

Science Defeats Common Sense

Take this simple test. Hold one piece of unfolded A4 paper in each hand, gripping at the top of each length and pointing the paper downwards.



Hold the two pieces of paper approximately five centimetres apart and get ready to blow down the resulting gap. Before you exhale, however, decide on what you think is likely to happen. Common sense suggests that the two pieces of paper will be blown apart, but then common sense once told us that the world was flat.

Blow between the sheets and prepare to be amazed...

What you have just seen is the same phenomenon that lifts aeroplanes off the ground, closes heart valve and governs the flow of water and other fluids, such as blood, through narrow channels. Leonardo spotted this phenomenon during his own lifetime but it was to be another couple of centuries or so before science caught up and gave it a name.

The same effect can be seen with just a single piece of paper. If you hold a sheet of paper horizontally on the two corners of the shortest side and blow hard over the curve of the sheet (see below), you will see the same lifting effect that one would expect around an aeroplane wing.

Try the test out on your friends and see how many are able to guess the outcome correctly.

