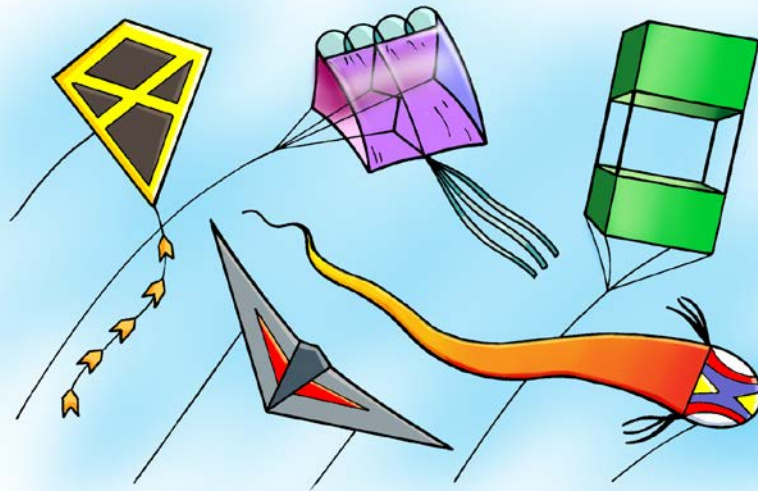


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All About Kites

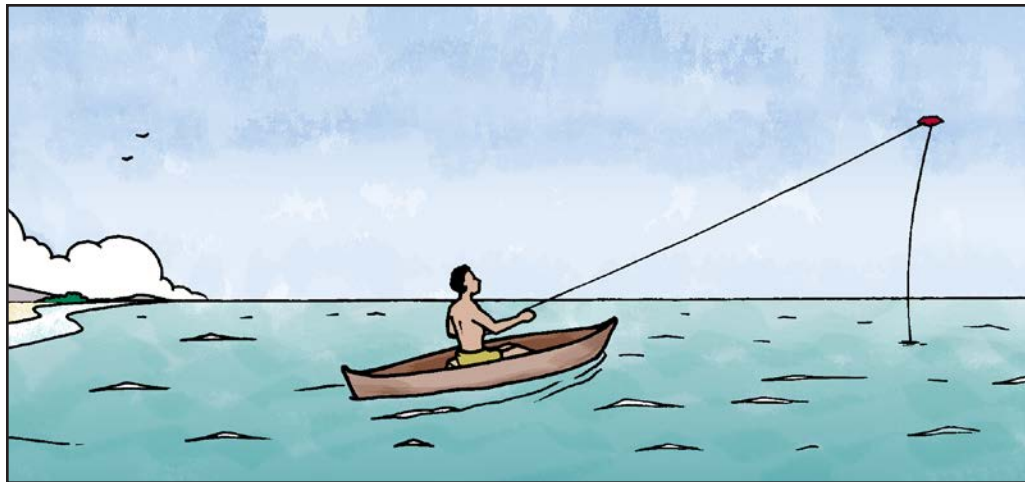


Written by Elizabeth Austin • Illustrated by Maria Voris

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All About Kites

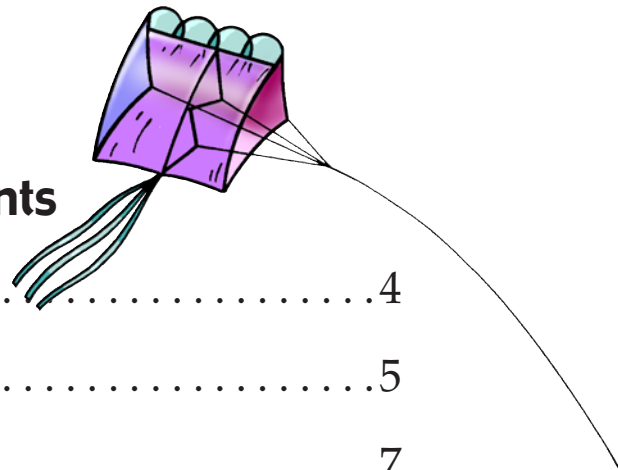


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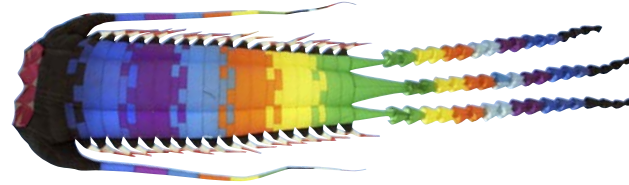
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Introduction

A kite is one of the oldest, simplest toys. People all around the world enjoy flying kites. Kites come in every size, shape, and color you can imagine. Did you know that kites are designed to be both toys and tools? Some kites are made to be art as well.

