

It's all in the fall

Measuring the speed of parachutes

9 - 12

Forces



Background information:

A great challenge to learn about gravity and forces that affect a parachute as it falls to the ground.

Design your own parachutes and put them to the test. Use your findings to develop your ideas you go along.

Equipment

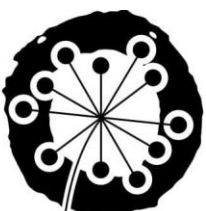
- Plastic bags (bin or carrier)
- String
- Plasticine
- Scissors or a hole punch.
- A window, walkway, hill, wall etc that can be used to release the parachutes
- Stopwatch

Activity

- Cut out a large square from your plastic bag. Trim the corners, so it becomes an octagon.
- Cut or punch a small hole near the edge of each corner.
- Cut 8 pieces of string that are all the same length. Attach a piece of string to each of the holes.
- Make a weight from the plasticine and tie each piece of string to it.
- Find a high spot from which to drop your parachute and test how well it works.
- Time how long it takes to reach the ground using the stopwatch.
- Can you improve the design? What will you change? How do you think that will that make it better?

Taking it further

- Select parachute sizes to compare speed of fall.
- Make parachutes from different materials
- Represent the data in graphs or tables



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