

# How the Little Kite Learned to Fly

"I never can do it," the little kite said,  
As he looked at the others high over his head;  
"I know I should fall if I tried to fly."  
"Try," said the big kite; "only try!  
Or I fear you never will learn at all."  
But the little kite said, "I'm afraid I'll fall."

The big kite nodded: "Ah, well, good-bye;  
I am off"; and he rose toward the tranquil sky.  
Then the little kite's paper stirred at the sight,  
And trembling he shook himself free for flight.  
First whirling and frightened, then braver grown,  
Up, up he rose through the air alone,  
Till the big kite looking down could see  
The little one rising steadily.

Then how the little kite thrilled with pride,  
As he sailed with the big kite side by side!  
While far below he could see the ground,  
And the boys like small spots moving round.  
They rested high in the quiet air,  
And only the birds and clouds were there.  
"Oh, how happy I am!" the little kite cried;  
"And all because I was brave, and tried."

~ Katherine Pyle ~

### Synopsis and Notes

“How the Little Kite Learned to Fly” is an easy, accessible poem with a clear lesson about the importance of taking risks in order to learn new things, even when those risks are scary. The rhyming couplets mark this as a poem for young readers, and its lilting, musical sound mimics both the wind and the movement of the kite through the air. The rhymes and structure of the poem are not complex; its richness lies primarily in the story it tells about a small, personified kite learning to rise into the air. Through the poem, children are able to witness the little kite move from fear of the untried to the discomfort of trying something new to the thrill of succeeding.

There are two characters in this poem: a little kite and an older, wiser kite who encourages the younger to fly. Readers who are learning to do things like ride their bikes or swim in deep water will likely be able to relate to the little kite's initial fear and later feeling of triumph. The second character in the poem, the big kite, reminds older readers of the importance of giving the “little kites” in their lives the space, independence, and opportunities to take risks, to try new things, and to see for themselves what they are capable of achieving. Instead of meddling or cajoling, the big kite challenges and encourages, and then steps back.

### Start a Conversation

1. How many stanzas are in the poem? What happens in each stanza? How does each stanza introduce a new part of the little kite's story?
2. Can you think of any time when you were in a situation like the little kite? Was there a time when you were scared to do something, and you did it anyway? How did you feel at first? How did you feel later?
3. Why doesn't the bigger kite help the little kite to fly? Is the big kite being mean, or does it have a reason for leaving the little kite alone? Does it keep an eye on the kite?
4. What would you tell the little kite if you met it? Do you think the little kite would have any advice for you? Is there anything you would like to try but haven't because you are afraid?
5. What do you think inspired Katherine Pyle to write this poem? Why do you think she used kites as the subjects? What other characters or situations would work to convey this same message?
6. What lesson is Pyle trying to teach readers? Do you think this is an important lesson for kids to learn? Why?

### Read Like a Writer: Use a Story to Teach a Lesson

In this poem, Pyle tells the story of a kite overcoming its fears to fly high in the sky as a way of teaching readers a lesson about being brave and trying new things, even when they are scared. Pyle's approach works because she embodies it in a narrative without being overly didactic or heavy-handed. Spend some time talking with students about the lesson Pyle is teaching in this poem, and about the ways in which writers use stories to help readers understand lessons that might otherwise be hard to teach. Here are a few questions to guide your conversation:

- Why do we often enjoy reading about characters who do things or act in certain ways, but we rarely like it when other people tell us what to do?
- Are stories a good way to teach readers lessons about how they should live? Why?
- Can you think of any other lessons that could be taught through a story poem like this one? What lessons do you think children need to learn?
- How could you make the lesson part of a story? What characters would you create? What would they do? How would their actions help readers to learn the lesson you want to teach?

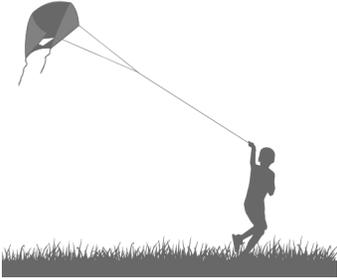
### Explore More: How Do Kites Fly?

Kites might seem like they are able to defy gravity because they are heavier than the air, yet they can hang in the sky as if by magic. There are several factors involved in getting and keeping a kite in the air: there must be at least a light breeze, the kite must have a string to hold it against the breeze, and it must be designed and held so that the front point angles upward and the tail angles downward.

