# *String Labyrinths*

- [Simplified Flaming Chalice](#)
- [Tarry Town labyrinth](#)
- [Baltic labyrinth](#)
- [5-circuit unicursal wall labyrinth](#)
- [The Bridge labyrinth](#)
- [Ariadne's Clue](#)

Simple patterns are easy to lay out on your floor or in your yard with string or yarn. The materials are very inexpensive and take up almost no storage space. Three-circuit labyrinths are relatively easy to lay out and have paths wide enough to walk in a small room. To hold the yarn in place, I put a foot down on the most recent section while I lay the next section down. I can do it standing upright; you don't have to crawl on the ground to lay the yarn down, just unroll the ball of yarn and drape the yarn onto the carpet.

On my [Labyrinths for small spaces](#) page, I describe a design I call the Simplified Flaming Chalice. You can lay out this design using three pieces of string, rope, or yarn. Start with the red string, then the blue one, then the black one.
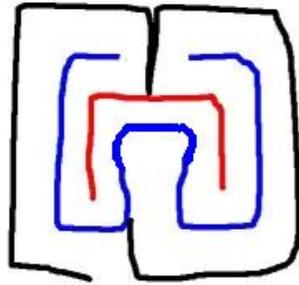

You can make the shapes more rounded if you prefer.
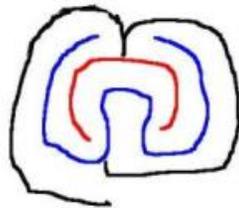
I tried this with yarn and it worked surprisingly well. Here's a photo of one of our cats, who plopped herself in the middle of it. As you can imagine, shortly after I took the photo, the cats had a field day destroying the labyrinth. If you build a yarn labyrinth around cats, don't expect it to last long.

The three-circuit classical labyrinth is very easy to lay out using two pieces of string or yarn. In the diagram below, begin with the piece I've colored red. Notice that it spirals around one and a half times. Then use the piece I've colored blue, beginning with a small half circle in the center, and make it spiral in the opposite direction. It begins in the center, and then crosses the red spiral and goes around the outside. Once you have this laid out to your satisfaction, cut the yarn to length. You can roll up the lengths and reuse them later.
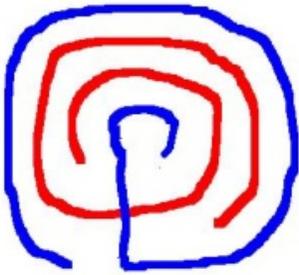
You can also make the seven-circuit classical labyrinth using two pieces of string, but it's much more difficult. The way I've colored them, you'd want to start with the blue string.
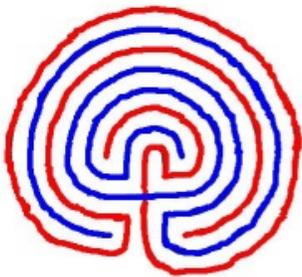
Here's a seven-circuit classical labyrinth laid out with kite string in my backyard.

The next pattern is called the Tarry Town (or Troy Town) pattern, and is described in Jeff Saward's book "Labyrinths and Mazes", on page 127. It is a turf labyrinth at Temple Cowley near Oxford. I'm not sure if it's still in existence; it may be as old as 500 years. The first picture is a little easier

to lay out, the second looks more like the original Tarry Town turf labyrinth, which has concentric circles. Start with the red string. Make a spiral, going around once and a half as in the classical labyrinth. Then go straight down twice the width of the path you want, and trace back along the outside of the spiral. To lay out the blue string, start in the lower left corner, placing the end between the red walls. When you get to the end of the red string, loop back around the outside, and come up the middle to connect with the inner spiral. I made this one in our front yard, with paths a foot wide, and it was very enjoyable.
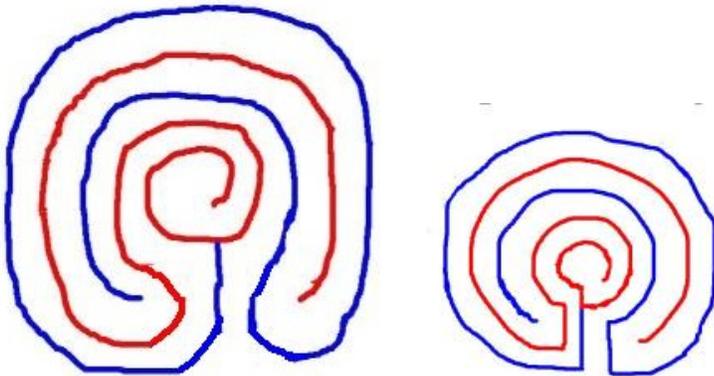

