



# Kumihimo

the art of  
Japanese  
String  
Making

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# What is it?

Kumihomo is a Japanese word for braided cord. The origins of braiding goes back thousands of years with evidence of braided hair in artwork from the bronze and iron ages. Many different cultures have used many different fibres throughout history for braiding. This includes fibres such as hair, grass, nettle, hemp, alpaca wool and bison hair! In Asian countries silk was commonly used.

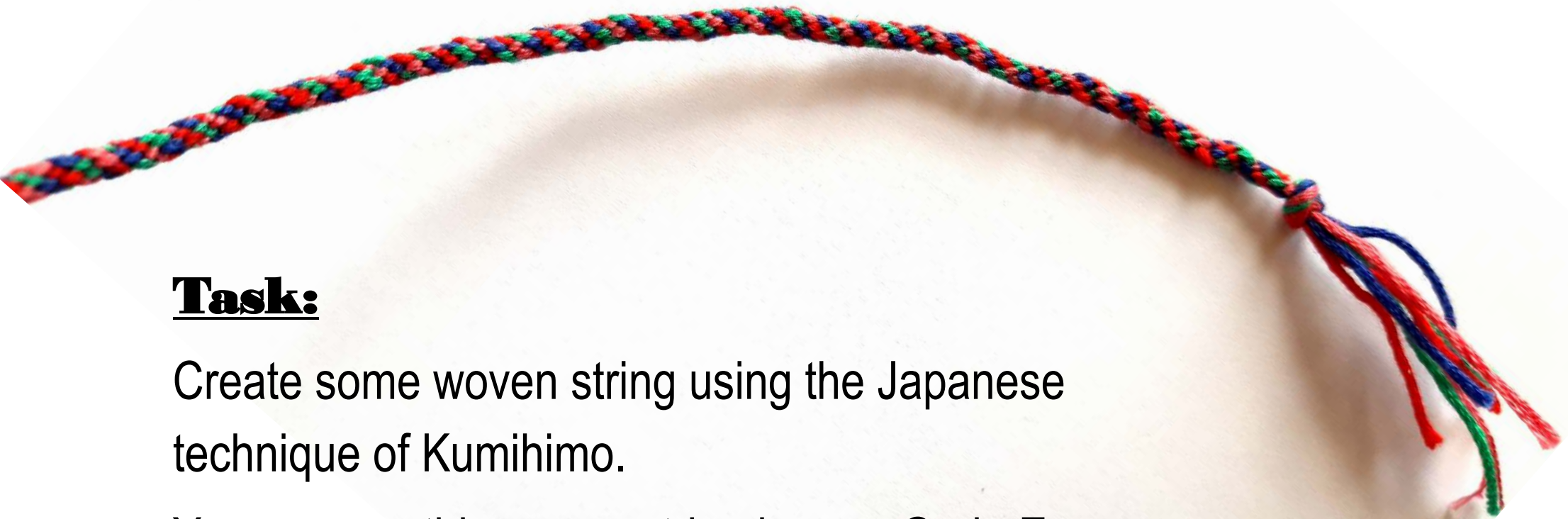
In Japan Kumihomo braids were used to hold Samurai armour together, as decorative wraps for sword handles, to adorn Buddhist temples and as cord to secure sashes on kimonos.

There are many different patterns of braiding Kumihomo, some very complex requiring 400 steps to achieve!

Source: <https://www.interweave.com/article/beading/kumihimo-origin-facts/>



Samurai warrior armour from Japan



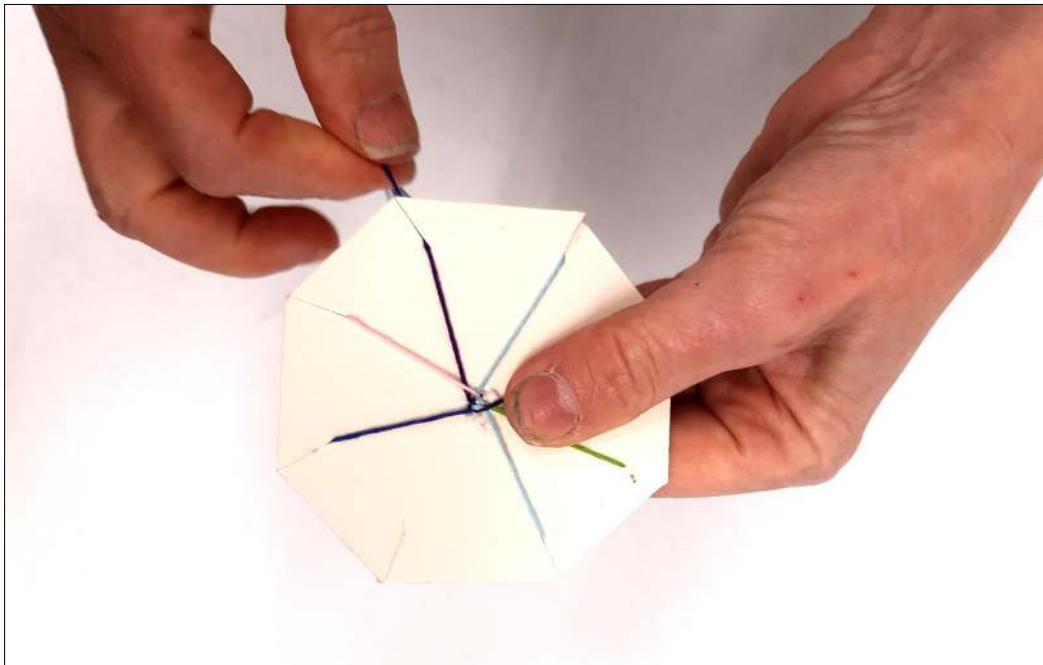
**Task:**

Create some woven string using the Japanese technique of Kumihimo.

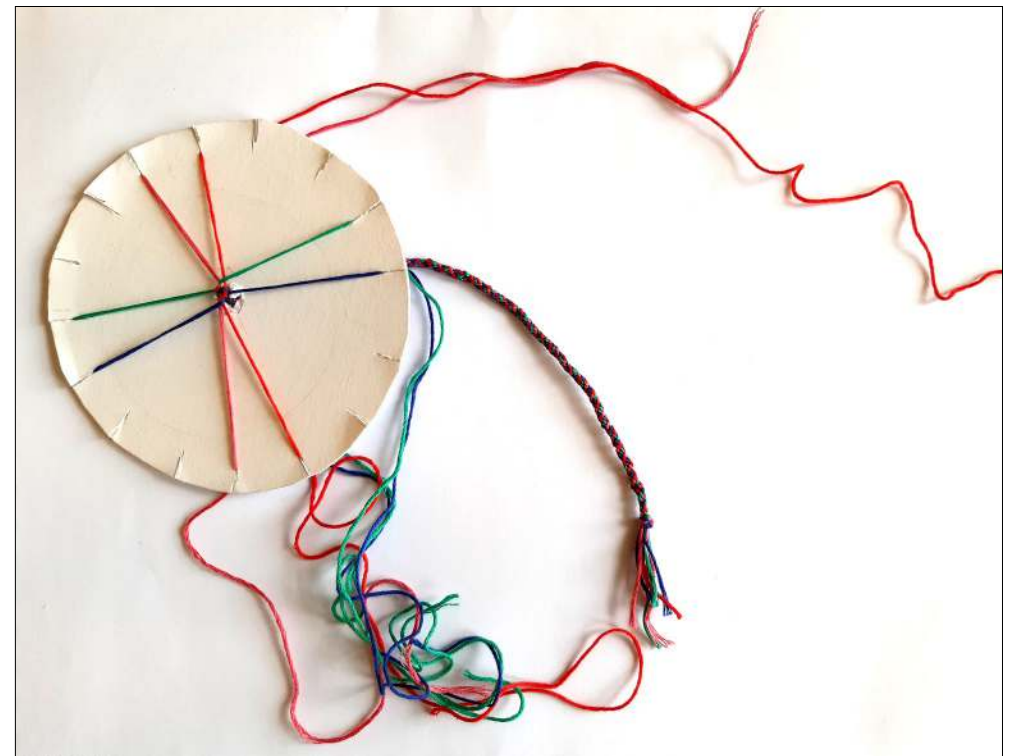
You can use this woven string in your Gods-Eye mobile creation... next weeks activity!

***We will look at two different patterns for Kumihomo string making.***

1. The first one is a little simpler and recommended for beginners. It uses 7 different threads on a hexagonal board.
2. The second method uses 8 pieces of thread (2 or 4 different colours) on a round board with 16 notches.



**#1**

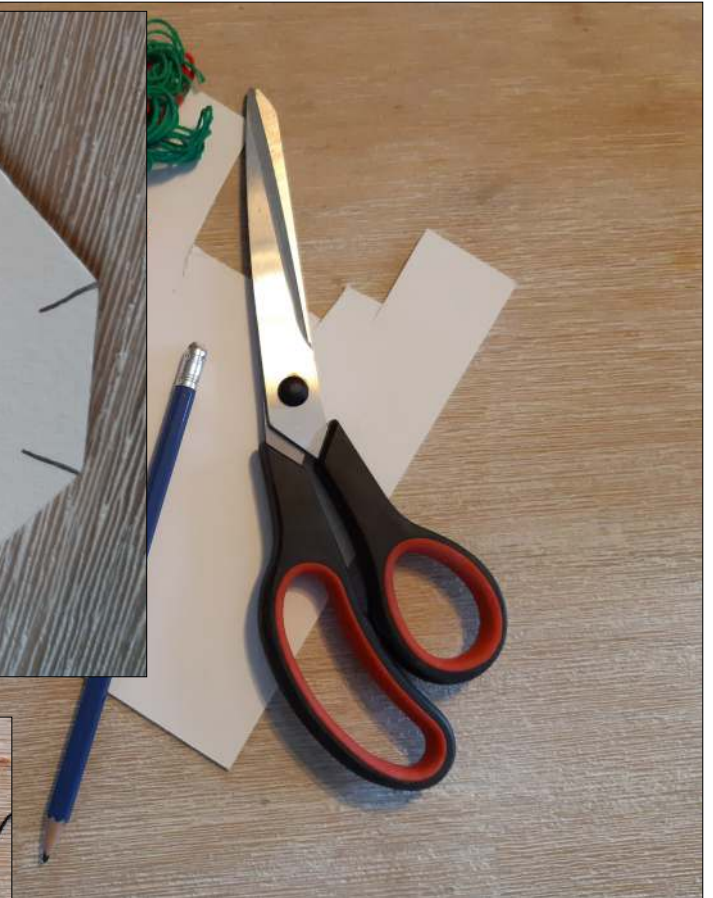
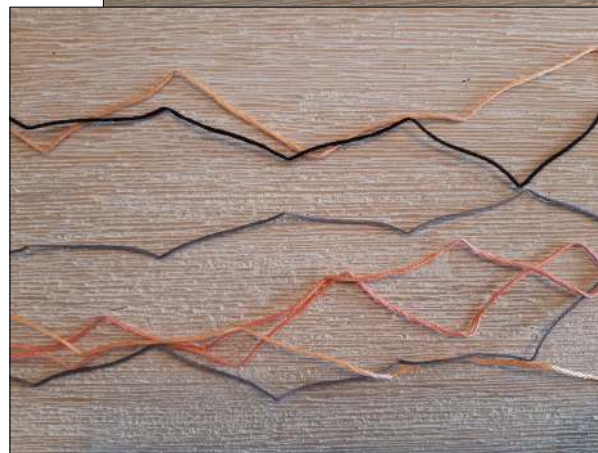
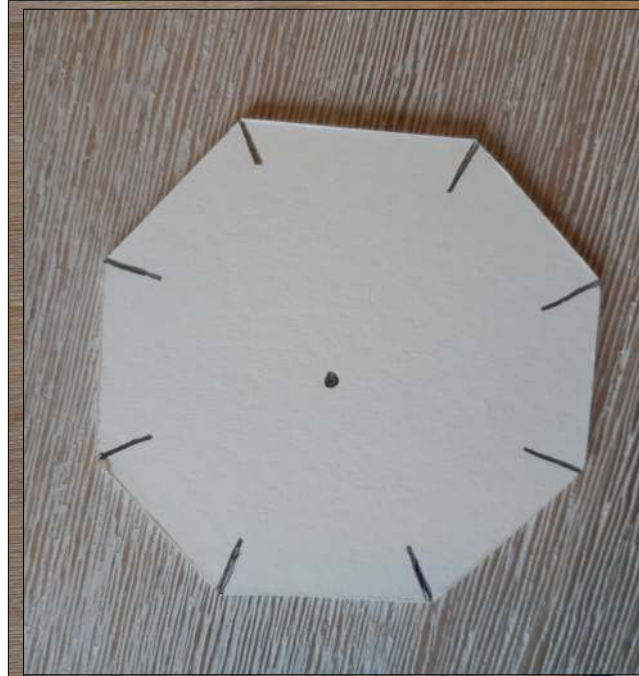


