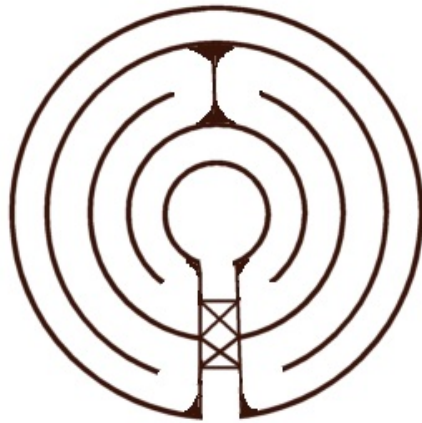


Labyrinths You Can Do Anywhere



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This page will describe ways to actually walk a full-sized Chartres labyrinth that cost next to nothing, require no layout and can be done anywhere, from a living room to a sanctuary to a lawn or a beach. One way is to use prayer beads to duplicate the labyrinth. I will describe two methods using beads. I described the first method on my [prayer beads page](#) in 2001, and focuses on compass direction. The second method dates from 2007, and focuses on arclength.

One advantage to being able to walk the Chartres pattern anywhere is that when you do it in the snow or on the beach, you can trace out a full-sized labyrinth in about ten minutes, which you can then enjoy walking. On the beach, use two ski poles, one on each side of your body, to trace out the sides of the path as you walk. In the snow, you only need your feet. Here are a couple of photos showing the result:





- [Labyrinth beads: walk the labyrinth anywhere](#)
- [Another bead pattern](#)
- [Sue's labyrinth beads](#)

- [Labyrinth pattern book: walk a full-sized labyrinth in a small space](#)
 - [How to walk the Chartres pattern *from memory* \(no kidding!\)](#)
 - [Walk a full-sized labyrinth in a small space from memory](#)
 - **New!** [Singing the Chartres labyrinth: another way to memorize it](#)
 - [Walking the Bridge Labyrinth from memory \(an easy way to approximate the Chartres experience.\)](#)
-

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Labyrinth Beads

A labyrinth walk consists of walking around a circle to a compass point, and then turning either toward the outside of the circle or to the inside, and going back the other way, along a larger or smaller circle. If you keep track of at which compass point you should turn, and which direction (toward the outside or inside of the circle), you can approximate the experience.

Use four colors of beads to stand for the four directions, and two sizes: a large bead means turn to the outside, and a small bead means turn to the inside. If you get muddled, there's no harm done. Just head for the next compass direction and take it from there.

The pattern for the Chartres labyrinth is as follows: Start at the East, go about halfway to the center, and turn toward the South. (The asterisks indicate places where you not only turn around but move toward the center five layers.) In the photo I used faceted beads for the "large" beads, and pony beads for the "small" beads.

(See the section on ["How to memorize the Chartres labyrinth"](#) for a way to do this without beads.)

Note: I have been told that the labyrinth in the Chartres cathedral actually begins on the west side, facing east. However, I have reversed this, so that as you walk, you will come to the directions in the following order: East, South, West, North. I did this because it matches the order in which I honor the directions on my [prayer beads page](#). Those directions in that order signify to me morning, noon, evening and night, as well as spring, summer, fall and winter.

Suggested beads

Start at East	large green
1. South-inside	small red
2. East-inside*	small green
3. West-outside	large blue
4. East-outside	large green
5. South-outside	large red
6. East-outside	large green
7. West-inside	small blue
8. South-inside	small red
9. North-inside	small white
10. West-inside	small blue
11. East-outside	large green
12. North-outside	large white
13. East-outside	large green
14. West-outside	large blue
15. North-outside	large white
16. South-outside	large red
17. West-outside	large blue
18. East-outside	large green
19. South-outside	large red
20. East-outside	large green
21. West-inside	small blue
22. South-inside	small red
23. North-inside	small white
24. West-inside	small blue
25. East-outside	large green
26. North-outside	large white
27. East-outside	large green
28. West-outside	large blue
29. East-inside*	small green
30. North-inside	small white
31. East-inside*	attach the string to the original
to center	large green bead

