

Chinese Macramé:

Tying the Friendship Knot



Introduction to Chinese Macramé



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A unique folk craft, Chinese Macramé (Chinese Knots) originated two thousand years ago in China. Chinese people believe that these hand-crafted knots prevent calamity and bring good luck. Knots often represent themes of power, harmony, friendship and unity. To this day they are commonly given as gifts to others as a token of good will. With their classic elegance and ever-changing variations, the knots serve both practical and ornamental purposes. They may be used to adorn clothing or can be hung on a wall to ward off evil spirits.

Chinese knots can range from very small (button sized) to very large (wall hangings). They are traditionally made from cotton, silk or hemp and incorporate beans, beads, bells, jade pieces and other small decorations.

Chinese Macramé is based on dozens of basic knots which are named according to their distinctive shapes, usages, or origins. The Two Coins Knot, for example, is so named because it is shaped like two overlapping coins similar to the ones used in ancient China. The Button Knot can actually function as a button, and the Reversed Swastika Knot is derived from the Buddhist symbol, which was commonly seen on the streamers hanging down from the waistband of the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy.

FAQs

Q: Why do my series of Bird Knots not look neat?

A: First, make sure that you tie the knots in the same direction and that strings B, C, and D are kept straight. Also, make sure that your knots are not too tight or too loose; they should only be tight enough to keep their shape.

Q: Where can I find the materials for making Chinese Macramé?

A: Most craft stores should carry these materials.

Q: Where can I find further information about Chinese Macramé?

A: Refer to the books listed under “references” and the websites listed to the right. There are also many books at your local bookstore or craft store on Chinese Macramé.

Q: Where can I add beads and other decorations?

A: You can add decorations anywhere in your Chinese Macramé. You may consider adding them within the series of Bird Knots, where you tie off the ring of Bird Knots, or where you tie the Flower Knots.

Other Sources:

Jiang Nan Ren Jia:
[go1.163.com/
jiangnanren/zhgj/
zhgj.htm](http://go1.163.com/jiangnanren/zhgj/zhgj.htm)

Chinese Macrame:
[www.gio.gov.tw/info/
culture/cultur22.html](http://www.gio.gov.tw/info/culture/cultur22.html)

Chinese Knot:
www.chineseknotting.org/

Two Snakes:
twosnake.myetang.com/

Zhong Guo Jie:
www.chineseknot.com/

Hua Yang Nian Hua:
[vix.topcool.net/
index.html](http://vix.topcool.net/index.html)

Jie Yi Fang:
www.myknots.com/

20. Decorate / embellish: Decorate the finished product with beads/beans or other ornaments.



Liu, Yanni

References:

E-Chinaj (2001). China Knots Web. Retrieved from: http://e-chinaj.com/new_page_2.htm (Sept. 6, 2001).

Liu, Yanni (2001). China Knots. Guangxi, China: Science and Technology Publications.

Jiang Nan Ren Jia (2001). Retrieved from: <http://go1.163.com/jiangnanren/zhgj/zhgj.htm> (Oct. 6, 2001).

The Friendship Knot

The Friendship Knot, which is actually a series of continuous loops, or Bird Knots, symbolizes the conception of long-lasting friendship. In China the circular ring traditionally represents unity and harmony. This knot fully reflects the profundity of highly collectivistic Chinese culture, which puts heavy emphasis on harmony in friendship.

The instructions below will direct you in learning to tie two basic Chinese knots: the Bird Knot and the Flower Knot. Through combining these two knots you will learn how to create and personalize the Friendship Knot.



Tools & Materials

1 string, 2 yards long
1 string, 2.5 yards long
1 stick
(chopstick or pencil)
Scissors
Beads or beans

Optional Materials:

Needle and thread
Cardboard
4 push pins
Other ornaments

Tips for selecting materials:

String should be a little stiff, textured, and flexible, with luster and bright color.

Red is preferred; it traditionally represents good fortune. Because black and white represent death, they should not be used.

Tip: Try holding the stick between your knees.

Note: The two loops are the bird's "wings."

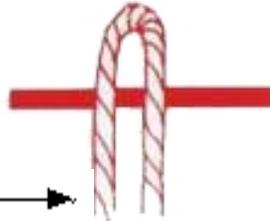


The Bird Knot

You will be fixing the string to the stick using the **Bird Knot**. This knot is so named because it looks like a bird (see illustration).

