

How To Play Cat's Cradle by Cynthia von Buhler

Cat's Cradle is a game in which you use string to weave patterns representing familiar objects. Cat's Cradle is an ancient form of amusement originating from Asia. It is still played all over the world today. The names and figures vary from culture to culture. These instructions are for "Real Cat's Cradle," a popular English version. Other versions of the game have been found in indigenous cultures all over the world - from the Arctic to the Equatorial zones.

You'll need a partner to play this game.

Steps

Cut a length of string (about 58 inches works well, but it can vary). Tie the ends of the string together using a square knot and clip off the ends.

1. Slip the loop over your hands (see Fig. 1).

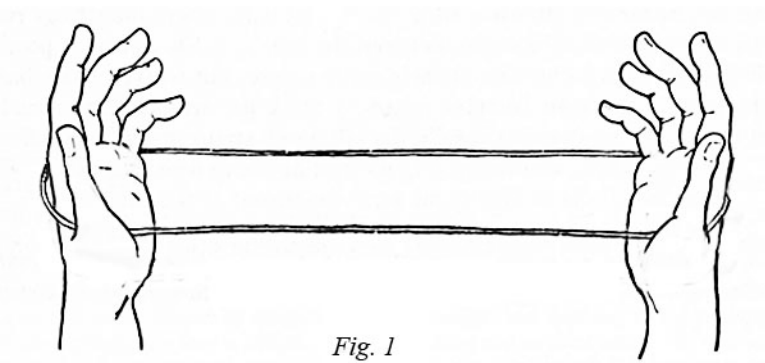


Fig. 1

2. Wind the string around your palms, not including the thumbs. Hold your hand with your palm facing towards you. Take the far string and loop it around the palm once, moving it towards you. Do this on both hands. (See Fig. 2).

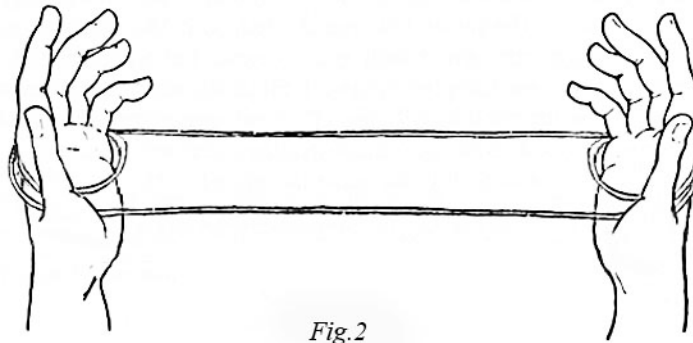


Fig. 2

3. Move your right middle finger left, and pick up the left palm string. Move the right middle finger back to its original position.
4. Move your left middle finger right, and pick up the right palm string, and pull the left middle finger back to its original position. This is known as the **Cradle**. (See Fig. 3).