**#2**

# For #1 Easy

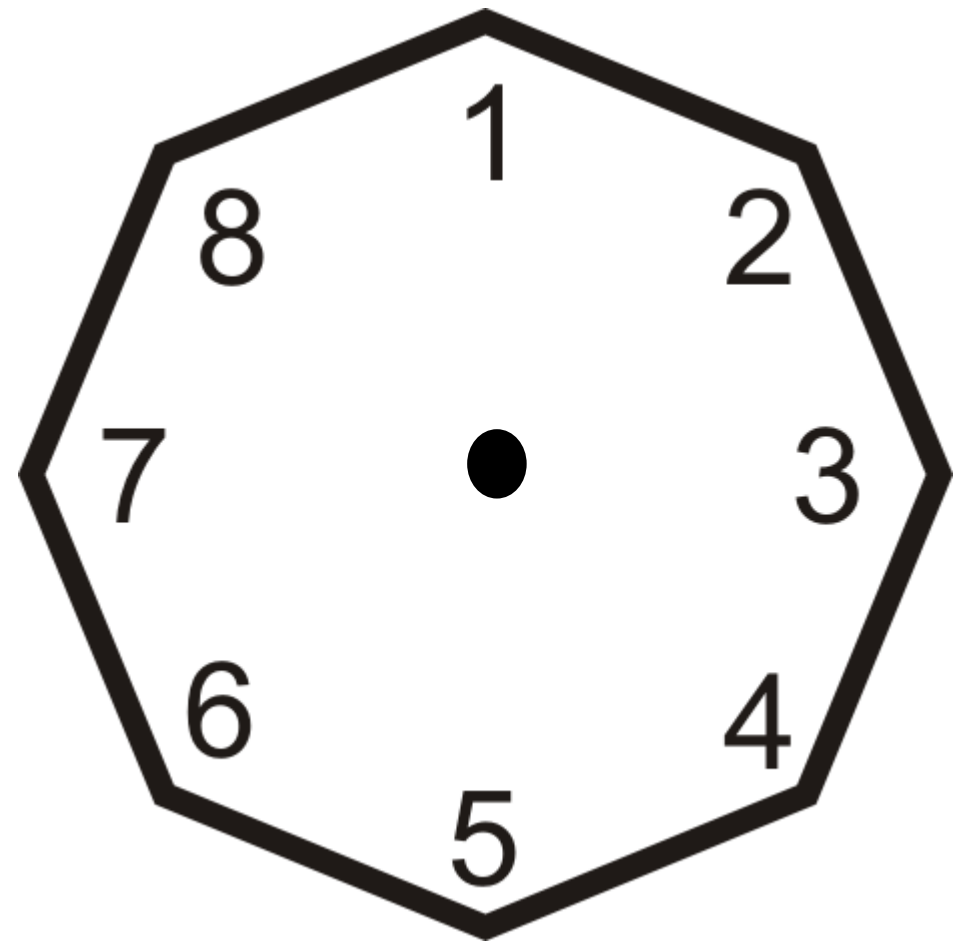
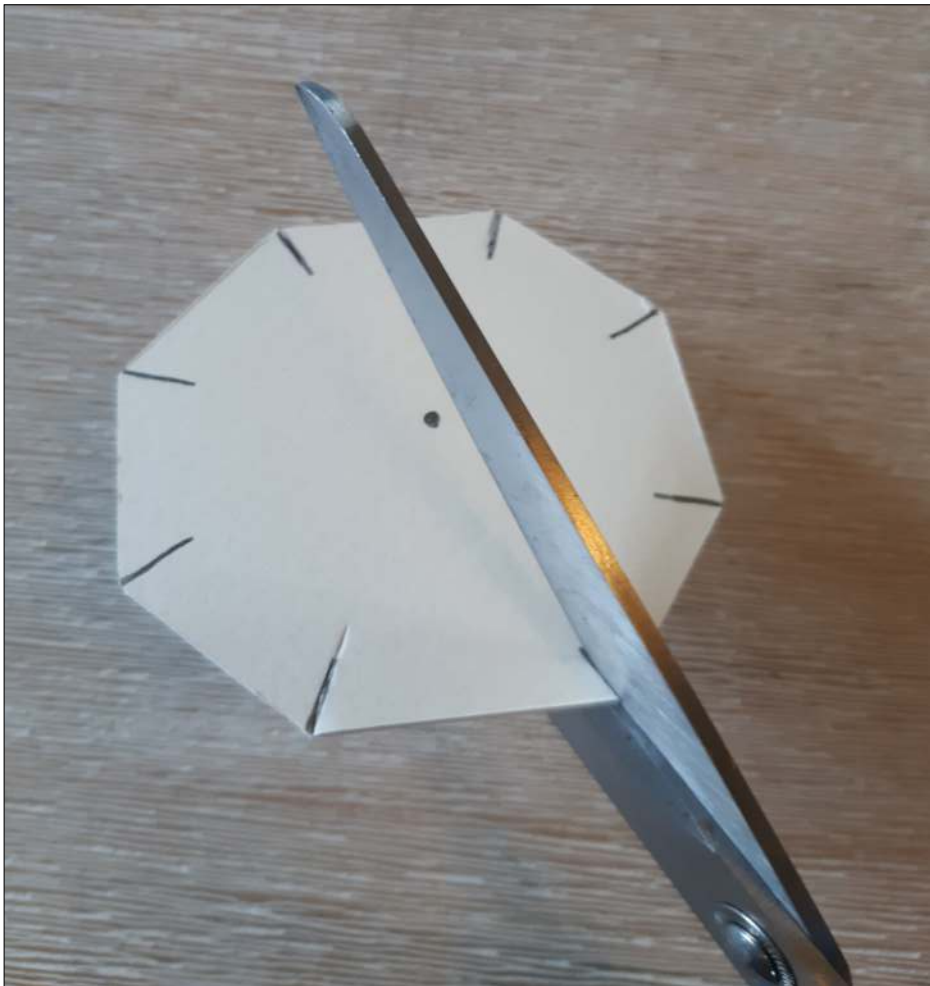
## You Will Need:

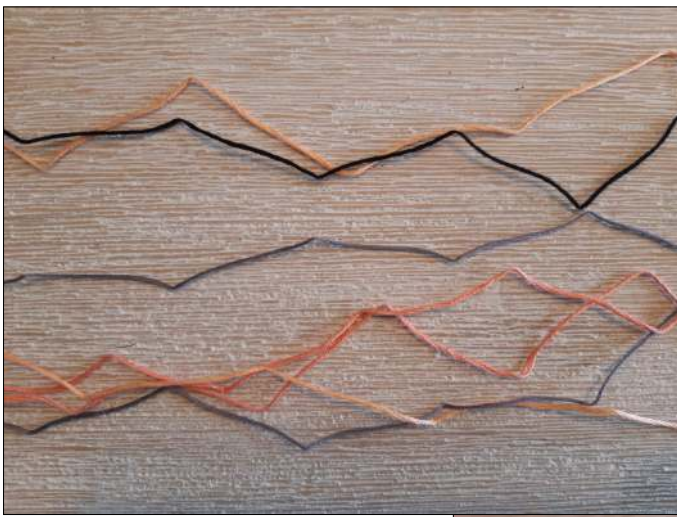
- 7 lengths of thread (the same length.)
- Octagonal shape made out of thick stiff cardboard/ mount board
- Pencil
- Scissors



## Step 1:

Mark and cut 8 short notches (no more than 1cm in length) on an octagonal piece of board with a hole in the middle. Make the hole just large enough to pass your knotted threads through.

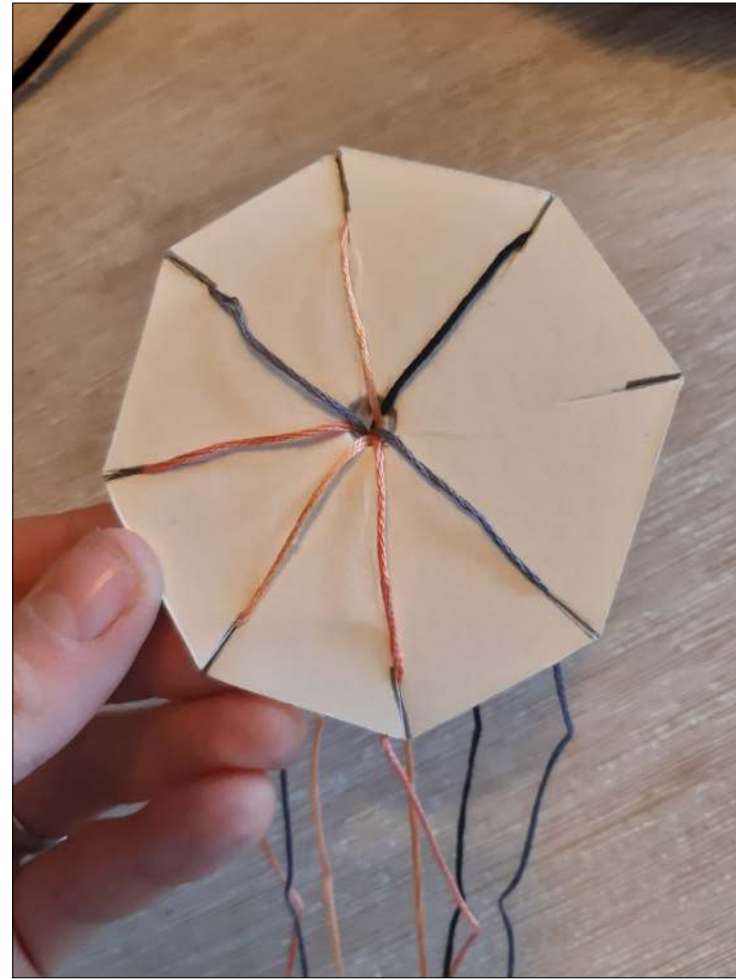




## **Step 2:**

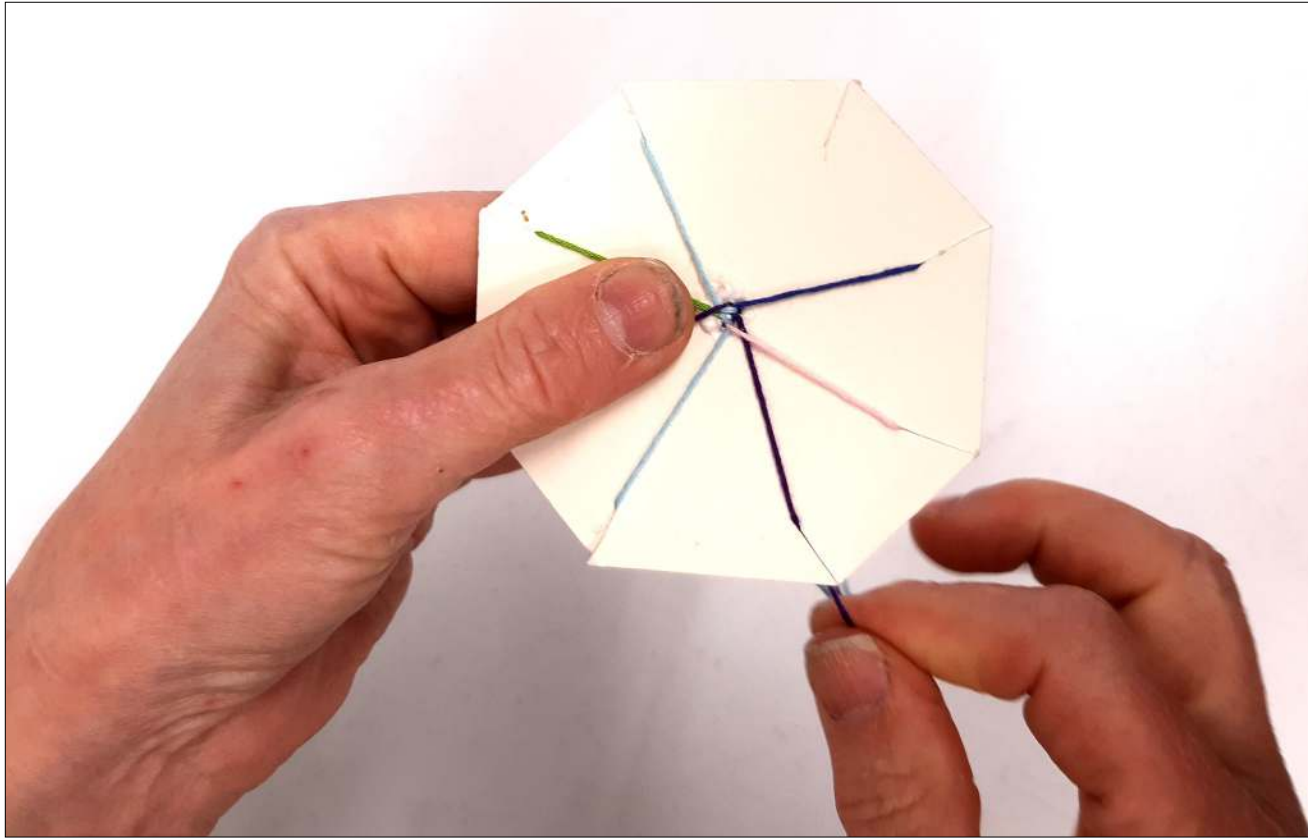
Cut 7 equal lengths of thread whatever colours you like, and tie together in a simple knot at the end.

