This project was imagined by Frédéric Bouquet (Paris-Saclay University) and Giovanni Organtini (Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy).

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Videos, photos, gifs: Amel Kolli

Graphic design and illustrations: Anna Khazina

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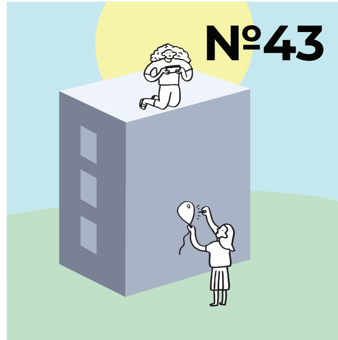
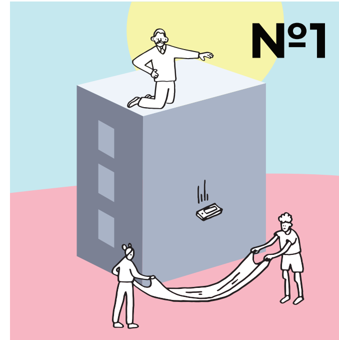




Challenge

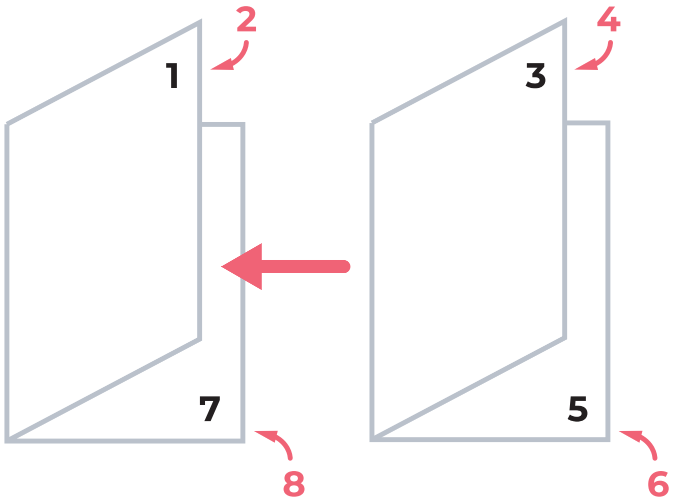
PHYSICS IN ACTION

Use five different principles of physics to measure the height of a building using a smartphone.

Discover The Smartphone Physics Challenge at VULGARISATION.FR

«Physics Reimagined» team (Paris-Saclay University)

To assemble the booklet:



Print on two A4 sheets using both sides (select short-edge binding), then assemble the booklet by folding the sheets in two.

To do measurements with your smartphone:

Install Phyphox app on your phone. This app is developed by Aachen University, it's free and open-source, translated in English and available for Android and iOS. Phyphox allows to conduct measurements using your smartphone built-in sensors.