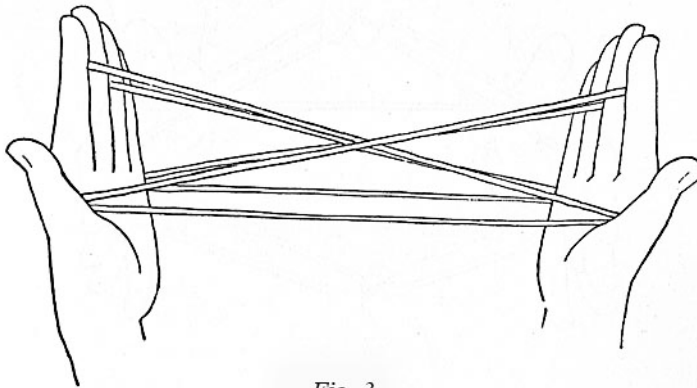
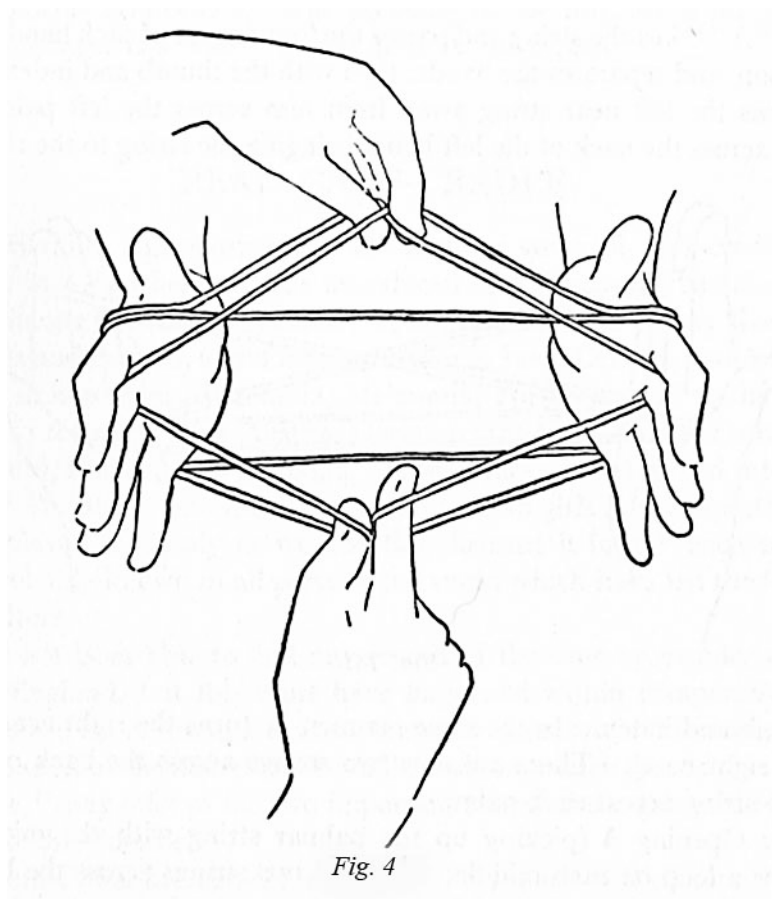