**Tip:** Remember, whatever length you cut your string it will be shorter as a braid. If you have an art pack from the gallery you will have received 4 different coloured threads to use. Each colour can be cut into x4, 80cm (approximately) lengths.



### **Step 3:**

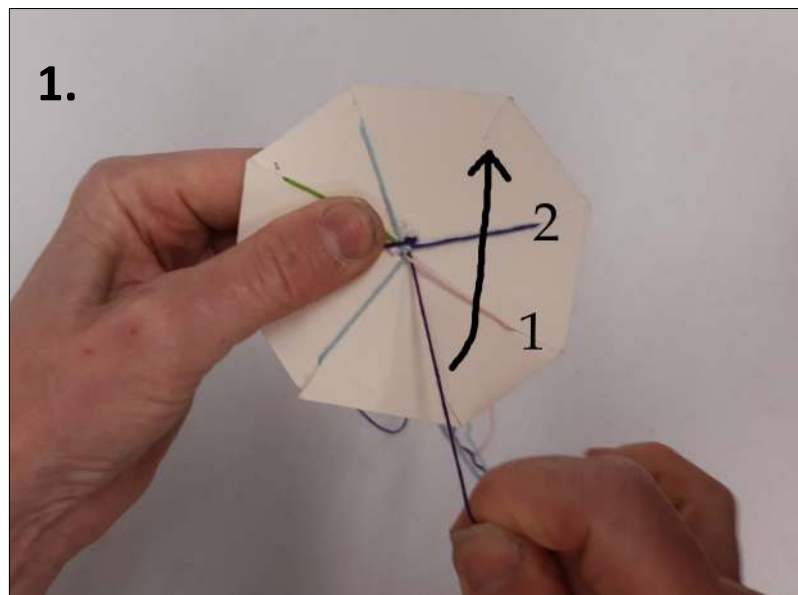
Thread the knotted end of your threads through the hole in the middle of your octagonal board. Turn the disc over and arrange all 7 threads into the notches so they are held in place with your knot underneath.



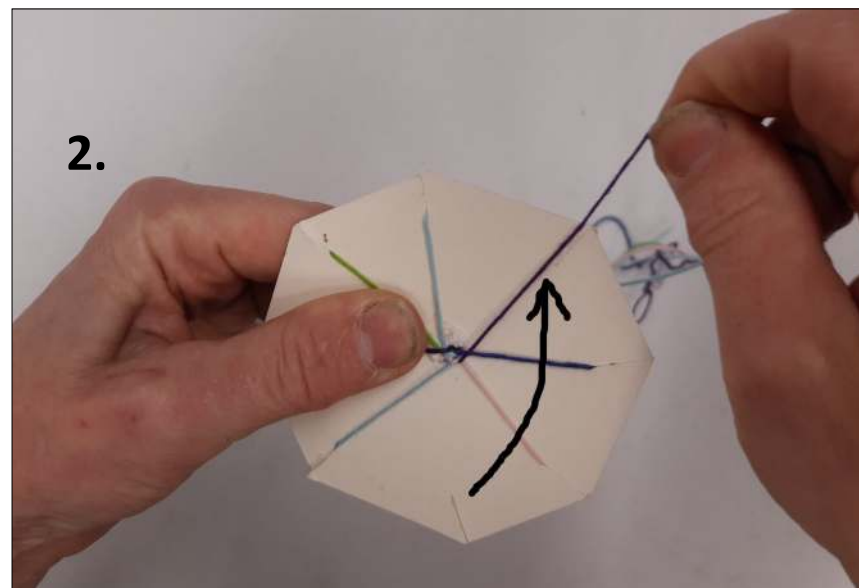
### **Step 4:**

Start braiding! Watch my superstar work colleague *The Bodacious Birgitta* show you how in this video [here!](#)

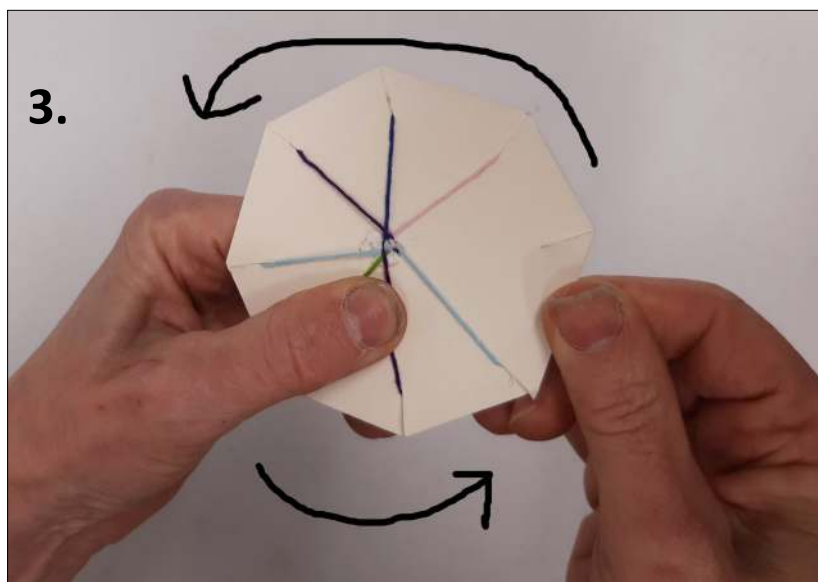
# #1 Step by step in pictures



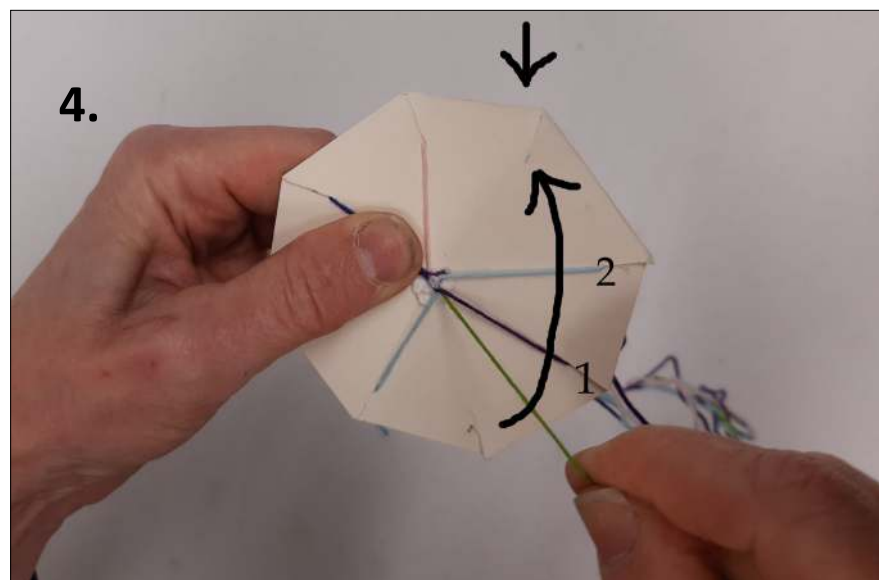
Lift thread and move over two strings



Place thread into empty notch at the top– **Run your fingers through the strings to detangle!!**



Rotate disc so the next empty notch is at the top



Take thread from bottom, move over two threads and place into empty notch at top. Repeat steps 1-4.

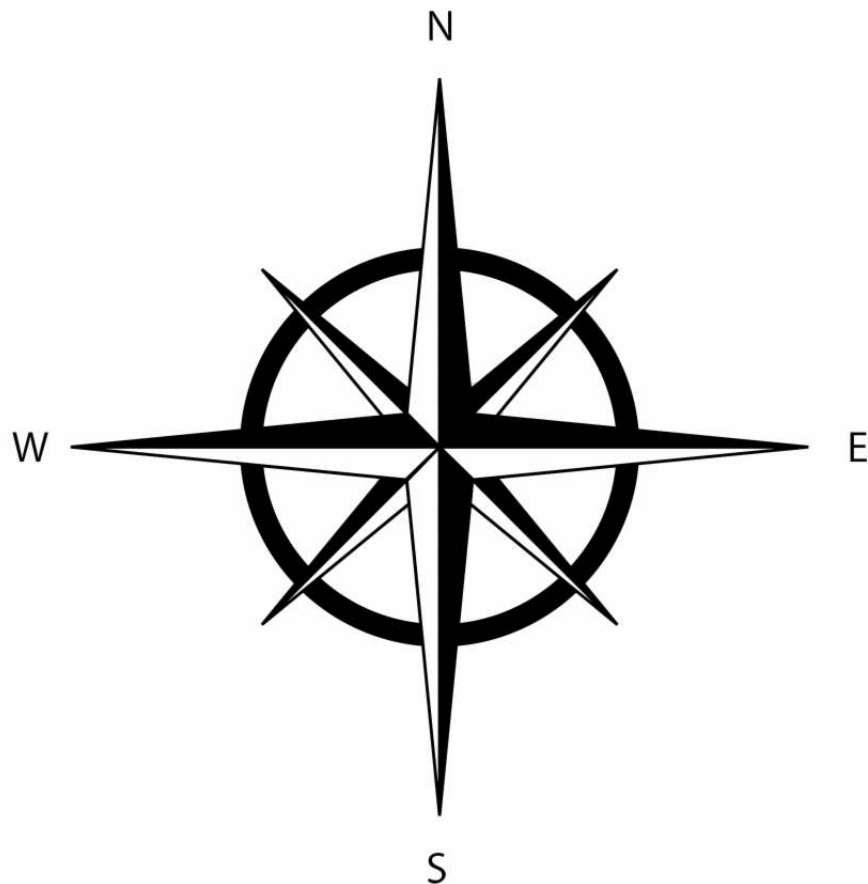
# For #2 Intermediate

## **You Will Need:**

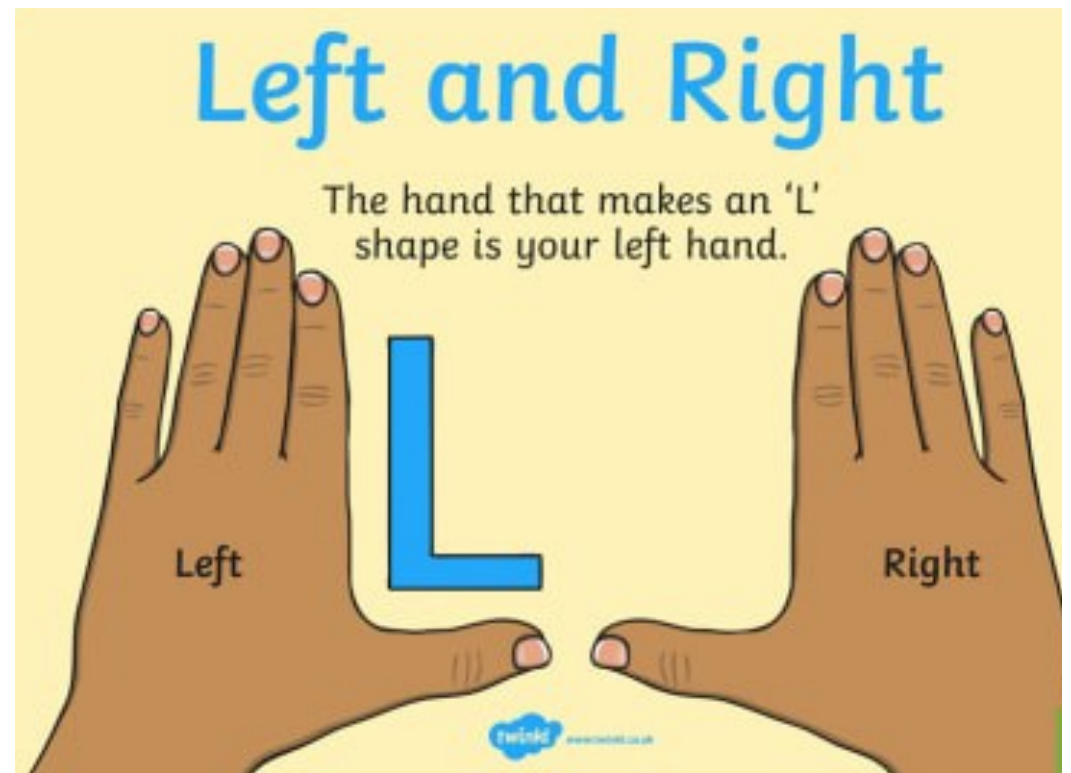
- 8 pieces of thread the same length. 4 matching pairs (4 different colours) or 2 different colours (so 4 pieces one colour and 4 pieces another colour)
- Circle cut out of thick stiff cardboard/ mount board
- Pencil
- Scissors

