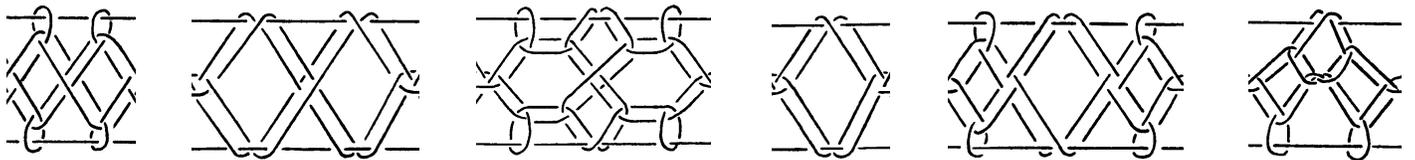


Nauruan Finishing Techniques

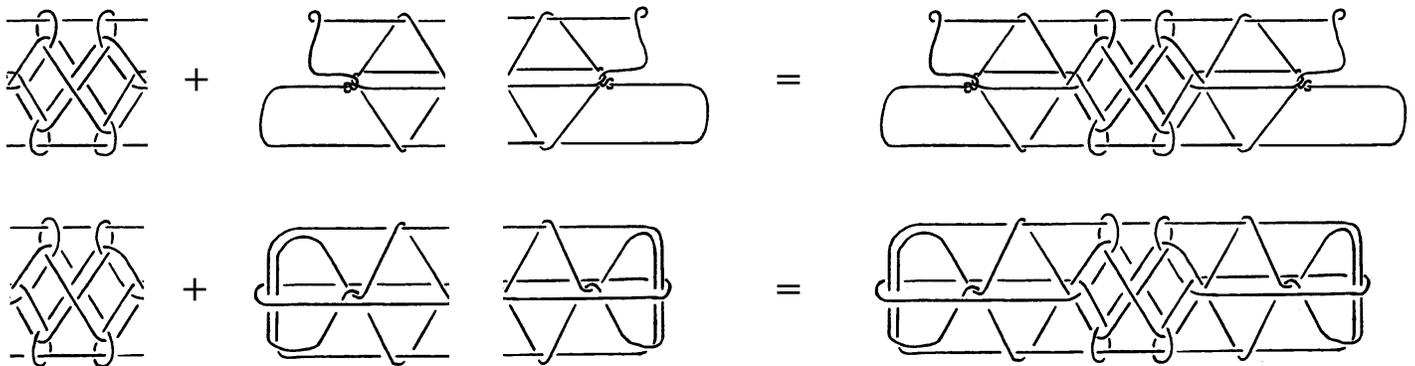
String figures from the Pacific Island nation of Nauru (nah-oo-roo) are often billed as the most elaborate designs ever created. Fifteen are illustrated in Jayne's book. Honor Maude's Nauru book includes instructions for making many more. One would assume that Nauruan construction methods are complex and difficult to master, but in reality they are rather straightforward.

Ten years ago Joseph D'Antoni wrote an article for the ISFA Bulletin called "Variation on Nauru Island Figures." In it, he demonstrated that classical Nauruan figures typically begin with movements that create the center of the design:



Central design motifs from D'Antoni's article

Once the center is formed, a finishing sequence is applied to add flanking diamonds and make the figure easier to display. D'Antoni shows how various beginnings can be combined with various finishing sequences to create dozens of intricate designs with very little effort:



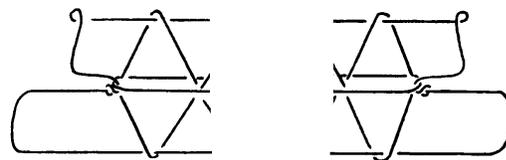
In Honor Maude's Nauru book, four traditional finishing sequences are accurately described but not illustrated. As a result, most of the classic figures remain inaccessible to beginners.

In this issue of *String Figure Magazine* we illustrate three of the four finishing sequences: *Small Amwangiyo*, *Amwangiyo*, and the *Nauru Ending*. A simple double-walled diamond has been selected as the central design motif. We also provide hints on how to effectively apply the *Caroline Extension* to the finished pattern so that the figure truly blossoms on the hands.

In the September issue we will illustrate the fourth finishing sequence (*Eongatubabo*) as well as several other techniques that are utilized in making the Nauruan classics.