Fig. 3

5. Have a partner pinch the two X's, one in each hand. (See Fig. 4).



6. Have your partner push the X's down outside the side strings, and then up into the open center. (See Fig. 5).

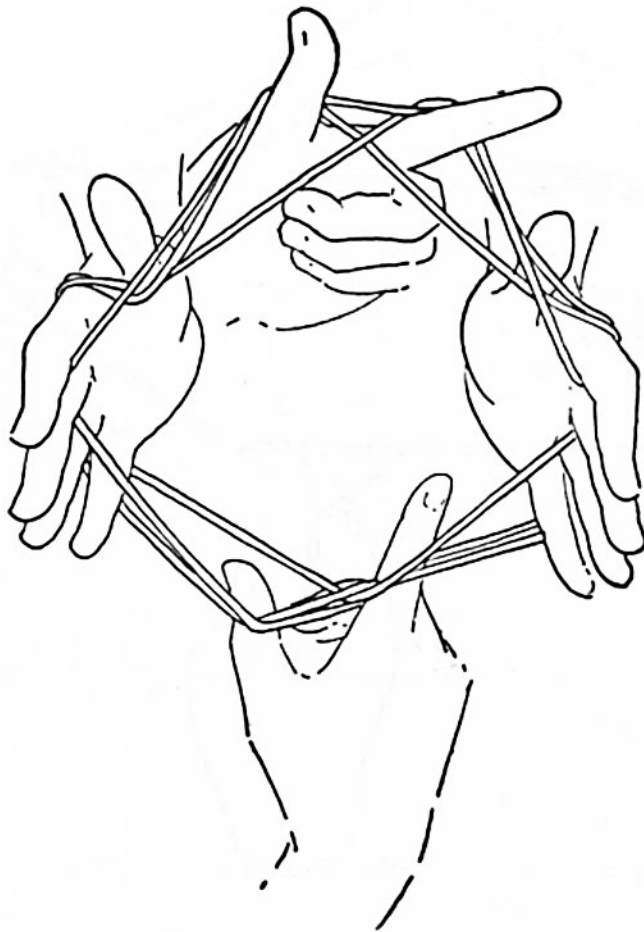


Fig. 5

7. You drop the strings, while your partner pulls their hands apart to make the **Soldier's Bed**. (See Fig. 6).

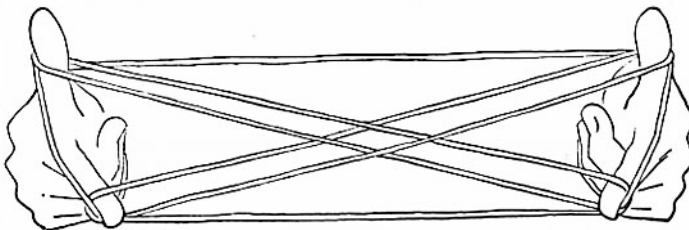


Fig. 6

8. Perform the same process again. You pinch the two X's, one in each hand. Push the X's down outside the side strings then up into the open center. (See Fig. 7)

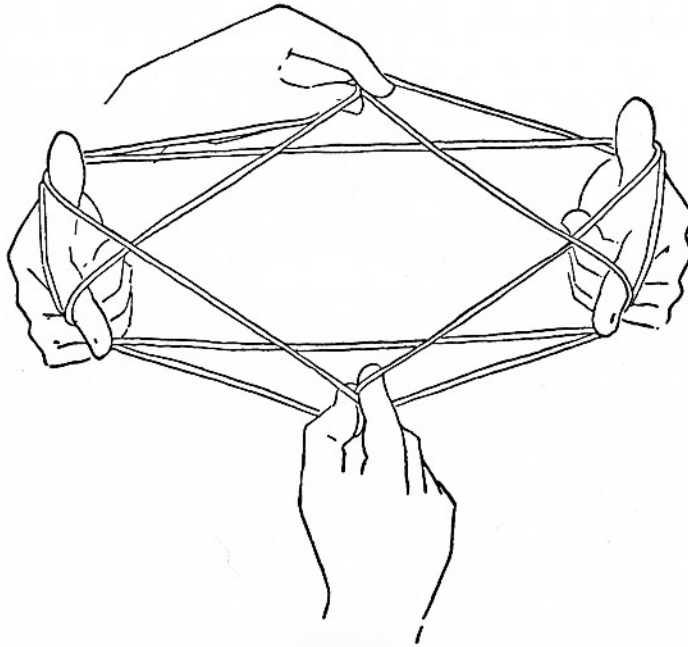


Fig. 7

9. Have your partner drop the strings while you pull your hands apart to make **Candles**. (See Fig. 8).

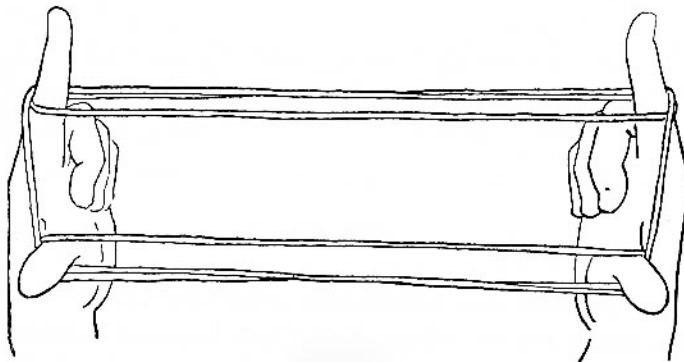


Fig. 8

10. Have your partner use their right pinky to hook the inside left string and pull it past the right outside strings. They should do the same thing with their left pinky and the inside right string. (See Fig. 9).

