Porotiti (Spinning Disc)

Learn how to make your own porotiti. Listen to the hum as your porotiti spins and watch the colours as they morph into each other.

Porotiti made with wood, pounamu and bone. Photograph by Brian Flintoff

What is a porotiti?

A porotiti is a small disc spun on parallel cords that creates a humming sound like the wind.

Porotiti are part of the taonga puoro group of Māori musical instruments that are linked with Tāwhirimātea, the guardian/god of the wind.
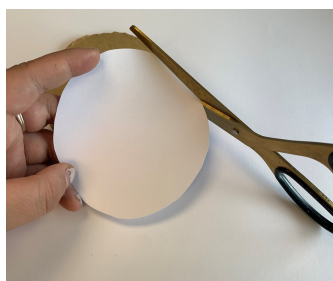
Although very small and quiet, porotiti can gain the attention of a group of people by focusing them intently on the object to listen for the sound. The gentle vibrations have also been used for healing or making rain.

What are porotiti traditionally made out of?

Porotiti are traditionally made from carved stone, bone or wood. Today, contemporary materials include plastic, cardboard and clay.
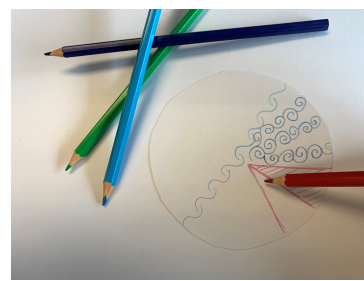
How to make your porotiti:

All you need is string, cardboard, colouring pencils, glue, scissors and a blunt/tapestry needle. Follow the steps below with the help of an adult:

Step 1: Make the disc
Measure and cut out three identical circles, one made of cardboard and two of plain paper. Glue the two pieces of paper to each side of the cardboard.

Step 2: Decorate
Be creative! Colour in both sides of your disc. Use lots of different colours and patterns. Your colours will transform when the disc spins.

Step 3: Thread string
In the middle of your disc, poke two holes with the blunt needle, about 1cm apart. Measure out 80cm of string and thread the string through the holes. Tie the ends together with a firm knot.

Step 4: Spin
To spin, position the porotiti in the middle of the string and twirl it by winding the string in a circular motion in front of you. When it is fully wound, pull side to side. This continuous motion will create a humming sound.

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