Another Bead Pattern

In the years since I came up with that idea, I've found that another bead pattern works better for me. Instead of thinking of the Chartres pattern in terms of compass direction, you could think of it in terms of quarter-circle arcs and half-circle arcs. You can encode them with beads, using small beads for the quarter circles and large beads for the half circles. The pattern is:

oo00 oo0o0o0 oo0o0o0 oo0o0o0 oo00oo

.....
This doesn't address the problem of whether to turn toward the outside or the inside of the circle at each turn. You could use two different colors or shapes of beads for that. If I let the Os represent paths that are getting further from the center and Xs represent paths that are getting closer, then the pattern would be:

xxX0 oo0xXxX oo0o0o0 oo0xXxx oo00xx

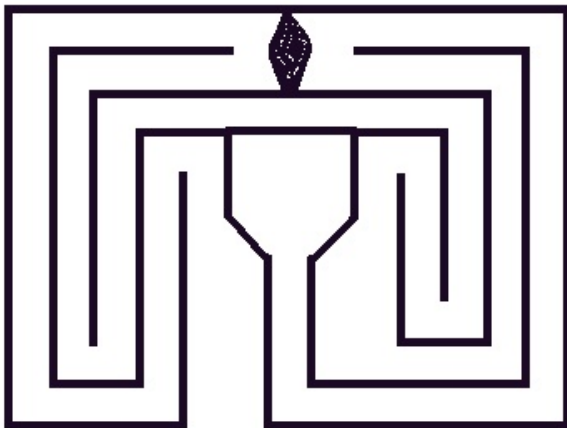
Here is a photo of a string of beads in that pattern. I used light beads for paths that are getting closer to the center, and dark beads for paths that are getting further from the center:



A blogger whose name I don't know has described these ideas more clearly than I did. You may enjoy his/her explanations on [All Things Labyrinth](#).

Sue's labyrinth beads

My friend Sue came up with yet another way to use beads to replicate a labyrinth. She used the design I call the "Flaming Chalice Labyrinth:"



Here is a photo of her beads:





She wanted a way for her blind friend to participate in a labyrinth walk. Her idea was to use small beads to represent steps, and large beads to represent turns. In her own words, here is an explanation:

The beads are designed to be followed by touch. If you're not sight-impaired, close your eyes. Start at the bauble and its surrounding beads; locate the beads which are incised, instead of smooth, and follow three of those in a row to the first small round bead. Each small round bead represents one step; each large spherical bead means turn 90-degrees left; each large flat round bead means turn 90-degrees right. When you reach the three smooth flat oval beads in a row, you're at the center! (And back at the bauble.) You can then retrace your steps to go "out".

To string a set of beads like this, you can use this pattern:

Bauble, Incised bead, 6L1L6R3R9R5R1R4L7L1L6R8R5R1R4L1L5L3L7L4R1R5R9R6R5,
Smooth bead

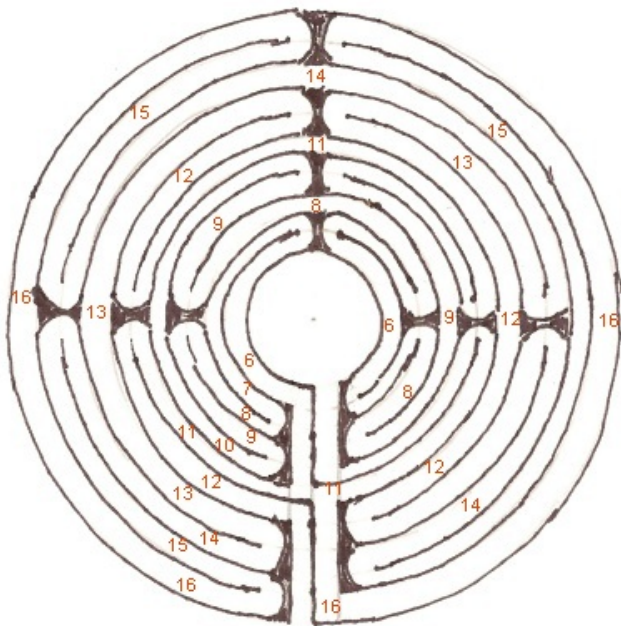
where the number represents the number of small step beads, R means a right-turn bead, and L means a left-turn bead. She used three each of the incised and smooth beads for aesthetic reasons, but they aren't necessary for the actual walk. I replicated her design using beads of differing materials that were readily distinguished by touch. I walked it in a mountain meadow and had a lovely experience. This idea can also be used in a very small space if you march in place instead of taking forward steps. With your eyes closed, it still feels like you're walking through a pattern. Thank you, Sue, for giving me permission to share this wonderful idea!

