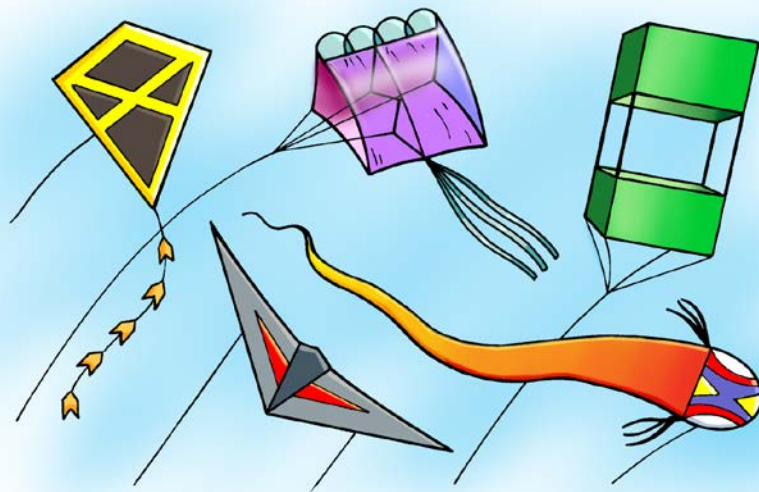


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All About Kites

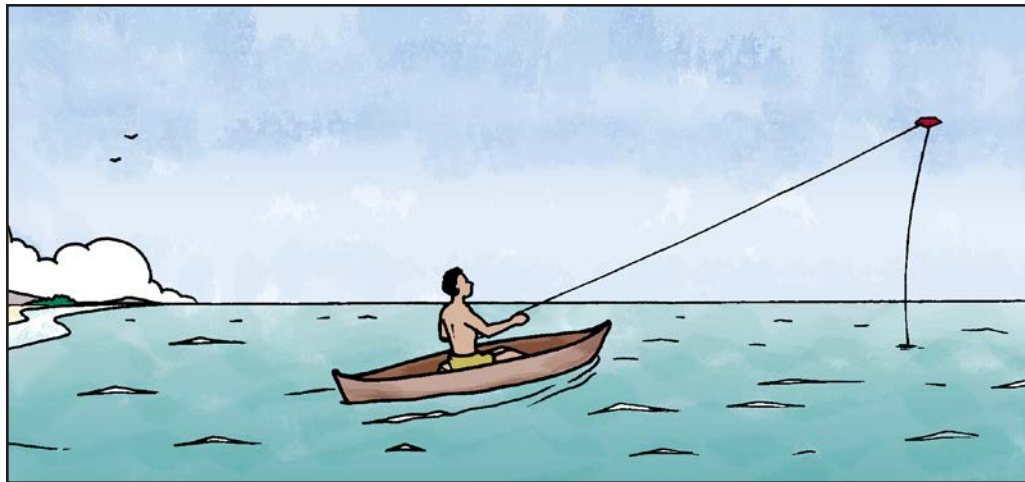


Written by Elizabeth Austin • Illustrated by Maria Voris

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All About Kites

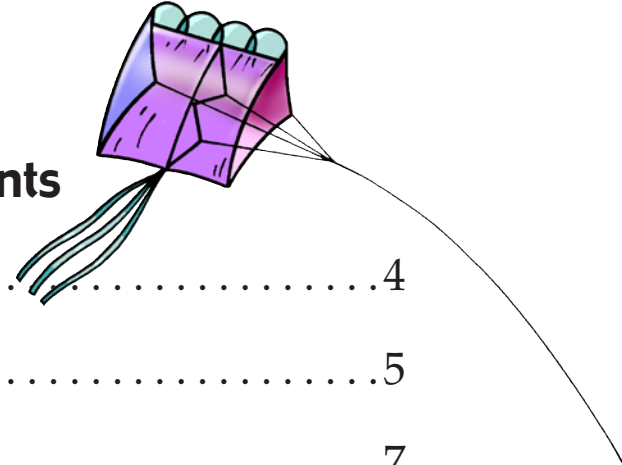


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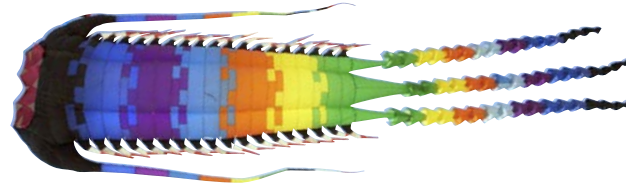
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Table of Contents



