

The First Airplane Flight



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Wilbur and Orville Wright were brothers who spent years working out how to fly. Before they built an airplane with an engine, they made more than a thousand glides from a big sand hill on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Those glides made them the first real pilots.

The brothers could not find an engine light enough for their airplane, so they designed their own. They also designed its propellers, the first ones that worked well on an airplane. Their new airplane, the Flyer, weighed 605 pounds.

On December 14, 1903, they tossed a coin to decide who would fly first. Wilbur won, but the Flyer climbed too steeply and dove into the sand.

On December 17, it was Orville's turn. At 10:35 he took off into a strong wind, with Wilbur running beside the wing, and came down in the sand about 120 feet away. The brothers flew three more times that day. The last flight, by Wilbur, went 852 feet in 59 seconds.

1. How many glides did the brothers make before they flew with an engine?

2. How far did the last flight on December 17 go, and for how long?

3. Why did the brothers design their own engine?

4. Why do you think all those glides helped the brothers fly the Flyer?

Answer key

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1. How many glides did the brothers make before they flew with an engine?
More than a thousand.
2. How far did the last flight on December 17 go, and for how long?
852 feet, in 59 seconds.
3. Why did the brothers design their own engine?
They could not find an engine light enough for their airplane.
4. Why do you think all those glides helped the brothers fly the Flyer?
Sample answer: they had already learned how to steer a flying machine in the air, so they were skilled pilots before they ever added an engine.