Labyrinth Pattern Book

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As he was watching me walk the labyrinth using beads in our small living room, my husband noticed that I was taking only a step or two before turning around. He had the idea that I could re-create the experience of a larger labyrinth by turning **not** at a particular compass direction, but rather after a certain **number of steps**. Each sector of the path is either a quarter circle or a half circle, but the outer sectors are longer than the corresponding inner sectors. If you know how many steps to take to complete the part of the path you are on, you can walk that number of steps around a small circle to replicate the larger walk. Then turn toward the outside or inside of the circle for the next part of the path.

Number the circuits of the labyrinth from the inside to the outside, with the inside numbered "6" and the outside numbered "16". The numbers represent the number of steps it takes to walk a quarter circle on each circuit, but you can also think of them as labels for the circuits. This will help you visualize the labyrinth as you walk it.



If you walk the actual labyrinth in a large space the numbers in the diagram will give you a labyrinth with a diameter of about 40 feet, assuming two feet per step. You can change the numbering to make the labyrinth larger or smaller if you like. You could go from 4 to 14, or double those numbers by only counting every left step, and so forth, but in practice I've found that 6 to 16 works well. The inside circuits are large enough that you don't change direction too often, and the outer ones are small enough that you don't get bored walking the same direction too long.

The following chart summarizes the pattern (I will include a [simpler chart](#) a bit later that doesn't include the compass directions):

Chartres Labyrinth Pattern

Introduction: /--(E16,15,14,13W)12ES-- /-- 11SE (E10,9,8,7W)-- /

Inner half: /-- 6ES 6SW-- /-- 7WS 7SE-- /-- 8ES-- /-- 9SE-- /-- 10ES 10SW-- /-- 9WS-- /-- 8SW 8WN-- /-- 7NW-- /-- 6WN 6NE-- /-- 7EN-- /-- 8NE-- /-- 9EN 9NW-- /-- 10WN-- /

Bridge: /-- 11NW 11WS-- /

Outer half: /-- 12SW -- /-- 13WS 13SE-- /-- 14ES-- /-- 15SE-- /-- 16ES 16SW-- /-- 15WS-- /-- 14SW 14WN-- /-- 13NW-- /-- 12WN 12NE-- /-- 13EN-- /-- 14NE-- /-- 15EN 15NW-- /-- 16WN 16NE-- /

Conclusion: /-- (E15,14,13,12W) 11EN-- /-- 10NE (E9,8,7,6W) -- /-- *Center*

Each entry between slashes represents one part of the path. "(E16,15,14,13W)" means start at the

Each entry between slashes represents one part of the path. (E10,13,14,13W) means start at the east, walk forward across circuits 16, 15, 14 and 13 toward the west. "12ES" means go 12 steps from the east to the south. The next entry says "11SE". Since 11 is smaller than 12, you will turn toward the inside and walk back from the south to the east 11 steps.

An entry like "6ES 6SW" represents a half circle on circuit 6. I've listed it as two quarter circles of 6 steps each, because this allows you to visualize both that you are on circuit 6 and that it's a half circle. Even without the compass directions, you can tell that it's a half circle because you stay on the same circuit. The next entry is "7WS 7SE". Since 7 is bigger than 6, you will turn to the outside and walk another half circle. To come back out of the center, begin at the end, and read from right to left. For example, "10NE" would tell you go 10 steps from the east to the north

.You don't really need the compass directions under this system; I've only included them to help with orientation. Once you get started, if you know which circuit you're on and whether you're walking a quarter circle or half circle, that's enough to walk the whole pattern. Here's the pattern without the compass directions:

Introduction: /--(16,15,14,13)12-- /-- 11 (10,9,8,7)-- /
Inner half: /-- 6 6-- /-- 7 7-- /-- 8-- /-- 9-- /-- 10 10-- /-- 9-- /-- 8 8-- /-- 7-- /-- 6 6-- /-- 7-- /-- 8-- /-- 9 9-- /-- 10-- /
Bridge: /-- 11 11-- /
Outer half: /-- 12 --/-- 13 13-- /-- 14-- /-- 15-- /-- 16 16-- /-- 15-- /-- 14 14-- /-- 13-- /-- 12 12-- /-- 13-- /-- 14-- /-- 15 15-- /-- 16 16-- /
Conclusion: /-- (15,14,13,12) 11-- /-- 10 (9,8,7,6) --/-- *Center*

