

Popular Mechanics

Adventures in Ill-Advised Office Aviation: RC Helicopters, Reviewed

I have spent the past two weeks buzzing my colleagues and crashing these remote-controlled choppers into bookshelves. A self-taught and utterly incapable pilot, I confess that I almost beheaded an editor with the Hercules Unbreakable RC Helicopter's whirring blades and that I landed the NBA Licensed Remote Control Helicopter inside a trashcan—twice. Now that I'm done terrorizing the office, let's take a closer look at two of our favorite RC helicopters from World Tech Toys.

Hercules Unbreakable Helicopter

Price: \$59.95

Charge time: 90 to 120 minutes for 8 minutes of flight time.

First of all, this thing is enormous. At 15 inches long and 7.5 inches high, Hercules lives up to its name. And its rotors—a ridiculous 13 inches in diameter—kick up enough wind to knock papers off your desk. (I found out the hard way). You would think a helicopter the size of a football wouldn't work well indoors, around breakable objects and irritable people. But the Hercules soon became an office favorite. Its built-in gyroscope provides maximum stability, which meant far fewer aerial disasters. I did blow it on one particularly sharp bank and Hercules' "unbreakable" polymer frame literally took a beating, but the helo managed to fly another day.

One word of caution: The frame is unbreakable, but the rotors are not. Our set came with two replacement rotors and a tiny screwdriver, but, as any RC enthusiast knows, the aircraft never flies quite the same after you've swapped out the originals. I've massacred my fair share of RC helicopters, but always by ripping through rotors and never by smashing the body of the aircraft itself.

The Hercules is by far the most easy-to-handle RC helicopter that I've ever flown, and it's perfect for a beginner with a penchant for mid-air collisions.

NBA Licensed Los Angeles Clippers Helicopter

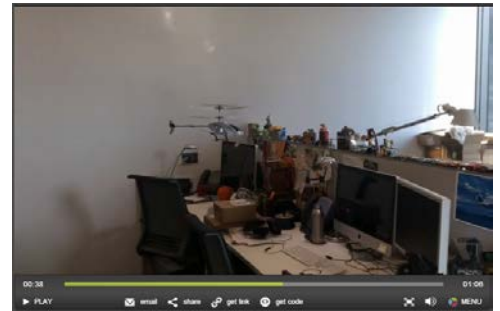
Price: \$39.95

Charge time: 40 minutes for 5 minutes of flight time.

The Clippers and their owner were suffering through [some particularly bad press](#) at the time this branded helo showed up at our office (perhaps World Tech Toys meant to send us the Miami Heat helicopter instead). Nevertheless, I had high hopes for this tiny copter. At 8 inches long and 4 inches high, it handled relatively well indoors. But after only one crash, I chipped a stabilizer. Since then it just hasn't flown the same.

Even before I damaged the Clipper copter, this model was difficult to fly. I passed it around the office and while the direction controls performed decently, beginners could hardly control its altitude. That meant frequent, violent encounters with the floor or ceiling.

But there is one major plus and that's your ability to customize. For too long, the RC helicopter market has been full of nameless choppers that do nothing for your team pride. These NBA licensed models are available for a nice selection of teams (though not all are available). That makes them the perfect present for your favorite armchair pilot/sports fan who might just need a gift for Father's Day.



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