

# Labyrinths (art + history, art + social studies)

Labyrinths are symbolic designs associated with metaphor, mystery and mythology, and have been found in the art and architecture of cultures around the world. In ancient Greek mythology, the labyrinth was designed to imprison a beast called the Minotaur. In the middle ages, labyrinths were laid out on the floor of some cathedrals as a “prayer walk,” symbolizing a spiritual journey. Other examples were built of stone or sod and have been called “turf mazes.” Labyrinth petroglyphs drawn by Native Americans have been found throughout Arizona, New Mexico and the northern states of Mexico.

Often confused with a maze, a labyrinth is not a puzzle. A maze is intended to be difficult to navigate, with false turns and dead-ends. A labyrinth is different because it follows a single path leading in and out, and strives for a symmetrical balance.

This lesson plan offers options for students of all ages to create their own labyrinths, either by using a pattern, drawing their own classical design or creating one out of their own imagination.

*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

**Grade Levels** K-12

## Yarn Labyrinths Elementary/Middle

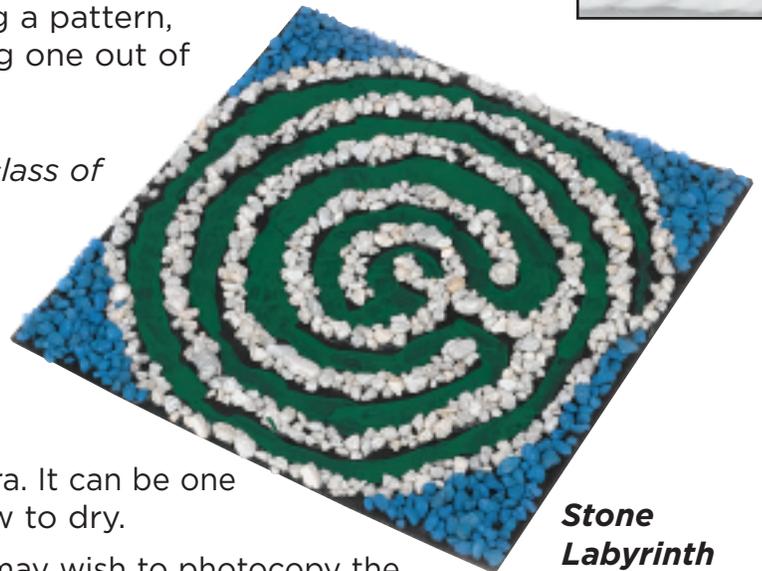
### Process

1. Paint one side of the chipboard with tempera. It can be one color or many. Paint the edges as well. Allow to dry.
2. If working with early elementary ages, you may wish to photocopy the labyrinth pattern on page 3, cut it out and glue it to the chipboard. Otherwise, follow the simple 5-step procedure to draw the labyrinth directly onto the board or transfer by tracing the pattern with a ball point pen using heavy pressure. The pressure will pick up tempera beneath and a faint line will be visible.
3. Cut the yarn into one 20", one 24" and one 28" piece for each labyrinth. If working with early elementary, this can be done in preparation - upper elementary will find this a good exercise in measuring. Tie a knot in one end of each yarn piece, then trim away excess on the end with a pair of scissors. This will prevent fraying.
4. Use glue bottle to trace over the inside line marked in red in illustration (A). Place the shortest length of yarn (20") into the glue line. At the end of the yarn, either tie another knot or simply trim and cover end with another drop of glue to prevent fraying.