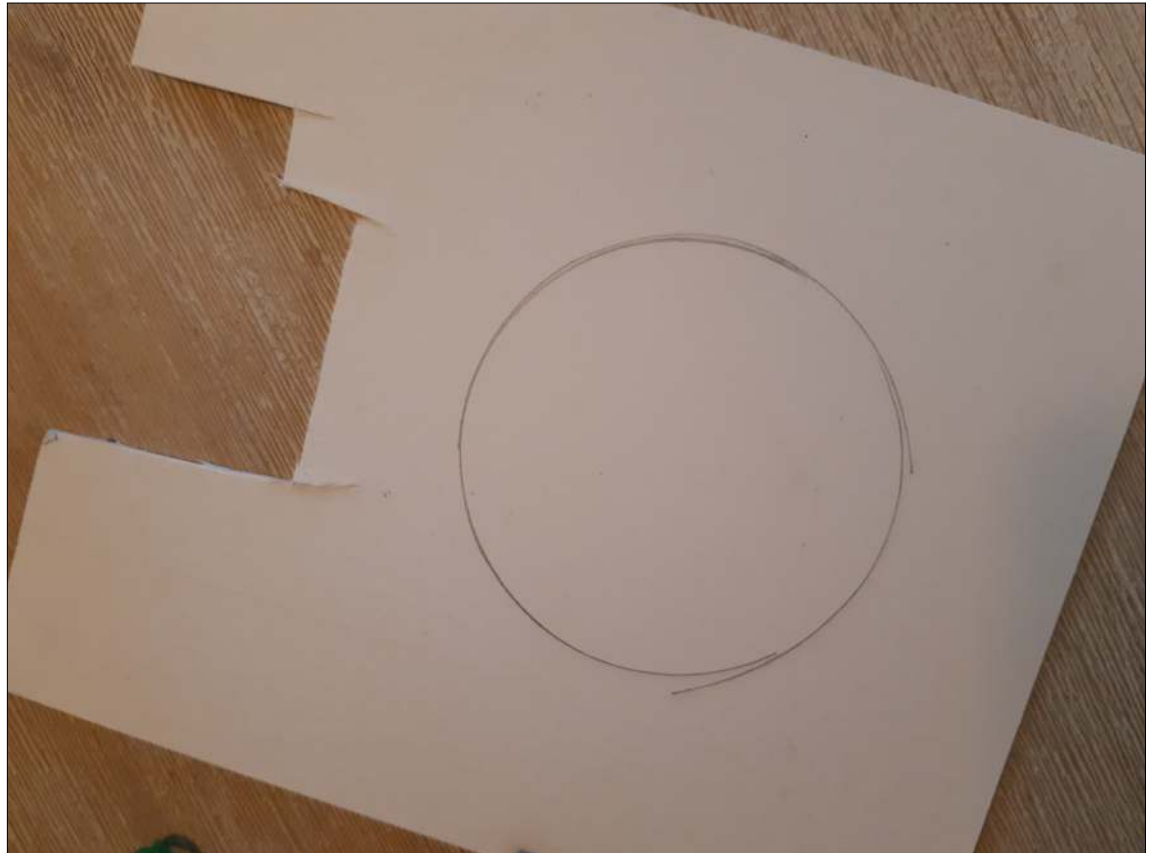
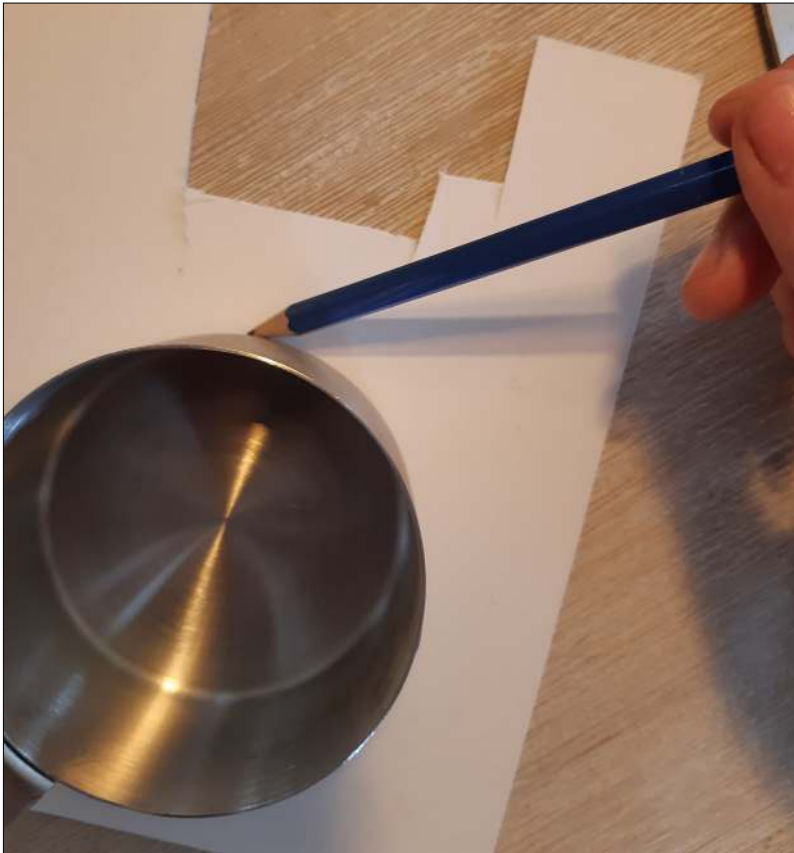


To help you understand these instructions familiarise yourself with where North, South, East and West are positioned on a compass.



You will also need to know your left and right.



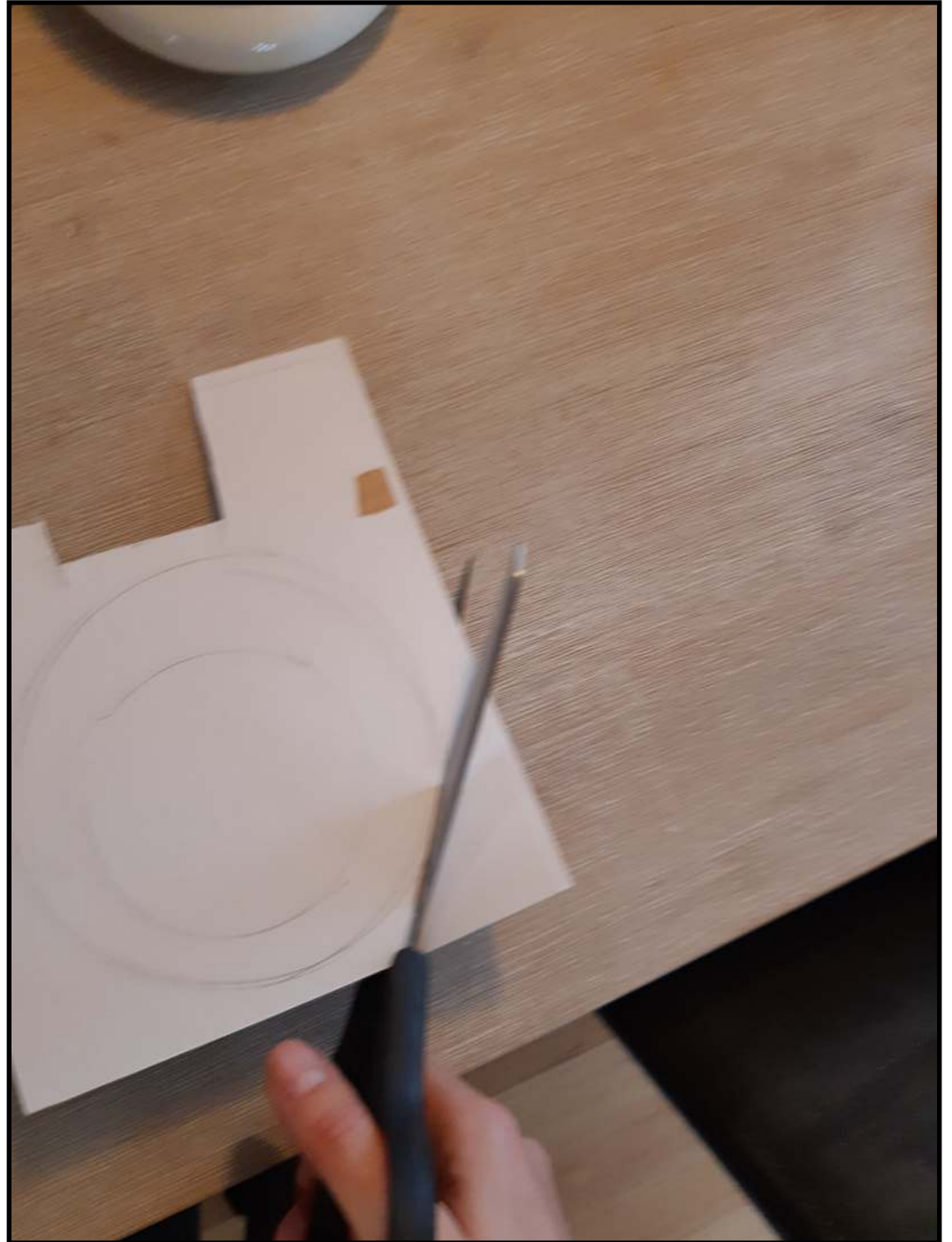


### **Step 1:**

Trace around a round object (about 10cm– 15cm in diameter) with pencil onto thick card.

