



Make a Parachute

Have you ever thought about what it would be like to jump out of an airplane? The Science Watch article *Adventures in Skydiving* (<http://www.seed.slb.com/en/scictr/watch/skydiving/index.htm>) was written by people who have done exactly that! They used parachutes to slow their descent so that they could land safely.

A parachute works by spreading out a large area of cloth that is suspended above the person who is falling. The open parachute creates a lot of friction with the air. This friction causes the person to fall at a slower speed.

You can make a small parachute and see for yourself how this works. Here is one way.

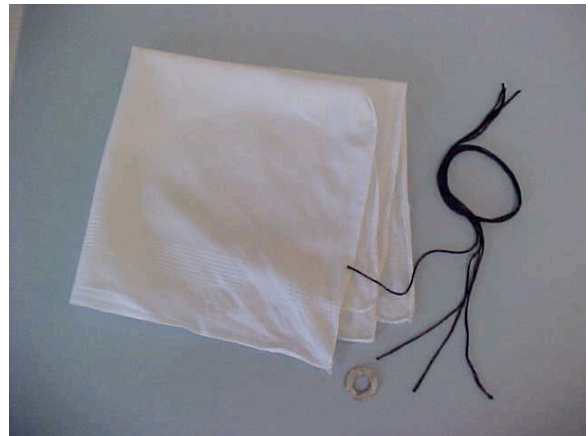
Materials

- large handkerchief, scarf, bandana or other piece of lightweight fabric about 30 cm (12 in) square
- four pieces of string, each about 40 cm (16 in) long
- metal washer or other similar weight

What to Do

1. Tie small overhand knots in each corner of the cloth. Then tie each string to a corner of the cloth above the knot.

2. Hold the center of the cloth in one hand and pull all strings with the other to collect them.



3. Tie the free ends of the strings together with an overhand knot.

4. Tie the strings to a washer using a lark's head knot, shown below, or other knot.



That's it. Now try out your parachute by releasing it from shoulder height.

How well does it perform? What is a good way to release it so it opens all the way? What do you observe about the way it falls?



Compare your observations with our results (<http://www.seed.slb.com/en/scictr/lab/parachute/res.htm>)