Small Amwangiyo

-a finishing technique collected by
Honor Maude from the people of Nauru

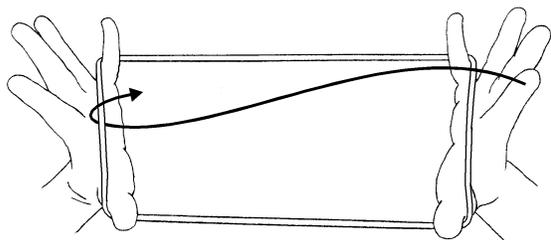


Recommended String Length: 1½ spans of thin string

Small Amwangiyo adds one diamond to either side of a central motif. Each diamond is bisected by a horizontal loop that emanates from the central motif and wraps around the palmar knot.

Small Amwangiyo is often used in place of *Amwangiyo-Nauru Ending* whenever a simpler and more stable design is desired. For example, when Ijauwe showed Honor Maude how to make Jayne fig. 835, he finished with *Small Amwangiyo* rather than *Amwangiyo-Nauru Ending*. As a result, the central motif of his figure was flanked on either side by one diamond rather than two as illustrated by Jayne. Others used *Eongatubabo* to finish the figure. All three versions were said to represent the same thing: a man and his two wives!

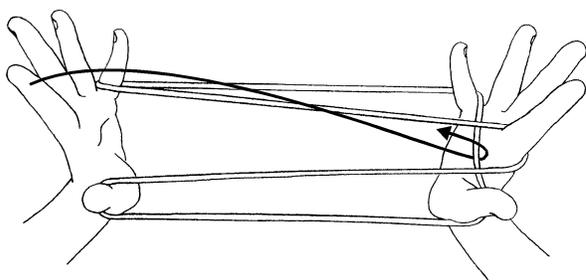
1



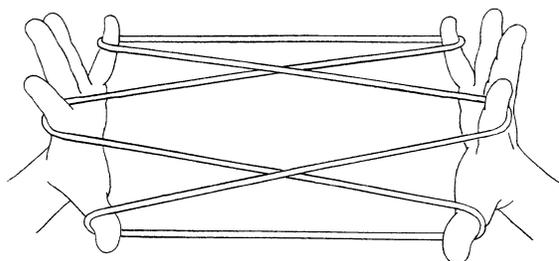
Create the center of the design first:

Place loop on 1 and 5 (*Position 1*)

R2 picks up L palmar string...

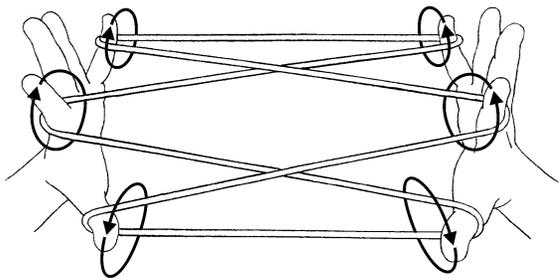


...L2, through R2 loop from above, picks up R palmar string.



You now have *Opening A*.

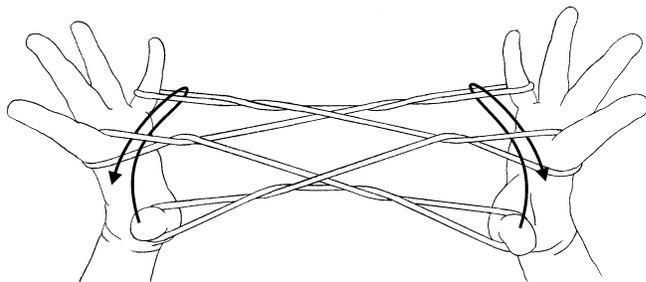
2



Rotate 2 and 5 a full turn away from you.

Rotate 1 a full turn towards you.

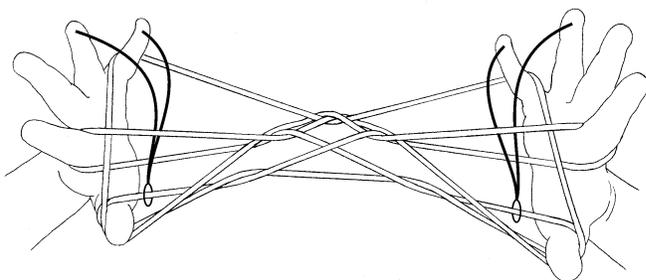
3



The center of the design is now complete. Add flanking diamonds using the *Small Amwangiyo* sequence:

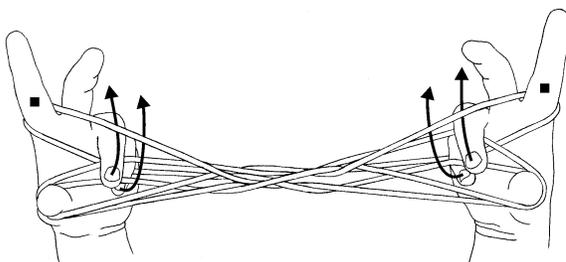
1, through 2 loop from above, picks up 5n and returns.

