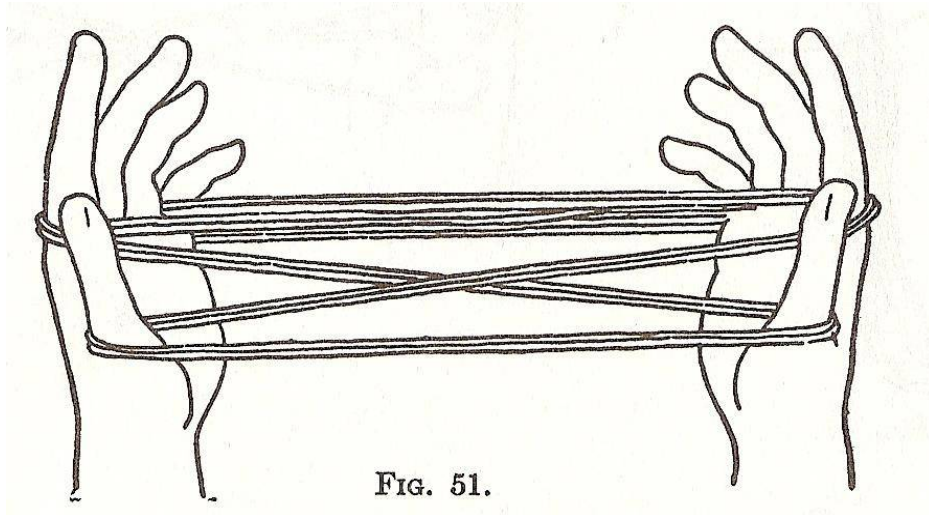


Real Cat's Cradle and Four other String Figures



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FIRST POSITION

The following movements put the loop on the hands in what for convenience may be called the First position. Very many string games begin in this way, and the movements should be learned now, as we shall not repeat the description with every figure. *First:* Put the little fingers into the loop of string and separate the hands. You now have a single loop on each little finger passing directly and uncrossed to the opposite little finger.

Second: Turning the hands with the palms away from you, put each thumb into the little finger loop from below, and pick up on the back of the thumb the near little finger string; then, allowing the far little finger string to remain on the little finger, turn the hands with the palms away from you, put each thumb into the little finger loop from below, and pick up on the back of the thumb the near little finger string; then, allowing the far little finger string to remain on the little finger, turn the hands with the palms facing each other, return the thumbs to their extended position, and draw the strings tight.

In the first position, therefore, there is, on each hand, a string which crosses the palm, and passing behind the thumb runs to the other hand to form the far little finger string.

It is not essential that the loop shall be put on the hands by the movements just described; any method will answer, so long as the proper position of the string is secured. This method, however, has been found to be as easy as any other. The first position is, of course, absurdly simple, yet it not infrequently puzzles the beginner, largely because it is the reverse of the first steps in the ordinary Cat's-cradle known to every child.

OPENING A

More than half of the string figures open in the same way; to avoid constant repetition therefore, we may follow Drs. Rivers and Haddon and call this very general method of beginning opening A. It should be learned now, because in the descriptions of the figures in which it occurs, the first movement will be simply noted as Opening A. It is formed by three movements.

First: Put the loop on the hands in the First Position.

Second: Bring the hands together, and put the right index up under the string which crosses the left palm, and draw the loop out the back of the finger by separating the hands.

Third: Bring the hands together again, and put the left index up under that part of the string crossing the palm of the right hand which is between the strings on the right index, and draw the loop out on the back of the left index by separating the hands.

You now have a loop on each thumb, index, and little finger. There is a near thumb string and a far little finger string passing directly from one hand to the other, two crosses formed between them by the near little finger string of one hand becoming the far index string of the other hand, and the far thumb string of one hand becoming the near index string of the other hand.

In forming many of the figures beginning with Opening A it is absolutely necessary to follow the order just given, and take up, first, the left Palmar string with the right index, and then the right Palmar string with the left index: it will save trouble, therefore, if this order be always followed, even if it makes no difference in the result. If the reverse of this order is ever required, it will be noted in the description.