When the breeze hits the angled lower surface of the kite, the air is pushed downward, which then pushes the kite upward. When this upward push is greater than the weight of the kite, the kite lifts into the air. This is only half the story, though. Something equally important is happening over the top surface of the kite. As the air moves horizontally past the top edge of the kite, it leaves an "empty space" over and behind the kite. Although air rushes in to fill this space, that region ends up with lower air pressure. Air passing above the kite is pulled down into this gap, and the kite is effectively pulled up into it. The force pushing up from below and the lesser opposing force from above result in a total force upward that is greater than gravity's force downward, and the kite lifts into the air. To learn more, check out books or do a web search for "aerodynamics," the name for the study of the principles of flight.

*Fall brings plenty of windy days.  
Find a pleasant one, grab a kite,  
and see how long you can keep it aloft.*





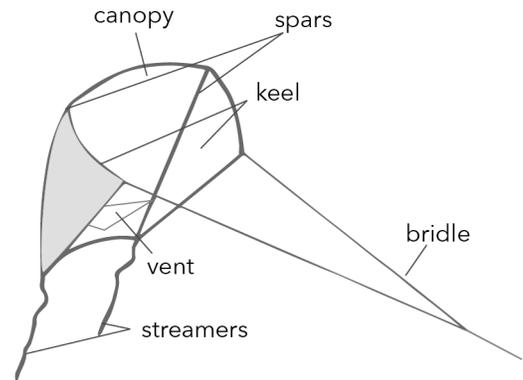
# Sled Kite

*Make your own little kite, and see if you can coax it into the air. This sled kite is simple to construct and flies well even in light wind.*

## Gather:

- Kite sail material (Tyvek® mailer, paper, plastic bag, etc.)
- Kite string
- Wrapping paper
- 1/8" dowels or long drinking straws
- Strapping tape
- Pruning shears
- Hole punch
- Surveyor's tape or crepe paper
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Scissors

A sled kite has a large center canopy or sail and two triangle-shaped keels, on the sides. A bridle (the string) is tied to the keels and the structure of the kite is supported by two spars, which may be straws or dowels. A sled kite also has streamers and a vent in the canopy to help it get off the ground, stabilize, and stay aloft.



## Step 1: Make a Full-Size Pattern

Use the template to create a full-size pattern on a large sheet of wrapping paper (which often has one-inch grid squares on the back) or newspaper. If you want a larger or smaller kite, you can enlarge or reduce the dimensions proportionally.

## Step 2: Make the Canopy

Trace the pattern onto a sheet of plastic or Tyvek® using a ruler and a pencil or marker. Carefully cut along the lines to create the sail and vent.

## Step 3: Trim and Attach the Spars

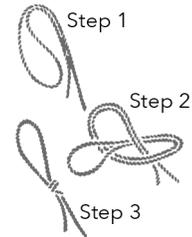
If you have wooden dowels for the spars, use pruning shears to cut the dowels to match the length of your kite. If you are using straws, push one straw into another about an inch and secure them with tape. Add more straws or cut them as needed to create the spars. Tape the spars along the length of the kite as shown in the template. Fold pieces of tape over the top and bottom of the sail to keep the spars in place.

### Step 4: Decorate the Kite

Use decorative tape, permanent markers, paint, or other lightweight materials to decorate your kite.

### Step 5: Bridling

Reinforce the point of each keel with strapping tape. Cut a string for the bridle that is twice the width of the kite. If you are using the template, the string will be 35 inches long. Fold the string in half and tie a small loop at the end with the fold. Use a hole punch to make a hole at the point of each keel. Put one free end of the bridle string through each of the holes, and tie them securely. You will later attach the kite string to this loop.



### Step 6: Add the Tails

Cut strips of surveyor's tape, plastic, ribbon, crepe paper, or other lightweight material for the tails, which should be about three times as long as the width of the kite, including the keels. On the template, this length is 17.5 inches. Tape or staple the tails to the bottom corners of the kite. If you have more than two tails, space them evenly along the bottom.

### Step 7: Fly the Kite

Attach kite string to the bridle loop and take the kite outside. You should be able to fly it just by running around and pulling it behind you, or it should fly on its own on a windy day. Watch out for power lines, trees, and other hazards!

### Variations

#### Use Different Materials

Try using a different material for the sail. You might also try nylon fabric, plastic sheeting, or other materials you find around your house. You can even make this kite with tissue paper, which is very light and easy to fly on a day with little wind.

#### Try a Different Vent Shape

The template includes a standard triangle vent for the kite, but you can individualize your kite by varying the shape of the vent or having multiple vents. The area from which the vent(s) should be cut is the lower third of the central body. On the template, it is the lower 4.5 inches of the central rectangle situated between the keels (i.e. the gray triangle and below). Once you determine the correct area for vents on the kite, decide on a shape for the vent(s), such as one or more circles, a square, a rectangle, or the like. Keep in mind that the total area of the vent(s) should be about the same as the original gray triangle. On the template, this is one quarter of the lower section.

### Sled Kite Template