1. Fold one length of string in half.

Make the left string 10" longer on the first knot only



2. Drape the folded end over the stick.



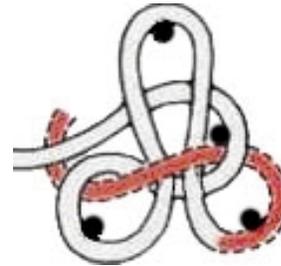
3. Pull the loose ends through the resulting loop.



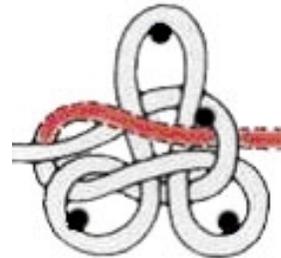
4. Pull tight.



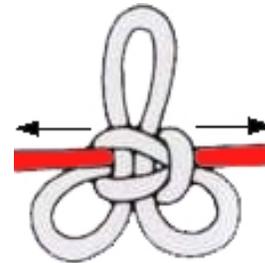
16.



17.



18. Take out the pins and pull the flower tight.



19. Repeat the process above, tying a Flower Knot on each remaining string.



Variation: You may sew two or more flower knots together in different combinations (see picture).

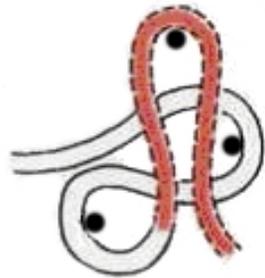
The Flower Knot

You will be making a Flower Knot on each of the remaining strings.

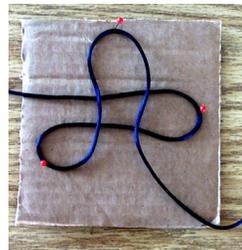
14. Thread one bead or bean on each remaining string before you begin the flower knots.



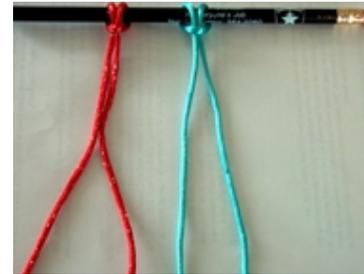
15. Using the piece of cardboard and the push-pins, begin tying the Flower Knot on one string.



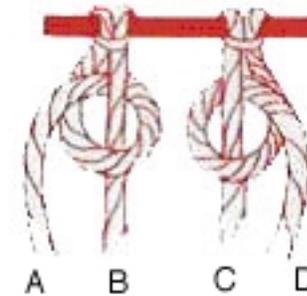
Push a push-pin into the cardboard at each point where you create a loop to hold it in place.



5. Follow steps 1-3 again using the other piece of string and the same stick.



6. Take string A (longest string) and loop it in front of and around string B. Take string D and loop it in front of and around string C.



7. Continue looping string A (longest string) around strings B, C, and D in the same direction and manner



Note: *Though these do not look the same, they are still Bird Knots.*



Tip: Make the knots just tight enough to hold their shape.

Variation: You may also choose to create a different pattern of Bird Knots by tying string A around strings B, C, and D. And then tying string D around strings C, B, and A.

Variation: You may choose not to add beads or you may add even more beads.

Tip: For this step, lay the entire Friendship Knot horizontally on the piece of cardboard.

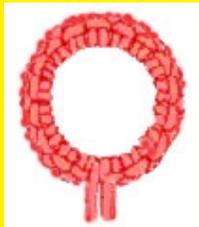
Note: *The shaded area of the picture represents what you are doing now.*

Tip: Start tying the knot at the very top of the string and make your loops small. Make the “petals” the same size.

Tip:

Stop periodically to adjust the Bird Knots from top to bottom. Make sure the tightness is consistent.

Variation: You may choose to sew the ends together with a needle and thread.



You can then use beads to hide the ends of the threads.

8. Continue tying Bird Knots with string A until approximately 4" remain. Make the series of knots at least 6" long.



9. Take the stick out of the knots; be careful not to influence the finished shape.

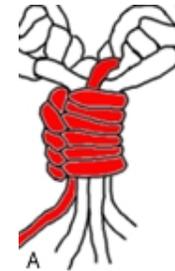
10. Bring each end of the series of Bird Knots together and hold them in place to form the series of Bird Knots into a ring.



11. Pull strings B, C, and D through the pencil loops.



12. Using string A, begin tying a series of Bird Knots around the loose ends of the ring. This will "tie off" the ring.



13. Tuck the loose ends of the string into the middle of the tie-off using the pointed end of a pencil.



14. Gently pull out one of the strings from the top center of the ring to form a loop.



Tip: You may use a needle or pencil to pull out the loop.