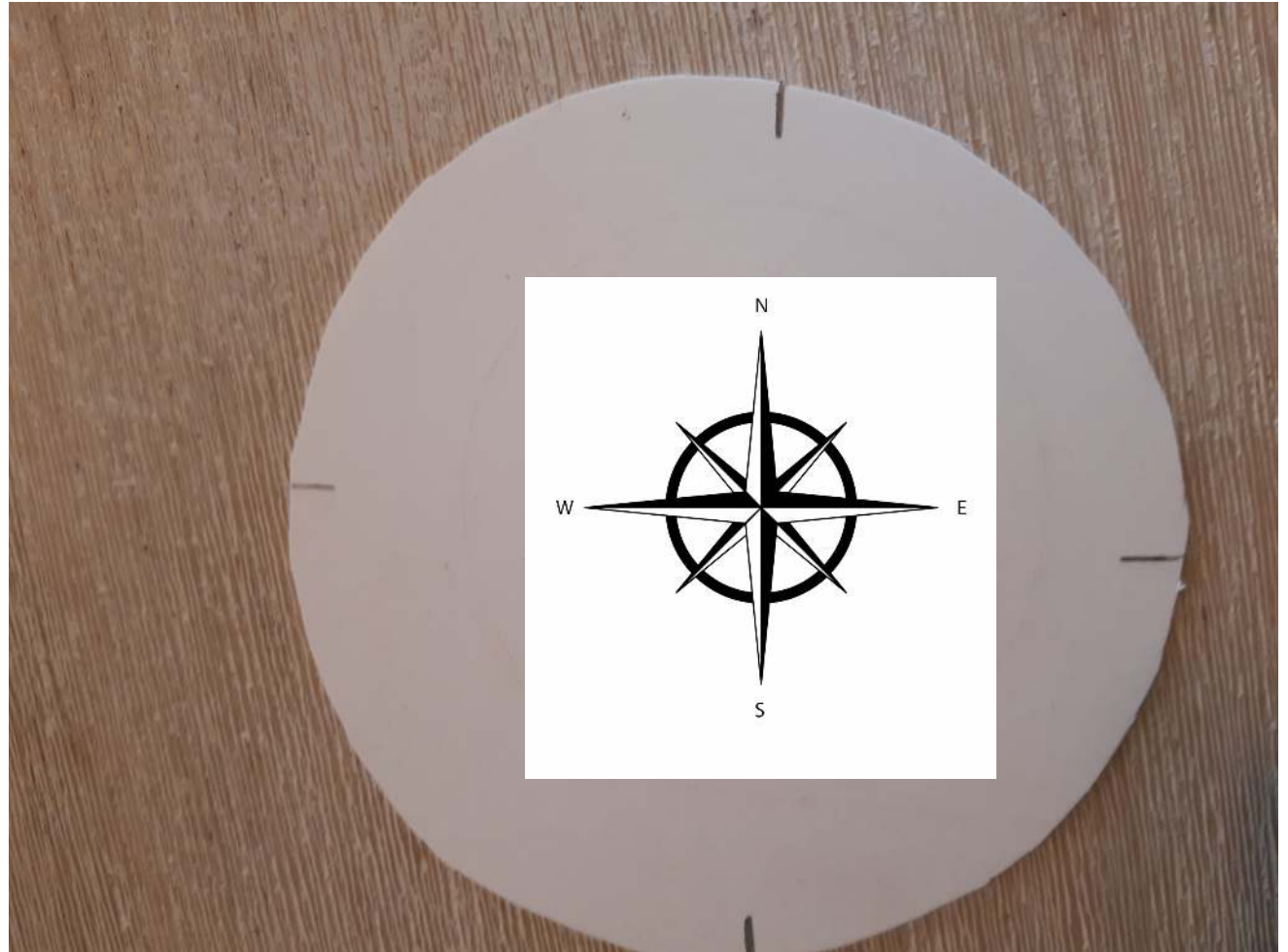
**Step 2 :**

Cut out your circle with scissors



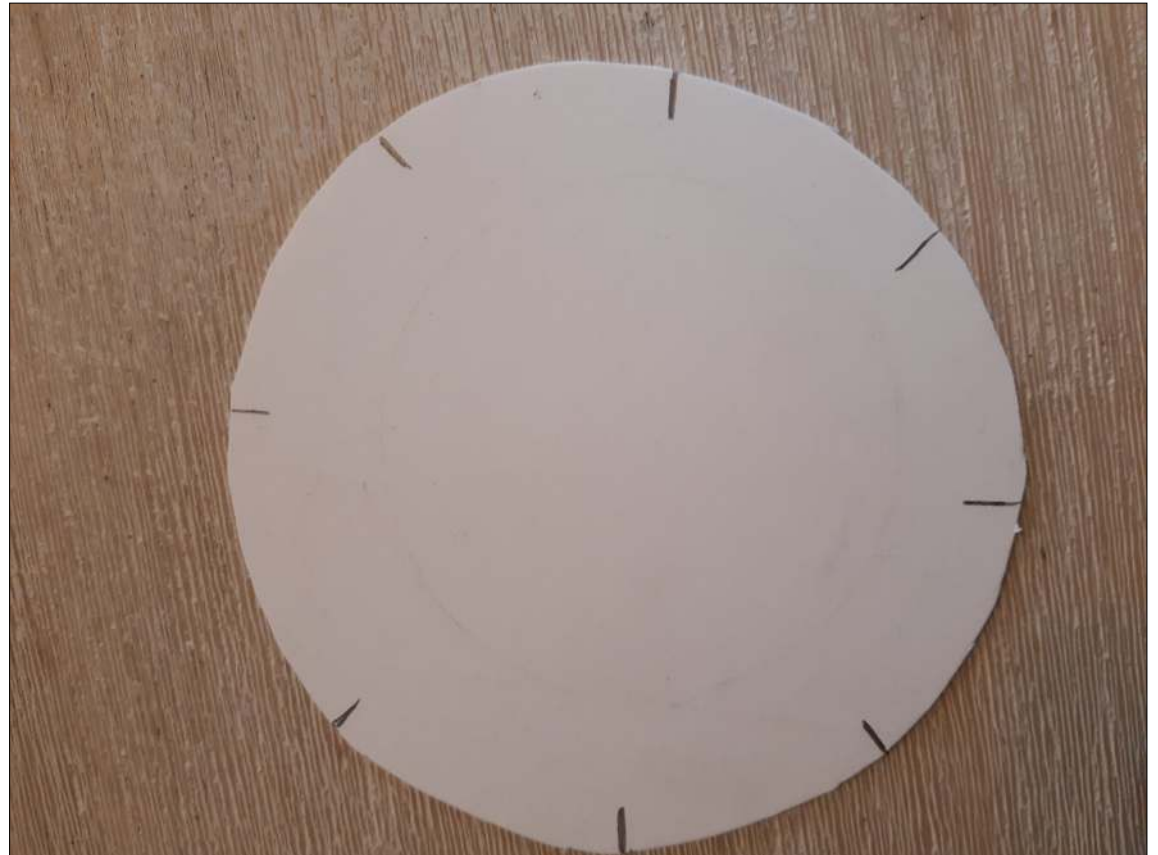
### **Step 3:**

Using a pencil make 4 small notch marks from the edge equally spaced around the circle. These do not need to be made, but just locate at North, South, East and West on your circle.



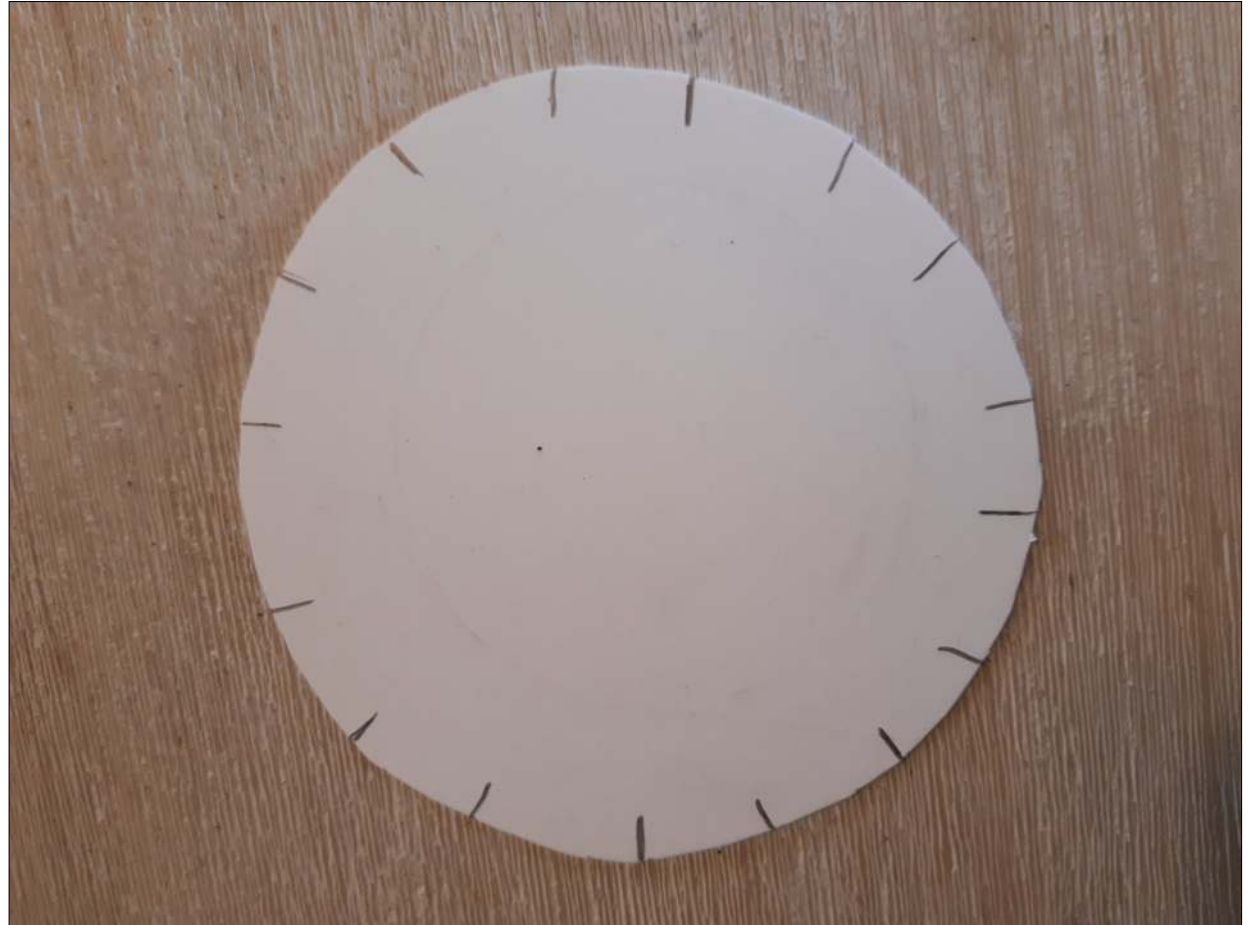
#### **Step 4:**

Make another notch half way between the existing notches as pictured. You should now have 8 marks.



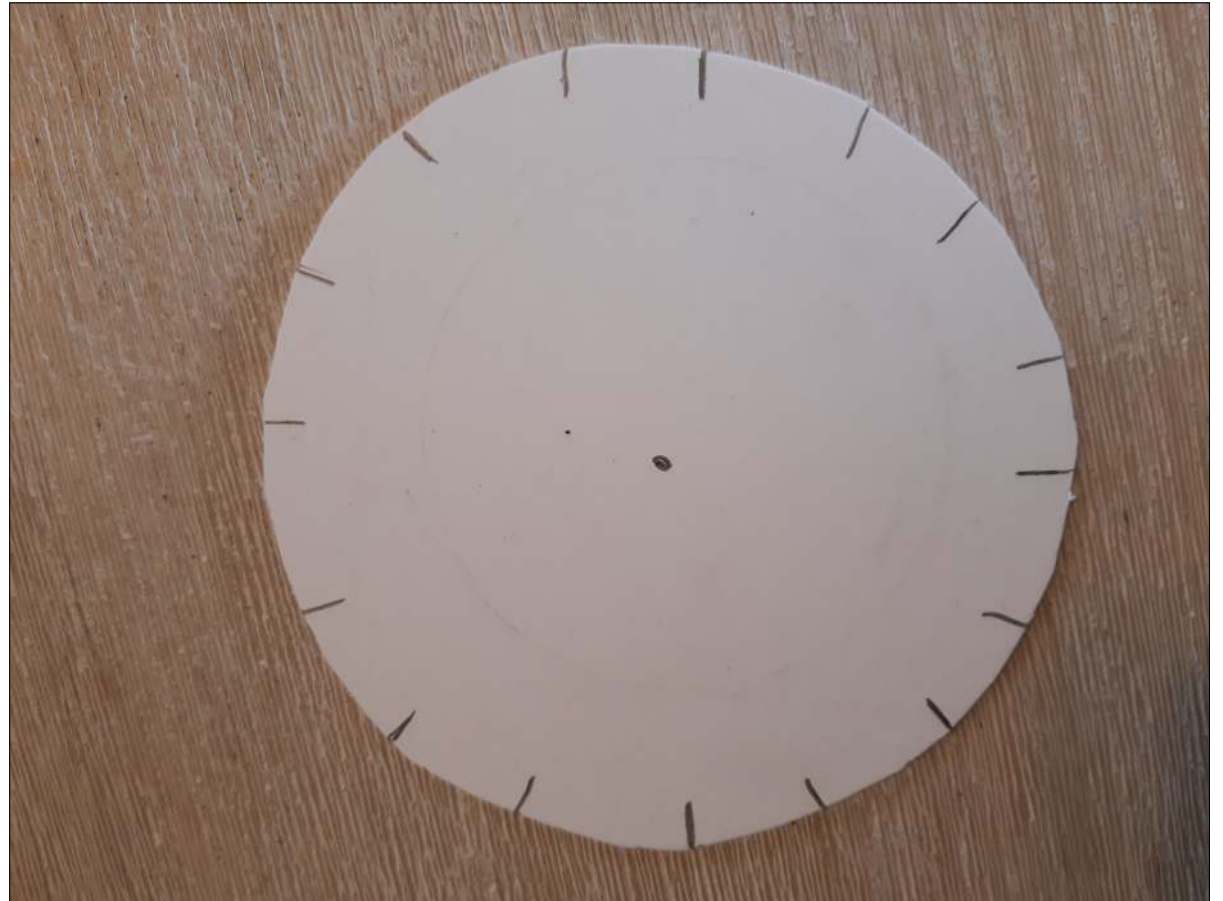
### **Step 5 :**

Repeat step 4 and make another mark half way between each mark as pictured. You should now have 16 marks on your disc.



### **Step 6:**

Make a mark in the centre.