REAL CAT'S CRADLE

Two persons and one loop of string are required for the game of “Real Cat's Cradle” which is played by the persons alternately taking the string off each other's hands to produce eight definite figures which have been given distinctive names, as follows: 1, Cradle; 2, Soldier's Bed; 3, Candles; 4, Manger; 5, Diamonds; 6, Cat's Eye; 7, Fish in a Dish; 8, Clock. For convenience in describing the game the players will be called “A” and “B.” The terms “near” and “far,” “right” and “left” describe the position of the strings as seen by the person from whose hands the figure is being taken.

1. Cradle

First: “A” takes the string and passes the four fingers of each hand through the untwisted loop, and separates the hand; then with the thumb and index of the right hand he turns the left near string away from him across the left palm, and then toward him across the back of the left hand, bringing the string to the right between the left thumb and index. In the same manner, he turns the right near string once around the right hand. There are now two strings across the back of each hand and a single string across each palm.

Second: Opening A(picking up the palmar string with the middle finger). There is now a loop on each middle finger and two strings across the back of each hand; the “Cradle” being formed by a straight near string, a straight far string, and the crossed strings of the middle finger loops.

2. Soldier's Bed

“B” puts his left thumb away from “A” under the left near middle finger string, and then, by bringing the thumb and index together, picks up between their tips the two near middle finger strings just where they cross at the near side of the figure. In the same manner he picks up the two far middle finger strings, by putting the right thumb toward “A” under the right far middle finger string, and the right index toward “A” under the left far middle finger string, then bringing the thumb and index together to hold the two strings where they cross at the far side of the figure.

Now separating the hands, drawing the right hand away from “A” and the left hand toward “A” he carries the thumb and index of each hand, still holding the strings, around the corresponding side string of the figure and up into the centre of the figure; then by drawing his hands apart and separating the index fingers widely from the thumbs he removes the figure from “A's” hands and extends the “Soldier's Bed”. There is a loop on each thumb, a loop on each index, and a string passing across the backs of the thumb and index of each hand. The figure is formed of the four finger loops crossing in the middle, a straight near string and a straight far string.

3. Candles

“A” inserts his left index from above into the left thumb loop, near the centre of the figure, and his left thumb from above into the right thumb loop and then, bringing the thumb and index together, picks up between their tips the near thumb strings just where they cross. In like manner, by inserting the right thumb from above into the right index loop and the right index from above into the left index loop, he picks up the two far index strings where they cross. He then separates the hands- drawing the right hand away from “B” over, and past, the far straight string, and the left hand toward “B” over, and past, the near straight string; and finally puts the thumb and index of each hand (still holding the strings) under the corresponding side string and from below into the centre of the figure, when, by drawing the hands apart and separating the index fingers widely from the thumbs he takes the figure from “B's” hands.

There is a loop on each thumb, a loop on each index, and a string passing across the backs of the thumb and index of each hand; the “candles” being formed by a straight single far thumb string, a straight single near index string, and straight double far index and near thumb strings.

4. Manger

“B” turns his left hand with the palm facing upward, and takes up in the bend of the little finger the near index string, and draws it over the strings toward “A”; then turning

his right hand with the palm up he takes up in the blend of the right little finger the far thumb string, and draws it over the other strings away from "A". Closing the little fingers on the palms, he passes the left thumb and index from the near side under the two near thumb strings and up on the far side of them, and at the same time passes the right thumb and index from the far side under the two far index strings and up on the near side of them. Then, drawing the hands apart, and separating the index fingers widely from the thumbs, he takes the figures from "A's" hands. He now has two strings passing across the backs of the thumb and index of each hand a loop held to the palm by each little finger. The form of the "Manger" is the same as that of the "Cradle" only inverted.

5. Diamonds

"A" now takes the "Manger" from "B's" hands in the same way as "B" took the "cradle" from his hands, but the thumb and index of each hand holding between their tips (the two crossed strings) are brought up around the corresponding side string and down into the centre of the figure; then, when the hands are drawn apart and the thumbs and index fingers widely separated, he forms a figure exactly like the "Soldier's Bed" but it is held with the fingers pointing downward.

6. Cat's Eye

"B" takes the figure from "A's" hand in the same way as "A" took the "Soldier's Bed" from "B" to form the "Candles"; but, although he has a loop on each thumb and index, instead of getting the same figure as the "Candles," the "Cat's Eye" has two straight near thumb strings, two straight far index strings and crossed far thumb and near index strings forming a central lozenge and four triangles, produced by the thumb and index loops, which may be called the near and far right, and near and far left triangles.

