

Basic PVC Wind Turbine Parts List

KidWind sells the *Basic PVC Wind Turbine* but it can easily be built with about \$20 worth of parts. For a classroom of 25 kids we recommend having at least three turbines for blade testing. Below is a parts list for this wind turbine.

PVC Pipe & Fittings & Dowels

Head to your local hardware store for PVC pipe and fittings. KidWind also gets fittings from www.PlumbingStore.com. All pipe and fittings are 1". This turbine has:

- ◇ (5) 1" PVC 90° Fittings
- ◇ (3) 1" PVC T Fittings
- ◇ (5 ft) 1" PVC Pipe
- ◇ (1) 1" PVC Coupler

DC Motor, Wires & Clips

A local electronics shop or *Radio Shack* will have wire, clips and multimeters. There are also a variety of online vendors—www.allelectronics.com. You can use any small DC motor as a generator. One DC motor that works well is the *Motor 500* by PITSCO. We also carry many different kinds at KidWind. You can easily test any motor/generator — spin it with your fingers and see if you get any measurable output if you do that is a good generator. This turbine has:

- ◇ (1) *Motor 500 (Pitsco) (KidWind also sells Wind Turbine Motors)*
- ◇ (4 ft) *22 Gauge Hook Up Wire*
- ◇ (2) *Clips (Alligator or Banana)*
- ◇ (1) *Simple Multimeter to Record Power Output*

Special Parts

KidWind custom builds hubs for our turbines. For years we used to fashion your own hubs from Tinkertoys. If you want, head to your local toy shop or an online vendor to get yourself a barrel of Tinkertoys. A small junior barrel will run around \$20 and has plenty of materials for 10 turbines. When you want something sturdy and tested come to Kidwind.

- ◇ (1) *Hub (Crimping Hub from Kidwind, Tinkertoy or a round piece of wood to attach blades)*

Blade Materials

You can make blades, out of a variety of materials— wood, cardboard, felt, fabric. Students have made blades out of **styrofoam bowls, pie pans, paper and plastic cups**. Anything you find around the classroom can be made into blades!

- 4" dowels 3/8" dia. (or Tinkertoy rods)— attach blades that you make to this.

Tools

To build this turbine from scratch you'll need at a minimum a drill, ruler, PVC cutter or hacksaw, wire strippers, soldering iron, solder, duct tape, glue.



Power in the Wind – A simple look

If a large truck or a 250lb linebacker was moving towards you at a high rate of speed you would move out of the way right?

Why do you move? You move because in your mind you know that this moving object has a great deal of ENERGY as a result of its **mass** and its **motion**. And you do not want to be on the receiving end of that energy.

Just as those large moving objects have energy so does the wind. Wind is the movement of air from one place on earth to another. That's the motion part.

What is air though? Air is a mixture of gas molecules. It turns out that if you get lots of them (and I mean lots of them) together in a gang and they start moving pretty fast they can definitely give you, a sailboat or a windmill a serious push. Just think about hurricanes, tornadoes or a very windy day!

Why aren't we scared of light winds while we stay inside during a hurricane or wind storm? The velocity of those gangs of gas molecules have a dramatic impact on whether or not we will be able to stay standing on our feet. In fact, in just a 30 mph gust you can feel those gas molecules pushing you around.

Humans have been taking advantage of the energy in the wind for ages. Sailboats, ancient wind mills and their newer cousins the electrical wind turbines, have all captured the energy in the wind with varying degrees of effectiveness. What they all do is use a device such as a sail, blade or fabric to "catch" the wind. Sailboats use energy to propel them through the water. Wind mills use this energy to turn a rod or shaft.

A simple equation for the **Power in the Wind** is described below. This equation describes a the power found in a column of wind of a specific size moving at a particular velocity.

P = Power in the Wind (watts)
ρ = Density of the Air (kg/m³)
r = Radius of your swept area (m²)
V = Wind Velocity (m/s)
π = 3.14

$$P = 1/2 \rho \pi r^2 V^3$$

From this formula you can see that the size of your turbine and the velocity of the wind are very strong drivers when it comes to power production. If we increase the velocity of the wind or the area of our blades we increase power output.

The density of the air has some impact as well. Cold air is more dense than warm air so you can produce more energy in colder climates (as long as the air is not too thin!).

The sample equation to the right shows how much power there is in a column of wind coming out of your average household box fan.

How much power is there coming off a regular circular house fan?

V = 5 m/s (meters per second)
ρ = 1.0 kg/m³ (kilograms per cubic meter)
R = .2 m
A = .125 m² (A = πr²)

Power in the Wind = 1/2ρAV³

Power = (.5)(1.0)(.125)(5)³
= 7.85 Watts

There are 7.85 watts coming out typical house fan. Can our little turbines capture all of this power?

How to use the Multimeter

Small DC motors like the one you're using do not produce much power when spun slowly (see power output sheet). As a result, our electrical output will be limited and even a great set of blades in high winds might only be able to light an LED. To accurately measure our production you should use a multimeter. If you are interested in lighting bulbs and creating more electricity you may want to check out the *Geared Turbine* at the Kidwind Website (<http://www.kidwind.org>).

