



Flying a Kite

*No one can tell me,
Nobody knows,
Where the wind comes from,
Where the wind goes.*

*It's flying from somewhere
As fast as it can,
I couldn't keep up with it,
Not if I ran.*

*But if I stopped holding
The string of my kite,
It would blow with the wind
For a day and a night.*

*And then when I found it,
Wherever it blew,
I should know that the wind
Had been going there too.*

*So then I could tell them
Where the wind goes...
But where the wind comes from
Nobody knows.*



Holding the String

Photo by
Kiyomi Okawa

This is a poem by A.A. Milne. He also wrote about Winnie the Pooh. The poem is sweet and a little bit spooky.

But would a scientist say it is correct? No! We do know where the wind comes from. We can measure where it goes. You will learn something about the wind when you fly your kite. Pay attention to the wind and make it your partner.

The Flying Field

First, find a safe place to fly your kite. It could be the playground at your school. Perhaps it's a park. Maybe you can go to a beach. Look around. Do you see a kite-eating tree close by? Do you see electric power lines close by? Then you should find another place to fly your kite.



Flying Field

Photo by Kiyomi Okawa

Finding the Wind

When you find a good place to fly your kite, stand still. Where is the wind? From which direction is it blowing? You may feel the wind on your face. You may see a flag flying. Leaves on a tree in the distance may move.

The wind may be very light and hard to find. Lick the tip of your finger and stick it in the air. One side of your finger will cool as the air moves against it. Or toss one blade of grass (not a handful) into the air. Watch where it flies.



Standing Still

Photo by Cathy Palmer

Time to Launch

Stand with your back to the wind. Does the wind tickle the back of your neck? Hold your kite by the bottom edge. Let out about one foot of line from the winder. Toss your kite, top up, into the air, and pull back quickly on the line. Your kite may then catch the wind and begin to climb. Let out a little more line and tug again. Watch your kite stair-step into the sky.

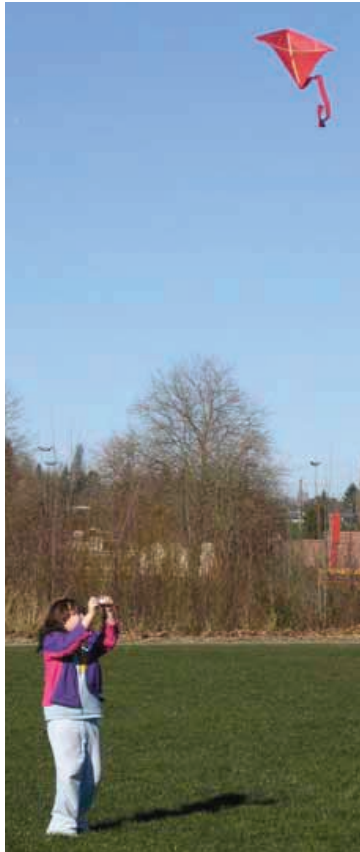


Launching

Photo by Cathy Palmer

You may need the help of a friend if the wind is very light. Stand with your back to the wind and give your friend the kite. He or she will walk about 20 feet away from you (about 5 times your height) while you unwind the kite line. Your friend will hold the kite up, with the front of its sail facing you, against the wind. Wait for a gust of wind to hit the kite. Then your friend should toss it into the air. You should tug on the line to help the kite climb. Or ask your friend to hold the kite very lightly. Pull on the line when you feel a gust of wind, and the kite will pop out of his or her hands.

Look around you if your kite still does not fly. Are you too close to a building? Are you near the bottom of a slope or a hill? A building or a hill may change the pattern of the wind. The wind will be choppy instead of even. Your kite will have a harder time finding the wind.



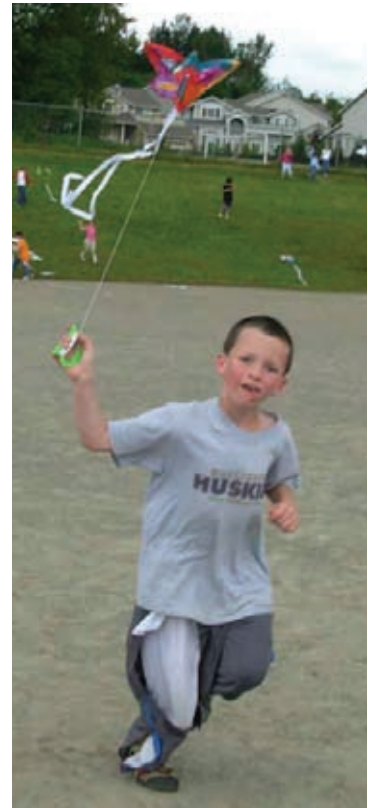
Up There *Photo by Kiyomi Okawa*

It's Up!

To see your kite flying in the air is a thrill! Why does it stay up there? Why doesn't gravity pull it to the ground? Thank the wind. Your kite flies at a tilt or angle. Air moves above and below it. Your kite is in a kind of wind sandwich. The air flows more quickly above your kite, at lower pressure. Less air pressure above your kite helps your kite rise.

Should You Run?

When the air is calm, you can make your own light wind by running. Air moves over you and your kite when you run. Running is fun. But it is not the easiest way to launch a kite. Your kite has no time to feel how the wind moves. It may dive and crash. Or you may dive and crash. Be careful if you run. You may need to run only a little to launch your kite. Or you may have to wait for a stronger wind.



Running *Photo by Cathy Palmer*

Helping the Wind

Think of the wind as dancing with your kite. Is your kite a good partner for this wind? In light wind you must fly a very light kite.



Practice

Photo by Cathy Palmer

Make your kite carefully, of light materials. Check that it is well balanced, the same on each side. Check that the tail is not too heavy. In a heavy wind you may have to add more tail or another spar.

And practice! Flying a kite is a skill. “Practice makes perfect” with any skill—shooting a basketball, baking cookies, reading a map, dancing. You don’t have to fly a kite perfectly. Just improve your skill by practicing.

Key Vocabulary for the reading

Balanced: equal; in a state of equilibrium or stability

Calm: still; motionless

Gravity: the natural force of attraction from a body such as earth upon objects at or near its surface. Gravity draws these objects toward the center of the body.

Launch: to set in motion; to give something a start

Pressure: force by one body upon another that it is touching



Photo by Kiyomi Okawa

Spar: one of the parts of the kite frame

Spooky: mysterious; eerie