4



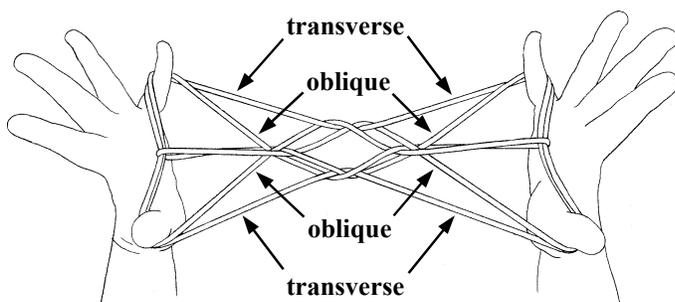
4 and 5, through 2 loop from below, trap lower 1f.

5



4 and 5 return through 2 loop, allowing the trapped string to slip over 5 to create an upper 5 loop.

Release 2 loop.

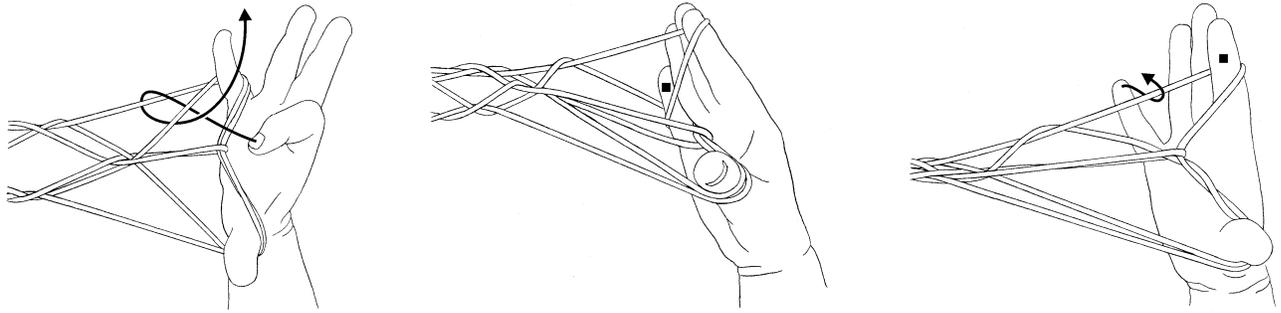


You now have two 1n strings and two 5f strings:

One string of each pair is *transverse* (runs directly from hand to hand).

The other string is *oblique* (runs diagonally to the center of the figure).

6



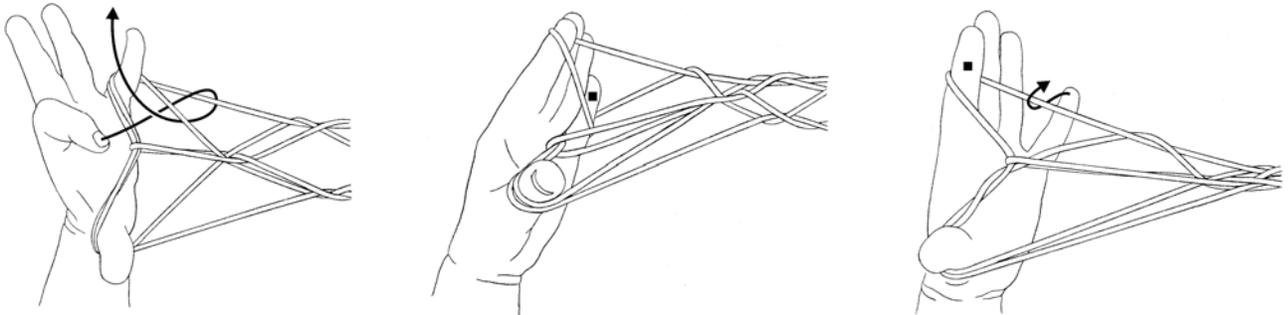
Right hand only:

R2, passing under oblique R5f, hooks up transverse R5f and returns.

Release R5 loops.

R5, from below, removes R2 loop.