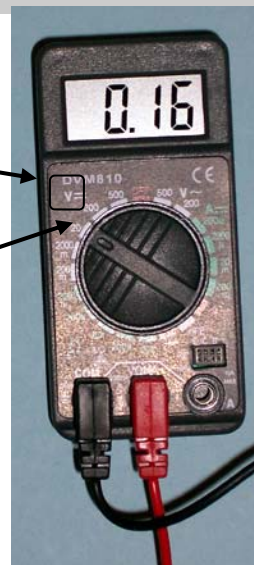
Power (Watts) = Voltage (V) x Current (A) <-- Watch Your Units
Make sure you are recording volts and amps (not milli or microvolts unless you want to!) If your readings are higher than 1– 2 watts you have done something wrong!



Voltage

1. Attach the wires from the generator to the multimeter.
2. To check the voltage select DC Volt (V) and choose a the whole number setting at 20 volts.
3. Place your turbine out in the wind or in front of a fan and let it run up to speed. It is normal for the readings to fluctuate. Power output is often unsteady because the wind is inconstant or your blades are not balanced.

Set at 20 DC Volts

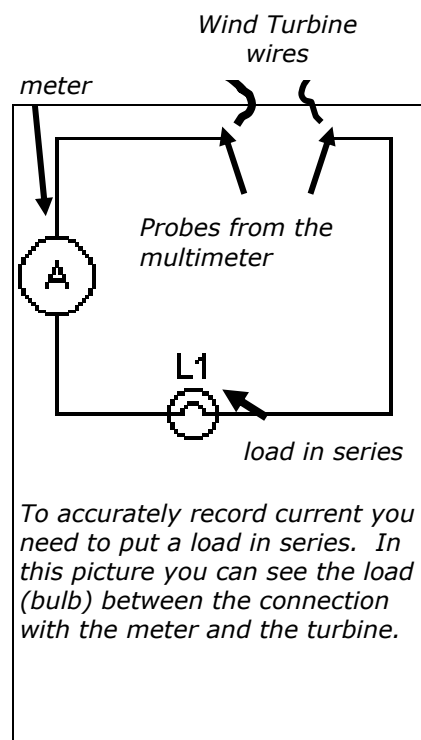


4. A set of very well designed blades may make around 1 –2 volts
Typical blades will be in the 0.4 - 0.8 volt range.
5. When measuring voltage you are calculating how fast the DC generator is spinning. The faster it spins the higher the voltage. As there is no load on the generator it has very little resistance so it can spin very fast. If you look closely when you attach a load (bulb, pump) the RPM may drop as will your voltage.

Amperage

1. To get a more accurate picture of the power output of your turbine measure amperage as well. To accurately measure the amperage you must hook up your multimeter differently.
2. Place a load (a resistive object - small bulb, resistor, pump etc.) in series with the meter so that the generator is "loaded" and has to do work.
3. A set of very well designed blades will make around 0.1 amps (100 milliamps) with this motor. Typical blades will be in the .02-.05 amp (20 – 50 milliamp) range. This will vary based on your resistive load.
4. When measuring amperage you are gauging how many electrons are being pushed through the wire by the turbine. This relates to the torque your blades are generating.

DON'T FORGET TO TURN OFF THE METER WHEN YOUR ARE DONE OR THE BATTERY WILL DIE!!



PVC Wind Turbine FAQ

Why are the dowels flying out of the hub?

You need to get a Crimping Hub from Kidwind or secure them better to the hub.

Why won't the rotor spin when I put my turbine in front of the fan?

Check the orientation of the blades. Are your blades oriented in the same direction? Are they flat? Are they hitting the tower? Look at some pictures of old and new windmills to get some ideas about how to orient your blades.

Why does the turbine slow down when I attach it to load (pump, bulb, motor)?

Loading the generator forces it to do work. This makes it harder to push electrons through the circuit. The more load you add the harder it is for the generator to turn and the more torque you must generate from the blades. The only way to do this is to make bigger blades or relocate your wind turbine to a place with higher wind speeds.

Why are the readings on my multimeter all over the place?

Your readings may be fluctuating because the wind coming out of your fan is fluctuating. This can also be caused by your blades not spinning smoothly or changing shape as they spin. Additionally, if your blades are not balanced, evenly distributed, or are producing unequal amounts of drag your readings will be irregular.

What are the best blades?

That is for you to figure out! Lots of testing and playing will get you closer to your answer.

Is a fan a good wind source to test with?

Well, it is the best we've got, unless you have a wind tunnel handy! The wind that comes out of a fan has a great deal of rotation and turbulence. It isn't very smooth. While it will still make your turbine spin it is not exactly like the wind outside. To see this turbulence, hold a short piece of thread in front of a fan and move it from the center out. It should head out straight all the time...does it?

Can I take my turbine outside? Can I leave it there?

You can certainly take, use and test your wind turbine outside. But unless you have a yawing turbine it will not track the wind and may not perform optimally. To make it work well you will have to continually face it into the wind. It is not a good idea to leave your turbine outside for too long. It is designed for basic lab tests and not to endure the rigors of the outdoor environment!

Based on the power in the wind equation it seems that longer blades should make more power. On my turbine this is not true!! WHY??

The blades on your turbine may be bigger than the diameter of the fan. If that is the case, the extra part is only adding drag so your blades will slow down. Additionally if you design large blades poorly they will have lots of drag near the tips and slow down. This will negate any positive effect of the added length. Also short blades spin faster than long ones, so if you are just recording voltage they will seem better. Try short blades with a load in series and see if they have enough torque to spin. Many cases they do not!