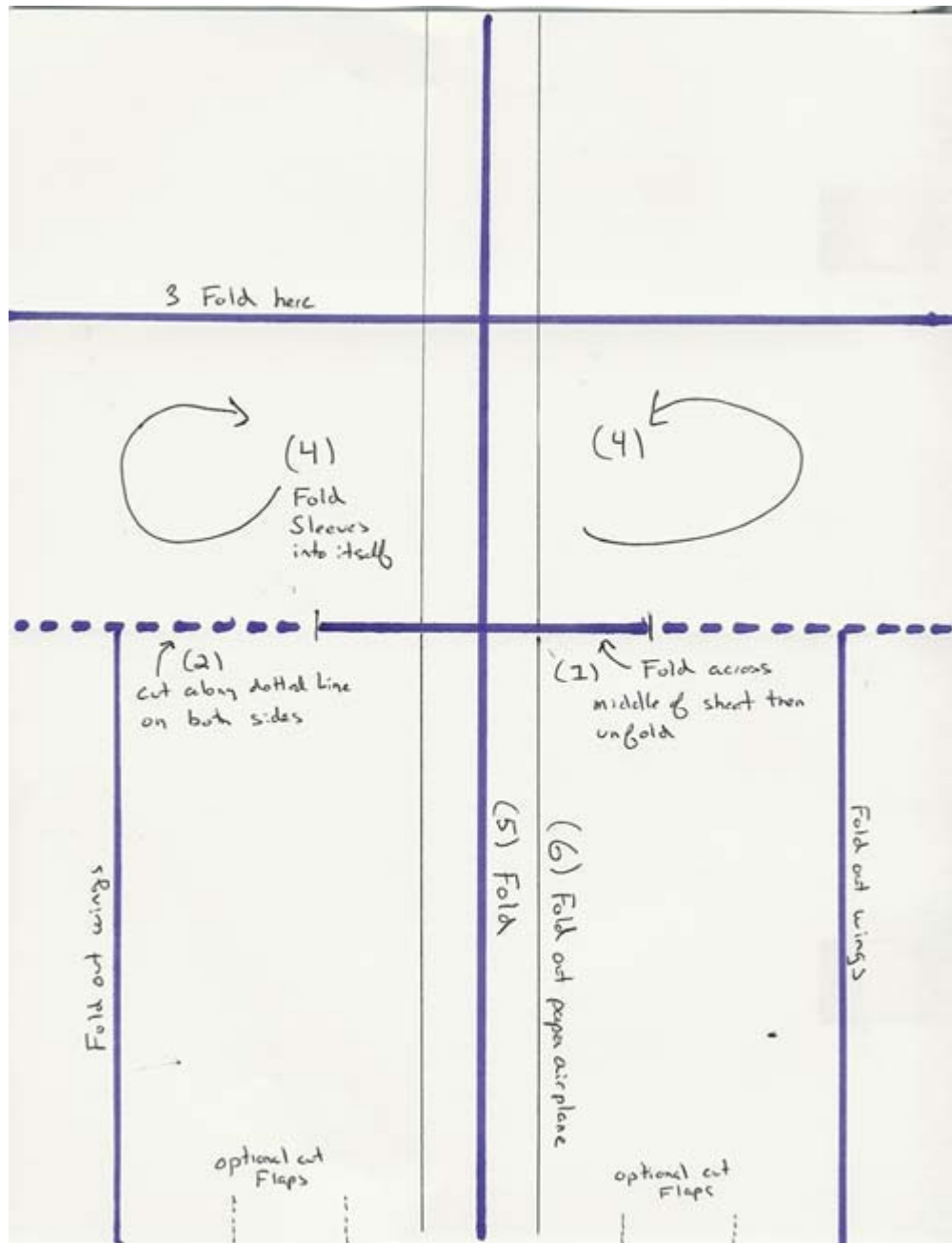


## Paper Airplanes



Once, back in 1985, I was an engineering student. For some odd reason I wanted to design the perfect paper airplane. I did just that<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps someone else has built the same paper airplane, I don't know. I just know that in 1985 a single design of mine summarized all the concepts which were learned over 21 years of living. The important aspect of the experience was the need to express creativity, like a poem, except within the physical folding of paper.

1) Perfect is a relative term: as I haven't needed to design another paper airplane, I consider it perfect for my needs.

I knew the proper design needed to have balance, for a key in flight is weight distribution. The other point was it had to be simple, no glue, no staples; I wanted the plane to be only a sheet of paper along with basic cuts.

The first thing I discovered was that a plane might work fine inside, but outside, in the winds, most designs failed. Our minds make a good initial test bench, a safe walled room makes a good stepping stone, yet, in the end, you need to throw something into the larger world to discover how well it works. I would test in my room, and then once that worked, I would take test planes to the top of a ten story building I lived within, and throw it off the roof. So for 3 nights I folded and folded and folded, until the third night, I came across this most elegant design.

It's supremely simple. It has a blunt nose, so you can reuse it over and over; as it doesn't get damaged upon a crash or slamming into the wall. If you cut wing flaps it becomes a stunt plane. If you leave it with no flaps, it will fly smoothly like a ripple over a calm pond.

The night of testing, I took it to the roof. On the first throw, it floated, smoothly went straight, and forward, and forward, getting smaller, and smaller, never losing height. It flew until I lost it in the darkness, long out of my vision. Perhaps it is still flying today. I have this wonderful memory, of a paper airplane floating out → out → out... over Riverside park, slowly fading into the unknown darkness of night. The moment was perfect, breathless in unfolding of amazement as the plane flew out of sight.

Over my life, I have had similar experiences, people slowly leaving out of my life, events moving into distant points. Like my paper airplane; events, other lives and endeavors coming into focus and then later moving out into the distance to be gone.

Funny thing, that paper airplane and myself are still on the roof, and indeed it is still flying, still floating high over Riverside Park.

===== Paths =====

Moving on often means letting go, watching what was in our lives move on to its own destiny without us.

Instructions on how to build the Tao Glider can be found here:  
<http://www.personaltao.com/tao/paperairplane.htm>