Precision: high

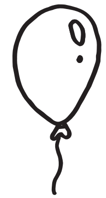
Difficulty: low

№43. Slow Motion

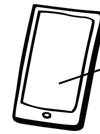
Formula

$$H = vt$$

Material

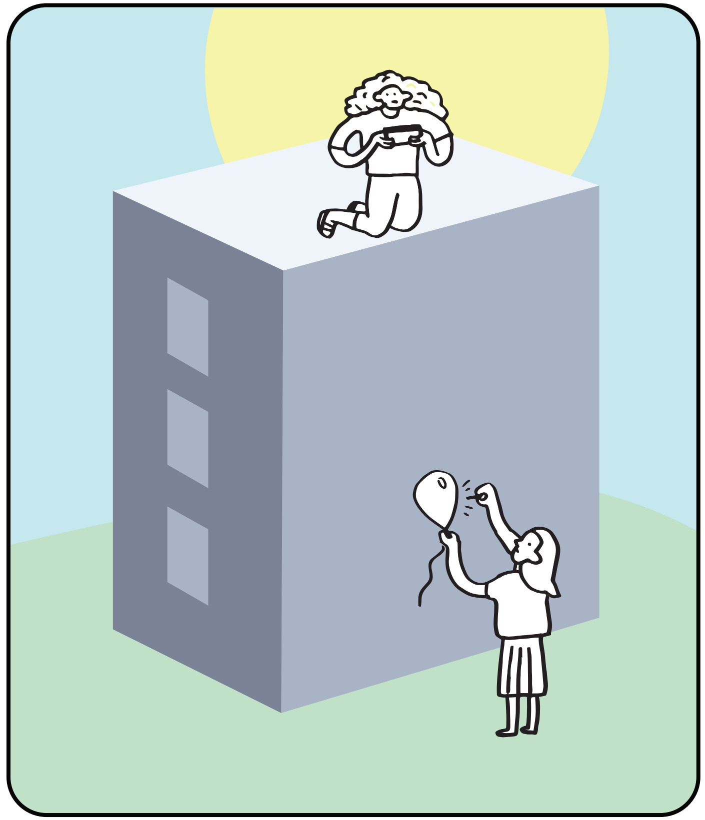


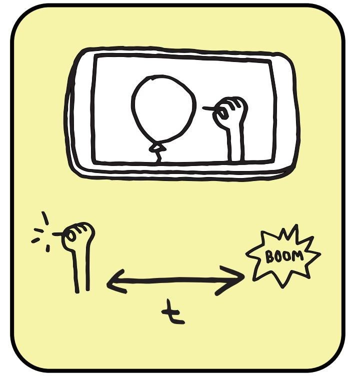
1 balloon



Sensors: **camera, microphone**

1 smartphone with slow motion





From the top of the building, film in "slow motion" the bursting of a balloon at the bottom of the building. Measure the time elapsed between the image and the sound of the exploding balloon.

v = speed of sound, t = delay between pop image and pop sound

Some smartphones do not record sound in slow motion.

№36. Pressure Variation

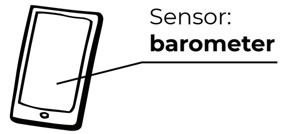
Precision: high

Difficulty: minimum

Formula

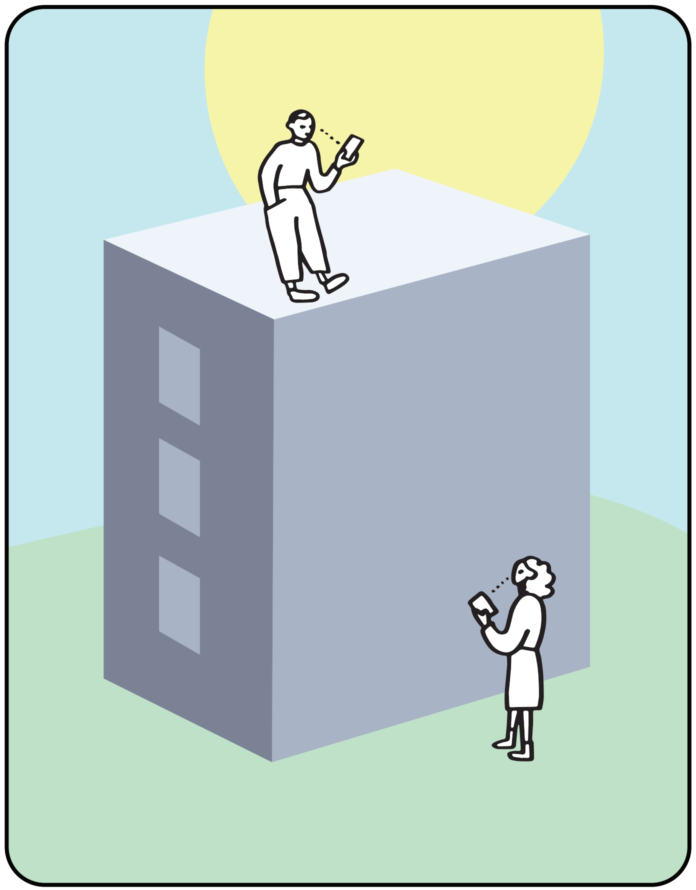
$$H = \frac{P_2 - P_1}{\rho g}$$

Material

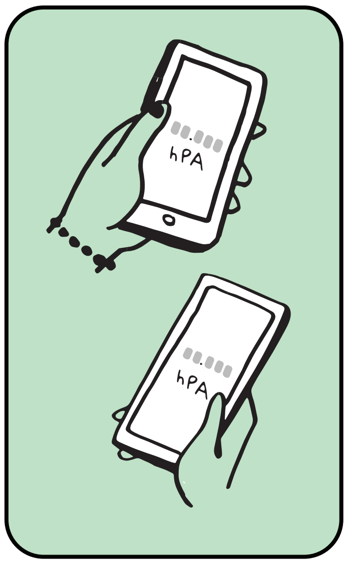


Sensor: **barometer**

1 smartphone



Measure the atmospheric pressure at the top and bottom of the building. The pressure variation depends directly on the height and density of air.