You can use beads to encode the pattern, if you can find beads with numbers on them. Or you could just print up the [pattern](#) (highlight it and say "print"selection"), but I found it more satisfying to make a little booklet with one entry on each page. There are 31 entries altogether, not counting the center. Using a sheet of notebook paper, you can make a booklet with 32 pages. If you start on the inside front cover, you will put all the pathways where you walk to the left on the left-hand pages, and all the ones where you walk to the right on the right-hand pages. This will also help you keep your place. You may want to put a diagram like the numbered Chartres pattern on the front cover.

Start with a sheet of typing paper. Fold it in half lengthwise. Then fold it in quarters the other direction. When you unfold it, it should look like this:



Cut along the folds to make eight strips of paper. Stack them on top of each other and fold in half to make a book. Open it and staple along the fold. This gives you a little pocket-sized book with 32 pages. Put one entry on each page as described above.

If you use this pattern in a large field, you can walk an actual labyrinth pattern. On the other hand, you can use this pattern to approximate the labyrinth experience in a small space by walking around the circle several times in each direction and not worrying about compass directions. Just turn to the outside or the inside of the circle when you have completed the appropriate number of steps.

See the section [below](#) for a description of how to memorize the Chartres labyrinth. If you have a clear mental map of the labyrinth, it is easy to walk it by counting steps in a small space from memory, and not have to resort to a pattern book. I will describe that process [a little later](#).

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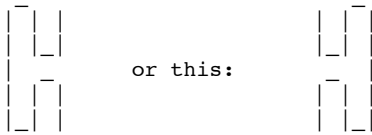
How to Memorize the Chartres Pattern

Ever since I came up with the labyrinth [beads](#) back in 2001, I thought it would be really cool to

memorize the pattern so I wouldn't need the beads. But I thought it was impossible; the pattern was too complicated. Then I came upon this site by Fr. Paul Edwards: [Walking the Virtual Chartres Labyrinth](#). He too had had the idea of a labyrinth you could walk anywhere, with nothing to lay out. But he went one better: he memorized the pattern so he wouldn't need any tools at all, just a place to walk. He suggests using an item in the center to help in the visualization: I've found that walking around a large tree is very satisfying.

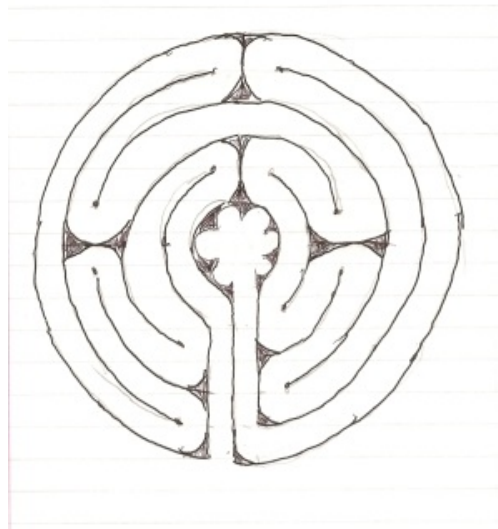
After reading his treatise, I lay in bed thinking with my eyes closed, and after an hour, I realized that I had the pattern memorized! I couldn't believe it. I got up and drew a line representing the path from memory, and then compared it to a photo of the Chartres labyrinth. It matched.

Fr. Paul's idea is to break the complex pattern down into basic building blocks called 'shuffles'. Each one looks something like this:



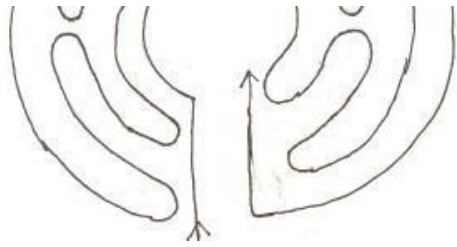
He then builds up simple labyrinths from the 'shuffles'. By doubling a simple labyrinth, he gets what he calls a 'basic training Chartres labyrinth.' It's very similar to the Chartres labyrinth, but just a little simpler.

