

Galileo and the Leaning Tower of Pisa.



http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leaning_tower_of_pisa_2.jpg

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was an Italian physicist, mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher. He is most famous for two things he didn't do! First, many people think he invented the telescope, but he really just made improvements to someone else's invention. And secondly, he is famous for doing an experiment where he drops two balls off of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Galileo kept very good notes of the scientific experiments that he did, and there is no mention of doing this in his notes. Chances are very good that he didn't do it!

So why do people go around giving Galileo credit for doing this experiment? Because he figured out what the outcome of the experiment would be. He lived in a time when people were just beginning to understand how the physical world really worked. Some people thought that two objects of different "heaviness" would fall at different speeds; other people thought that all objects fell at the same speed regardless of how heavy they were. Which side of the argument was Galileo on? Well, he was on the right side of the argument—but if you knew for sure what the right side was, you wouldn't have to do the experiment.

Your mission in your group is to design and conduct an experiment to determine whether or not objects of different masses (why *masses* instead of *weights*?) fall at the same rate. Use the lab report form handout as a guide. When you have completed designing your experiment, show it to your teacher to get approval to try it out.