7. Fish in a Dish

"A" inserts the right index from above into the far left triangle, and his right thumb from above into the far right triangle, his left index from above into the near left triangle and his left thumb from above into the near right triangle; then turning the thumbs and index fingers up into the central lozenge, he draws his hands apart, separates the index fingers widely from the thumbs, and takes the figure from "B's" hands. The "Fish in the Dish" consists of a large central lozenge, divided lengthwise by two straight strings; and right and left and near and far triangles. There is a loop on each thumb and a loop on each index, but no string passing across the backs of both thumb and index.

8. Clock

Dr. Horace Howard Furness, tells me that as a child he ended the game of Cat's-cradle by forming the "Clock" from the "Fish in a Dish" in the following manner.

First: "B" arranges the two strings which pass from side to side through the central lozenge so that , uncrossed, they can easily be separated into a near string and a far string.

Second: "B" now turns his left hand with the palm facing upward, and picks up in the bend of the left little finger the near string which passes through the central lozenge, and draws it over the other strings toward "A"; then turning the right hand with the palm facing upward he picks up in the bend of the right little finger the far string which passes through the central lozenge, and draws it over the other strings away from "A". Putting the right thumb above into the right far triangle, the right index from above into the left far triangle, the left thumb from above into the right near triangle, and the left index from above into the left triangle, "B" turns the thumb and index of each hand toward the centre of the figure and up into the central lozenge when, by drawing the hands apart, and separating the thumbs widely from the index fingers, he takes the figure from "A's" hands.

When the figure is held vertically it is supposed to represent a tall clock.

OSAGE DIAMONDS (AKA JACOB'S LADDER)

This string figure is known among Indians sometimes as "Jacob's ladder" and to the Irish, under the names of the "Ladder or the "Fence."

First: Opening A

Second: Release the loops from the thumbs, and separate the hands.

Third: Pass each thumb away from you under all the strings, and take up from below with the back of the thumb the far little finger string, and return the thumb to its former position without touching the other strings.

Fourth: Pass each thumb away from you over the near index string, and take up, from below, with the back of the thumb the far index string and return the thumb to its former position.

Fifth: Release the loops from the little fingers and separate the hands.

Sixth: Pass each little finger toward you over the near index string and take up from below on the back of the little finger the far thumb string, and return the little finger to its former position.

Seventh: Release the loops from the thumbs.

Eighth: Pass each thumb away from you over the index loop, and take up, from below, with the back of the thumb the near little finger string and return the thumb to its position.

Ninth: With the right thumb and index pick up the left near index string (close to the left index and above the left palmar string) and put it over the left thumb. With the left thumb and index pick up the right near index string (close to the right index and above the right palmar string) and put it over the right thumb. Separate the hands.

Tenth: Bending each thumb toward the other hand and then up toward you, slip the lower near thumb string off the thumb, without disturbing the upper thumb loop.

Eleventh: Insert each index from above into the small triangle formed by the palmar string twisting around the thumb loop, and, turning the palms down, release the loop from the little fingers; then separate the hands, turn the palms away from you, and the finished figure will appear.

This figure is extremely simple; the majority of the movements are most direct. The ninth movement appears to be rather a clumsy way of taking an additional loop on the thumb, but if you try the usual Indian way of putting each thumb simultaneously up into the index loop between the Palmar string and index, and then separating the thumbs from the index fingers, you will find it rather difficult.

In the tenth movement we see a new way of slipping the lower thumb loop over the upper loop and off the thumb. The turning of the palms away from you to form the finished figure is a movement we shall meet with repeatedly; in this figure it is not essential to the success of the pattern, but in many other figures the final pattern will not appear unless the far strings are drawn tight by turning the palms away from you.

A RABBIT

First: Opening A

Second: Bend each middle finger down toward you into the thumb loop, and bend each index down toward you on the near side of the near thumb string, then, holding this string tightly between these two fingers, straighten the fingers and turn the palms away from you to put the string around the tip of the index(Right hand). Release the loops from the thumbs.

Third: Pass each thumb from below into the little finger loop and draw toward you, on the back of the thumb, the near little finger string, the upper far index string and both strings of the lower index loop.

