

Make a Parachute!

What you'll need

- Paper
- Tape
- Plastic bags, tissue paper, coffee filters & other materials for parachutes
- Scissors
- String
- Small toy (e.g. animal, LEGO figure)

Introduction

In this activity, you and your child will build parachutes to learn about drag (resistance from air), and how parachutes use drag to slow something down.

To understand the concept of drag, and how a parachute uses it, watch this video:

“Playtime with Parachutes | Physics for Kids” by SciShow Kids on YouTube:

https://youtu.be/Ab_g5sLoXoY

Search online for “parachute” and display images, so you have an idea how to build yours.

Do it!

With the knowledge of how parachutes look and work in mind, build some parachutes! The simplest form is a square of tissue paper with string tied at each corner to a toy in the middle, as shown below.

Experiment with different designs, and try dropping the toys with and without parachutes to see how well they work.

Adaptations

For Younger children

Help them with their parachutes.

For An Extra Challenge

Challenge your child to make a parachute for a heavier object.

Vocabulary

Drag: The resistance from air. Think of the pushing you feel when you stick your hand out the window while driving in a car.

Fun facts

Parachutes on Mars! NASA has used parachutes to help land rovers and probes on Mars, and plans to use a parachute as part of their landing for the 2020 Mars rover.