

## The Early Days of Helicopters

When were helicopter designs first drawn? No one knows for sure. Some information suggests the Chinese played with rotary wing toys more than a thousand years ago. Early records show Leonardo da Vinci, an Italian artist and scientist, drew a helicopter-like design in the fifteenth century. That's over 500 years ago! As you can see from the picture, it looked like a corkscrew and probably would not have flown for very long or very far. Many designs were produced after that.

In 1907, the first helicopter called the Breguet-Richet Gyroplane No. 1, a French model, made its first flight. The design was so simple and unstable, it had to be held onto by ropes! Many other designers from places like Russia, Denmark, England, France, Italy, USA, Austria, Spain, Germany, and Argentina improved on the first models.



In 1939, the first practical helicopter was built by a Russian named Igor I. Sikorsky. He flew his VS-300 helicopter in the United States. During World War II (1939-1945) many countries worked hard to quickly make a better helicopter. Why? What do you think the advantages are of a helicopter?

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