P_1 = pressure at the top,
P_2 = pressure at the bottom,
ρ = density of air, $g = 9.8\ ms^{-2}$

№1. Free Fall of the Smartpone

Precision: high

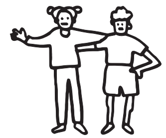
Difficulty: low

Formula

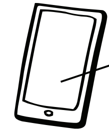
$$\begin{cases} H = \frac{1}{2} g t^2 \\ \text{or} \\ H = \iint \ddot{z}\, dt \end{cases}$$

Material

1 sheet

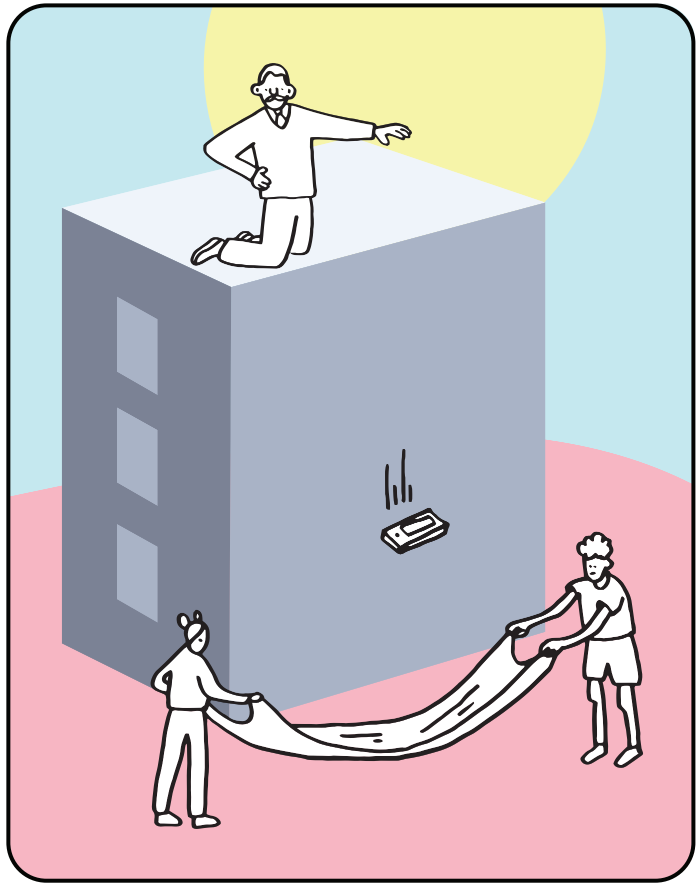


two friends

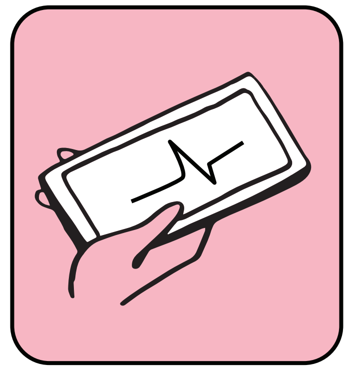


Sensor: **accelerometer**

1 smartphone



Drop your smartphone from the top of the building, your friends receiving it down in a sheet, like firefighters. The recording of the accelerometer data makes it possible to determine the time of fall, and if needed the value of the acceleration can be used to take air drag into account.



t = fall time of the smartphone,
$\ddot{z}$ = smartphone's acceleration,
$g = 9.8\ ms^{-2}$

