances

3 — Course-specific system view

This lesson does not reuse one generic picture for every subject. The system view follows cause → measured quantity → decision or physical response → limit for “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”. The English text remains fully equivalent while large translated illustrations are intentionally deferred until their dedicated artwork is supplied. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, the system view must expose inputs, outputs, measured quantity and the consequence of drift without relying on a generic module diagram.

4 — Mathematical relationship and reading the symbols

Read aloud : total time equals the sum of each distance divided by its speed, plus operation times.

Before substituting numbers, write the unit of every term, state whether the relationship is a physical law, approximation or project indicator, and check dimensional consistency. This is especially important here because “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances” combines quantities that do not all have the same evidence status. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, this relationship is chosen because of the phenomenon under study; a different dominant quantity would require a different equation or model.

5 — Worked calculations and interpretation

12 km ÷ 6 km/h = 2 h outbound; 4 h round trip before stops

80 m vertical rise ÷ 2,000 m projected horizontal distance = 0.04 = 4%

5 trips × 18 km = 90 km of driving for one campaign

1. 1. Traverse 12 km ÷ 6 km/h = 2 h outbound; 4 h round trip before stops Interpretation: this result is used only after comparison with units, margin and the scenario boundary for “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”.

2. 2. Average grade 80 m vertical rise ÷ 2,000 m projected horizontal distance = 0.04 = 4% Interpretation: this result is used only after comparison with units, margin and the scenario boundary for “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”.

3. 3. Logistics distance 5 trips × 18 km = 90 km of driving for one campaign Interpretation: this result is used only after comparison with units, margin and the scenario boundary for “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”.

Operational table

Phenomena / sections: 3 — Course-specific system view ; 4 — Mathematical relationship and reading the symbols ; 5 — Worked calculations and interpretation

Relationship to revisit: $T_{\text{total}} = \sum(d_i / v_i) + \sum t_{\text{op}}$

Expected decision: measure → compare with margin → choose nominal, degraded or stop

Check before continuing

Explain without rereading: 3 — Course-specific system view ; 4 — Mathematical relationship and reading the symbols ; 5 — Worked calculations and interpretation. State one measured quantity, one margin and one possible decision.

Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances

6 — What the formula does not contain

The relationship “ $T_{total} = \sum(d_i / v_i) + \sum t_{op}$ ” does not by itself contain all of “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”. It does not automatically tell us whether a sensor is valid, a structure is aging, a resource is accessible, a command arrives in time or a secondary failure removes margin. The example $12\text{ km} \div 6\text{ km/h} = 2\text{ h}$ outbound; 4 h round trip before stops therefore remains a local calculation rather than a complete architecture.

To make the model useful, explicitly add the quantities that dominate this subject: distance, network flow, power, pressurized volume, travel time, interface state and backup capacity. We can then ask which variation truly changes the result, which is negligible and which forces an architectural change. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, this model limitation states exactly what a correct calculation still cannot establish about the real system.

7 — Instrumentation, observability and data quality

For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, observability relies on distance, network flow, power, pressurized volume, travel time, interface state and backup capacity. Each datum has a unit, acquisition rate, uncertainty, timestamp and validity domain. A value arriving without context can be more dangerous than no measurement because it creates unjustified confidence.

Consistency is checked with at least one independent piece of information when the function is critical. A trend, physical balance or second measurement principle helps distinguish a real system change from a drifting sensor. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, the selected instrumentation must distinguish a real physical change from sensor drift or a bad state estimate.

8 — Phenomenon-specific failures and recovery

The reference failure is not a vague “broken component.” For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, test in particular broken line, blocked logistics route, isolated zone, incompatible interface or backup capacity concentrated in the same location. Diagnosis asks which symptoms appear first, which are only consequences and which action preserves the most options.

The degraded mode must be defined before failure: minimum function, allowable duration, consumed stock, crew action, abort condition and return-to-nominal criterion. That sequence is topic-specific and cannot be replaced by one universal paragraph about redundancy. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, the degraded mode is defined around the minimum function specific to this subject, with an abort threshold and a return-to-nominal condition.