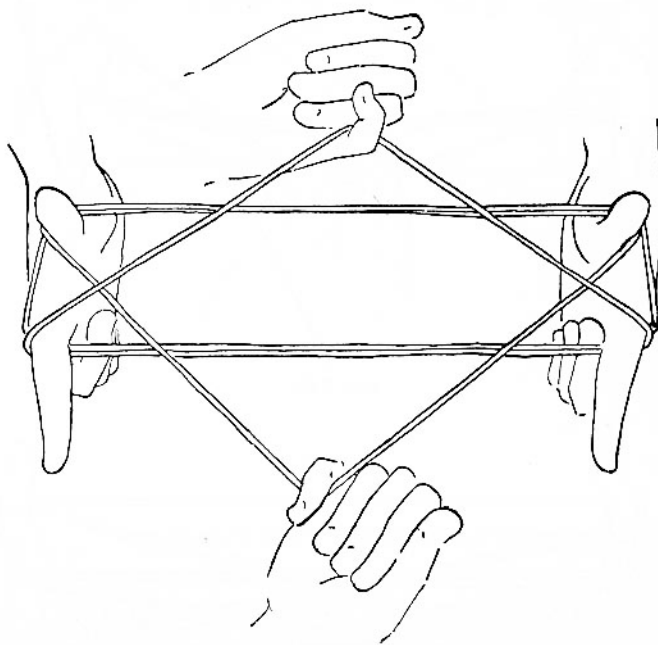


Fig. 9

11. Your partner continues to hold the pinky strings. Then they pinch their thumb and forefinger of each hand together, and push them into the triangles, under the outside strings, and up into the center. (See Fig. 10).

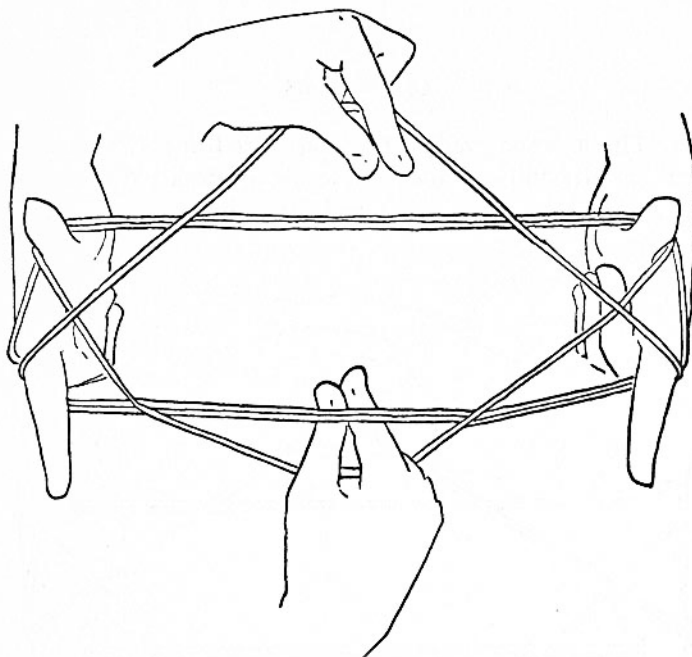


Fig. 10

12. You drop the strings as your partner spreads their hands apart to make the **Manger**. (See Fig. 11).

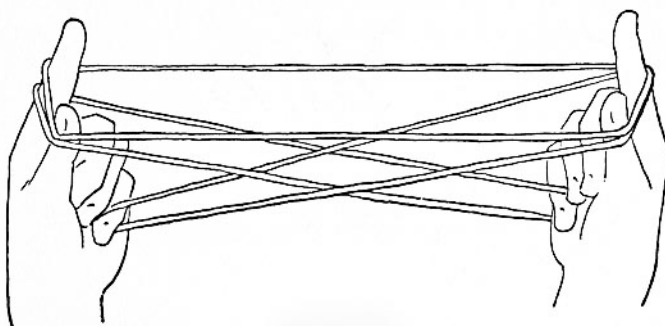
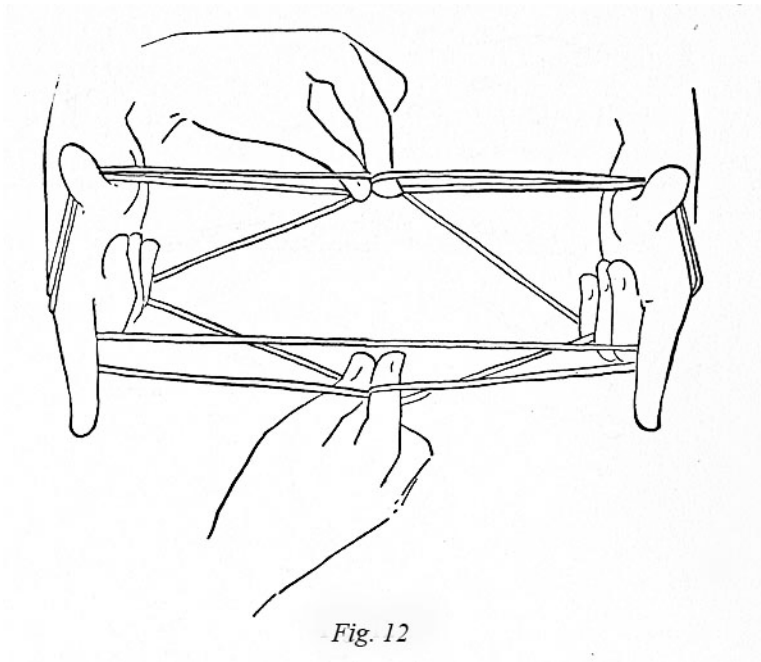
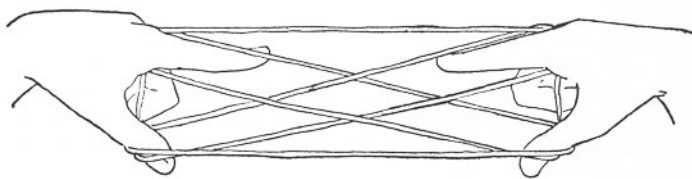


