DIY Parachutes (and the Science Behind How they Work)

What You Need
Disposable plastic (or paper) cup
Plastic rubbish bag or shopping bag
String or tightly twisted cotton
Paper punch
Scissors
Tape measure

How to Make It

Try this experiment with at least one other person in your family. It will work best if you each make your own parachute.

First, punch holes in the top of the plastic cups, just under the rim. You'll need to punch four holes equal distance apart.

Next, cut one plastic bag into a large square.

Now cut four 35cm lengths of string for each parachute. Gather a corner of the plastic square and tie one length of string to it, leaving only a small tail. Repeat this with the other four corners.

Then tie each string to a different hole on the cup. (TIP: Try to keep the tails all the same length so you don't get a lopsided parachute.)

Climb (safely!) to a high place and drop the parachutes.

Thinking scientifically
What questions can you come up with before you drop your parachutes? What might you want to find out?
How will you measure the results?
If we are going to compare our parachutes, what do we need to make sure we all do the same?
What could we change if we wanted to compare different parachutes?
Now you have done the experiment, how do you think parachutes work?