7



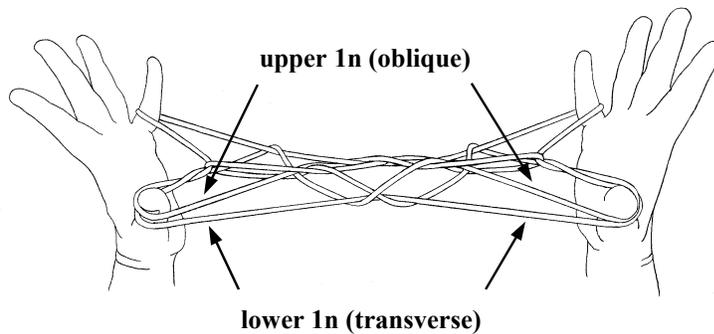
Left hand only:

L2, passing under oblique L5f, hooks up transverse L5f and returns.

Release L5 loops.

L5, from below, removes L2 loop.

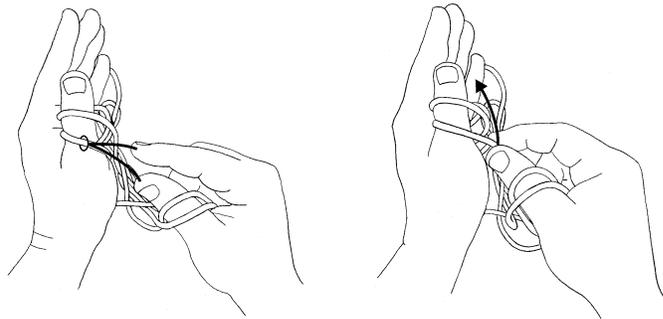
8



Both hands:

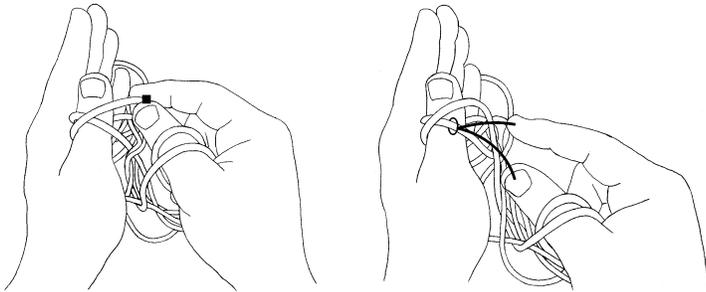
Arrange the two loops on 1 so that the 1n strings are parallel and the 1f strings coil around each other. Make sure lower 1n is transverse and upper 1n is oblique.

9

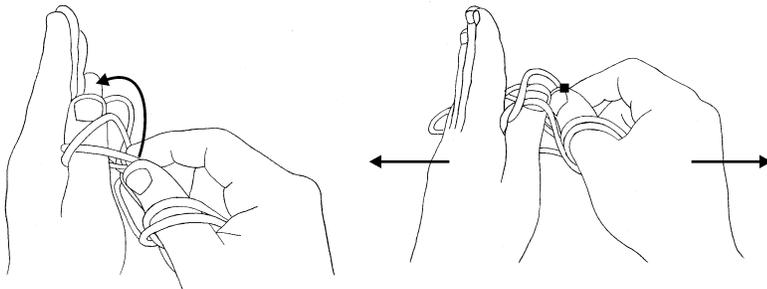


Double Navajo the L1 loops as follows:

With R1 and R2 grasp the lower L1 loop and move it to the upper position.

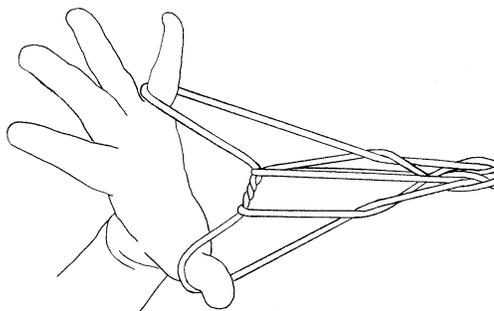


Release the new upper L1 loop and immediately grasp the new lower L1 loop.



Lift the new lower L1 loop over the new upper L1 loop and release it on the far side of L1.

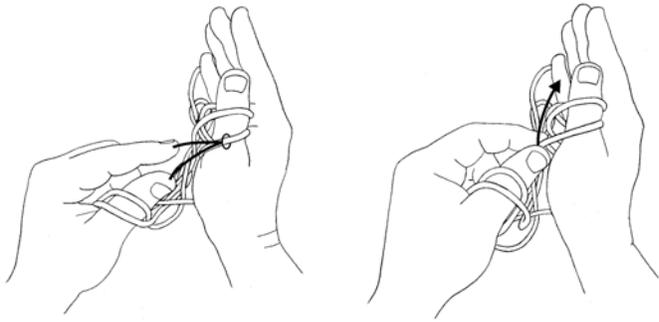
Separate the hands to absorb the released loop.