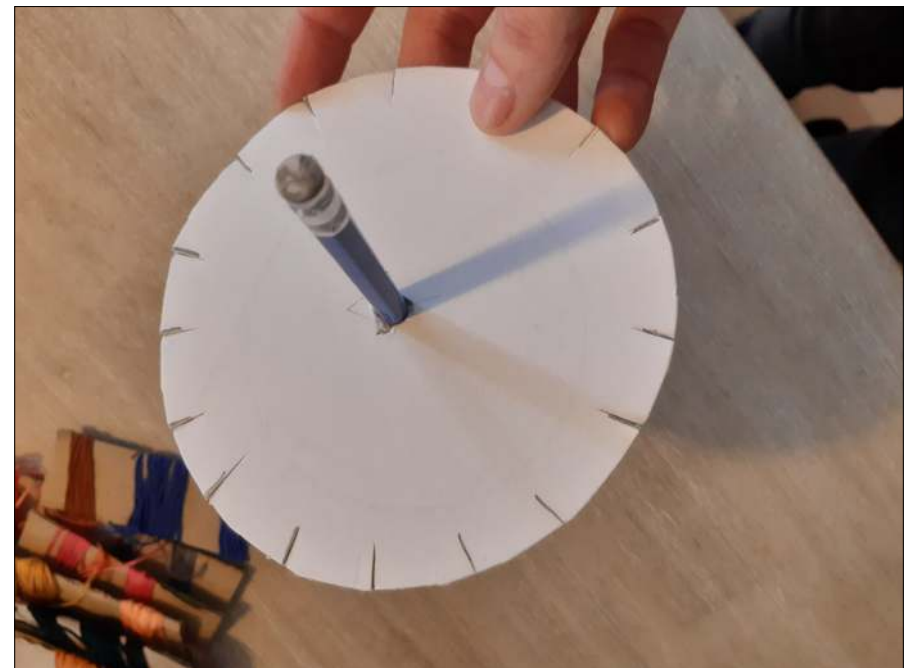
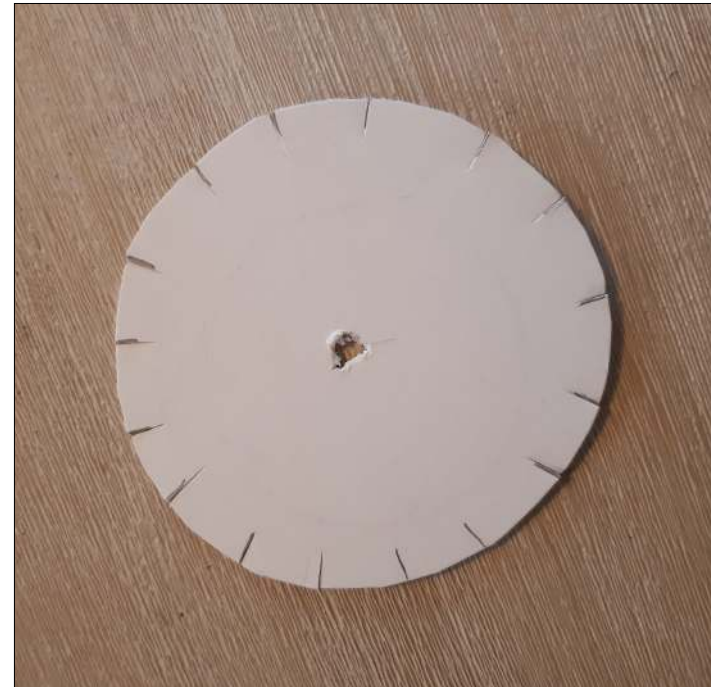
### **Step 7:**

Cut a small notch on each of your marked lines. Do not make them very big. No more than 1cm in length for each cut.



### **Step 8 :**

Carefully make a hole in the centre.  
It should be just wide enough to pass  
a pencil through.



### **Step 9 :**

Choose 2 or 4 different colours of thread to use for your braid. Cut 8 pieces of equal length. If using just two different colours use 4 strands of each colour, if using 4 different colours, use 2 strands of each colour.

**TIP:** *when starting out it is easiest to use just two different colours until you get the hang of it.*



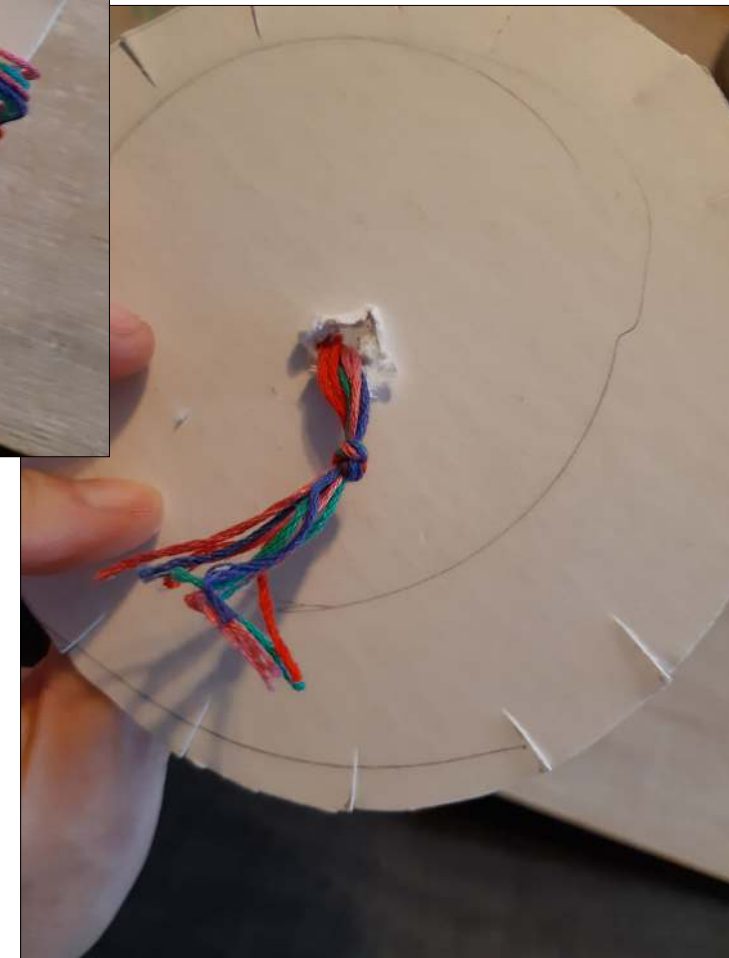
### **Step 10:**

As before, tie a simple knot in the very end of all of the strands of thread.



### **Step 11:**

Thread the knotted end of your strands through the hole in the centre of your disc.

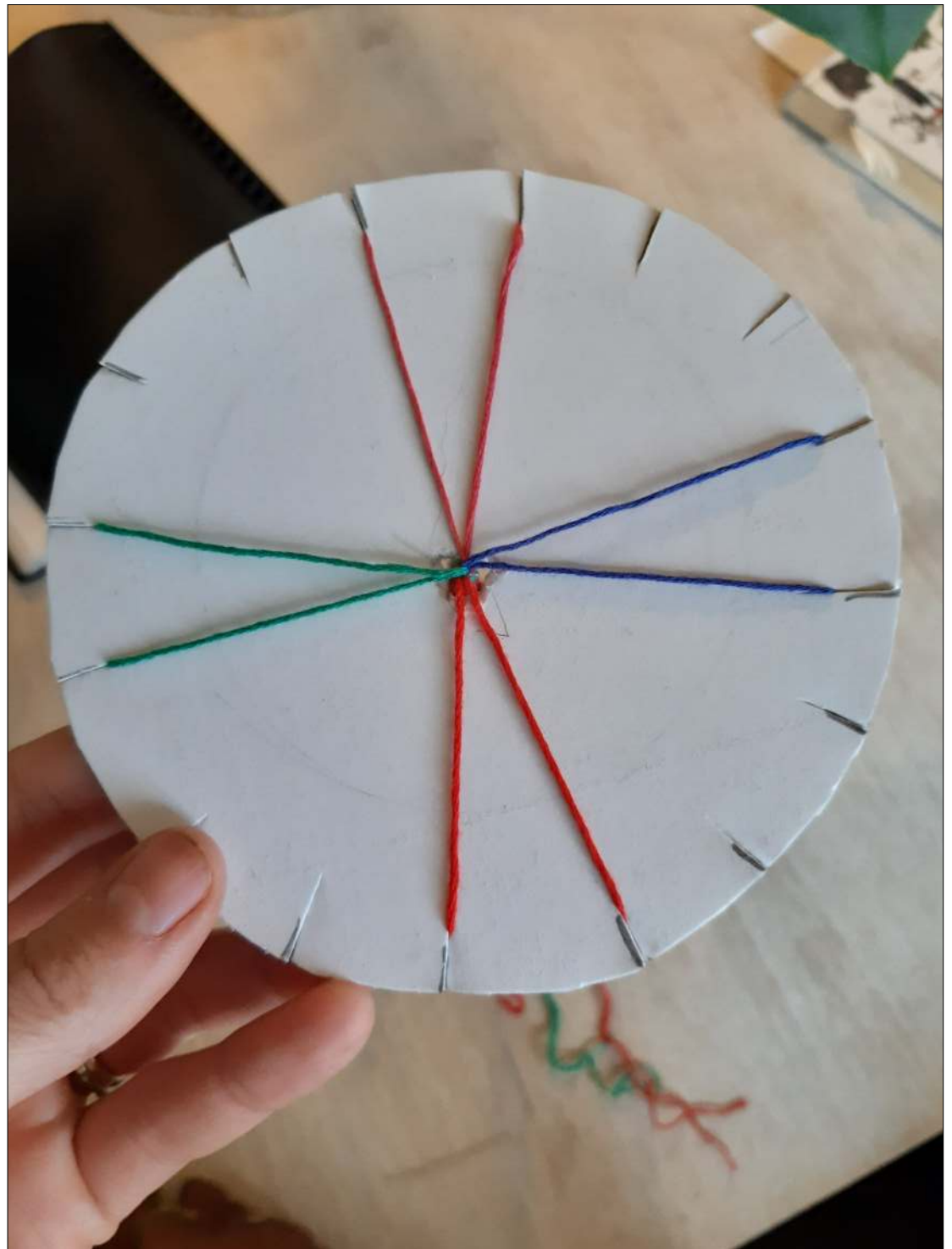


## Step 12:

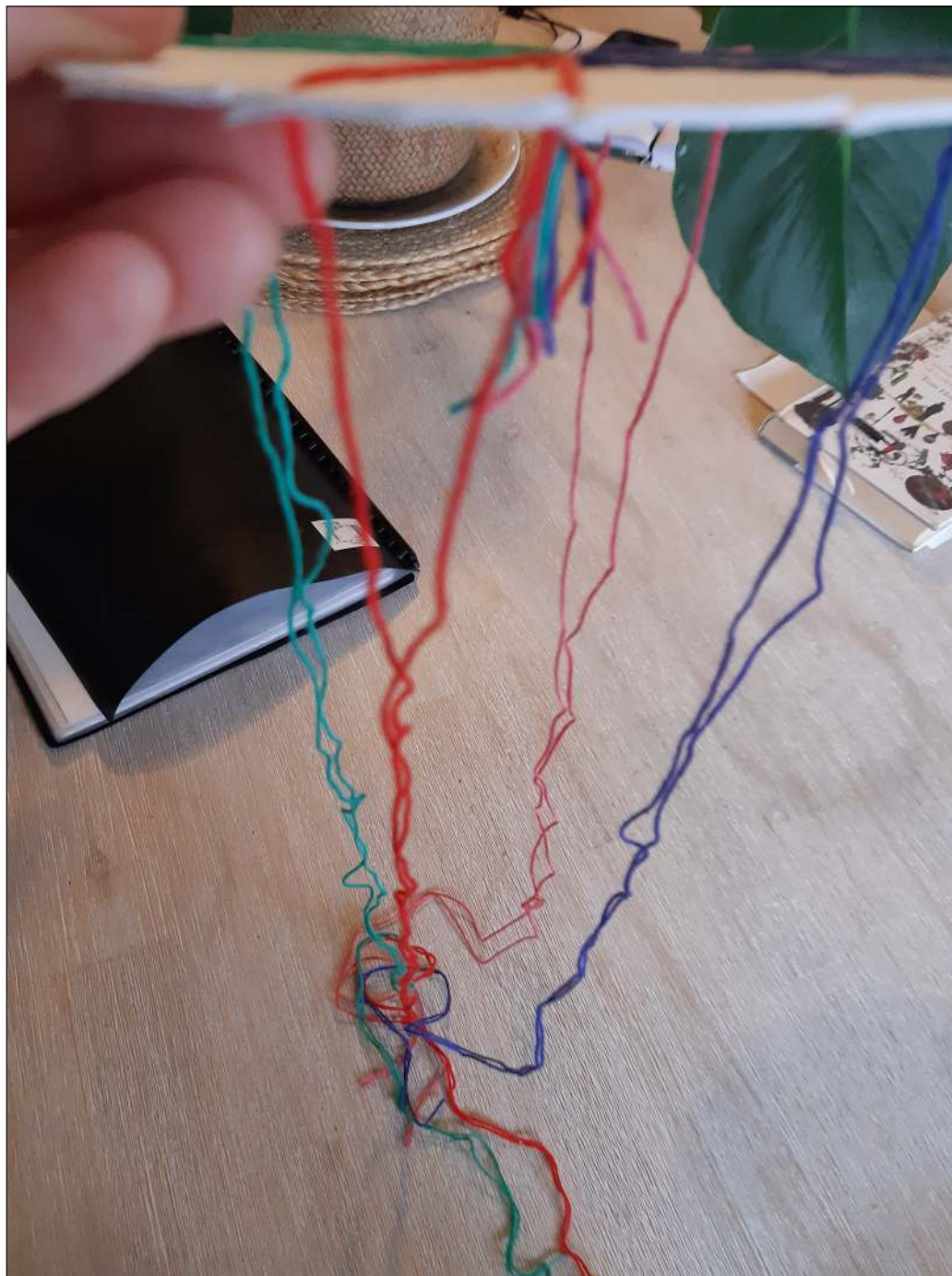
Thread individual strands into the notches on your disc as shown. Keep colours together in pairs. Hold your disc so the threads make a cross pattern as pictured.

If using two different colours have the same colours on opposite sides to each other. Remember your compass (North, South, East and West) Eg: The same colour pair on the top (North position) and the bottom (South position) and the same colours on the right (East position) and on the left (West position).

There should be two spare notches between each strand.



