

Another modern invention we owe to a happy accident is Post-it® Notes, those small pieces of notepaper that can be stuck and unstuck again and again. In 1970, Spencer Silver was working in a research laboratory, trying to create a strong adhesive. He created a new adhesive that stuck to objects, but it could also easily be lifted off them. Because the adhesive was so weak, Silver considered it a failure. He shouldn't have. A few years later, a co-worker of Silver's was looking in a book. He used scraps of paper to keep his place in the book, but the scraps kept falling out. Remembering Silver's invention, the co-worker put some of the adhesive on the scraps. It was perfect! The scraps stayed in place, but came off easily so they didn't damage the book. Post-it Notes were introduced in 1980, and quickly became an essential office product around the world. All of these stories show that accidents are not always a bad thing, and that not all mistakes should automatically be discarded. Instead, perhaps we should take a closer look at our accidents and mistakes. They just may reveal the solutions to a problem, or pave the way to an extraordinary new idea.