You now have single loops on L1 and L5.

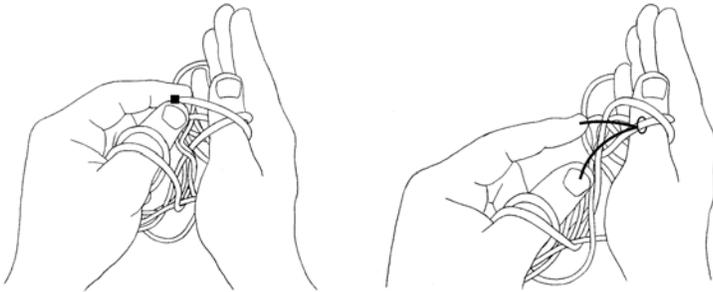
L1f and L5n coil around each other several times near the left palm.

10

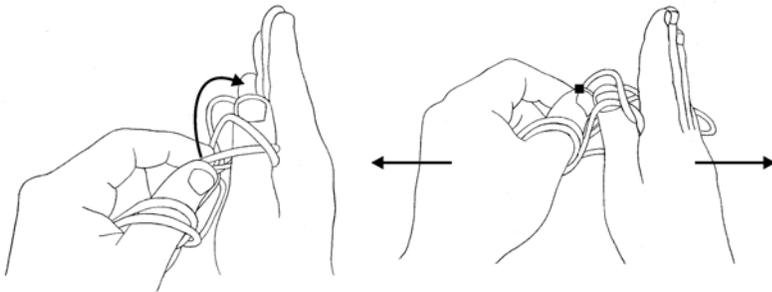


Double Navajo the R1 loops as follows:

With L1 and L2 grasp the lower R1 loop and move it to the upper position.

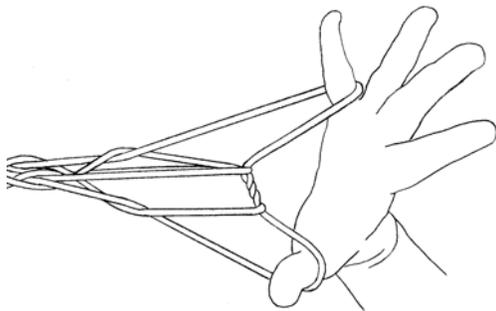


Release the new upper R1 loop and immediately grasp the new lower R1 loop.



Lift the new lower R1 loop over the new upper R1 loop and release it on the far side of R1.

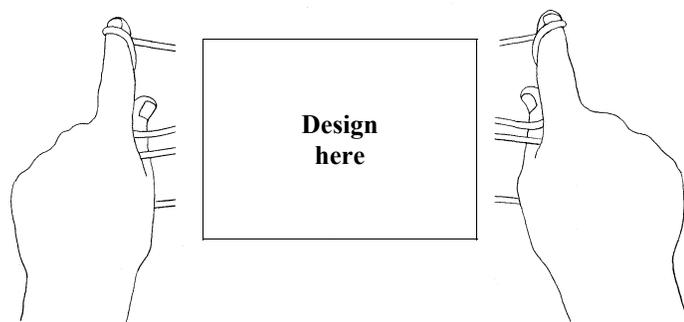
Separate the hands to absorb the released loop.



You now have single loops on R1 and R5.

R1f and R5n coil around each other several times near the right palm.

The *Caroline Extension* is a powerful technique for displaying a finished pattern. It was first observed in the Caroline Islands of Micronesia, hence the name. It has since been found throughout Micronesia, Melanesia, western Polynesia, and Australia where it is called the *Pindiki Stroke*. Its absence in eastern Polynesia and New Zealand suggests that it was invented after colonization of the Pacific was complete (i.e., sometime after A.D. 1200).



