

[Home](#)

Quotes of the Wright Brothers

Orville and Wilbur Wright's Thoughts on Flight and Life

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On December 17, 1903, [Orville Wright](#) and [Wilbur Wright](#) successfully tested a flying machine that took off with its own power, flew at even speeds, then landed safely without damage and started the era of human flight.

The year before, the brothers tested out a number of aircraft, wing designs, gliders, and propellers in order to understand the complexities of [aerodynamics](#) and hopefully create a powered craft capable of prolonged flight. Throughout this process, Orville and Wilbur recorded many of their greatest quotes in the notebooks they kept and interviews they made at the time.

From Orville's thoughts on hope and living to both brother's interpretations of what they [discovered during their experiments](#), the following quotes encapsulate the thrill the Wright brothers felt when creating, then [flying, the first self-propelled airplane](#).

Orville Wright on Dreams, Hope, and Life

"The desire to fly is an idea handed down to us by our ancestors who, in their grueling travels across trackless lands in prehistoric times, looked enviously on the birds soaring freely through."

"The airplane stays up because it doesn't have the time to fall."

"No flying machine will ever fly from New York to Paris...[because] no known motor can run at the requisite speed for four days without stopping."

"If birds can glide for long periods of time, then... why can't I?"

"If we worked on the assumption that what is accepted as true really is true, then there would be little hope for advance."

"We were lucky enough to grow up in an environment where there was always much encouragement to children to pursue intellectual interests; to investigate whatever aroused curiosity."

Orville Wright on Their Flight Experiments

"In our gliding experiments, we had had a number of experiences in which we had landed upon one wing, but the crushing of the wing had absorbed the shock so that we were not uneasy about the motor in case of a landing of that kind."

"With all the knowledge and skill acquired in thousands of flights in the last ten years, I would hardly think today of making my first flight on a strange machine in a 27-mile wind, even if I knew that the machine had already been flown and was safe."

"Isn't it astonishing that all these secrets have been preserved for so many years just so we could discover them!"

"The course of the flight up and down was exceedingly erratic, partly due to the irregularity of the air, and partly to lack of experience in handling this machine. The control of the front rudder was difficult on account of its being balanced too near the center."

"When the machine had been fastened with a wire to the track so that it could not start until released by the operator, and the motor had been run to make sure that it was in condition, we tossed a coin to decide who should have the first trial. Wilbur won."

"With 12 horsepower at our command, we considered that we could permit the weight of the machine with an operator to rise to 750 or 800 pounds, and still have as much surplus power as we had originally allowed for in the first estimate of 550 pounds."

Wilbur Wright on Their Flying Experiments

"There is no sport equal to that which aviators enjoy while being carried through the air on great white wings. More than anything else the sensation is one of perfect peace mingled with an excitement that strains every nerve to the utmost if you can conceive of such a combination."

"I am an enthusiast, but not a crank in the sense that I have some pet theories as to the proper construction of a flying machine. I wish to avail myself of all that is already known and then, if possible, add my mite to help on the future worker who will attain final success."

"We could hardly wait to get up in the morning."

"I confess that in 1901, I said to my brother Orville that man would not fly for 50 years."

"The fact that the great scientist believed in flying machines was the one thing that encouraged us to begin our studies."

"It is possible to fly without motors, but not without knowledge and skill."

"The desire to fly is an idea handed down to us by our ancestors who...looked enviously on the birds soaring freely through space...on the infinite highway of the air."

"Men become wise just as they become rich, more by what they save than by what they receive."