

The history of aviation



Hello, I'm Peter.
During my summer vacation
I was in Lisbon with my parents
and sister. That's in Portugal and is over
1,500 km away from my home in London.
If we'd gone by car and ferry, we would
have been traveling for days, but by plane
it took us less than three hours.
And the plane tickets were
cheap too.

Air travel is quite normal today. Perhaps you've flown on a plane yourself. But what is perfectly normal for us today was something quite out of the ordinary a hundred years ago. There were already airplanes in those days, but they were still rather flimsy and only very few people used them.

Large passenger planes have been in existence only for somewhat more than 50 years.

People have always dreamed of being able to fly like birds, but unfortunately humans do not have wings. Even if they did, their arm and leg muscles would not be strong enough to power wings. For this reason, humans had to invent technical aids such as the airplane, the parachute, and the helicopter.

By following the time line in the form of a snake on the next page, you will learn about a few important flying machines that humans have invented and further developed over the course of time until airplanes as you know them today evolved.

Tasks:

- Carefully read the texts.
- Here you can see a few pictures of modern flying objects. Who thought of the idea for them? Match the pictures to the texts.

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2

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4

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The story of **Daedalus and Icarus** dates from the days of the ancient Greeks, **long before our calendar began**. According to legend, they attempted to fly like birds by making wings out of birds' feathers, straws, and wax. Unfortunately, Icarus flew too close to the sun. The wax melted and his wings fell apart. Icarus plunged into the sea and drowned.

After **1480**, **Leonardo da Vinci**, one of the smartest and inventive people of all time, worked on developing flying machines. He invented a device that he called an "airscrew." This device is said to be the precursor of the modern helicopter. However, in Leonardo's time, it was not possible to build these devices yet, because there were no suitable materials.

In **1890**, **Otto Lilienthal** built a glider with which he flew 25 m. It did not have an engine. The further development of Lilienthal's glider can be seen, for example, in modern sailplanes or paragliders. These can, however, fly much further than Otto Lilienthal could in his day.

In **1783**, the **Montgolfier** brothers from France flew the first hot air balloon. Warm air is lighter than normal air, so the balloon was able to rise. The passengers on this first flight were a sheep, a rooster, and a duck. The flight lasted 8 minutes and the balloon flew a little more than 3 kilometers.

Today's large passenger airplanes are not propelled by an engine, but by jets (similar to the propulsion of a rocket). They can thus fly much faster and also higher. The first jet airplane in the world was a fighter plane that was built in England in **1941**.

The first flight by an airplane powered by an engine took place on **December 17, 1903**, and lasted 59 seconds. The airplane covered a distance of 250 meters. This airplane was built by the **Wright brothers**, and this date marks the beginning of modern aviation. Propeller machines powered by an engine still exist today.