By using his idea, I was able to memorize the half-Chartres pattern, which looks like this: (I found this easier than using his training labyrinths.)



It suddenly seemed very simple; just two shuffles and a little extra on the inside and outside.

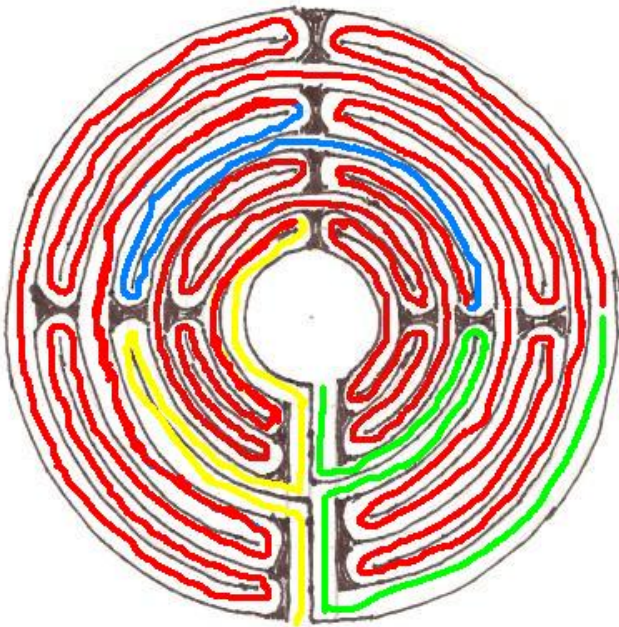




Here's another view of the Half-Chartres pattern, color coded to show how it fits into the full Chartres pattern below it. The only modification is that the red and green paths on the right side are joined up in the half-Chartres, while in the full Chartres there is a turn there. (A mirror image of this pattern was used in a church at Guingamp in Brittany, dating from the late 1850s, according to Jeff Seward's book "Labyrinths and Mazes".)



The red part of the half Chartres pattern is repeated twice in the full Chartres pattern, once in the center and once around the outside, with a little connecting bit and an introductory path and concluding path. In the drawing below, you see that the red pattern on the inside is identical to the one on the outside. A blue bit connects them. (I've called the part on circuit 11 the "bridge" in my section on the [pattern](#).) The introductory path is yellow, and the concluding path is green.



By memorizing a little bit at a time, and then putting it together, you can memorize what at first looks like an impossibly daunting and complicated pattern. If this interests you, please see Fr. Paul's [website](#). Not only does he have a more detailed explanation, but he also has many insights on

the spiritual uses of the labyrinth.

You might also be interested in Fr. Paul's method for using church pews to recreate the Half Chartres labyrinth. You can see it [here](#).

Singing the Chartres labyrinth: another way to memorize it

I think it was Sig Lonegren who had the idea of encoding the classical labyrinth with notes: the outer circuit would be C, the next inner one would be D, and so on. This gives a tune of EDCFBAGc (where c is an octave above C.) I adapted this to the Chartres labyrinth by using notes an octave apart to represent the inside and outside halves. I used half notes to represent the half-circle segments, and quarter notes to represent the quarter-circle segments. Here is the resulting tune. I use the notation A2, for example to represent a half-note A, and A4 to represent a quarter-note A. I leave out the two side trips at the beginning and end of the path, because they don't help the tune, but they're easy to remember. I also skip F at the beginning of the second line, so that the octaves line up. Playing the tune backwards gives you the path back from the center to the outside.

```
g2 f2 e4 d4 c2 d4 e2 f4 g2 f4 e4 d2 c4 B2 A4 G2
      E4 D4 C2 D4 E2 F4 G2 F4 E4 D2 C2
```

It was while singing this that I realized that there's a repeating rhythm: two quarter notes and a half note, followed by two sets of a quarter note and a half note. In Morse code, the rhythm is ..- .- .- This is repeated three times. The rhythm for the entire Chartres labyrinth, including the intro and conclusion, is

```
..- /..- .- .- /..- .- .- /..- .- .- /..- .-
```

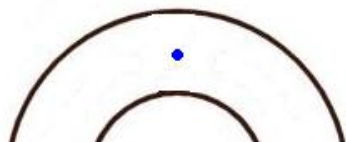
(I've put slashes to emphasize where the repeating sections are.) The beads I describe above show this pattern:

```
oo00 oo0o0o0 oo0o0o0 oo0o0o0 oo00oo
```

This tune and rhythm make it easy to see another pattern in the Chartres, made of smaller units than the shuffle. The ..- pattern is a zig-zag in a quarter circle, and then moves to the next quarter circle. The .- .- pattern moves you halfway around the circle with a couple of limping zig-zags.