Fig. 11

13. You find the two X's again, and pinch them from the outside this time. Your partner should pull them out and up. You turn your hands over and push your fingers down into the open center. (See Fig. 12).



14. Your partner drops the strings as you spread your hands apart, and you make **Diamonds**. (See Fig. 13).



15. Your partner pinches the two X's from the inside, lifts them out and over, under the outside strings, and up into the center. You drop the strings and your partner spreads their hands apart to make the **Cat's Eye**. (See Fig. 14 and Fig. 15).

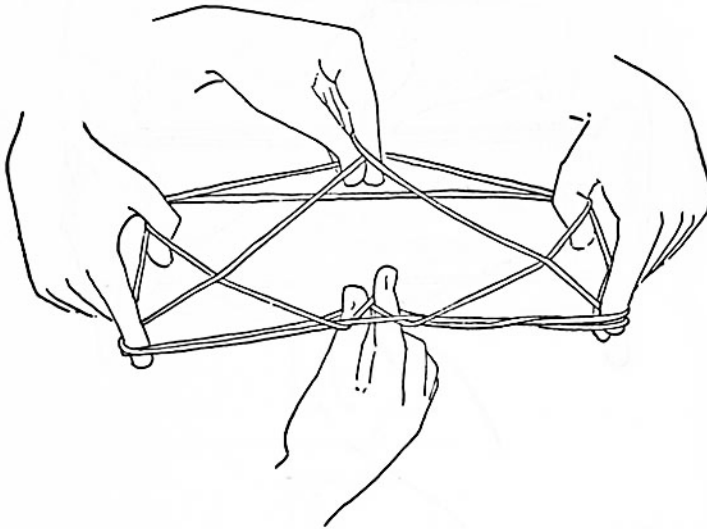


Fig. 14

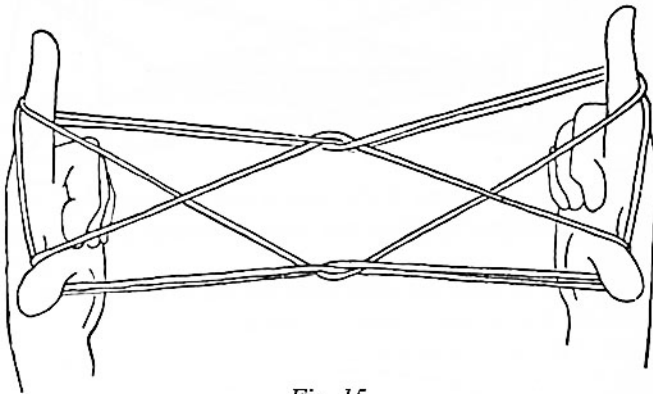


Fig. 15

16. You move down from above and grab the crossed strings and then pick up the diagonal strings (using their thumbs and forefingers). (See Fig. 16).