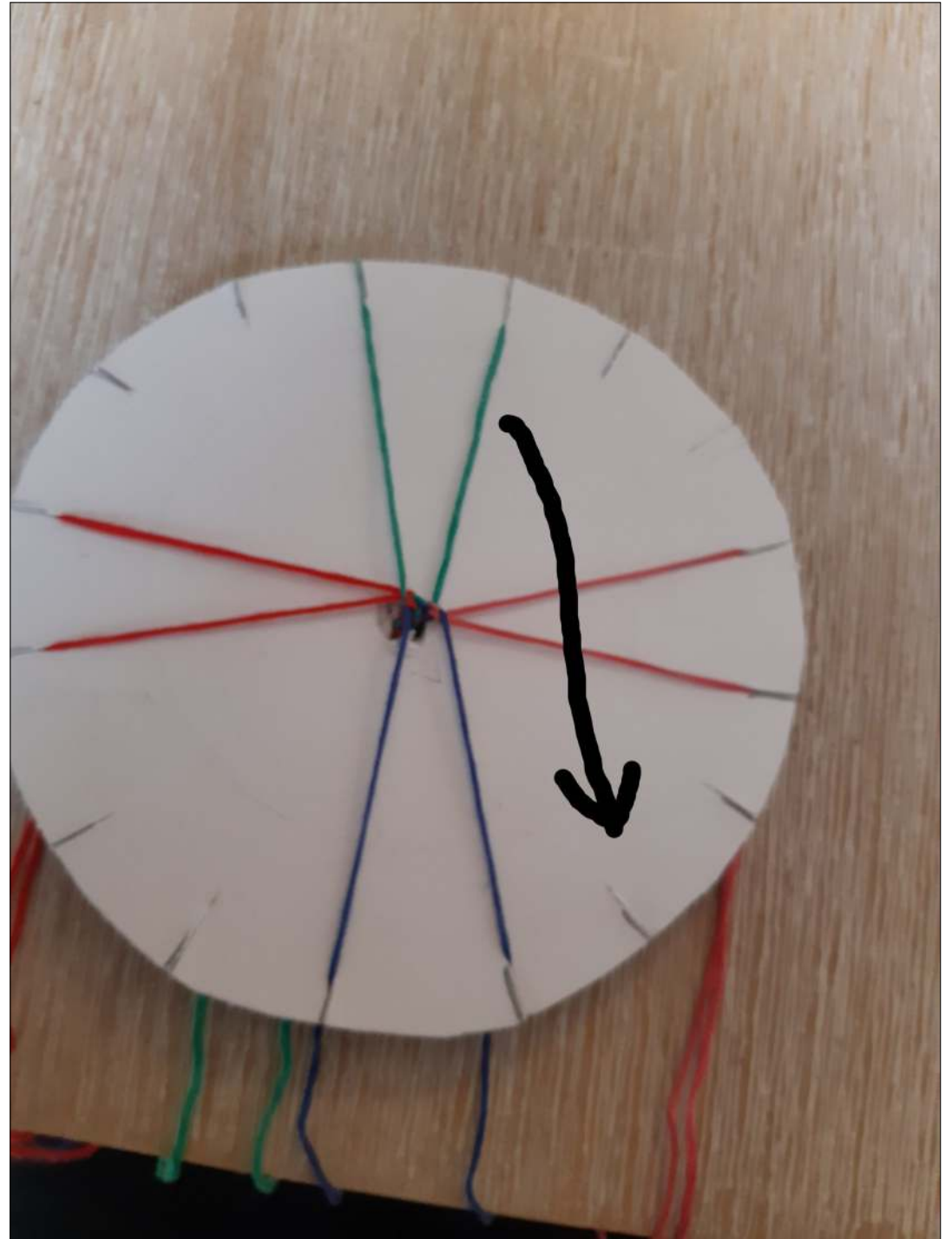
Let your strands hang loosely below your disc as you work. Just be careful not to tangle them and continuously run your fingers through them to stop them tangling. You can try putting some clothes pegs onto each strand to help weigh them down if you keep getting tangles.

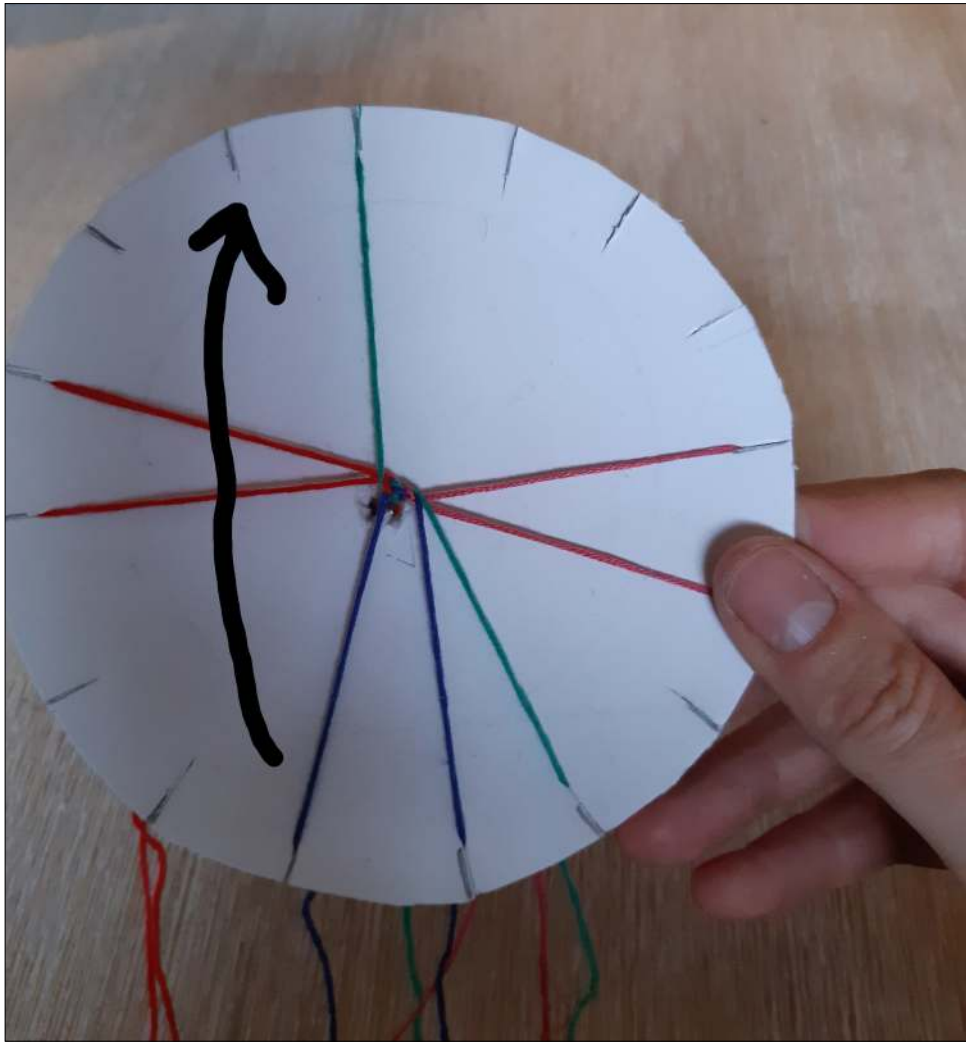


### **Step 13:**

Move your top (North position) right side thread down to the bottom (South position) right side of the other threads as pictured. Secure in the notch.

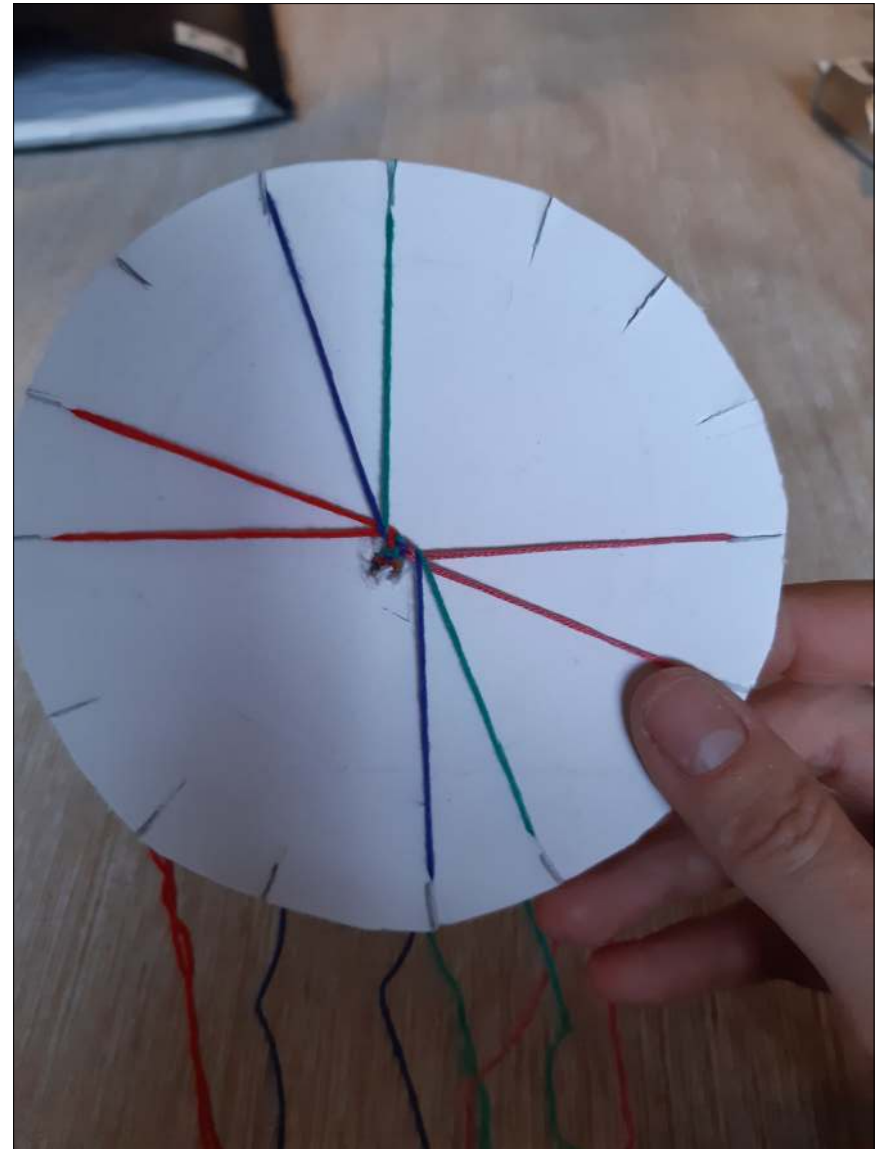
**Tip:** *Run your fingers through the stands after each move to stop tangles!*





