




# Mānawatia a Matariki

Matariki is upon us, and the theme for 2024 is Matariki heri kai meaning 'Matariki, the bringer of food'. Food is central to the celebration of Matariki - the four stars in the cluster are associated to the four environments that we harvest our kai from:

 **Tupuānuku** is the star associated with food grown in the earth.

 **Tupuārangi** is associated with food from above, such as food grown in trees and birds.

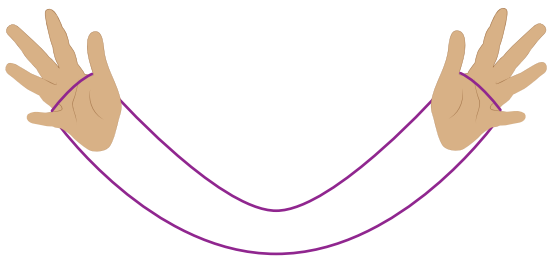
 **Waitī** is the star of lakes, rivers, streams and fresh water.

 **Waitā** is the star of salt water and is associated with food from the ocean.

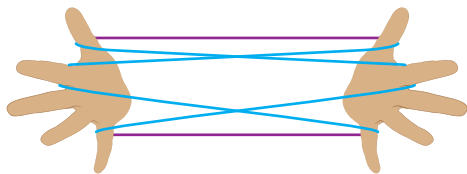
To acknowledge these four stars and their connection to our sustenance, let's learn a traditional Māori string game called whai. Whai involves the intricate manipulation of a looped piece of string held between the hands, and in this game, we'll be creating a diamond-shaped pattern representing the four stars and the vitality of food.

## Mahi Whai | Ngā Taimana e Whā

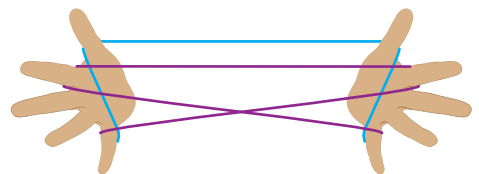
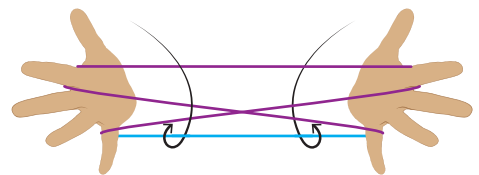
You'll need a two-metre length of string tied in a loop – harakeke is customary, however, nylon or wool can be used:



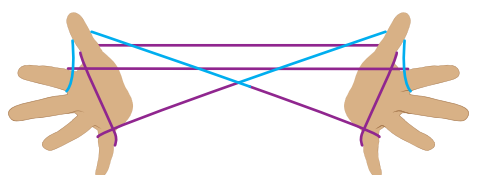
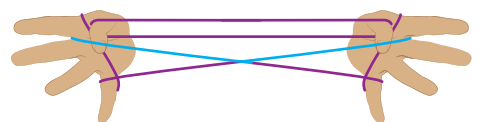
**1.** Hook your loop of string over both thumbs and little fingers and pull taut, forming a rectangular loop – this is the basis of the pattern called whai.



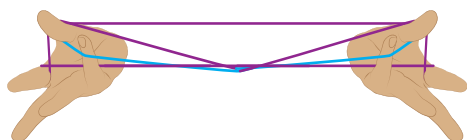
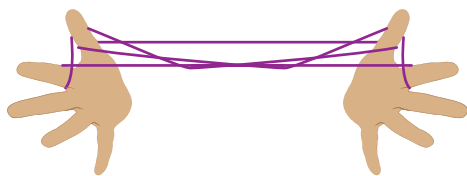
**2.** Loop the string from the opposite palm around your index fingers and pull it back.



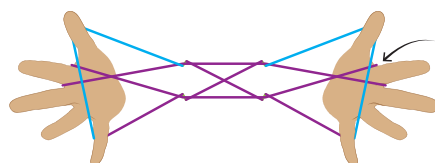
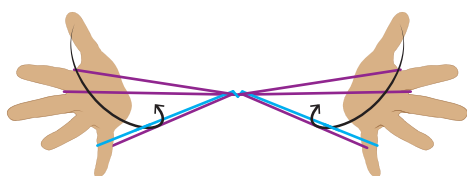
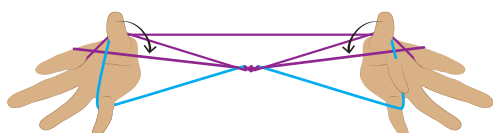
**3.** Drop the thumb loops, and with both thumbs, pick up the far little finger strings from underneath.



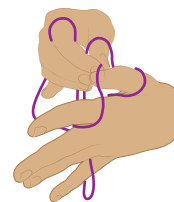
**4.** Now both thumbs go over near the index string to pick up the far index strings, and return.



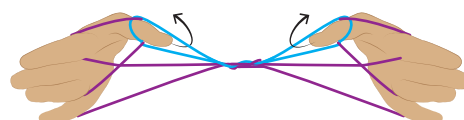
**5.** Drop the little finger loops, and with both little fingers, go over the near index string to pick up the first thumb string and return.



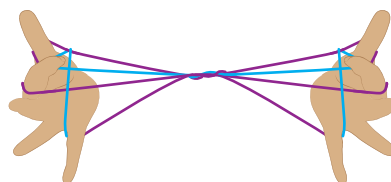
**6.** Now drop the thumb loops and take the thumbs over the strings to pick up the near little finger strings and return.



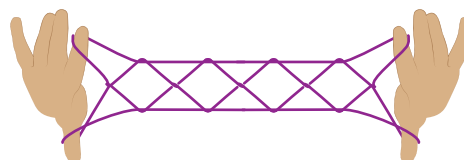
**7.** Loop the index finger loops around thumbs on both sides.



**8.** A space will open where you can roll your thumbs under the far string without releasing the thumbs completely.



**9.** Put your index fingers in the triangles that have now formed next to the thumbs.



**10.** Turn your hands so that the palms face away from you. The strings should naturally roll inwards and drop off your little fingers. Now straighten up your index fingers to get to reveal ngā taimana e whā – four diamonds.

**Whai** traditionally served to develop dexterity and entertain during long winter nights. Credited to the demigod Māui, from whom the game's full name, Te Whai-Wawewawe-a-Māui, is derived, whai is often accompanied by chants as players skilfully weave the string into complex patterns. Whai also holds cultural significance among iwi, serving as a platform for storytelling and cultural transmission. The game's widespread presence in other Polynesian cultures highlights the interconnectedness of Pacific Island communities and the rich tapestry of artistic expression shared across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.



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a Matariki