



Making a Kite

Have you ever made a kite? Some artists make kites with fancy shapes and many sticks, or spars. The artist who made this kite sees an object that he likes.



Dragon Bones

Photo by Buteo Huang

Then he wonders, “Can I make a kite in that shape that will fly?” His kite is 270 feet long. Five people worked for six months to build it.



Dragon Kite

Photo by Buteo Huang

The kite you make need not be fancy. Children all around the world make kites with simple shapes. They use a few sticks, scrap paper, glue, and string. What materials do you plan to use? You must also plan for the wind that will lift your kite.

What Materials?

People living in different places around the world can find different materials near their homes. Long ago Polynesians made kites from leaves. They hung hooks from the kite lines to catch fish.

People who live in Asia use bamboo to make frames for their kites. Bamboo is light and easy to find. It also bends easily.



Kite maker with bamboo

*Photo by
Drachen Foundation*



Colorful paper

Photo by Kiyomi Okawa

Many kite makers use paper for their kite sails. Paper is light, and it can be strong. Paper also comes in many bright colors.

Today kite makers may buy ripstop nylon and carbon fiber rods to make



Sport Kite

Photo by Kiyomi Okawa

sport kites. Sport kites must fly fast and make sharp turns.

But you need only simple materials to make a simple kite. Look for paper or plastic for the kite sail, or skin. You can use light sticks or even straws for the spars. Your flying line can be thread or string.

Matching Materials to the Wind

You must also think about the wind where you will fly your kite. You may be able to find materials in a catalog from anywhere around the world. But you can't order wind on the Worldwide Web!

The wind where you live may change from season to season. And winds are different in different parts of the world. In many places, kite flying takes place only when the wind is steady. In Guatemala, some children and adults fly kites in the



Giant Kite in Guatemala

Photo by Ben Ruhe

fall, for Day of the Dead. In China, people fly kites during The Festival of Ascending on High, in early September when it is windy. Springtime, during the Qingming Festival, is another good time to fly kites in China.



Strong wind in Taiwan

Photo by Cathy Palmer

Your kite should match the wind where you will fly it. If the wind is light, your kite should be very light, too. Your kite frame should be light and strong. You may have to tug on your kite line to get your kite into the air. You can make a heavier frame

if the wind is stronger. These children in Taiwan added extra spars to adapt a light kite to a strong wind.

On some days there is no wind. The air does not move at all. How can you fly your kite? To fly a kite you need at least a little wind. Better go for a walk or play a different game. Come back to fly your kite another day.

Key Vocabulary for the reading

Adapt: make suitable or fit for a specific use or situation

Bamboo: the woody stem of the bamboo plant (which is a grass). The stem is jointed and often hollow.

Carbon Fiber: a light, strong material used in all kinds of structures, from bicycles to fishing rods to airplanes to kites

Frame: the support structure for the kite

Lift: the upward force acting on a kite because it is deflecting the wind

Ripstop nylon: a kind of fabric that is lightweight and strong. It does not tear easily, and it comes in many colors.

Sail: the material that covers the frame

Spar: (stick): one of the parts of the frame

Tail: like the tail of an animal in that a kite tail extends beyond the main part of the kite frame and is often elongated



Harvested Bamboo

Photo by
Daniela Zitzmann