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Flying Machine or Flying Top

Many styles of flying machines or flying tops were found in period references. Many were similar to the spool flying machines and others were plain such as the nineteenth century illustration below. Notice the toy in child’s back pocket. There is no evidence of a spool or string which would indicate that it was a spool flying machine.

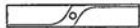


There is also a mention of a “flying top” in the September 29, 1866, issue of Scientific American which stated:

A FLYING TOP.

If well made, this top will fly fifteen or twenty feet in the air.

From straight-grained white pine or basswood, plane a stick five inches by seven-eighths of an inch by seven-sixteenths of an inch. Bore a three-sixteenths-inch hole straight through the center. If the hole is not true, the top will take a wobbly motion that will prevent it from flying well.



On each long edge of the stick draw a line one-sixteenth of an inch from the margin, and extending from a point near the center to the outer end, but reverse the position of the lines on opposite halves of the same edge, on opposite sides of the stick. In other words, when you hold the stick in front of you, and pointing

from you, one line should extend along the upper left-hand edge of the farther half, and another along the lower right-hand edge of that half; the third will be along the lower left-hand edge of the nearer half; the fourth along the upper right-hand edge of that half. Whittle to the lines in such a way as to produce something that resembles a propeller blade. Make the curve as near the hole as possible, and make the vanes between one-eighth and one-sixteenth of an inch thick. The handle is a perfectly round stick, five and one-half inches long, fitted tightly in the hole. To fly the top, revolve the handle rapidly between the two hands, and then let go suddenly.

“The flying top is a good illustration of the propeller screw. Released from the shaft on which it is made to revolve, it flies whirling at an angle through the air until its momentum is lost, when back it comes, returning to the operator for a new start.”

Finally, we have a picture of a later example of a flying top which is similar in appearance to the toy we carry. An illustration, directions for making this style were found in the May 1, 1913, *Youth’s Companion*.