

IELTS Reading practice

Filling gaps

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The Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur, were two American brothers, inventors, and aviation pioneers who were credited with inventing and building the world's first successful airplane and making the first controlled, powered and sustained heavier-than-air human flight, on December 17, 1903. In the two years afterward, the brothers developed their flying machine into the first practical fixed-wing aircraft.

The brothers' fundamental breakthrough was their invention of three-axis control, which enabled the pilot to steer the aircraft effectively and to maintain its equilibrium. This method became standard and remains standard on fixed-wing aircraft of all kinds. From the beginning of their aeronautical work, the Wright brothers focused on developing a reliable method of pilot control as the key to solving "the flying problem". This approach differed significantly from other experimenters of the time who put more emphasis on developing powerful engines. Using a small homebuilt wind tunnel, the Wrights also collected more accurate data than anyone had before, enabling them to design and build wings and propellers that were more efficient than rival models.

They gained the mechanical skills essential for their success by working for years in their shop with printing presses, bicycles, motors, and other machinery. Their work with bicycles in particular influenced their belief that an unstable vehicle like a flying machine could be controlled and balanced with practice.

Fill each gap in the summary below with a maximum of 2 words.

In 1903, the Wright brothers completed development of the first airplane that was capable of sustaining controlled _____. The key to their success was a system that gave the pilot the means to control and _____ the airplane. This set them apart from other inventors who had focused on building _____. The brothers had previous experience with a wide variety of _____, but it was their work with _____ that had the greatest influence on their ideas.