

Spirals and Knotwork

After the text of the manuscript was written, the pages were decorated by the monks. They used many different types of patterns or motifs to create decoration. Here, we are going to learn about spirals and knotwork.



Spirals

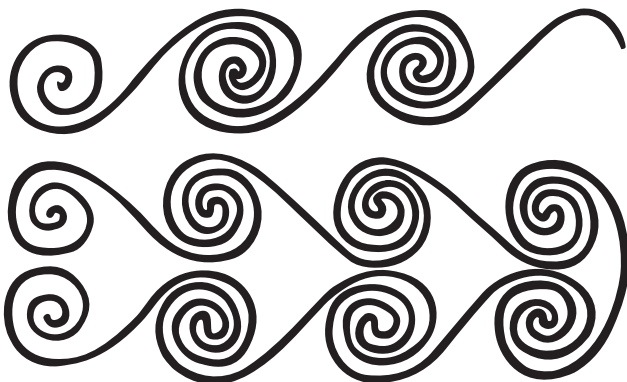
A **spiral** is one of the most basic elements of decoration used to decorate a manuscript, and it is also one of the oldest. The key to creating spirals is to make sure that you avoid straight lines. There are three basic shapes, and you can combine these to make larger spirals. You can also link spirals, but remember, do not make the spiral too tight.

These are the three basic spiral shapes:



Use the space provided to practice creating spirals

Here are examples of spirals that are connected:



Knotwork

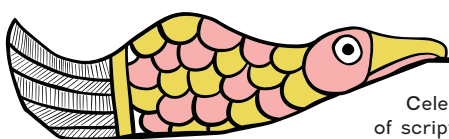
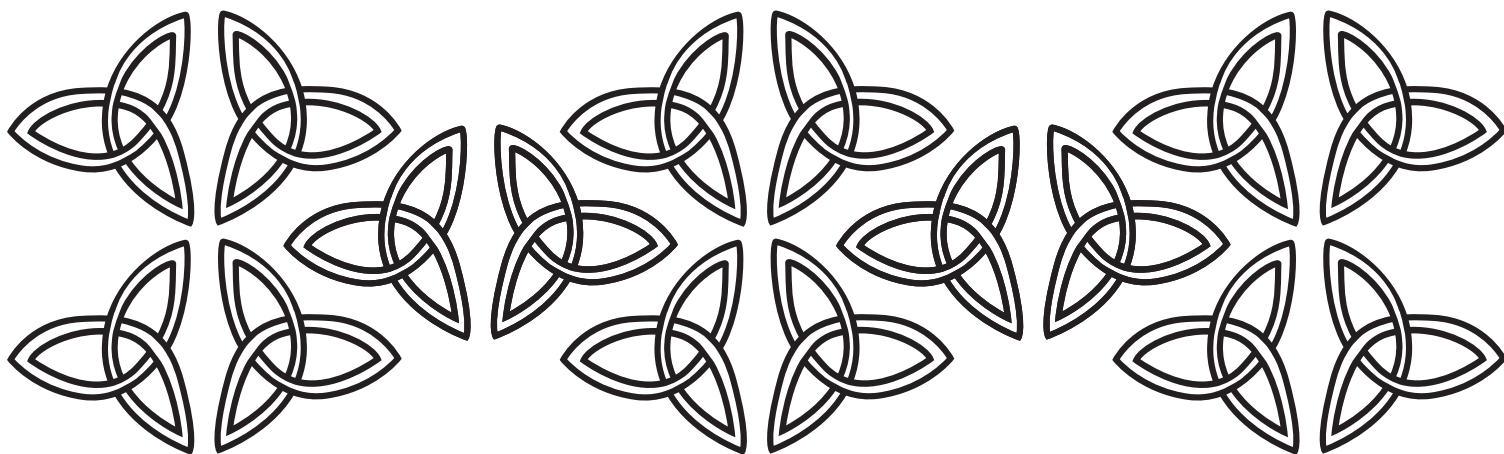
Knotwork is a type of decoration made of interwoven lines and ribbons. These were used to fill space such as in and around letters, in borders and illustrations. Similar to the spiral, the basic idea is simple.

The basic knot is made in three stages:



Use the space provided to practice creating knots

If you like, you can decorate and colour in these knots.



Celebrate the magic of manuscripts by learning the ancient skills of script and decoration that once brought sacred texts to life. These worksheets are adapted from *The Irish art of calligraphy* by Timothy O'Neill published by the Royal Irish Academy. Produced for the exhibition by the National Museum of Ireland: 'Words on the Wave: Ireland and St Gallen in Early Medieval Europe'. This is a project of:

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