



Hawke's Bay
Tai Ahuriri

MĀORI POI



WHAT IS IT?



HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN!



LEARN HOW TO USE



Tena koutou teachers, students and whanau!

In this MTG education lesson we are going to:

- Learn a brief history of Poi.
- Learn how to make your own Poi.
- Learn a traditional dance using Poi.

New Zealand curriculum areas:

- Social sciences
- Visual Art
- and Physical Education
- Mathematics
- Health Learning Languages



Poi Whakapapa

Long, long ago before time began there was no light in the world, only darkness all around. This was the time of Io the creator, the guardian of the world.

In the quiet of the dark lay Ranginui, the Sky Father holding the Earth Mother, Papatūānuku tightly in his arms. Crushed between them in the darkness were their children, all longing for light, space and freedom.

One of the children was Tāne Mahuta, the guardian and father of the forests. Tāne was big and strong. At last he could bear to be crowded no longer and Tāne rose up between his parents and used his great strength to separate them. He thrust Ranginui high, high above Papatūānuku – making sky and earth. Light and air filled the great space between them.

Tāne Mahuta became the father of a great family. Two of his children were Harakeke the flax, child of Pakoti and Raupō, the native bulrush, who was the child of Repo the swamp. Together, Harakeke and Raupō created Poi.

And that is, how the first poi was made from the strong leaves of the harakeke flax wrapped tenderly around the soft down of the native bulrush. Today the poi is made of materials of our time, but the story of the poi and its beauty and grace still lives on.



The History of Poi

The Poi was used, many years ago, by the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand to increase their flexibility and strength in their hands and arms as well as improving coordination.

Wāhine (female) dancers perform the Māori Poi, a dance performed with balls attached to flax strings, swung rhythmically.

The Poi dance was originally used by the Māori women for keeping their hands flexible for weaving and by the men for strength and coordination required during battle. Poi are also used as a training aid for other ancient weapons like the Mere or Pātū.



How to Make Your Own Poi



Everyday materials you can find at home:

1. A pretty good sized scrap of fabric
2. Some wool, ribbon or string
3. Two plastic baggies
4. Some rice or sand
5. Scissors and a ruler

1. If using scraps:
Your fabric should be decently sized, cut into even squares.

If using socks:
Cut your socks off at around the heel so you have a nice pouch.



2. If you're using ziplock bags like me, snip off the ziplocks so the bags will tie easier.



3. Now take your bag and fill it up with rice or sand until you think you've found a desirable weight.

If you end up not liking the feel of it later on then it's an easy fix.



4. Once you're happy with the weight of the bags, give them a couple twists and tie them nice and tight with some string.



5. If using scraps:

Place the bag in the middle of the square and fold all four corners around the bag. Tie the bag up nice and tight.

If using socks:

Slide the bag into the sock pouch and tie off with the ribbon nice and tight.

If you feel your poi might slip, try some colourful electric tape, duct tape or masking tape around the tie just in case.



6. Give them a few test swings, dose it flow well? If it's too light or too heavy go back to step 4 and try again.

If it does:

Find the right length for you (usually about as long as your arm from the wrist to the armpit) and tie off a handle.

Finish off the handle by wrapping some electrical tape or duct tape around the cord if you want. Add ribbons, puffy paint and just have fun decorating your practice poi!

Some other things you might want to try:

Try a tennis ball slipped into a long (knee length) sock and tie it off so it doesn't slip around.

Make a "tail" out of fabric and sew it onto the fabric square or sock and watch it chase the poi around and around!





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