Has this ever happened to you? A balloon pulls out of your hand and drifts into the blue sky. Soon there’s not a thing you can do but wave good-bye to that balloon! Don’t feel too bad. That’s happened to quite a few people.

Most balloons are flimsy things. It’s true that they look good and are fun for a bit. Then balloons pop, go flat, or at times, escape!
But not all balloons are toys. Some are created to work hard for people. The first working balloons were ones that people flew in—and still do. These balloons are filled with gas that helps them float high in the sky. Passengers stand in wooden baskets that hang from these balloons. At times, strong winds blow these balloons and they zoom too fast. Smooth rides are best.

Before planes, humans used these balloons to travel and explore. Armies even used them long ago. Spies flew over enemy troops and filled notebooks with what they saw.

Shiny weather balloons fly into space. These balloons do not have crews. They have electronic tools that send news about our planet’s heat, coolness, rains, and winds. At times, these balloons show up in TV news reports. People can be fooled. They think these shiny things are spaceships from other planets!

Some useful balloons never really travel. They are put on poles or towers to give plane pilots clues about how winds are blowing.

One working balloon you may wish to use is a normal balloon filled with water. Use it on hot days when you have on a swimming suit. Have fun!