

Quarantine Kumihimo

by Arabella De Mere

So, you are stuck at home... needing SOMETHING to help pass the time. I'm going to show you how to use things you can find in your house to make a simple Kumihimo disc and braid! This project is not only great for adults, but kids too!

First off, let's start with a little history... what is Kumihimo???

According to nordicneedle.net, Kumihimo translates into braided cord (kumi = to braid, himo = cord). Braiding has enjoyed a very long history in Japan with evidence dating clear back to 7,500 BCE. The styles and uses for the braids changed over time. Perhaps the greatest era for Kumihimo was during the Middle Ages when the Samurai suit of armor required up to 1,000 feet of braid to lace the panels together. In addition, the braids were used for sword hilts, obi ties for kimonos, and even harnesses for horses.

The Japanese technique for making these braids uses specialized stands. The most common is the Marudai which means round stand. The braiding is done on top of the disk and the finished braid goes down the center of the disk.

<http://www.nordicneedle.net/guides/stitching-techniques-guides/braiding/kumihimo/#.Xo8aRFMpBaw>

In recent times, a foam disk has been used to make this craft more portable! The foam disc can be used as a great introduction to this fiber art!

But.... you're stuck in the house... if you ordered from Amazon today, the disc might get here in a month! Well... what can you make a disc with?

A disposable plate or bowl...

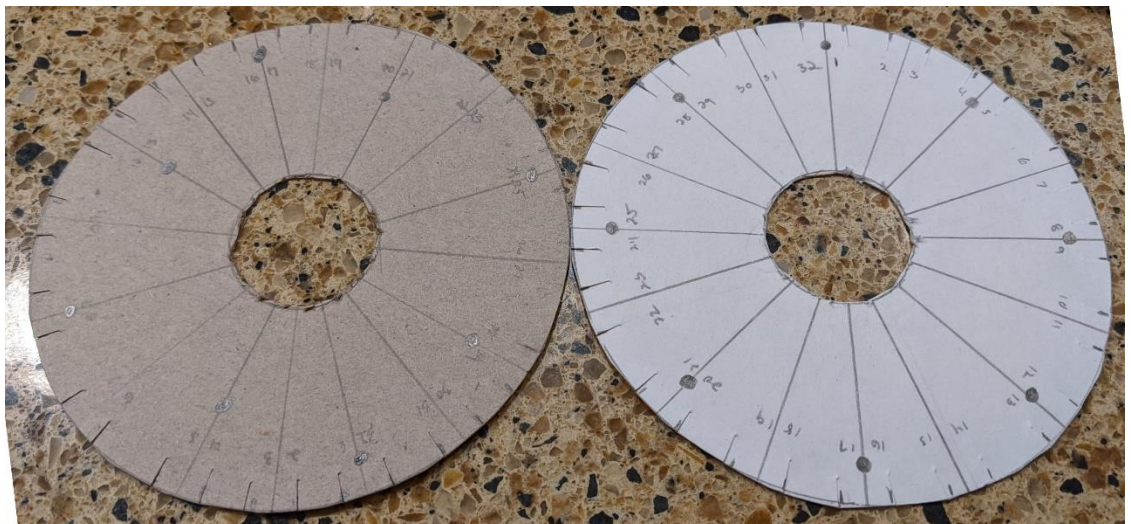
Cardboard from a cereal box...

Plastic milk jug...

An Amazon box!

Really anything that you can cut easily and will keep it's form. You don't want it to bend too easily. These discs may only last a project or two, but you can easily make more!

So, let's start:



Cut a circle out of your chosen material that will be comfortable to hold in your hands. Somewhere between 4-6 inches across will work great. This measurement does not need to be exact.