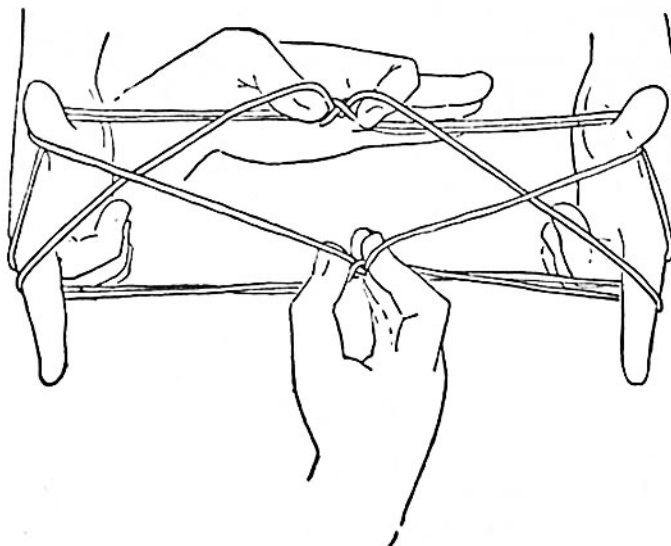


Fig. 16

17. You remove the strings from your partner's hands, and extend your thumbs and forefingers apart to make the **Fish in a Dish**. (See Fig. 17).

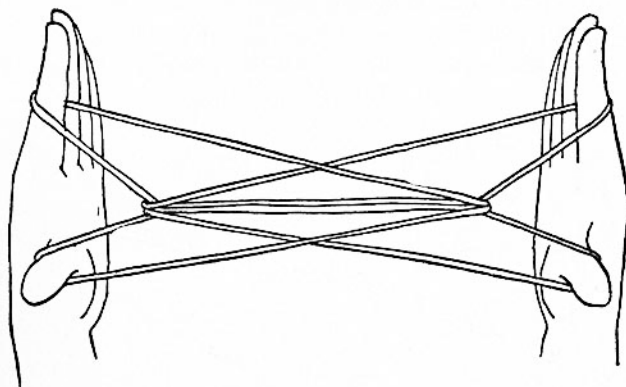
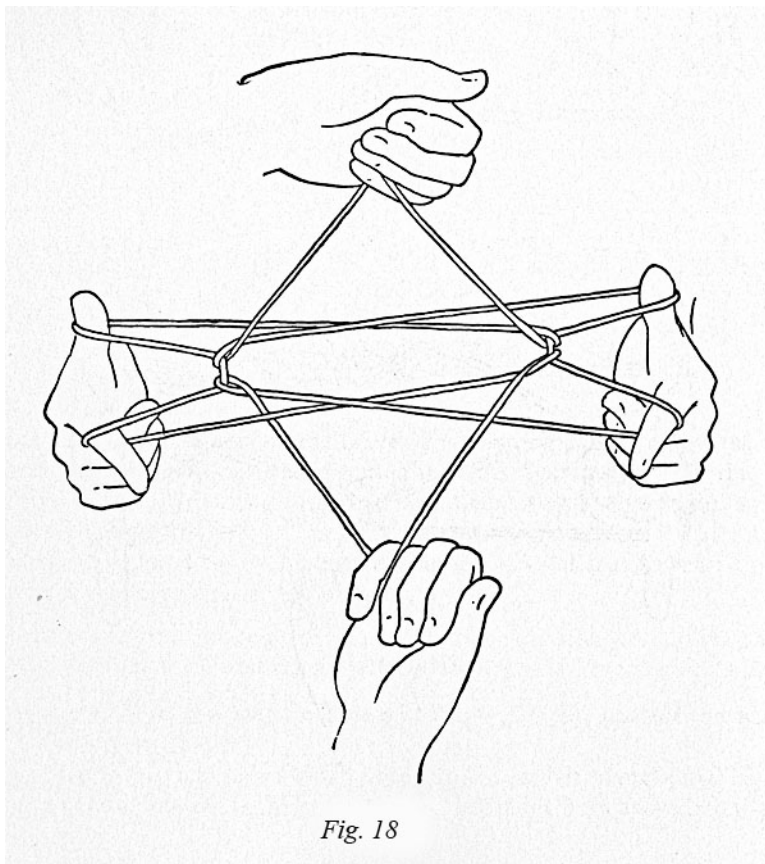
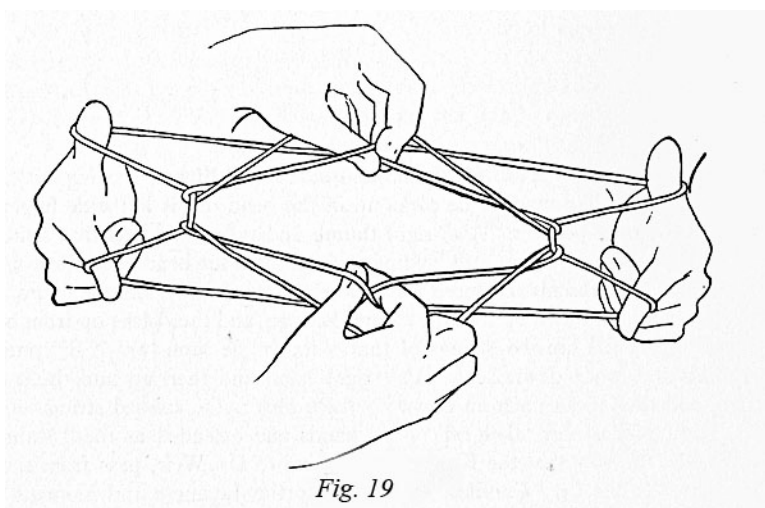