Introduction.....	4
History of Kites.....	5
Many Uses for Kites.....	7
Make Your Own Kite.....	12
Glossary	16



Introduction

A kite is one of the oldest toys. And it's very simple to make. Kites come in many sizes, shapes, and colors. Did you know that kites can be both toys and tools?

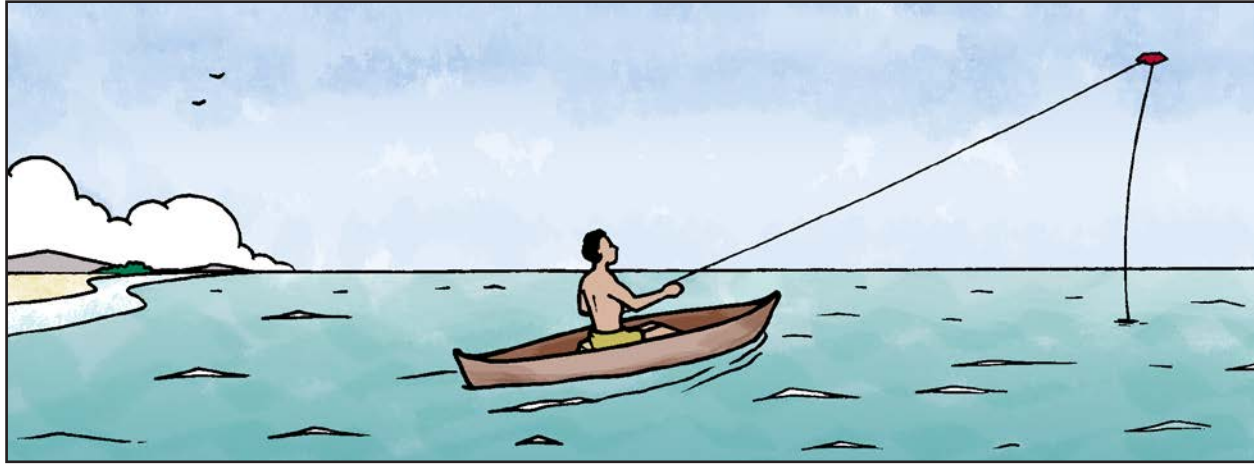


History of Kites

Kites were named after the kite bird. The kite bird has wide wings and easily floats high in the sky. No one knows who made the first kite. But one famous Chinese story about a kite was written over 2,000 years ago. The story is about a man who used a kite to attack a fort. He couldn't find a way to get inside the fort. So he tied himself to a huge kite. He flew over the wall of the fort and scared the soldiers!