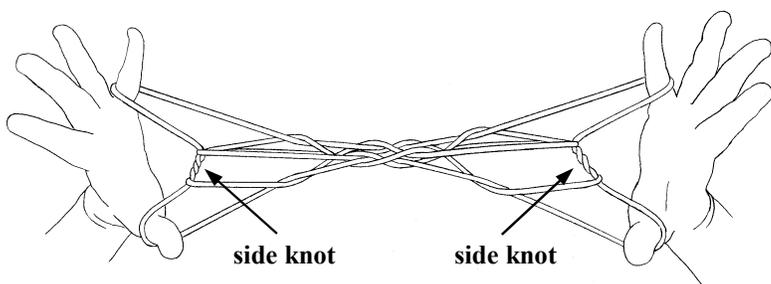
The *Caroline Extension* allows the maker to widely separate the upper and lower frame lines so that the design is big and impressive. Unique finger holds ensure that the upper and lower frame lines remain taut. During the extension, the upper frame line is immobilized and held high on the index by pressing the thumb against the side of the index to trap the two strings that pass between them. This also

locks the design and prevents its collapse since string can no longer flow from the interior into the frame lines as tension is applied. It also provides a sensitive mechanism for adjusting string tension within the design. A slight pivot of one or both wrists causes the design to expand or contract so that it fits the frame properly. The lower frame line is immobilized by pressing it down with the three lesser fingers or the heel of the palm, the choice being dictated by the length of the string in relation to the size of the hands).

Setting up the Caroline Extension

Before applying the *Caroline Extension* to any figure, the two transverse strings that become frame lines must be correctly positioned. The lower frame line must occupy the 5f position, and the upper frame line must occupy the lower 1f or upper 1f position (depending on the figure). Furthermore, the little finger loop must be shared with the thumb so that 5n is a palmar string. The movements that achieve this arrangement for our figure are illustrated in step 11.

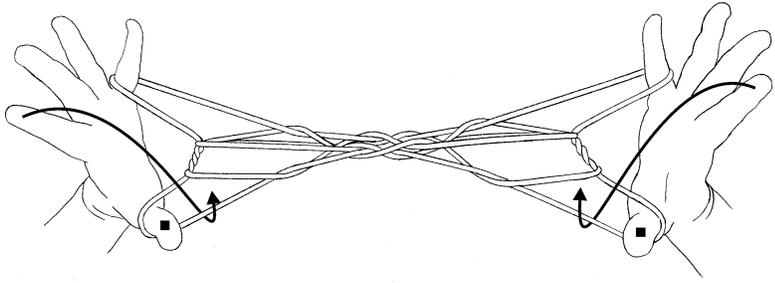
About the side knots



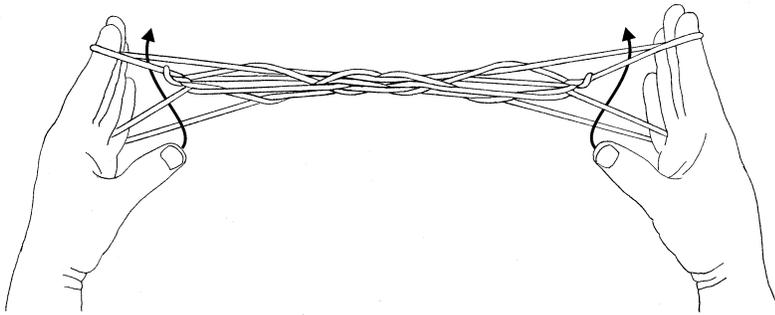
The “side knots” of a figure isolate the frame strings from the design strings. The distance between the knot and the palm determines how much of the loop is consumed by frame versus design, and therefore determines how “open” the design will be when extended. If the knot resides too far from the palm, the amount of

string consumed by the design will be too small, and the amount consumed by the frame lines will be too large. As a result, the design will not expand fully when extended, and the frame lines will curve toward the center. To ensure that the knots end up near the palms, do not pull the figure tight during steps 6-11: weave loosely and extend gently after each step.

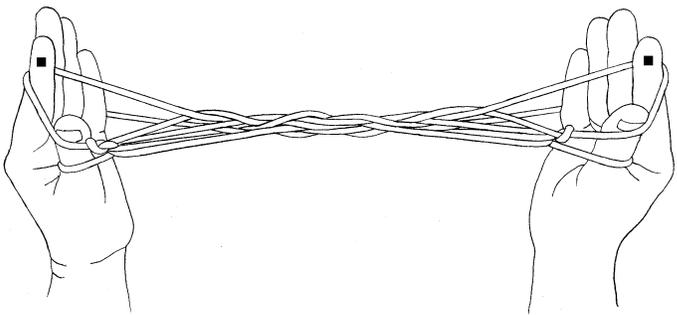
11



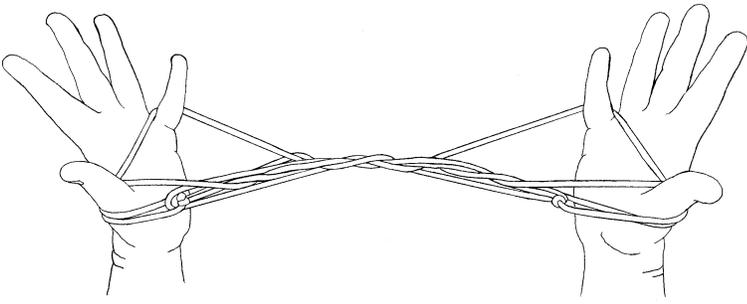
Set up the *Caroline Extension*:
 2, from above, removes 1 loop.



