How Parachutes Work

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HOW DOES A PARACHUTE WORK?

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If you're curious about skydiving at all, you've probably asked yourself: **How does a parachute work?** As Wisconsin's premier skydiving dropzone, we are daily and intimately involved with these rectangular pieces of fabric called parachutes – so let us explain.

When was this article written?

How many cells is a parachute usually made up of?

HOW PARACHUTES FLY

Parachutes are 'semi-rigid wings'. This means that while flying, they are pretty much solid. In fact, they are so firm, skydivers are able to bump their parachutes against each other. In a discipline called CRW, or canopy relative work, they are even able to walk over the top of a canopy.












If you look at a parachute from the front, you can see it is made up if either seven or nine 'cells'. Essentially, the full parachute is a series of separate chambers – all of which catch air and work together to make the full wing.

The front of each 'cell' is open and this is where the air enters. As the parachute is flying forward, air is rammed in through the front and caught inside the cells, giving the parachute its shape. Modern parachutes are also referred to as 'ram air parachutes' for this reason.

What shape are modern parachutes?

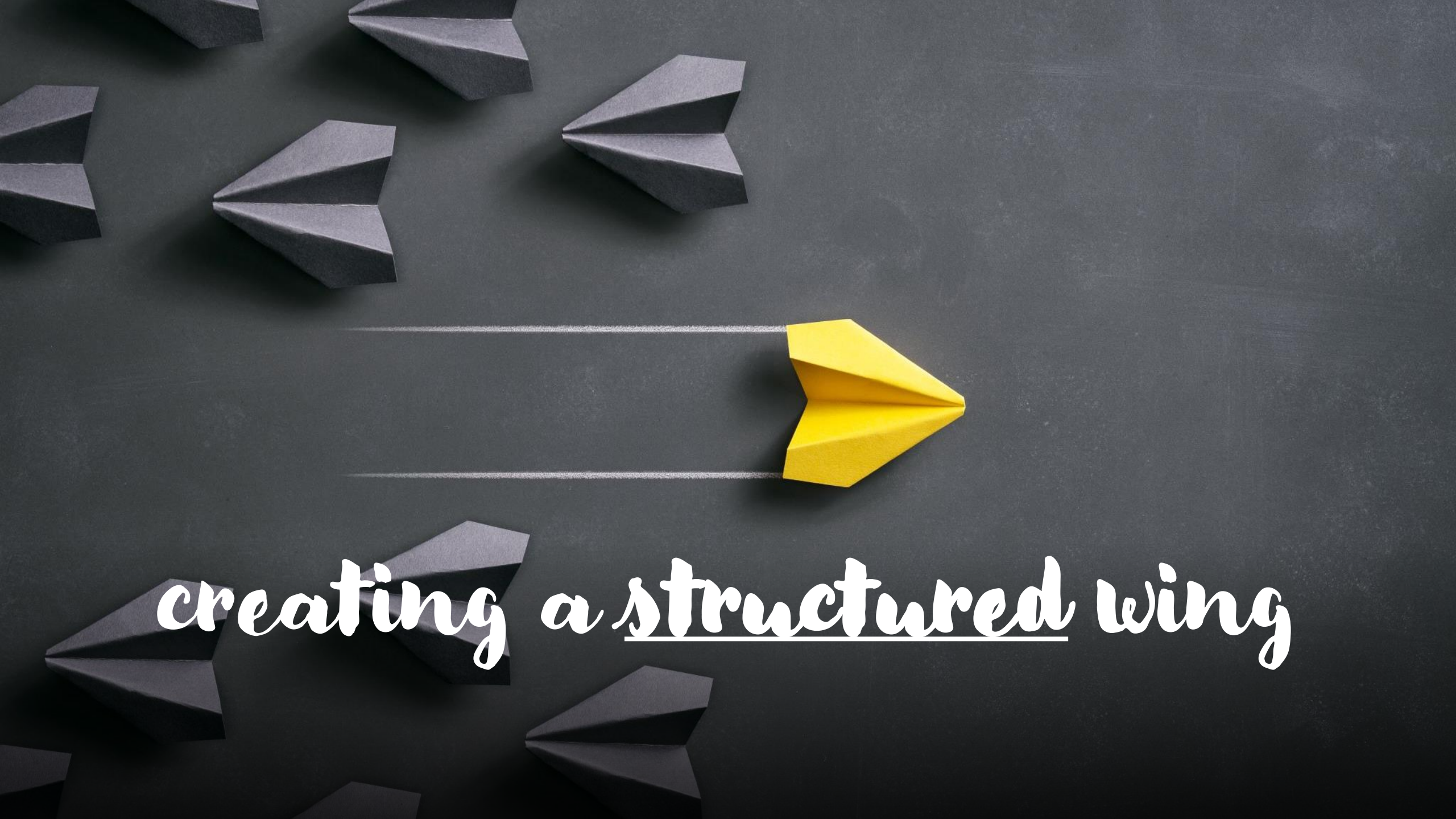
HOW DO PARACHUTES WORK?

A parachute works by forcing air into the front of it and creating a structured 'wing' under which the canopy pilot can fly. Parachutes are controlled by pulling down on steering lines which change the shape of the wing, cause it to turn, or to increase or decrease its rate of descent.

Modern skydiving parachutes are rectangular in shape – very different from the round parachutes of old. The change in shape has given skydivers much more control over their parachutes. Today, they can turn their canopies, change the rate of descent, flatten their glide, and make parachute landings more accurate than ever.


If you're curious about skydiving


intimately involved


creating a structured wing


How parachutes descend

Individual thinking

What is the purpose of this article?

Why might someone choose to read it?

"The purpose of this article is to..."

"Someone may choose to read it because..."

lines and turn, the parachute automatically descends a little faster. More advanced parachute pilots use a technique called 'swooping' which increases their rate of descent and creates a swooshing sound as they come in to land.

Why do you think only more advanced parachute pilots would attempt this technique?

"I think that only more advanced parachute pilots would attempt this technique because…"

Explain

Who can pack their own parachutes?

Explain why this is the case.

Explain

Explain why the author has chosen to include subheadings.

What is their purpose?

How are parachutes different today than they were in the past?

Explain

- Choose one word to describe a parachute journey.
- Explain why you have chosen this word.