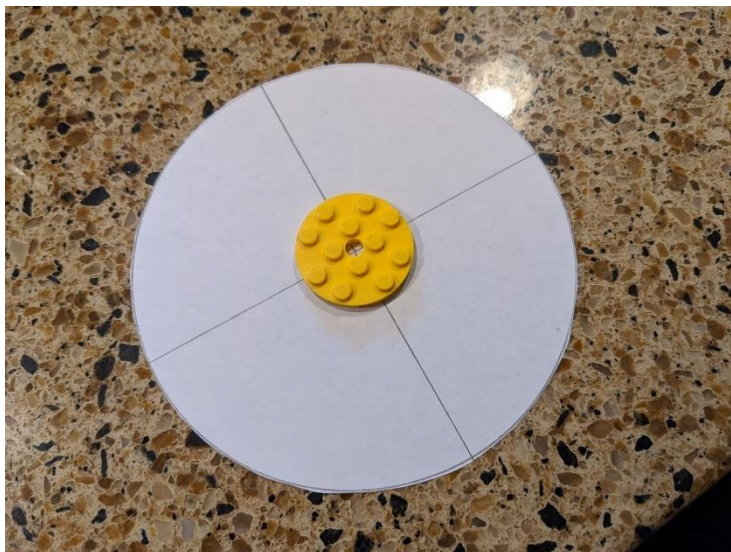
A good way to draw your circle is to trace a bowl from your kitchen (I used a kid's bowl from IKEA), or a disinfectant wipes container! Cause we all have those now, right?



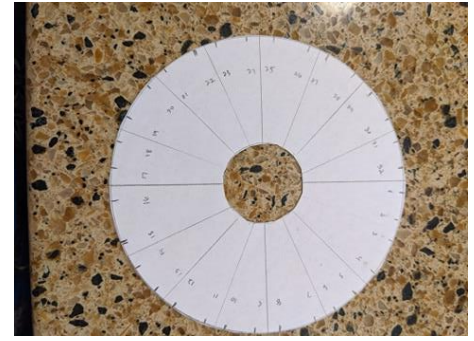
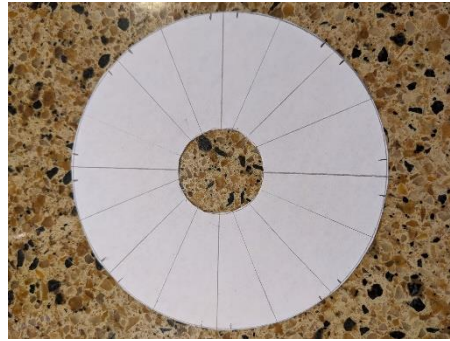
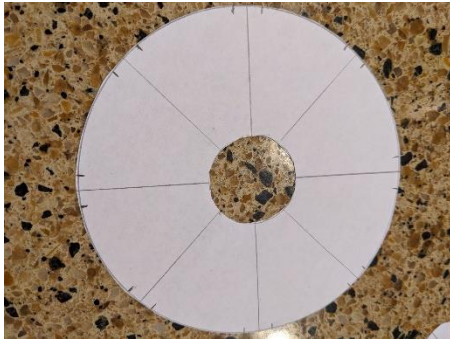
Cut out the circle. Make a dot in the center, then draw a line down the middle of the circle, turn the disc and draw another line, making an X. Then draw more lines, between each quarter... To make 8 sections. Then once more, make lines between each section to make a total of 16 sections! Put your coin on the center dot, trace, then cut out. If you don't have a ruler, you can use any straight edge to help draw your lines, a piece of paper or book will work well! (I used my son's copy of *Captain Underpants*).



Use a coin, round Lego piece, or wheel, something about the size of a quarter or silver dollar, to trace a circle in the center of your cut out disc.



After your center circle is cut out, make little lines on the edge, try making them equally spaced on each side of the lines you drew. At the long 12-o'clock line, label the left side 32 and the right side 1. Then label the other little lines going clockwise, 2-31. Now snip those 32 little lines. These slits are where your threads will be held.



Do you NEED to trace items? No, there is a template you can print here (<https://web.archive.org/web/20100401041824/http://www.theagenieslamp.com/kumihimo/kumihimo4.pdf>) but not everyone has access to a printer. You can also make a template out of paper, and you can use it again if you want to make another one.

String

Most craft stores are closed, and you don't want to leave the house... what can you use? Almost anything long and flexible.... from string and yarn, to shoelaces and ribbon, even wire! (I'll be using yarn, it works up quickly, and you can see the threads easily). The smallest cord I made consisted of 8 single threads of embroidery floss... that was TINY.... Please. Don't do that to yourself when learning. If you have yarn, it's perfect! Especially for the first braid.

For this simple 8 strand spiral braid, you will need 4 long (or 8 shorter) pieces of whatever material you are using. For simplicity, I will now refer to it as string. I will also be using 2 colors, so 2 long strands of each color (or 4 shorter strands of each color). Using contrasting colors will make it easier to see the pattern. I will use purple and yellow for my example colors. (Whoo! EK pride!)

Take your 4 pieces of string and line them up, with all the ends together. This works best if they are all the same length.