Fig. 17

18. Your partner grabs the crossed strings and pulls them out to separate the two center straight strings so they do not cross. With their pinky fingers, they grab the separated center straight strings. They pull them out over the crossed strings away from the center of the figure. (See Fig. 18).



19. They continue holding the string in their little fingers and grab from above the crossed strings. Then they pick up the diagonal strings with their thumbs and forefingers by rotating them up through the center of the figure. (See Fig. 19).



20. They extend their thumb and forefingers up, removing the strings

from your hands to make the **Clock**. Held vertically, this figure represents a tall grandfather type clock. The end! (See Fig. 20).

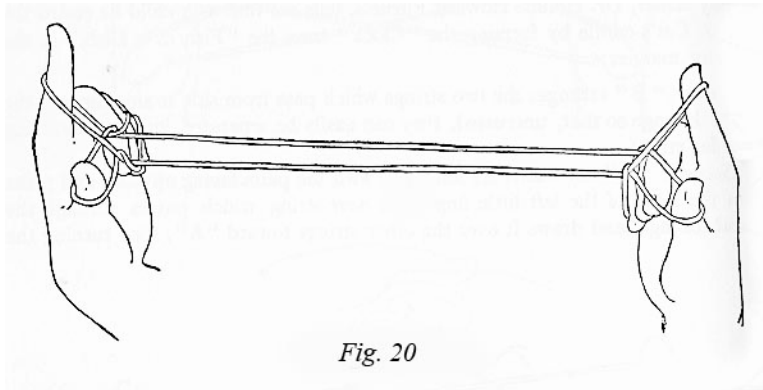


Fig. 20

Tips

Practice makes perfect! Chances are, you won't get it right the first time, but keep trying.

There are many variations of Cat's Cradle. Try doing something different, you may come up with a new figure that terminates the game, or you may be surprised to find you have jumped to one of the other figures from which you can continue the game. For example, you can go from Soldier's Bed to an inverted Cat's Eye by picking up the crossed strings from below, instead of above, and then picking up the straight strings from above.

If you get frustrated and can't figure out how to play the game, you can use the string to play with your cats. They'll love it!

Warnings

- . Be careful not to get your fingers tangled in the string too tightly.
- 0. Please supervise younger children who are playing this game - a loop of string can be hazardous.

Notes: How To Play Cat's Cradle by Cynthia von Buhler for the website www.butwhowillbellthecats.com. References and pictures are from the following public domain source: String Figures by Caroline Furness Jayne. 1906. Charles Scribner's Sons. Drawings by Mrs. Morris Cotgrave Betts (Fig. 1 and 2 have been updated by Cynthia von Buhler); Wikipedia; Wiki How.