

Wilbur and Orville Wright: The First Airplane

今では飛行機に乗って遠くの国へ行くことができますが、かつて空を飛ぶことは多くの人にとって夢のような話でした。アメリカのライト兄弟は、その夢を実現しようと、機体を工夫しながら飛行実験を重ねました。新しい技術が生まれるまでには、数々の失敗や試行錯誤もあったことでしょう。空を自由に飛べるとしたら、あなたはどんな体験をしてみたいですか。また、私たちの暮らしを大きく変えた発明には、ほかにどのようなものがあるでしょうか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Wilbur and Orville Wright are the American inventors who made a small engine-powered flying machine. They proved that flight without the aid of gas-filled balloons was possible.

Wilbur Wright was born in 1867 near Melville, Indiana. His brother Orville was born four years later in Dayton, Ohio.

As they grew up, the Wright brothers experimented with mechanical things. Later, the Wright brothers began to design their own flying machine. They used ideas they had developed from earlier experiments with a toy helicopter, kites, the printing machine and bicycles.

Soon, they needed a place to test their ideas about flight. The best place with the best wind conditions seemed to be a piece of sandy land in North Carolina along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. It was called Kill Devil Hill, near the town of Kitty Hawk.

The Wright brothers did many tests with gliders at Kitty Hawk. With these tests, they learned how to solve many problems.

By the autumn of 1903, Wilbur and Orville had designed and built an airplane powered by a gasoline engine. The plane had wings 12 meters across. It weighed about 340 kilograms, including the pilot.

On December 17th, 1903, they made the world's first [flight](#) in a machine that was heavier than air and powered by an engine. Orville flew the plane 36 meters. He was in the air for 12 seconds. The two brothers made three more flights that day.

Four other men watched the Wright brothers' first flights. One of the men took pictures. Few newspapers, however, noted the event.

It was almost five years before the Wright brothers became famous. In 1908, Wilbur went to France. He gave demonstration flights at heights of 90 meters. A French company agreed to begin making the Wright brothers' flying machine.

Orville made successful flights in the United States at the time Wilbur was in France. The United States War Department agreed to buy a Wright brothers' plane. Wilbur and Orville suddenly became world heroes. But the brothers were not seeking fame. They returned to Dayton where they continued to [improve](#) their airplanes. They taught many others how to fly.

Wilbur Wright died of typhoid fever in 1912. Orville Wright continued designing and inventing until he died many years later, in 1948.

Today, the Wright brothers' first airplane is in the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. Visitors to the museum can look at the Wright brothers' small plane. Then they can walk to another area and see space vehicles and a rock collected from the moon. The world has changed a lot since Wilbur and Orville Wright began the modern age of flight over one hundred years ago.

Marilyn Rice Christiano wrote this story for VOA Learning English. John Russell adapted it.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. develop (verb.) to make something grow or become more advanced

My classmates and I developed a robot to pick up and carry a small box.

2. experiment (noun.) a test done to see if an idea is correct

The college students did a science experiment to learn more about the weather.

3. condition (noun.) something that affects how a situation or activity happens

The road up the mountain was closed because of dangerous conditions.

4. flight (noun.) a trip through the air

Our flight to Singapore leaves at noon tomorrow.

5. improve (verb.) to make something better

Kazuya sends English emails to his classmates every day to improve his writing.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. Why did the Wright brothers choose Kill Devil Hill for their tests?
2. How long did Orville's first flight last?
3. Where can you see the Wrights' airplane today?
4. A glider is an airplane that has no engine and just rides on the air. Would you like to fly in a glider someday?
5. What invention has had the biggest effect on your daily life, and why?