

Knotted Rocks

Transform a rock into fiber art with the help of a common button.

In eastern Asian nations, there is an ancient art form that involves tying complex, decorative knots from a single cord. History indicates that knot-forming predates written language as a means for recording dates and information, and certain knots were symbolic. The handicraft is still practiced today, using centuries-old designs as well as modern adaptations and materials. Much like the Western art of macramé, knots create ornamentation for clothing, jewelry, household items, wall art, and more.

One of the most widely available items — the simple rock — can be transformed into a work of decorative art by wrapping, knotting, and weaving colorful string or cords around it. Threading strings through the holes of a button is an easy way to hold them in place and keep the strands spaced apart. A variety of colorful and textured yarns and strings can be woven and knotted about the warp strings to create interesting designs.

This lesson plan introduces a simple design familiar to many, the "God's Eye," named for spiritual weavings created by indigenous Mexican people. More complex designs and variations might be easier to create after warming up with this simple, four-sided pattern.

Just as painted rocks are often created for the purpose of sharing, a knotted rock can be gifted or placed somewhere where it will become a special find.

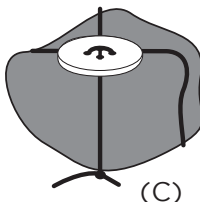
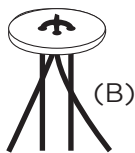
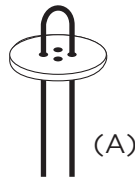
GRADES 3-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Gather, wash, and dry stones. Any stone can be used. Smooth, polished rocks (such as a rock from a lake or river) may be more attractive, but may initially require tape to help hold strings in place because of the smooth sides. Avoid stones with sharp edges that could cut strings.

Process for simple "God's Eye" on rock

1. Begin with a string that has a small enough diameter to fit through the button holes. We recommend waxed thread because it makes a good, strong base and will stretch and resist breaking as work progresses. Cut a length that will fit around the width and one that will span the length of the rock with enough to tie off. Thread through opposite holes of a button (or both holes, if using a two-hole button) and line up the ends (see A).
2. Insert the second thread through the remaining holes (see B). Tie both threads around the rock, securing them at bottom. If button has two holes, twist the second thread around the first one, just below the button and tie around the rock (see C).



Materials (required)

Beadsmith Knot-It Waxed Poly Cord, 2 ply, 492 ft spool, assorted colors (73560-); share one across class

Fibers for weaving and knotting, recommended:

Hemptique Hemp Cord Spools, 205 ft, assorted colors (63830-); share three to four across class

Hemptique Yarn Bon Bons, pkg of 6 colors, 82 ft each (63887-1001); share one across class

Beadsmith Chinese Knotting Cord, 8 mm, 16 yd spool, assorted colors (73564-); share three to four across class

Craft Button Assortment, 1 lb bag (61495-1001); share one across class

Blunt Tapestry Needle, #18, pkg of 12 (66903-1009); share two pkgs across class

Materials (optional)

Assorted Metallized Beads, 8 oz mix (60776-1008)



Ready to order materials?

Go to www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/space-search to access a product bundle for your convenience.

Process for simple "God's Eye" on rock

A small piece of masking tape can be used to hold the threads in place until weaving begins and the threads are stretched more tightly around the rock.

Alternatively, thread can be tied so that the ends move upward through the button and knotted at the top. The button can also be placed on the bottom of the rock.

3. Tie the end of the hemp cord around strings between the button and the rock, and cut away any excess. Thread the loose end of the cord with a needle.
4. Move the needle beneath the first waxed thread, and pull the cord through. Loop back around same thread, moving the needle beneath a second time. Pull the cord through, then repeat, and move to the next thread (see D).

HINTS:

- Pull the cord tight enough to lie flat. Do not over-tighten or waxed thread will be displaced. Aim to keep the wax threads perpendicular to one another as much as possible.
 - When looping cord back around waxed thread, always loop on the outside, away from the button.
5. Repeat step 4 until the cord is completely knotted around rock or a color change is desired. To tie off, knot around the thread and cut cord 1/4" or more about the knot. Use a flat tool, such as a craft stick, to tuck the thread beneath the woven area. Tie the next color or cord to the next thread in the pattern using the same method as before.

Options

- Create more threads that radiate from the button to provide more options for patterns. These threads become like the vertical lines of a weaving — the warp. Cords can be tied on and woven in and out in a basket-like pattern or knotted in a variety of ways.

At the start, as the button is attached to the rock, tie additional waxed threads by securing them between button and rock. Position them as equally distanced from the other threads as possible and hold them in place with a small piece of masking tape until the weaving/knotting process develops.

Another method for adding more warp lines would be to incorporate more than one button.

- Use beads along with or in place of the button as added decoration or as an integral part of the design.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

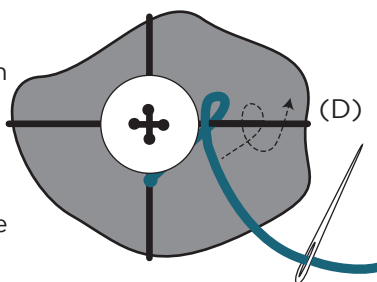
Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.



Step 1: Attach a button with waxed thread tied perpendicularly around the length and width of the rock. Use masking tape to hold it in place temporarily.



Step 2: Tie hemp cord between the rock and button.



Step 3: Thread a blunt tapestry needle and knot cord in a pattern around the waxed threads.

Ready to order materials?

Go to www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/knotted-rocks to access a product bundle for your convenience.