1 picks up 5n and 2n.



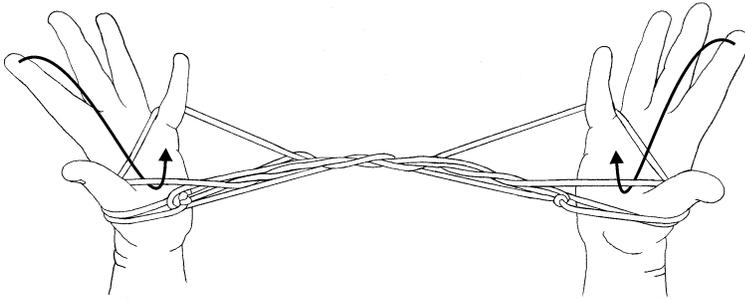
2 releases its loop.



Extend.

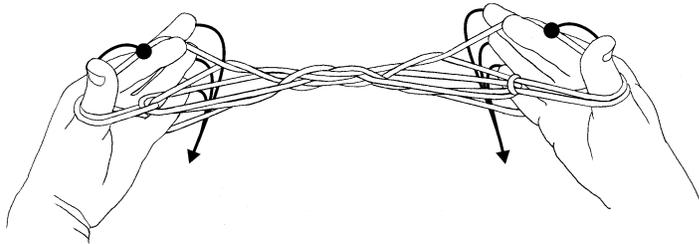
The transverse strings that become the frame lines (5f and upper 1f), and the strings that feed the design (upper and lower 1n) are now correctly positioned for the *Caroline Extension*.

12



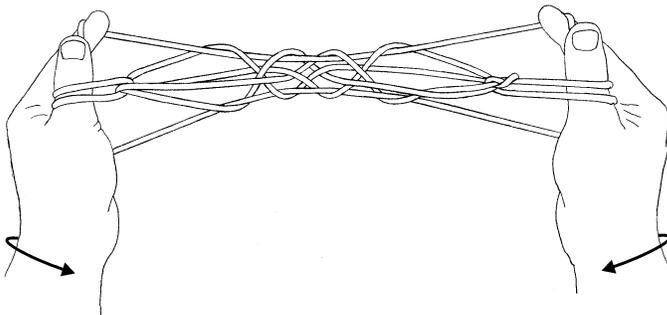
Now do the *Caroline Extension*:

With 2 pick up the transverse 1f string and begin to return.

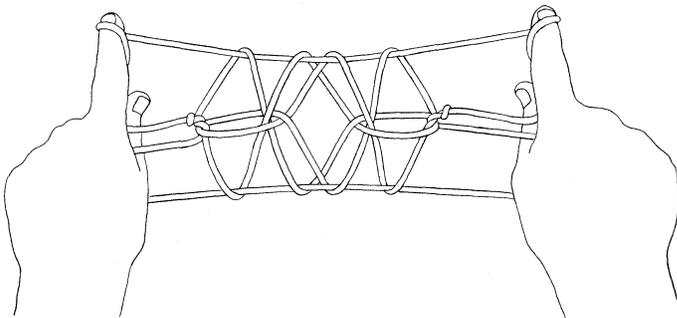


As 2 returns, press 1 against the side of 2 in order to trap the string that runs from 1 to 2 *and* the string that runs from 1 to 5 of the same hand.

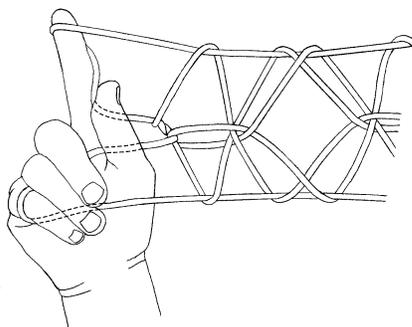
Simultaneously, fold 3, 4, and 5 down over 5f.



Extend with palms facing away from you, keeping 1 pressed firmly against 2.