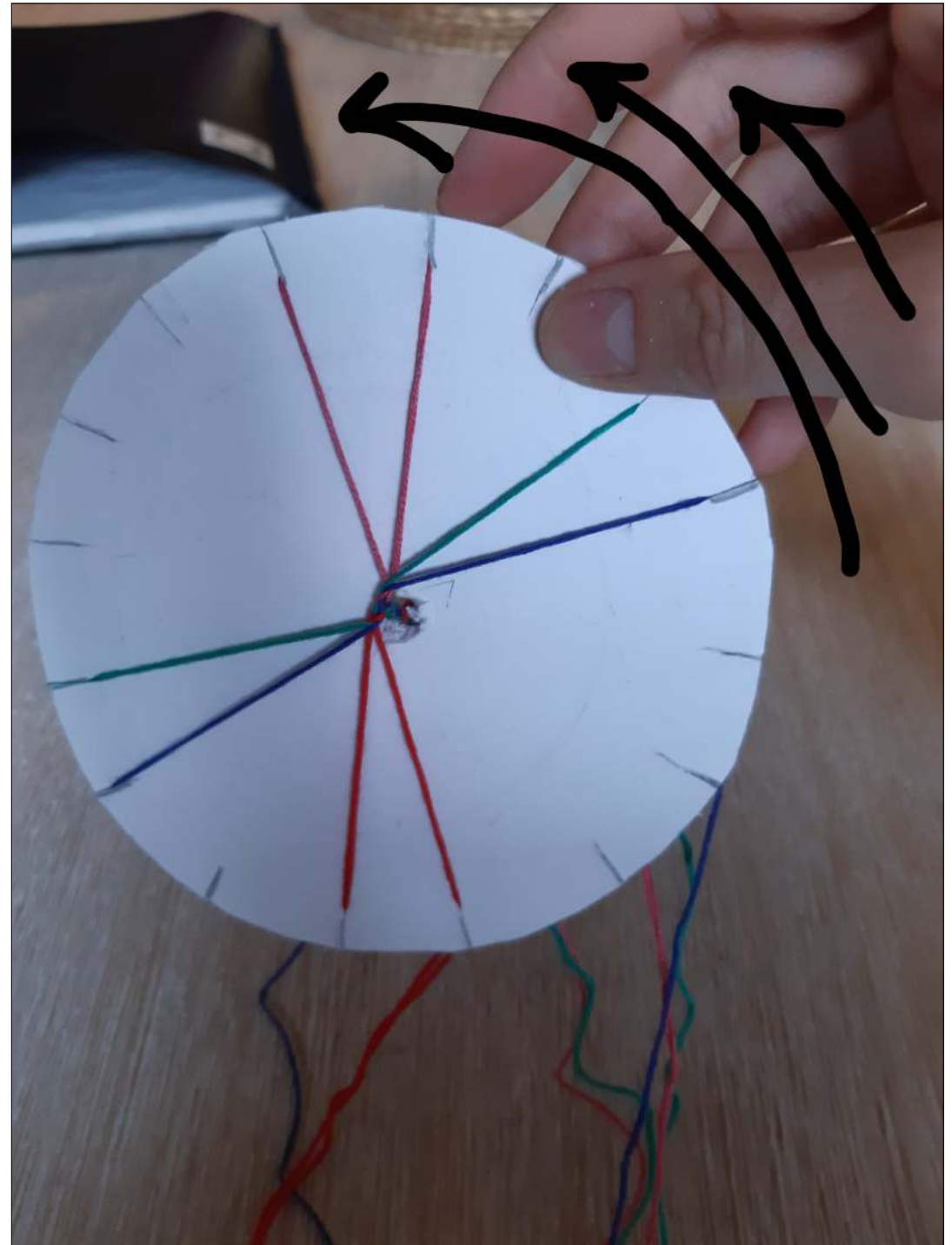
### **Step 14:**

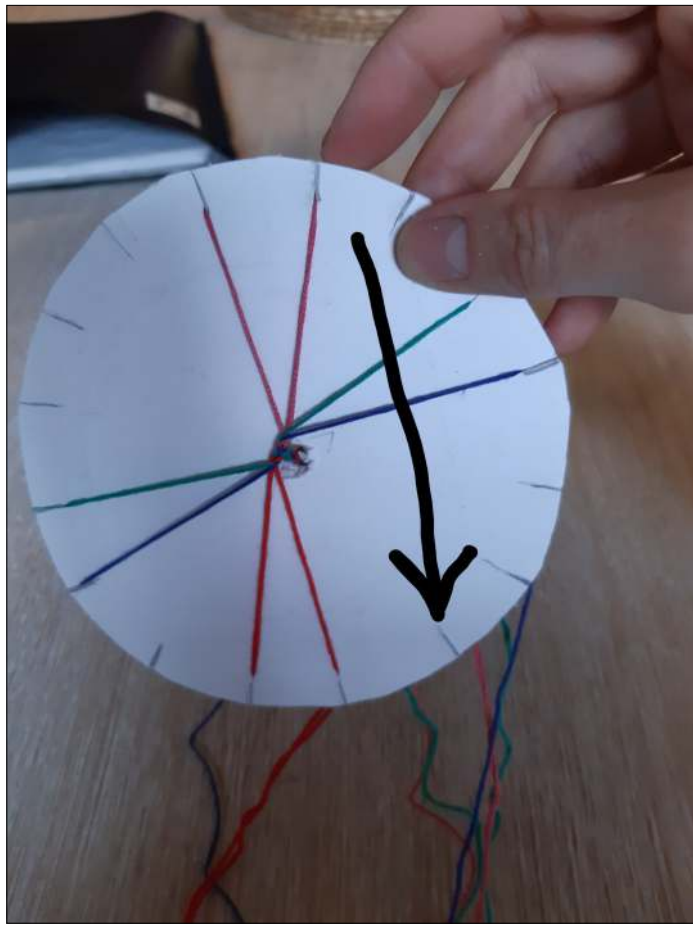
Take your bottom left thread and move it up to the top left position as pictured.



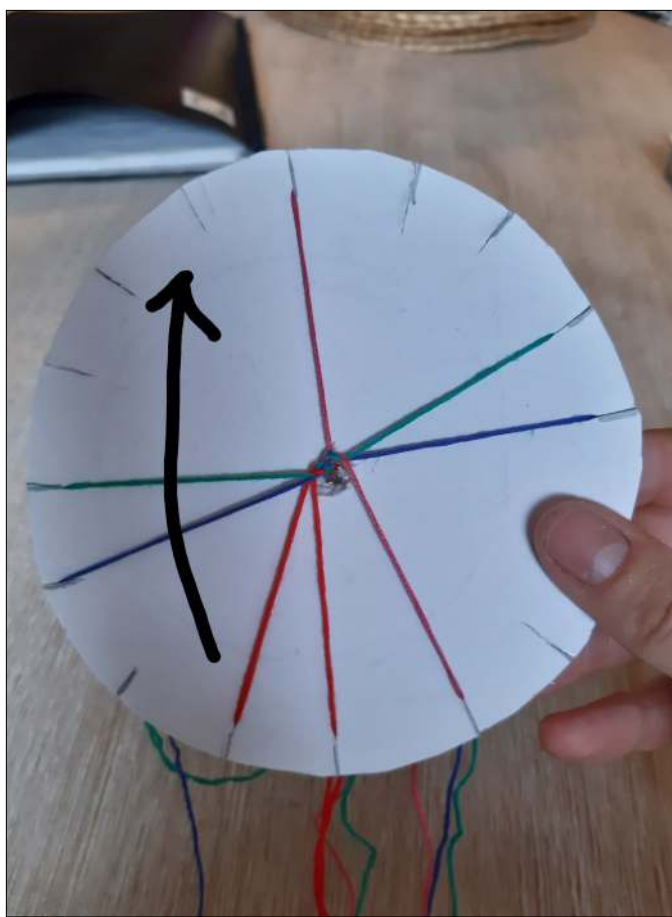
### **Step 15:**

Rotate your disc anti-clockwise so the next colour is at the top (North) position as pictured.

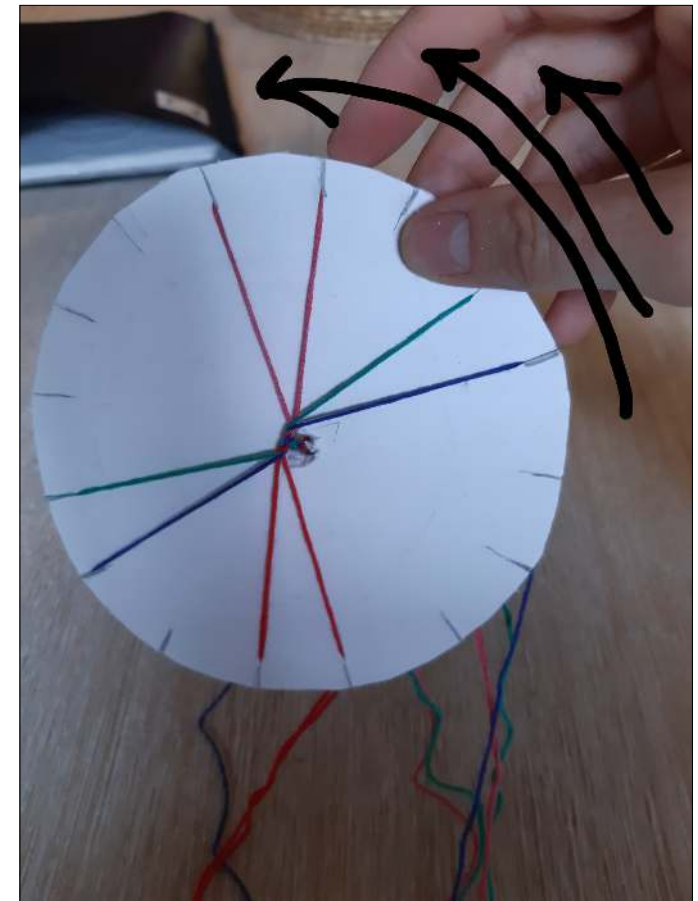




**1. Top right to bottom right**



**2. Bottom Left to top left**



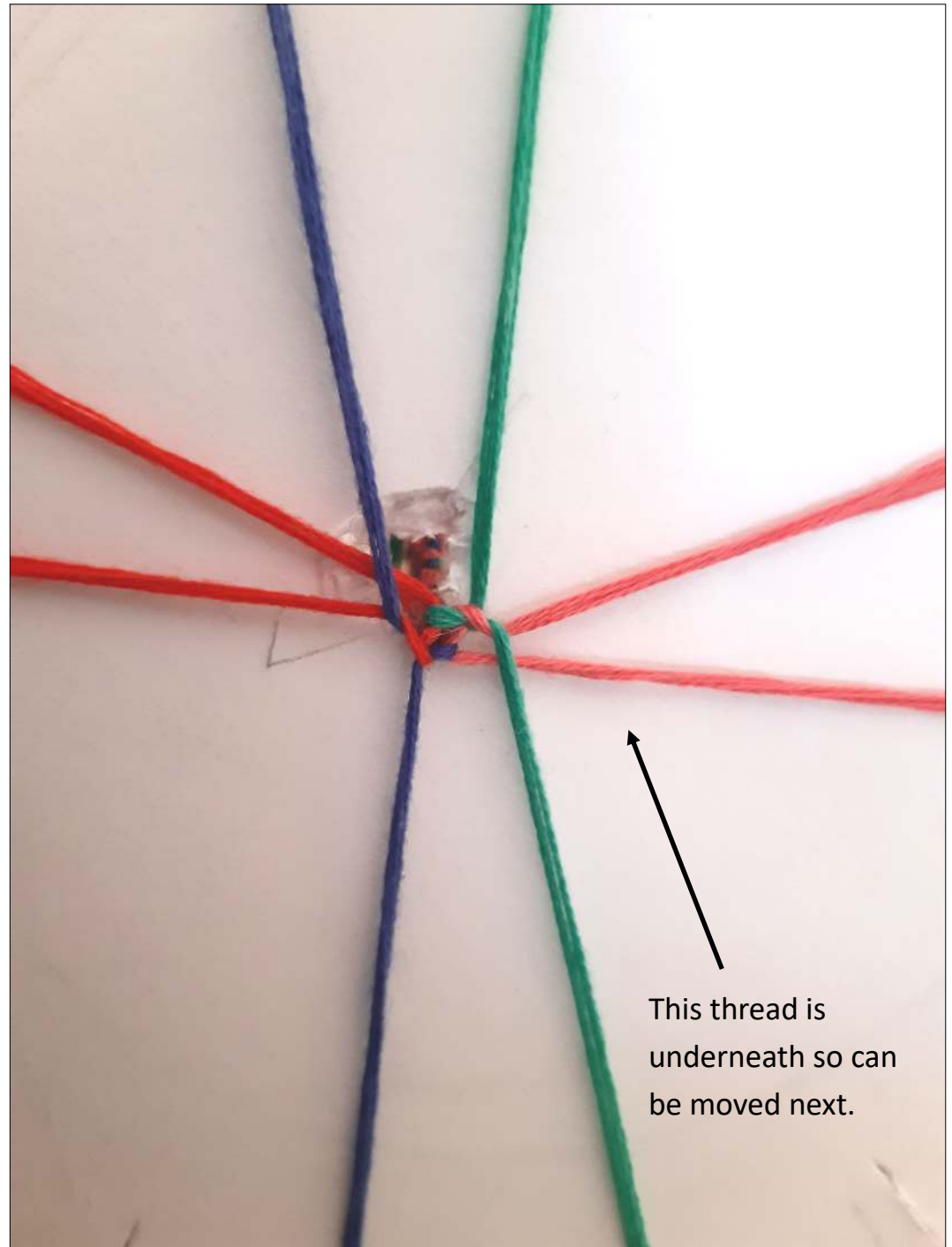
**3. Rotate disc. Repeat.**

### **Step 16:**

Repeat the steps from 13,14,and 15.

- \* Take Top right thread and move to bottom right position.
- \* Take bottom left thread and move to top left position.
- \* Rotate anti-clockwise and repeat.

**TIP:** You can leave your work and come back to it whenever you have time. To work out which thread to start with, look closely at the middle section. The next string to move is the one underneath the other thread. Remember to start with top right and move to bottom right.



You will notice as you continue the pattern of steps that a braid will form coming out underneath the middle of your disc!

Keep repeating the pattern until you have used up all of the thread.

Keep your braided string to use in the next *Home is Where the 'Art Is* project: Gods Eye Mobiles!

**Tip:** *You can try incorporating thicker thread and yarn into your Kumihimo braids too!*



Opportunity to be part of an art exhibition at the Devonport Regional Gallery!! Register your interest now!



Devonport  
Regional Gallery  
*Presents*

HOME IS WHERE THE 'ART IS  
**Exhibition** 30th January- 14th March 2021

An exhibition of works created in homes during the COVID 19 restrictions as part  
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Open to anyone who has or who would like to create works as part of the on-line  
art workshops available at: [paranapleartscentre.com.au/devonport-regional-  
gallery/public-programs-creative-learning/](https://paranapleartscentre.com.au/devonport-regional-gallery/public-programs-creative-learning/)

Please register your interest in participating by email:  
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