I have found that walking the memorized labyrinth is much more satisfying than using either the beads or the booklet. I'm not sure why. Maybe because it feels a lot more right-brained, non-verbal. By memorizing the pattern, I can 'see' the labyrinth beneath my feet, even though it's invisible to the eye.

Once you have the Chartres pattern memorized, you might enjoy the Weaver's labyrinth:





For more information, see the [Bridge Labyrinth Page](#).

Folding the virtual labyrinth for a small space

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As Fr. Paul points out in his treatise [Walking the Virtual Chartres Labyrinth](#), one advantage to a virtual labyrinth is that it can be made larger or smaller depending on the space available. However, if your space is very small, like my living room, the quarter-circle parts of the path are so short you end up tripping over your feet.

In the section on the [pattern book](#) above, I describe a way to walk a full-sized labyrinth in a small space by counting steps. It would be difficult to memorize the pattern as it appears in that section, a list of numbers and compass directions. However, if you have memorized the labyrinth itself using Fr. Paul's ideas, it turns out to be very easy to convert to a small space. You can also cheat and use the second set of beads I describe above, instead of memorizing the pattern.

First practice walking the virtual labyrinth in a large space, walking the actual pattern. (If the full pattern seems too much to memorize, you can use the half-Chartres pattern.) On each part of the path, name the circuit you are on. For example, when you do the inner circuit, think of it being circuit 6. When you turn to the next one out, think of it as being 7, and so on. This is easy to do because when you turn outward you go up a number, and when you go inward you go down a number. You can check yourself, because you know that the inner half goes from circuit 6 to circuit 10, and the outer half goes from circuit 12 to circuit 16. Circuit 11 is the bridge between them. Do this for several days in a row, until the numbers start to attach themselves to the places on your mental map. Don't memorize the sequence of numbers, just visualize the paths on the labyrinth as you walk and say the numbers as you come to them, using the beads if you want to, to help keep your place..

Now do the walk in a small space, but in your mind, continue to visualize the labyrinth as you were before. When you are on circuit 6, count 6 steps for a quarter circle and another 6 steps to complete the half circle. Try to focus on the mental image rather than your actual surroundings. If you find counting distracting, you don't have to do a careful count of steps, just an approximate number. But you should keep track of which circuit you are on, and do more steps on the outer ones. I find counting meditative and enjoyable myself.

In practice, I have found this surprisingly easy to do, after doing the full-sized virtual labyrinth for a week or so. The experience feels about the same, even when I'm walking in a space as small as my office, with a floor space about four feet across. In my house, the best place to do it is around the kitchen table, since the house is so cluttered.

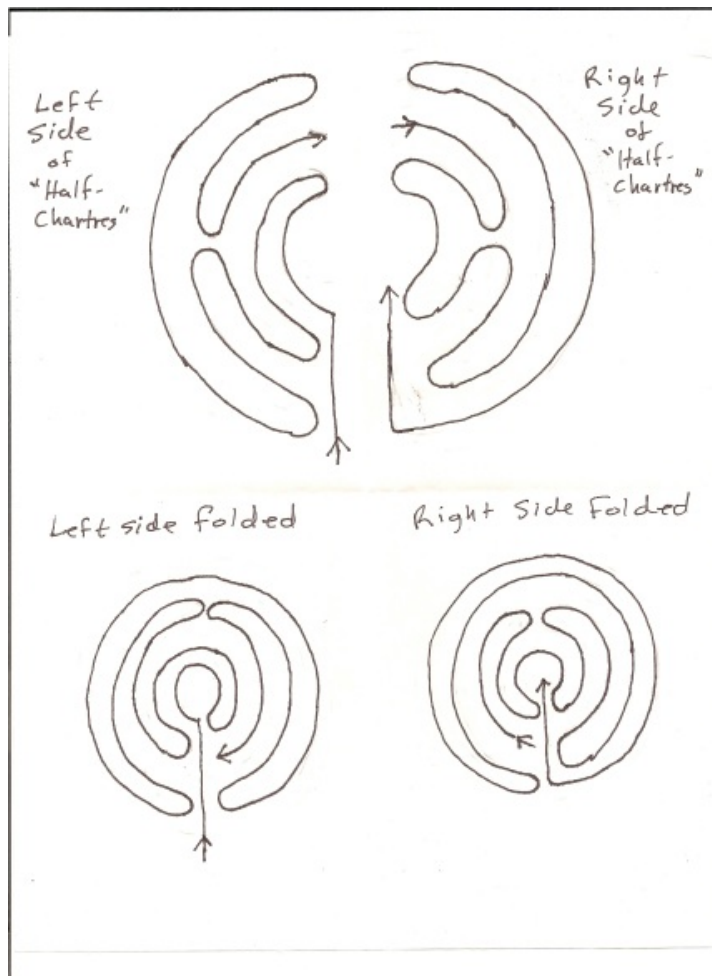
You can also do this while walking in a straight line along a sidewalk or a hiking trail, or even on a treadmill or exercise bike. You don't physically change direction, but you visualize the turns as you walk. (If you don't have it memorized, use the pattern book or the beads.) I find that I see the virtual labyrinth turning this way and that beneath my feet. You can even visualize the walk without physically walking. You don't want to do it while driving, since it can put you into a meditative state.

