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DIY Library Program

THE ART OF KUMIHIMO

MAKE YOUR OWN FRIENDSHIP BRACELET

Recommended for Ages 12-18

Kumihimo is the Japanese word for "gathered thread". The verb *kumu* means to braid and the noun *himo* is a cord. With this program, you will be able to make your own friendship bracelet using the kumihimo technique.

What is Kumihimo?

Kumihimo is a traditional Japanese weaving technique used in making long strands of braided material, usually silk. The braided strands are made by looping the thread in a repetitive way. In the beginning, the weaving was done using the artist's fingers but over time, tools were used. One of these tools is called a marudai (round stand); a traditional tall round tool for braiding. Today, smaller portable tools can be used like a kumihimo disk or square.

Kumihimo has been used throughout history in a variety of ways. During the Samurai period, some armor required silk cords laced together in the metal work. Also, traditional garbs like a kimono used a braided cord of kumihimo called an obijime. Today, kumihimo is used by designers to highlight the beauty of silk cords in different ways like beaded jewelry or as bracelets.

There are many types of kumihimo styles. Here are a few:

- Hira Kara Gumi: 8-element flat braid
- Edo Yatsu Gumi: one of the most familiar 8-element round braid, often plaited in a solid color to produce cords suitable for jewelry designers
- Kongō Gumi: 16-element braid, broken into 8 pairs, weaved on a disk. It is usually made with four colors to create spiral stripes. This is the one you will learn with this program.

Activity: Kumihimo Friendship Bracelets

Materials

- Cardboard or foamboard
- Yarn or string
- Pen or pencil
- Scissors
- Ruler

Before you start, here is a how-to YouTube tutorial: https://youtu.be/FRtMjpCgogk

So, let's get started!

1. **Make your cardboard kumihimo disc.**

- Trace a circle onto a piece of cardboard. Cut out the circle, then cut 8 small slits evenly spaced around the edge. Each slit should be about ½ inch long.
- Use your pen or pencil to poke a hole through the center of the circle.

2. **Make the starting knot.**

- Line up the ends 7 strands of yarn and then tie a simple knot.
- Make it so that there is about 1 inch of loose ends from the top.

3. **Put the yarn on the braiding disc.**

- Push the knotted end of the yarn bundle through the hole in the center of the braiding disc.
- Put one piece of yarn into each slot, except the top slot.

4. **Braid your friendship bracelet.**

- Making the bracelet is simple. Learn the following two steps and repeat.
- Hold the disc so that the empty slot is facing to the right. Count 2 threads to the left. Un-clip the third yarn and clip it into the empty slot.
- Rotate the whole disc so that the empty slot is back facing to the right. Repeat the steps and watch the bracelet grow.

5. **Remove your bracelet from the braiding disc.**

- Once the bracelet is long enough to go around your wrist, un-clip it from the braiding disc.
- Tie an overhand knot right at the point where the braiding ends. Then you are done!

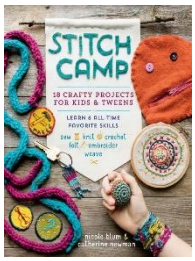
3 things to remember about Kumihimo:

1. The word kumihimo means “gathered thread”.
2. Braiding and threading silk has been used for centuries.
3. Kumihimo can be used for many things like jewelry, clothing, etc.

DIGITAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH LA COUNTY LIBRARY

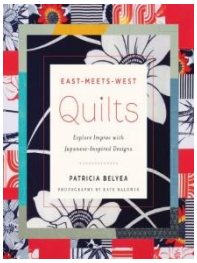
eBooks & Audiobooks

LA County Library offers numerous resources that can help you learn more about braiding, weaving, and Japanese culture and art. Here are just a few, all of which are available as eBooks on OverDrive and Libby:

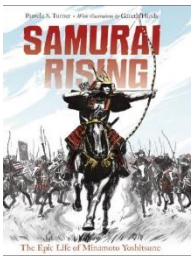


Stitch Camp: 18 Crafty Projects for Kids & Teens **by Nicole Blum**
Step-by-step photos and instructions teach readers the basics of how to sew, knit, crochet, felt, embroider, and weave, plus how to make three projects for each craft.

Japanese Knitting Stitch Bible by Hitomi Shida
This book is great for beginner or experienced knitters who are looking for new stitches that yield wonderful projects. Shida's new design ideas and deviations on classic stitches result in beautiful complex patterns and unique knitted fashions.



East-Meets-West Quilts: Explore Improv with Japanese-Inspired Designs by Patricia Belyea
“Improv quilting”, is a type of quilting where designs develop organically as fabric is cut and stitched. It is simple, popular, and fun. In this book, expert designer Belyea offers simple instructions and shares fourteen different projects that are inspiring and out of the ordinary.



Samurai Rising: The Epic Life of Minamoto Yoshitsune by Pamela S. Turner
This is the story of one of greatest Japanese Samurais of all time. After tragic events in his childhood, Yoshitsune was left at a monastery. He escapes and learns the way of the samurai, becoming one of the bravest warriors to fight for his clan.

Additional Library Resources

- *RBdigital.* Read full digital copies of your favorite craft magazines on a computer, tablet, or mobile device.

- *HooplaDigital.* Borrow up to 8 comics and eBooks per month. Search for "Kumihimo" or "Japanese Knitting" and you will find several titles to choose from.

- *Kanopy*. For more information on samurai and Japanese history, check out some great movies on Kanopy. We recommend watching the film Medieval Japan - Samurai and Shoguns from the *Foundations of Eastern Civilization* lecture series.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- *Google Arts & Culture.* Learn more about the importance of braided cords, how they are created, and their importance in Japanese history by reading, *Japanese Braided Cords* by Nishioka Samurai's Armer and Braiding Studio. https://tinyurl.com/y87oblxp

- *e-Museum: National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties of National Museums, Japan*. View images and read descriptions of national treasures and important cultural properties owned by four of Japan's national museums. https://tinyurl.com/y9bcjecj