

# The Maori Poi

The word 'Poi' means 'ball' in Maori. A Poi is a ball attached to flax strings that is swung rhythmically to music. The Poi was used by the indigenous Maori people of Aotearoa New Zealand many years ago and can still be seen in New Zealand today. Aotearoa is the Maori name for New Zealand and means 'land of the long white cloud'. Traditionally the Maori women used Poi in their dances, helping to keep their hands flexible so they were able to do weaving. The Maori men traditionally used the Poi to help them improve their strength and co-ordination, which was required during battles.

Try making your own Poi following the simple instructions below.

## You Will Need

- Newspaper or tennis ball
- Wool (or string) in 80cm - 1m lengths
- Coloured paper
- Pieces of plastic (ie: shopping bags)
- Scissors



## What To Do

- Squash newspaper into a ball shape (or use tennis ball)
- Plait 3 lengths of the wool together and knot at each end
- Tie one end of the wool around the newspaper ball
- Cut the coloured paper and plastic into squares approximately 40cm x 40cm
- Place the paper square on top of the plastic square and put the newspaper ball in the middle of the squares
- Wrap the paper and plastic around the newspaper ball and tie the opening together with the smaller length of wool
- Trim the gathered plastic and paper with scissors
- Repeat the above steps and you will have your first set of Poi

Once you have made a set of Poi you can learn how to swing them.

Wrap the plaited cord around three fingers and drop out the middle finger, on each hand. Start swinging your Poi in a circle either forward, keeping your palms facing downwards, or backwards, keeping your palms facing upwards. (If your palms are facing each other when you are swinging the Poi, they will come together and tangle or may hit you on the head!)

Next step is to try swinging one Poi forward and one Poi backwards (remember those palms!). As you get better at these swings, put on some Maori music and try swinging the Poi in other directions. Have fun!