Different people approach the labyrinth different ways. I find that I like to walk briskly. The long outer circuits make me feel like I'm flying. The whole pattern takes me about fifteen minutes to walk. This makes for a nice physical exercise I can do, even when circumstances don't allow for a walk outside. I can do it around the kitchen table while I'm keeping an eye on the stove before dinner. You may prefer to walk slowly and more meditatively. That makes for a different experience. You will probably find that the visualization and counting act as a focus for meditation, no matter what your pace.

What if you don't like counting? The virtual Bridge Labyrinth

When I sent the above idea to Fr. Paul, he replied that he does the same thing without counting: he allows the shuffles to cross over each other, without worrying about how long they are. That would be a nice way to lose yourself in an uncomplicated meditation. But if you want something more structured, this section will allow you to do what amounts to a complete Chartres walk using a small labyrinth that is easy to memorize and fits in a small space.

In the following diagram I've broken the half-Chartres pattern into a left side and a right side. Each side contains one "shuffle" and is fairly easy to memorize. The top row of the diagram shows the two sides. In the second row of the diagram, I've folded each of the sides so that quarter circles become half circles and half circles become whole circles. This effectively doubles the lengths of the paths without increasing the diameter of the circle. First walk the folded left side, cross over the entrance path, and continue on to the right side. If you do both sides twice, you will do about 80% of the full Chartres pattern. When you finish the right side the first time, just turn left at the center instead of going in, and repeat the pattern. The Bridge Labyrinth below allows you to do almost all of the Chartres pattern without thinking very hard.



The Bridge Labyrinth is a physical labyrinth that replicates the folded pattern above. I describe it in detail on a separate page: [Bridge Labyrinth Page](#)

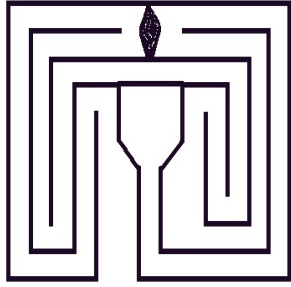


You can actually lay it out, but it's also very easy to visualize, so you can do it from memory much more easily. If you number the circuits from the inside to the outside, you begin by turning left onto circuit 3, then walking the circuits in order: 3,2,1,2,3,4,3,2. You could use beads in four colors to encode the circuits, but the layout of the labyrinth makes encoding them really unnecessary if you just visualize it. If you use beads, make four groups of eight. That way you don't have to keep track of how many passes you've made. When you have passed the large circuit and completed one more zig-zag, you cross the bridge from circuit 2 to circuit 3 and repeat the pattern, beginning on the opposite side. Four repeats (two on each side) complete the entire Chartres pattern, except for one circuit near the beginning and one near the end. See the [Bridge Labyrinth Page](#) for a more detailed explanation.

On that page you will also see something I call the [Model Railroad Maze](#), which approximates the Chartres pattern and can be walked using only four small markers to delineate the pathway.



Click on the labyrinth to return to the main labyrinth page.



Click on the mountaintop to see my other pages.



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