Fourth: Pass each thumb up and away from you over the upper near index string, and pull this string down on the ball of the thumb, letting the other strings slip off the thumb. Turn the palms away from you and, still holding down the string with the thumbs, pass each thumb away from you under the far little finger string and draw this string toward you on the back of the thumb. The string which was held down by the thumb, of course, is released during this movement.

Fifth: Insert each thumb from below (close to the index) into the small ring like upper index loop and draw the upper near index string, on the back of the thumb, down through the thumb loop, this latter loop slipping off the thumb during the movement.

Sixth: Release the upper loop from each index.

Seventh: Pass the index, middle and ring fingers of each hand toward you and down into the thumb loop; then gently release the loops from the little fingers, and put each little finger toward you in the loop with the ring, middle and index fingers. Hold all four fingers of each hand down on the palm; turn the hands with the palms facing each other. Lift up the near thumb string on the tip of each index, and withdraw the thumb. Some working of the strings is usually required to make the "Rabbit" appear.

This is an interesting figure because of the majority if the movements are unusual, and are met with again only in the following figure.

THE SUN

First: Opening A

Second: Bend each middle finger down toward you into the thumb loop, and bend each index down toward you on the near side of the near thumb string, then, holding this string tightly between these two fingers, straighten the fingers and turn the palms away from you to put the string around the tip of the index(Right hand). Release the loops from the thumbs.

Third: Pass each thumb from below up between the lower index loop and the little finger loop and draw toward you, on the back of the thumb, both strings of the lower index loop.

Fourth: Pass each thumb up and away from you over the upper near index string, and pull this string down on the ball of the thumb, letting the other strings slip off the thumb. Turn the palms away from you and, still holding down the string with the thumbs, pass each thumb away from you under the far little finger string and draw this string toward you on the back of the thumb. The string which was held down by the thumb, of course, is released during this movement.

Fifth: Release the loops from the little fingers.

Sixth: Insert the middle, ring and little fingers of each hand toward you (from above) into the thumb loop and withdraw the thumb.

Seventh: Pass the thumb from below into the upper index loop in order to make this loop wider. Bend each middle finger down toward you over the upper far index string and both strings of the lower index loop and draw these strings down to the palm. Withdraw the ring and little fingers of each hand from the loop which they have been holding and bend them toward you and down over the strings held down by the middle finger.

Eighth: The “Sun” is made to appear by raising each thumb, thus lifting up the near index string which passes across its back; if raised too high, the sun sets.

SEA SNAKE

First: Opening A

Second: Keeping all the loops securely on the fingers, turn the hands with the palms down and the fingers pointing toward one another. Move the right hand toward you, then to the left, and carry it up and away from you over and past the left hand; turn the hands with the fingers pointing upward and draw the strings tight. This movement brings all the strings from the palm of the left hand around the base of the left thumb over the back of the left hand and then to the right hand from the far side of the left hand.

Third: Put the entire left hand, from above, into the loop on the right index, and move it away from you over the right little finger loop, and release the loop from the right index as it slips down on the left wrist. Now carry the right hand around the left hand, by moving it away from you, to the left, and toward you over the left hand, thus unwinding the strings. Separate the hands and draw the strings tight.

Fourth: Release the loop from the left index and draw the strings tight. The string on the right hand is now in the First Position.

Fifth: With the back of the left index take up, from below, the string on the right palm, as in Opening A, and separate the hands.

Sixth: With the right thumb and index pick up the string on the back of the left wrist, lift it over the tips of all the left fingers, and let it drop on the palmar side; separate the hands.

Seventh: Release the loop from the left thumb

Eight: Put the left thumb, from below, into the left index loop and withdraw the left index,

in order to transfer the loop to the left thumb.

Ninth: Turning the palms away from you, bend each index over the near little finger string, and pick up on the tip of the finger the far little finger string; holding these index strings high, release very gently the loop from the left thumb, and the snake will be seen winding about the two parallel strings of the figure.

To make the snake swim to the right, draw the strings slowly to the left, allowing them to slip through the fingers of the right hand.

This figure is interesting because of the second and third movements are unlike anything we find in other figures, and also because the majority of the movements are done on the left hand only, instead of being done simultaneously on both hands. Of course the final figure must be unsymmetrical.

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