Fold them in half (if using the long strands) and tie an overhand knot at the bottom. If you are using the long strands, this will create a loop. If not, it will just be a knot with free ends.



This should give you 8 strands, 4 of each color. For example, 4 purple, 4 yellow.

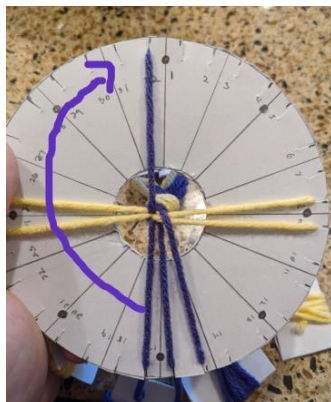
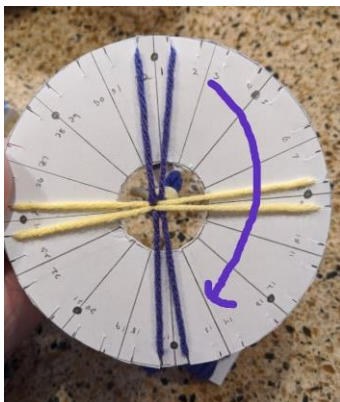
Attaching to the disc

Poke the knotted end through the center hole and spread out your threads. Separate the threads into matched pairs and attach them to the disc like a compass. Have the same colors across the wheel from each other. So, the top and bottom are the same colors (purple), as are both sides (yellow). It's ok if you can't completely sort out the threads, just do what you can.

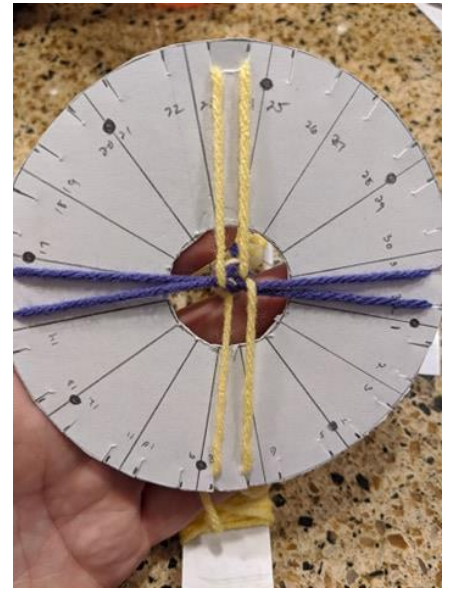
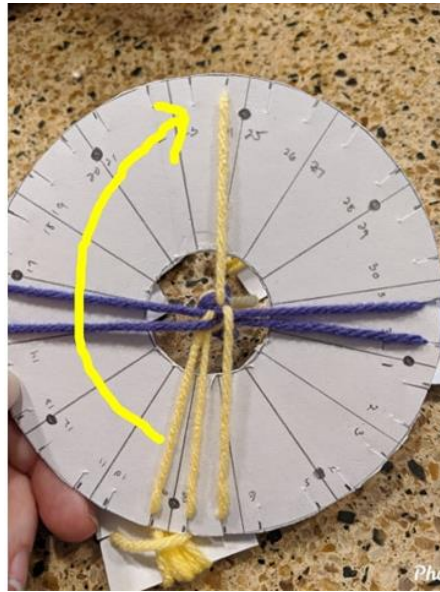
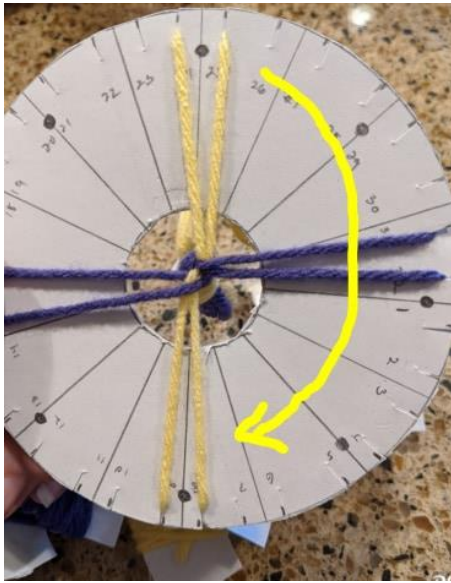


For ease of directions, I'll first refer to the # slit to direct which string goes where.

Move the string from #1 and bring it down to #15. Then bring the string from #17 up to #31. Do NOT cross the strings over the center. You are only moving in a straight line upwards or downwards, staying on that string's side of the circle.