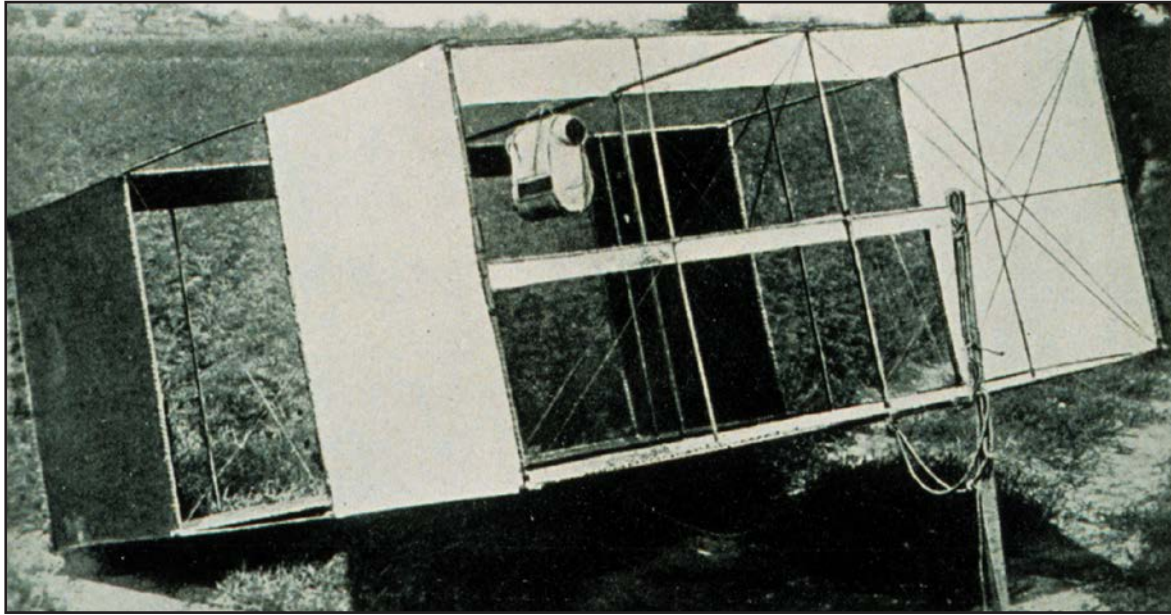
The inventor Ben Franklin had the idea that lightning was made of electricity. He wanted to prove his idea. One day when it was stormy, he tied a metal key to a kite string. Then he flew the kite up into the storm clouds. Lightning from the storm hit his kite. The electricity ran down the wet string to the metal key. When he reached for the key, he got a surprise. The electricity jumped from the key and gave him a **shock**! Do not try this yourself. It's not safe to do. When Ben Franklin tried to do it again, he was hurt badly.





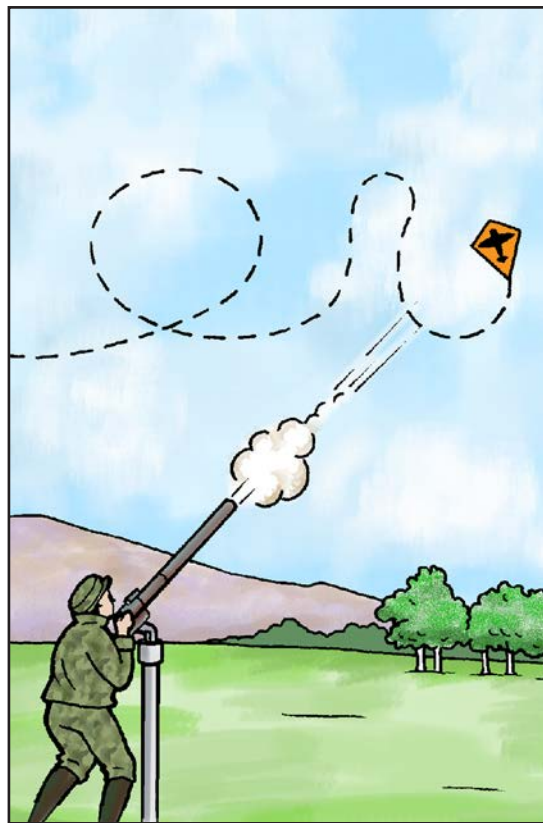
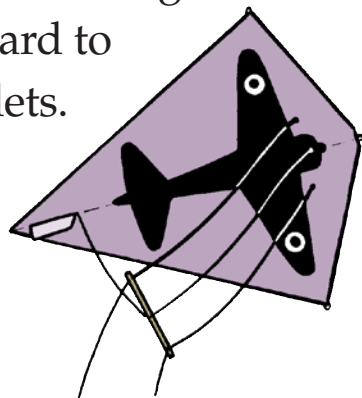
Many Uses for Kites

Some people have used kites for fishing. They put a **fishhook** and bait on the long kite tail. The kite tail dragged in the water. When a fish saw it, it bit the bait and was caught on the hook. Then the kite was pulled in.



