

Harnessing the Wind

Try It Out

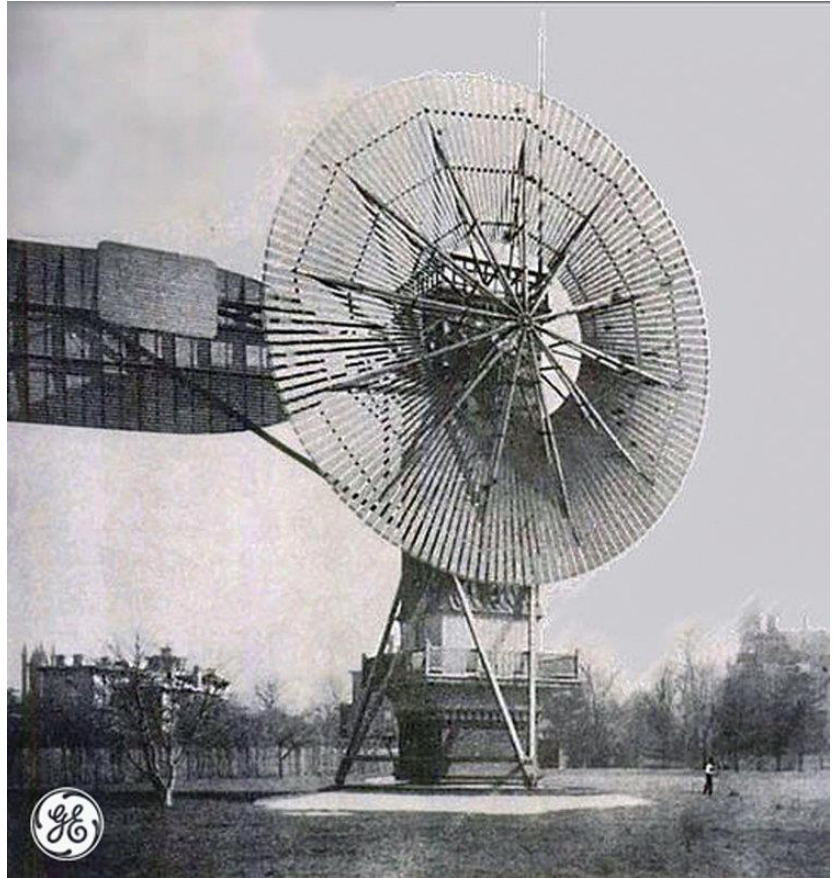
Blow as hard as you can into the blades of the windmill. If you're with friends, do it as a group. If it's a windy day, take the windmill over to the beach to catch the wind coming across the lake. Can you make the light in the bottle turn on?

What's Going On?

The earliest known windmills were used by the Persians in A.D. 500-900. They were used to grind grain or pump water. The first windmills (or wind turbines) used to generate electricity were built at the end of the 19th century. When wind blows through a wind turbine, its rotor turns, which converts rotational energy into electrical energy.

Why Does It Matter?

Wind generates about 10% of the power used in the United States and up to 40% in countries like Denmark that have invested heavily in wind power. While it is not as reliable as some power sources, it does not require exploration and provides a good energy source with few negative impacts to the environment.



First power generating wind turbine in 1887 (Image: General Electric)

Wonder While You Walk...

What else have humans harnessed the wind to do? What can you imagine us doing with wind in the future?



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