Operational table

Phenomena / sections:	6 — What the formula does not contain ; 7 — Instrumentation, observability and data quality ; 8 — Phenomenon-specific failures and recovery
Relationship to revisit:	$T_{total} = \sum(d_i / v_i) + \sum t_{op}$
Expected decision:	measure → compare with margin → choose nominal, degraded or stop

Check before continuing

Explain without rereading: 6 — What the formula does not contain ; 7 — Instrumentation, observability and data quality ; 8 — Phenomenon-specific failures and recovery. State one measured quantity, one margin and one possible decision.

Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances

9 — NASA / reference case

The operational case is treated as a production or service chain: input resource, machine, intermediate storage, quality control, maintenance and final user. NASA ISRU, autonomy and manufacturing work helps separate a technology demonstration from a truly available Mars industrial capability.

The case is used only within what it actually demonstrates. Flight measurement, human-system standard, component test and architecture study are different kinds of evidence; the text therefore states what is observed, calculated, simulated or still prospective. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, the cited NASA case is used as targeted evidence for this phenomenon and is never turned into one universal Mars architecture.

10 — Architecture trade

A good solution for “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances” does not maximize one metric. Compare nominal performance, mass, energy, simplicity, maintenance, crew time, common dependencies and recoverability. An option that improves $80\text{ m rise} \div 2,000\text{ m} = 0.04 = 4\%$ can still be rejected if it makes failure detection or repair much harder.

The trade is recorded together with its assumptions. If environment data, mass or mission cadence changes, we know which conclusions must be recomputed instead of silently preserving an obsolete choice. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, the trade is evaluated against the interfaces actually touched by this subject rather than a generic list of desirable qualities.

11 — Demonstration, testing and success criteria

The evidence strategy for “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances” combines layout mockups, segmented-network testing, rover campaigns and reconfiguration exercises. Every test records exact hardware, software, configuration, environment, tolerances and success criterion. A successful demonstration outside the mission domain does not replace qualification inside it.

Evidence grows by levels: analytical relationship, simulation, component, subsystem, integrated system, duration and failure. This hierarchy prevents one spectacular test from being presented as validation of the whole mission. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, demonstration must reproduce the constraints that make this phenomenon difficult; a spectacular test outside the mission domain is insufficient.

12 — Decision exercise

Operational table

Phenomena / sections:	9 — NASA / reference case ; 10 — Architecture trade ; 11 — Demonstration, testing and success criteria
Relationship to revisit:	$T_{total} = \Sigma(d_i / v_i) + \Sigma t_{op}$
Expected decision:	measure → compare with margin → choose nominal, degraded or stop

Check before continuing

Explain without rereading: 9 — NASA / reference case ; 10 — Architecture trade ; 11 — Demonstration, testing and success criteria. State one measured quantity, one margin and one possible decision.

Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances

Situation: revisit “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances” with a 20% increase in the most penalizing quantity from the first worked example while one measurement or backup path is unavailable.

Situation: revisit “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances” with a 20% increase in the most penalizing quantity from the first worked example while one measurement or backup path is unavailable. Expected answer: recompute the relationship, identify remaining margin, check whether observability is still adequate, and decide whether degraded operation remains acceptable. Multiplying by 1.2 is not enough if the variation also changes interfaces or limits.

13 — What to retain without over-generalizing

14 — Topic-specific primary sources

These references directly document the phenomenon, technology or human constraint addressed in this lesson. They do not by themselves define an official Mars architecture. For “Selecting a Mars-base site: resources, hazards and useful distances”, the bibliography is deliberately targeted to this page so that readers can trace each claim back to the relevant primary document.

Topic-specific primary sources

NASA NTRS — Current NASA Plans for Mars In-Situ Resource Utilization - <https://ntrs.nasa.gov/citations/20180002086>

NASA NTRS — Autonomous Systems & Robotics for Surface Infrastructure - <https://ntrs.nasa.gov/citations/20210024326>

NASA — Systems Engineering Handbook - <https://www.nasa.gov/reference/systems-engineering-handbook/>

Operational table

Phenomena / sections:	13 — What to retain without over-generalizing ; 14 — Topic-specific primary sources ; Topic-specific primary sources
Relationship to revisit:	$T_{total} = \Sigma(d_i / v_i) + \Sigma t_{op}$
Expected decision:	measure → compare with margin → choose nominal, degraded or stop

Check before continuing

Explain without rereading: 13 — What to retain without over-generalizing ; 14 — Topic-specific primary sources ; Topic-specific primary sources. State one measured quantity, one margin and one possible decision.