(A few weeks after I first described the Tarry Town pattern here, my husband and I discovered that there is a stone labyrinth in the mirror image of this pattern a few miles from our home. It's at 215 North Mason Street in Fort Collins, north of the city office building, and across the street to the west from the bus terminal. It's about thirty feet across, in a flood-control basin overgrown with thistles and mullein and dianthus. It has a mysterious atmosphere, like the Secret Garden or an ancient ruin. The parks department told us it is open to the public during daylight hours. An employee in the parks department enlisted the help of the local Unity church to build it in 2003.) Here's a photo:

Note that if you do not connect the end of the blue string to the inner spiral, but instead continue to go between the red walls, making a blue spiral in the center that wraps around the red one, you get a small version of what is called a Baltic labyrinth. It has a quick exit from the center and is often used for processions, since you don't have to retrace your steps from the center. One very nice feature of this labyrinth is that instead of exiting all the way from the center, you can enter the

labyrinth again as you spiral out, and walk through it as many times in a row as you want. This makes what would otherwise be a short labyrinth walk into as long a walk as you want in a small space.
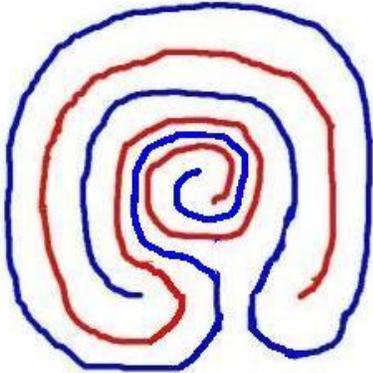
(For instructions on how to draw this using a seed pattern, click here.)

You can make more circuits in the Baltic pattern by taking the red inner spiral, bringing it around the outside, then back into the center:
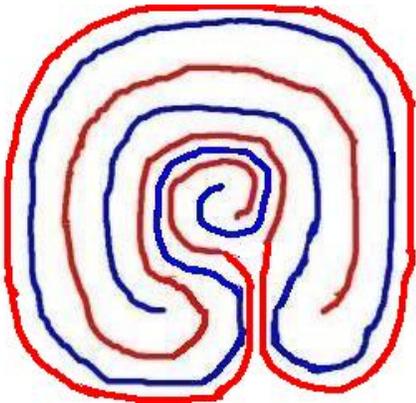
Here's a diagram based on an actual German turf labyrinth:

Here's a baltic labyrinth laid out in rope in our backyard:

You can also make fewer circuits, which makes for a labyrinth that is very closely related to the 3-circuit classical labyrinth, and is just as easy to lay out with string or rope:

This is pretty short if you just walk it once, but if you reach the center and spiral out, and continue back into the labyrinth instead of exiting, you can walk through it as many times as you like, making for a very meditative long walk. Here's what it looks like in rope on our living room floor. I used a 42-foot rope and a 21-foot rope, the same two ropes I used in my zipped labyrinth at the bottom of the page.