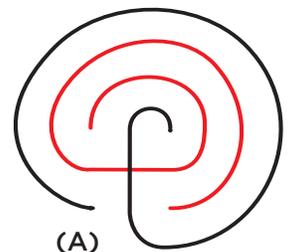
### Yarn Labyrinth

*Easy pattern and materials for elementary ages. Plus, it becomes a game!*



### Stone Labyrinth

*Plan and construct with middle or junior high grades.*



## Materials

### For Yarn Labyrinths (elementary)

All-Purpose Chipboard, double-thick (13115-2236), cut into 7" x 7" sizes for 24 per board, need one per student

*Note: use a packing knife to cut down large sheets of chipboard or a heavy-duty paper trimmer for smaller sizes*

Blick Premium Tempera, assorted colors (00011-), need approximately three pints to share across class

Blick Economy Camel Hair brushes, round, (05153-1012) size 12, need one per student

Jumbo Roving Yarn, assorted colors (65214-), cut to 72" pieces for approximately 42 per cone, need one length per student

Dura-Lar™ Clear Film, 25" x 40" sheets (55506-1103), cut to 7" x 7" for 15 pieces per sheet, need one piece per student

Blick Washable Glue, 4-oz size (23872-1044), one per student

Westcott® Klean Kut Kids' Scissors (57027-1009), one pair per student

### For Stone Labyrinths (Jr/Sr High):

All-Purpose Chipboard, double-thick (13115-2236), cut into approximately 8.75" x 8.75" sizes for 15 per board, need one per student

*Note: use a packing knife to cut down large sheets of chipboard or a heavy-duty paper trimmer for smaller sizes*

Blickrylic™ Economy Acrylic, assorted colors (00711-) need approximately three pints to share across class

Blick Scholastic Golden Taklon Flat (05859-4014), size 1/4", need one per student

Crushed Mosaic Pebbles, assorted colors (61005-), need approximately 3 bags to share across class

Blick Multi-Purpose Glue, 4-oz size (23872-1064), need one per student

## Process, continued

- Repeat with the 24" piece of yarn for the rest of the labyrinth, then glue the 28" piece around the outside edge of the board.
- To make a simple game, place a tiny round bead or BB in the labyrinth. Glue a piece of clear acetate over the top of the labyrinth and roll the bead through the paths.

### Options for Upper Elementary/Middle:

- See the template on page 4 for a more complex labyrinth, or copy another pattern from labyrinths around the world.
- Challenge students to design their own maze (see example below). It's not difficult to do, and a great exercise in problem solving. Sketch it out on a piece of paper first to make sure it works, then transfer sketch to the board.



Free-form  
designed  
maze

## Stone Labyrinths Jr/Sr High

### Process

- Paint one side and edges of the chipboard with Blickrylic paint. Allow to dry.
- Draw one of the labyrinth designs provided on page 3 and 4. Or have students create a labyrinth design of their own. Sketch out on a piece of paper first, then transfer the sketch to the board.
- Beginning in the center, build the labyrinth walls 2-3" at a time by applying a thick line of glue and placing pebbles into the glue. Continue until labyrinth is complete.
- Fill in the corners and edges around the labyrinth with colorful pebbles.

### Options for Jr/Sr High:

- Since labyrinths are traditionally metaphors for a personal journey, include meaningful images, words, lyrics, poetry, etc along the labyrinth path.

## How to draw a traditional labyrinth

These instructions create a simple, basic labyrinth in just 5 steps. Have students draw their own, or use photocopies of the large, finished example at the bottom.

Middle or junior high ages may use these instructions, and continue following the same pattern to make a larger, more complex labyrinth.