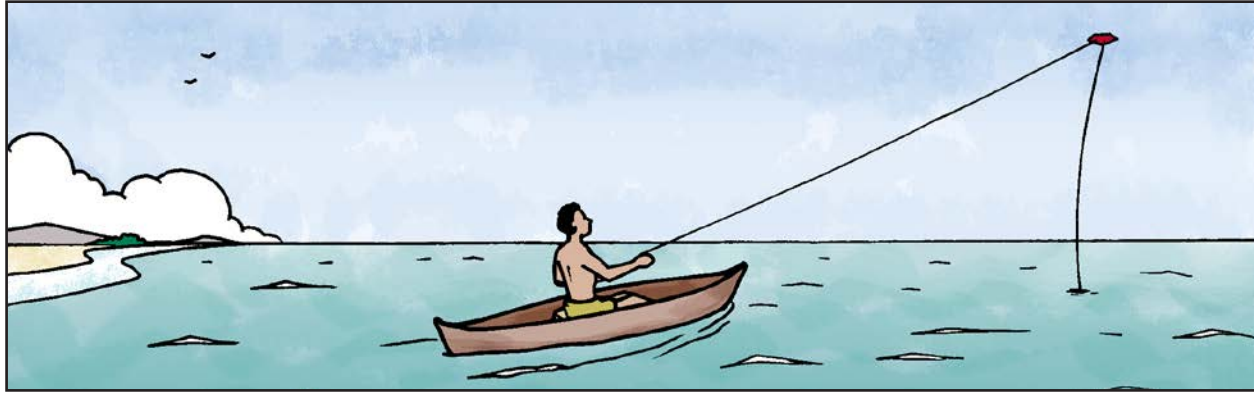
History of Kites



Kites were named after a bird with wide wings that soars high in the sky on air **currents**. No one knows who made the first kite. But Chinese writers wrote about them over 2,000 years ago. One famous Chinese legend tells a story about a man who used a kite to attack a fort. He couldn't find a way to get inside. So he tied himself to a huge kite and flew over the fort's wall! The soldiers were terrified to see a man flying, so they ran away.

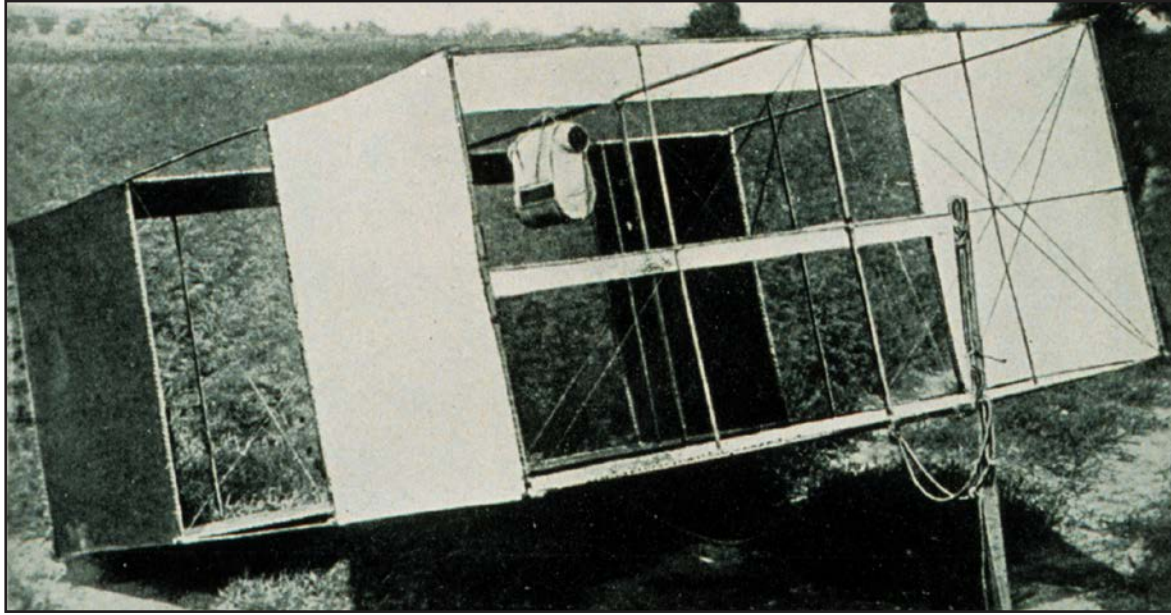
There is a famous story about the American **diplomat** and **inventor** Ben Franklin. He used a kite to prove his idea that lightning was made of electric current. He tied a metal key to a kite string. Then he and his son flew the kite during a thunderstorm. Electricity from the storm clouds ran down the wet string to the metal key. When he reached toward the key, he got a surprise. The electricity jumped from the key and gave him a **shock**! Do not try this dangerous experiment yourself. When Ben Franklin tried it again, he was hurt badly.





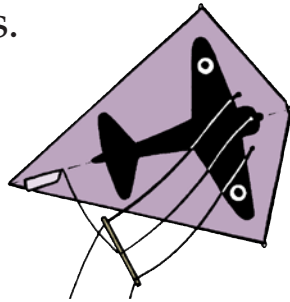
Many Uses for Kites

People sometimes used kites for fishing. They put a fishhook and bait on the long kite tail. Then they sailed the kite far from shore. The kite tail dragged in the water, so the fish could see the bait. It bit the bait and was caught, and then the kite was pulled in.



Weather kites carried scientific **instruments** into the sky. They recorded wind speed and temperature high in the clouds.