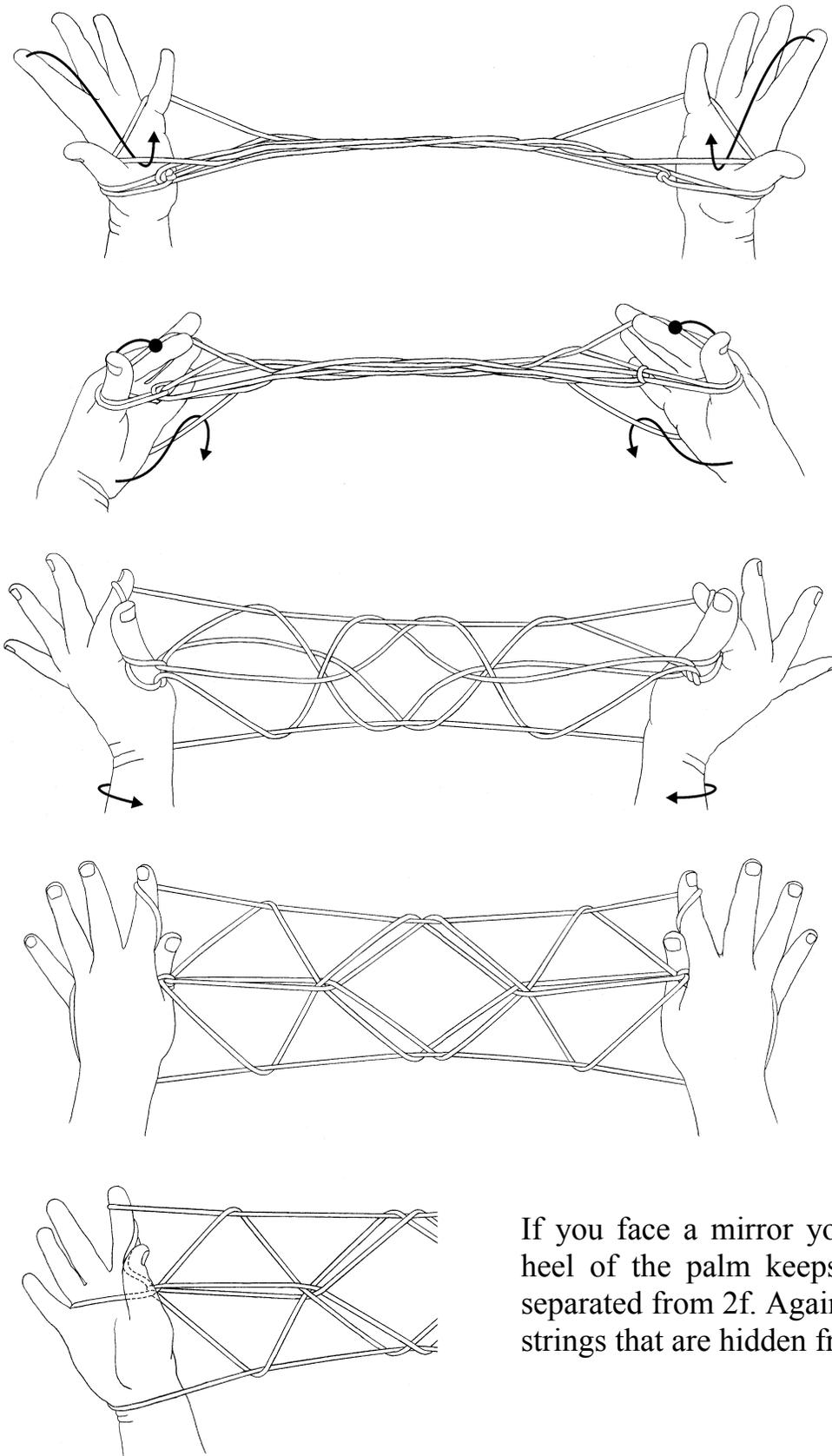
The design should spring into view if the finger holds are correct. Pivot your wrists slightly as needed to adjust the tension applied to strings within the design.



If the design fails to open as you extend the figure, examine your hands in a mirror to make sure the finger holds are correct. Dotted lines show strings that are hidden from view.

If everything looks okay, you may have released the wrong loop in step 9 or 10. Go back and try again.

Alternative display: To achieve an even wider extension, start with a longer loop and use the heel of your palm to push down 5f during the *Caroline Extension*:



If you face a mirror you can see how the heel of the palm keeps 5f taut and well-separated from 2f. Again, dotted lines show strings that are hidden from view.