You can also lay out the five-circuit unicursal-wall labyrinth with string, but it's more difficult and confusing. Here's a diagram drawn with a seed pattern, but if you do it with string, you won't use the seed pattern, you'll just begin at one end of the string. I was able to do this in my living room, but it wasn't easy. This pattern is the inside half of the eleven-circuit classical labyrinth, just as the Tarry Town pattern (without the inside spiral) is the inside half of the seven-circuit classical labyrinth.
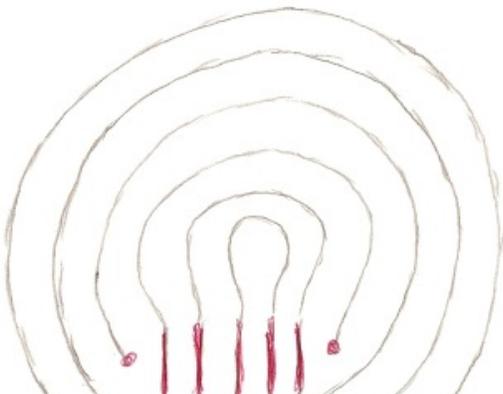
You can convert the first string laybrinth on this page to the 3-circuit Bridge Labyrinth that I describe on my Bridge Labyrinth page by not connecting the outer circle to the center. Here's what that labyrinth looks like:
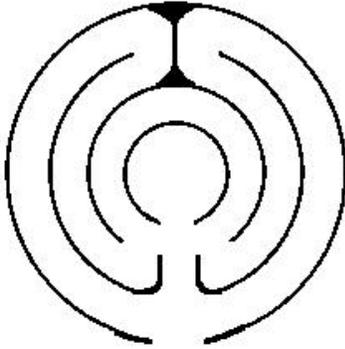
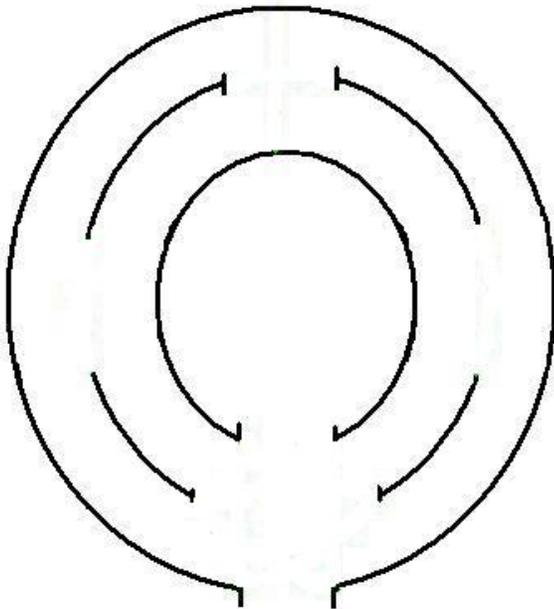And here it is in rope in the front yard.

You can make the four-circuit Bridge Labyrinth by adding another string around the outside:

The second [Zipped Labyrinth](#) that I describe on my Bridge Labyrinth page is very easy to lay out with string. It looks like this:

Here it is laid out in my yard with rope:


Ariadne's Clue

I got this idea while watching my husband lay out random labyrinths on the [beach](#) by raking them out with a wide wooden hoe. When Theseus went into the Cretan labyrinth to slay the Minotaur, Ariadne gave him a ball of string called a "clue" to help him find his way out again. This yarn labyrinth is different from all the others I've mentioned here in that the yarn marks the paths, not the walls. It also doesn't have any set pattern, and can cross over itself, making it especially suitable for a small space. You can use any ball of yarn or string, but I find that the kind of yarn that changes color every couple of feet works best, because it's easy to distinguish one portion of the path from another. Begin at one corner or edge of the room. Lay out the yarn in a looping path, with no sharp turns. When you cross the previous parts of the path, try to cross at as close to a right

with no sharp turns. When you cross the previous parts of the path, try to cross at as close to a right angle as you can. This makes it easy to see which part of the path you're on. When the path is long enough to suit you, lay the ball of yarn down. This marks the "center". Follow the path from the beginning of the yarn to the ball at the center, and then back out again.

The advantages to this kind of labyrinth are that it can be as long as you like in a small space, and that it will be different every time you lay it out, which makes it interesting to walk. You also don't have to go to any trouble designing it; just lay out the yarn in a random pattern.

If you want something more structured, you could use a celtic knot as a pattern. Here's one that's based on the knot my husband and I tied at our wedding.
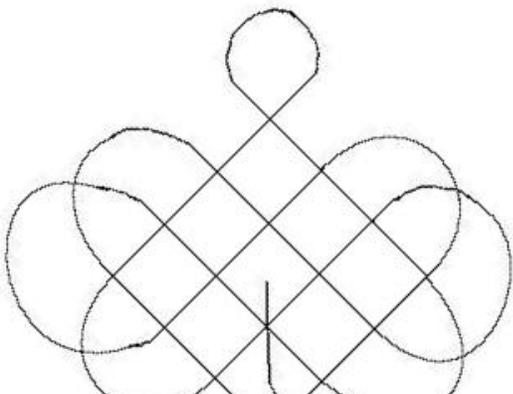
`004148`

Click on the mountaintop to see my other pages.

[Contact Me](#)