Precision: maximum

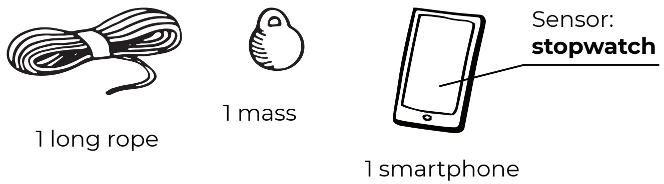
Difficulty: intermediate

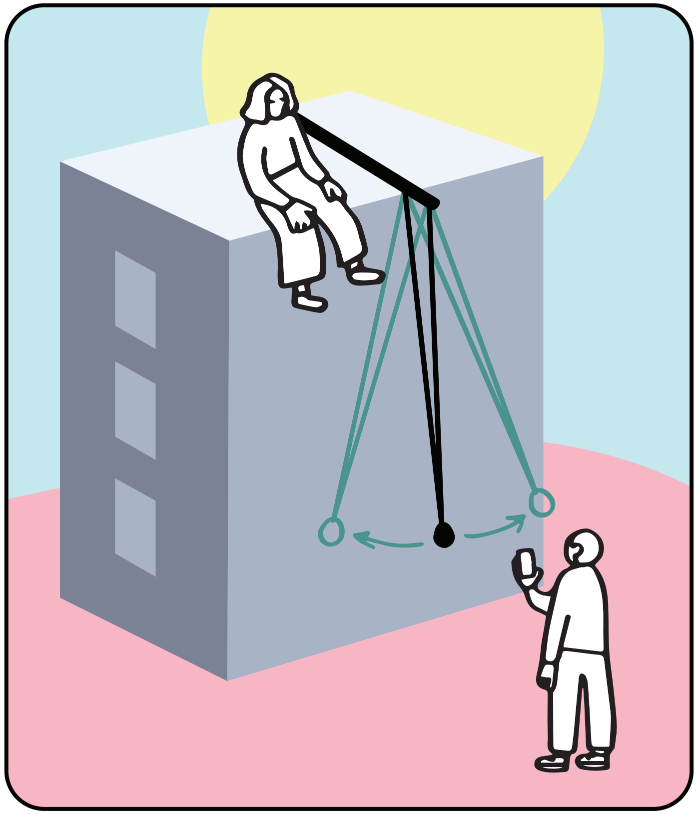
№10. Giant Pendulum Timed

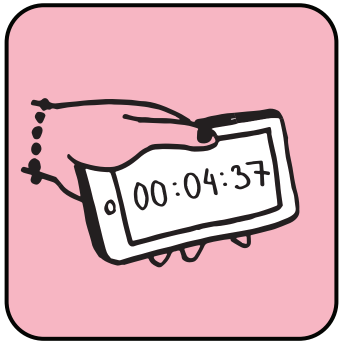
Formula

$$H = g\left(\frac{T}{2\pi}\right)^2$$

Material







Make a giant pendulum the size of the building. Use the smartphone timer to determine the period.

T = pendulum period,
g = 9.8 ms^{-2}

The pendulum must not rotate in all directions, it must only swing.

Precision: high

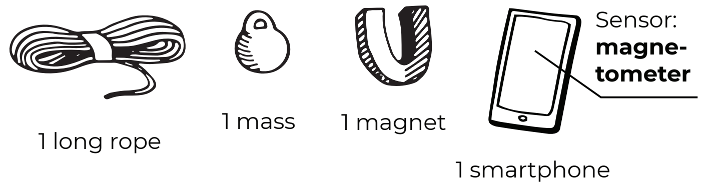
Difficulty: intermediate

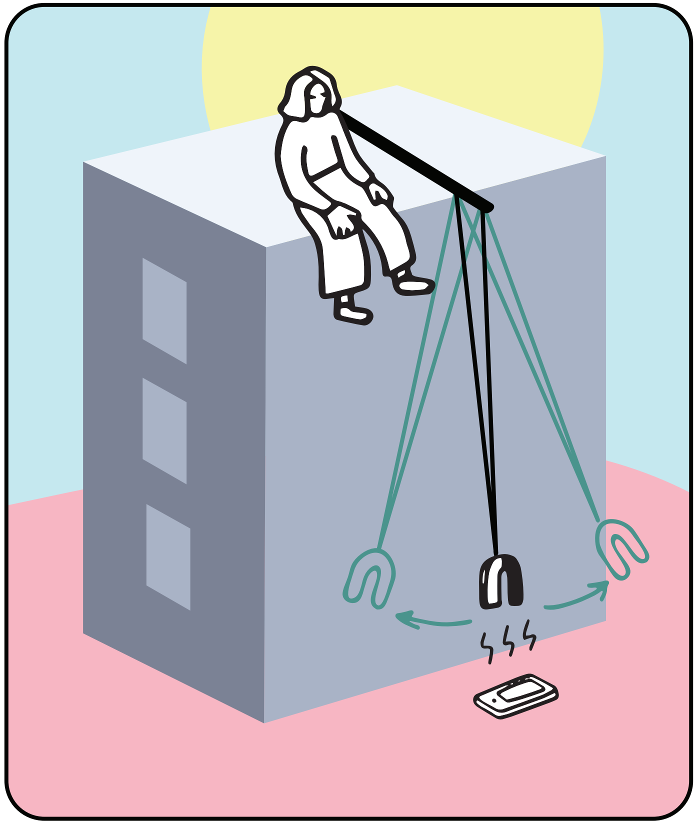
№14. Giant Pendulum & Magnet

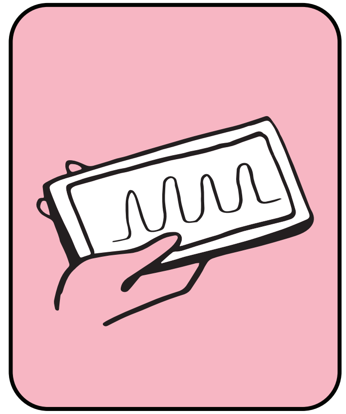
Formula

$$H = g\left(\frac{T}{2\pi}\right)^2$$

Material







Make a giant pendulum the size of the building. Attach a magnet to the pendulum. Position the smartphone vertically to detect the passage of the magnet.

T = pendulum period,
g = 9.8 ms^{-2}

The pendulum must not rotate in all directions, it must only swing.