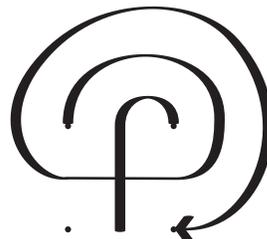
Step 1



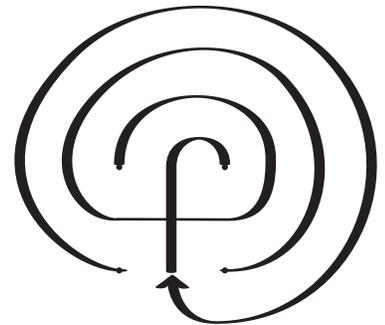
Step 2



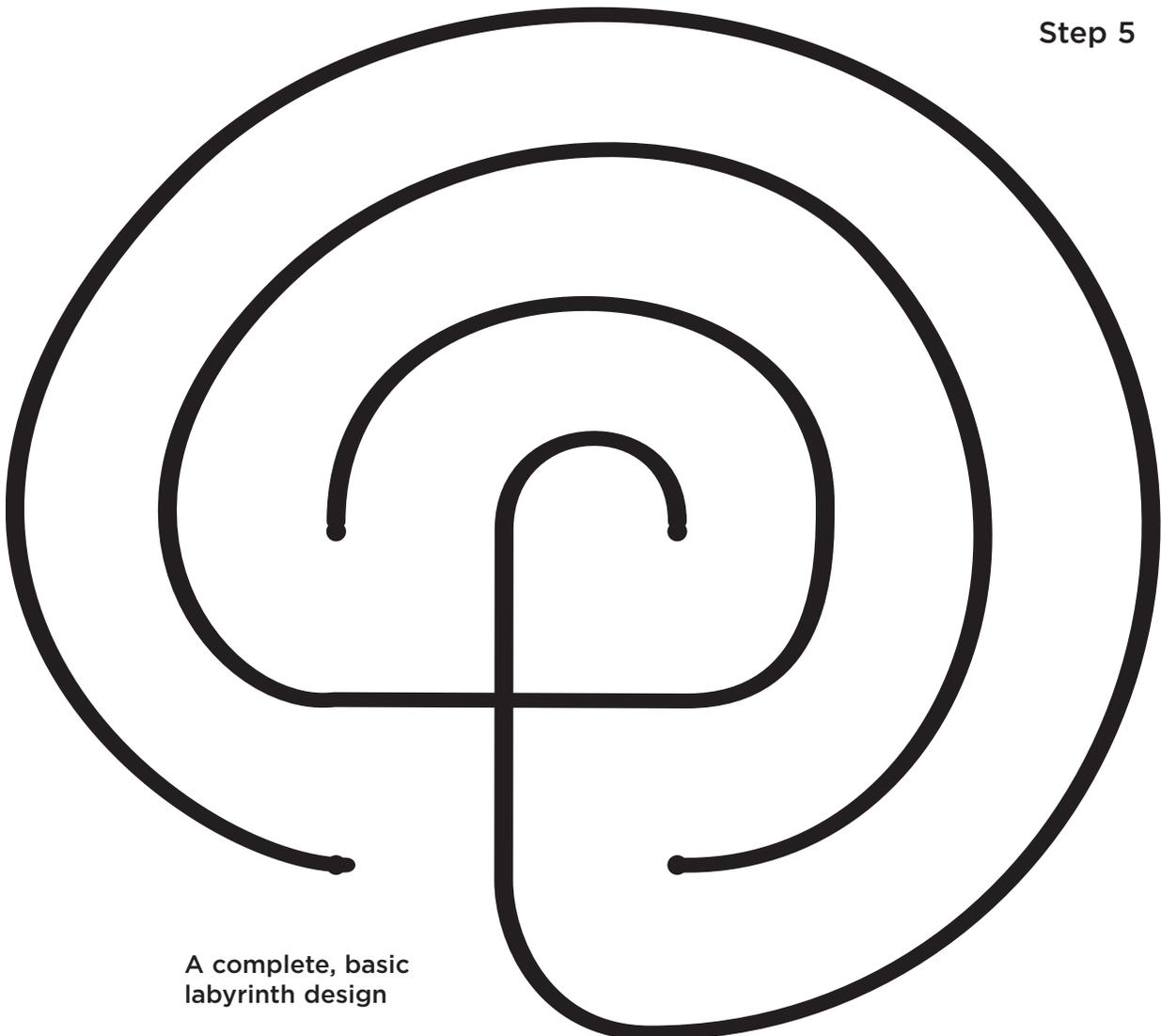
Step 3



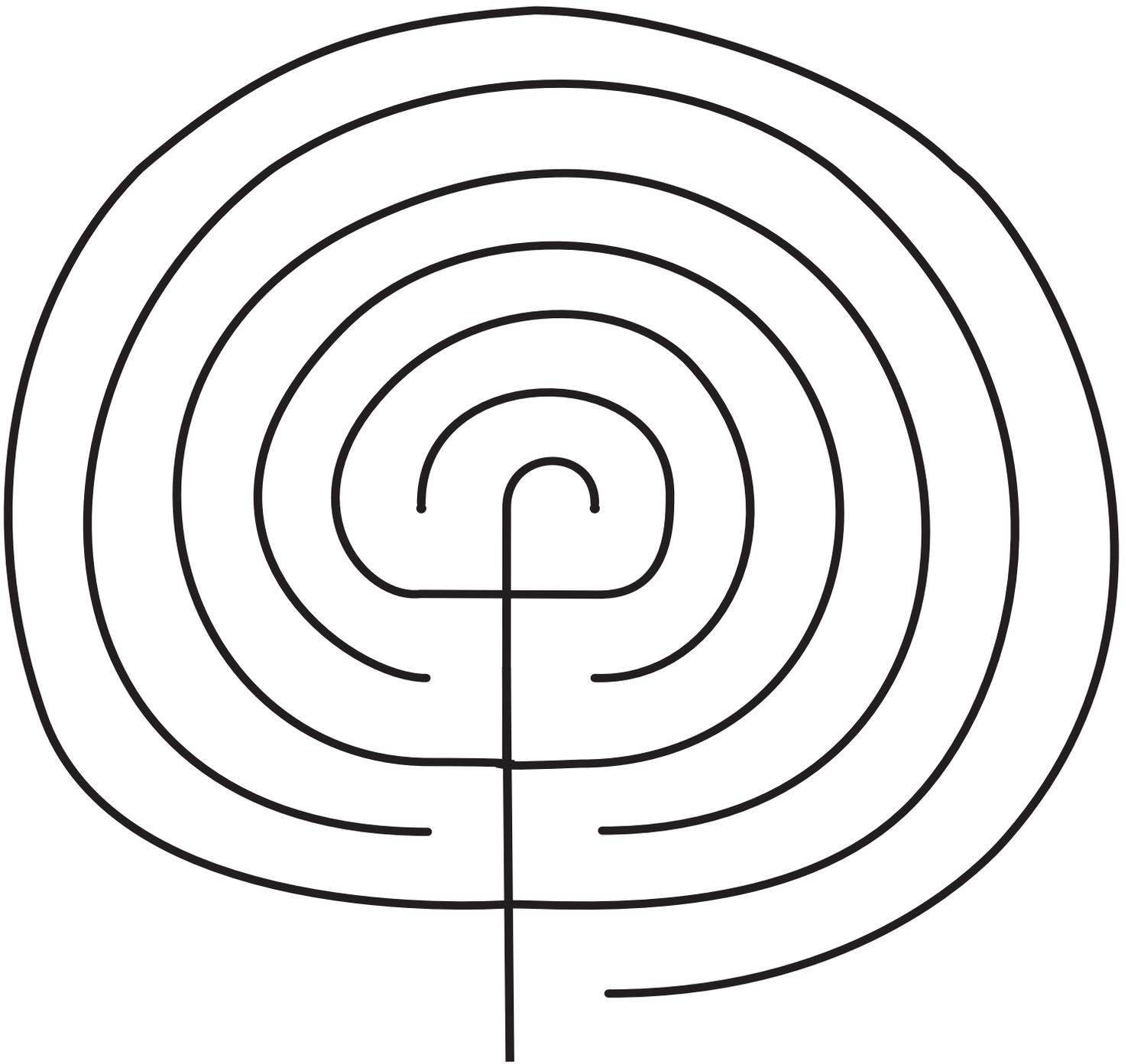
Step 4



Step 5



A complete, basic labyrinth design



Pattern for a  
traditional labyrinth

## National Standards

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

### K-4

Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places

### 5-8

Students analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art

### 9-12

Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

### K-4

Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum

### 5-8

Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts

### 9-12

Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues, or themes in the humanities or science