Years ago, some armies used kites with cameras attached to spy on enemy troops. Kites were also used as flying targets for shooting practice. These special kites could turn and dodge bullets, imitating the movements of fighter planes.





Today, kites are used mostly for fun. There is a kite design for everyone. You'll discover that different shapes of kites fly in different ways. Flat, diamond-shaped kites fly easily and smoothly. Rectangular box kites hang still in the air for a long time.

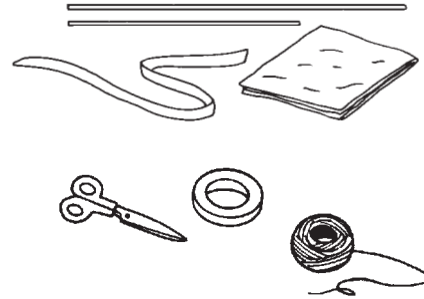
Stunt kites twist and twirl on many strings. Large **parafoil** kites are like parachutes. Giant dragon kites **flutter**. Fighting kites can be used to cut other kites' strings.



Make Your Own Kite

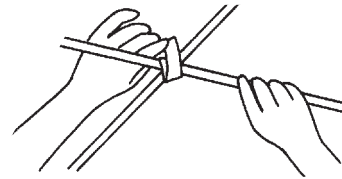
You'll need:

- two lightweight, smooth sticks, one 3 feet (90 cm) long, the other 2 feet (60 cm)
- a large plastic trash bag, cut open
- a long strip of lightweight cloth or plastic for the tail
- scissors
- strong tape
- a very long string



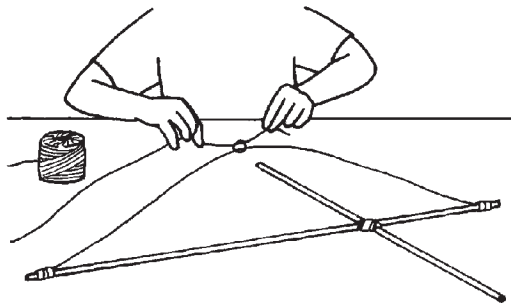
Step 1:

Form a cross shape with the sticks. Wrap tape around the sticks where they meet.



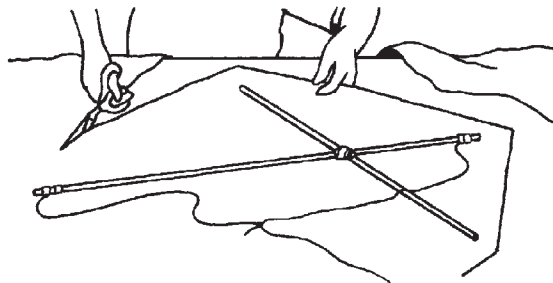
Step 2:

Cut off a 4-foot (120 cm) piece of string. Tape each end of the string to each end of the long stick. This string is called the **bridle**. Tie one end of the rest of the string to the middle of the bridle.



Step 3:

Lay the cross on the open plastic bag. Cut a diamond shape around it. Make sure to cut the diamond shape wider than the ends of the sticks.



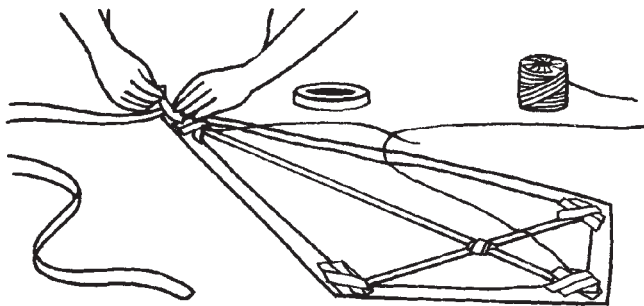
Step 4:

Fold the corners of the diamond over the ends of the sticks. Tape the corners tightly to the sticks.



Step 5:

For a tail, tape the strip of cloth or plastic to the bottom of the kite.



Kite Safety

- Remember to choose an open, safe place to fly your kite.
- Don't fly it near power lines.
- Keep it away from trees, roads, and airports.
- Don't fly a kite in the rain or when you hear thunder.
- Be sure nothing is on the ground to trip over.



On a breezy day, take your kite to a flat, open area. Be sure that there are no power lines or big trees. Look at the ground around you. Is there anything you could trip over? Hold your kite up

by the bridle and run into the wind. Let go of the kite and slowly let out some string. Then let out a little more until your kite is flying high in the sky.

Happy flying!

Glossary

currents (<i>n.</i>)	air that flows in a certain direction (p. 5)
bridle (<i>n.</i>)	a kind of harness that guides movement with ropes or strings (p. 13)
diplomat (<i>n.</i>)	a person who represents a government in meetings with other governments (p. 6)
flutter (<i>v.</i>)	to flap or vibrate in the wind (p. 10)
instruments (<i>n.</i>)	tools used for making or recording measurements (p. 8)
inventor (<i>n.</i>)	a person who invents or creates a new device or process (p. 6)
parafoil (<i>n.</i>)	a lightweight sail like a small parachute (p. 10)
shock (<i>n.</i>)	a sharp jolt when electric current touches a person's body (p. 6)

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