Weather kites carried scientific **gauges** into the sky.
The gauges measured how fast the wind was blowing
and how cool the air was.

Years ago, some armies used kites with cameras to spy on enemy troops. Kites were also used as flying targets. The kites trained soldiers to aim better. Soldiers shot at the kites. The moving kites were hard to hit with bullets.



Different shapes of kites fly in different ways. Flat, diamond-shaped kites fly easily. Box-shaped kites can hang still in the air for a long time.

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

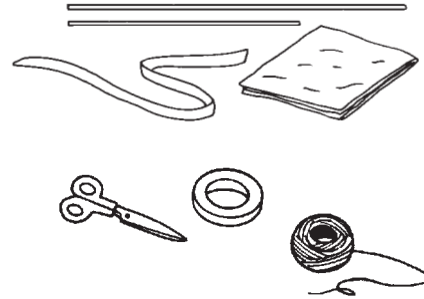




Make Your Own Kite

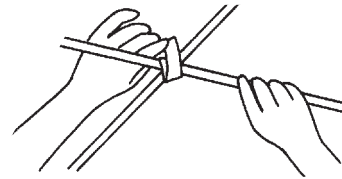
You'll need:

- 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



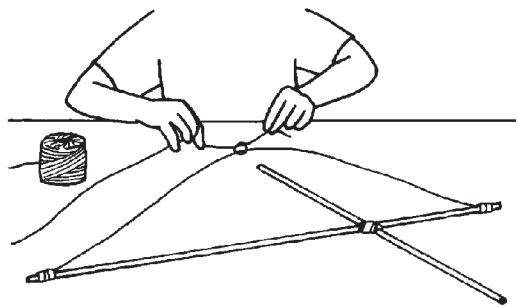
Step 1:

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



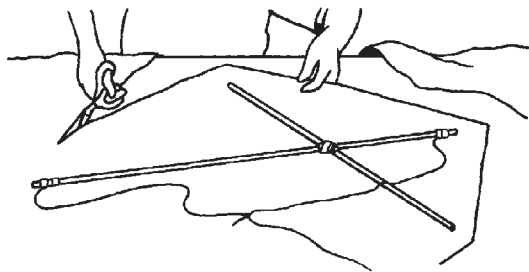
Step 2:

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.

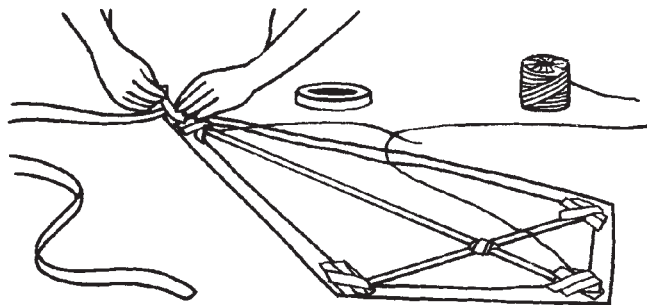


Step 4:

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 high in the sky.

Happy flying!

Glossary

bridle (<i>n.</i>)	a kind of harness that guides movement with ropes or strings (p. 13)
fishhook (<i>n.</i>)	a curved metal hook put on the end of a fishing line (p. 7)
flutter (<i>v.</i>)	to flap or vibrate in the wind (p. 10)
gauges (<i>n.</i>)	tools used to measure something, such as heat, wind, and cold (p. 8)
parafoil (<i>n.</i>)	a lightweight sail, like a small parachute (p. 10)
shock (<i>n.</i>)	a sharp jolt when electrical current touches a person's body (p. 6)

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