Make a balloon hovercraft

See how air pressure makes this balloon hovercraft whizz across a table.

What you need

- Paper plate
- Scissors
- Cap from a sports drink or washing-up liquid bottle
- Balloon
- Glue

TOP TIP
Sticky tape works just as well to fasten the bottle cap to the plate.

How does it work?

Air escaping from the balloon travels through the hole in the paper plate. The force of the air pushing out of the hole creates an equal force in the opposite direction, which lifts your hovercraft up off the table. The flat plate creates a cushion of air for the craft to float on. The thin layer of air between the paper plate and the table reduces friction (the force between two surfaces that rub together) and allows the hovercraft to zip across smooth surfaces easily – just like a real hovercraft.

DID YOU KNOW?
The hovercraft was invented by British engineer Christopher Cockerell in 1956.

WARNING!
Ask an adult to help you when cutting a hole in the plate.

1 Trim off the edges of the plate to give you a flat circle. Now cut a hole in the centre of the plate about 1cm wide.

2 Make sure the plastic bottle cap is open and stretch the balloon over the cap. Blow up the balloon and press the bottle cap down so that no air escapes.

3 Glue the bottom of the bottle cap over the hole in the paper plate. Now place the hovercraft on a flat surface and pull up the cap.

Send photos and videos of your amazing balloon hovercraft to scienceandnature@dennis.co.uk