Rotate the disc in your hands so the other color (yellow) is in the top and bottom positions. It does not matter which way you turn it, but just be consistent each time. Make the same movements. If you need numbers, then #25 will move to #7. And number #9 will move to #23.



Turn the disc in your hands again and move the strings. The string from the top right will always go to the bottom right, right next to the other string of the same color.

Then with three strings on the bottom, the left most bottom string moves up to the left top, on the left side of the only string on top.

You do this movement, over, and over, and over again....

But wait... what if I lose track? How do I know what color I did last? If you look at the center of your circle, whichever color is on top, is the last color you used! Easy peasy!

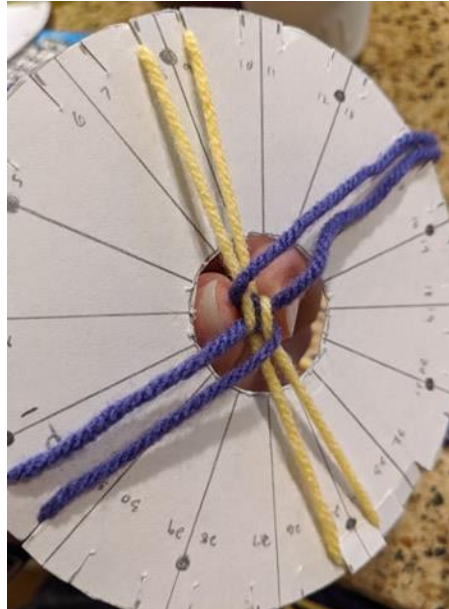
Now... lift your disc, and look underneath at the hole... what do you see? A spiral! Yay! You did it! If it looks a bit squished, then just give it a slight/gentle tug. It will elongate! Try not to pull too hard.



The slots in the disc not only hold your string in place, but also help maintain even tension. You don't want loose strings. A nice taught tension will help create an even braid.

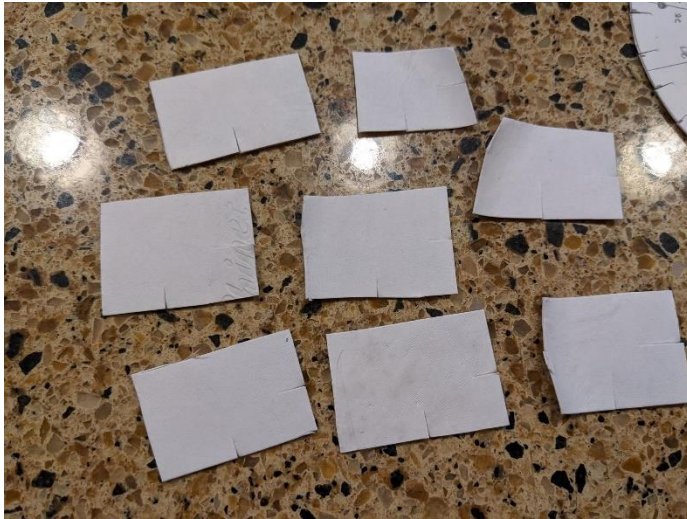
I'm almost out of string! Now what?

Is your braid finished? Pinch the end of the braid in circle. Then you can gently take the strands off the disc one pair at a time, gather them gently, and tie an overhand knot at the base of the braid. Leave a little room and cut to make the ends even.



If you find that the strands of your braid are getting tangled with each other, or you want to use longer strings, you can try tying them into a bundle or wrapping them around a bobbin. but you will need to unravel thread as your braid gets longer. I have used these (<https://www.amazon.com/Beadsmith-XTL-6103-Flexible-Plastic-Kumihimo/dp/B00C1FKLBA>) in the past, and they are a great way to keep everything organized and untangled.

Here is how you can make a bobbin/threadholder out of cardboard if you don't want to wait for an Amazon/craft store delivery...



Cut out as many bobbins as you have strands, in this case, 8.

Cut a small slit on the side, and another at the top. Starting from the middle, wind on the string, putting the end through the slit. When you get to a workable length, put the string through the top slit to hold it in place. Do this for all 8. As you use your thread, you will eventually need more. Just unroll the bobbin and re-secure the end. Simple as that!

I'm interested in seeing the wide variety of discs and braids! I know we have some very creative minds out there... Please post your projects! And let me know if you have any questions!