

Tie game: Ancient bit of string shows Neanderthal handiwork

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.27.20

Word Count **392**

Level **580L**

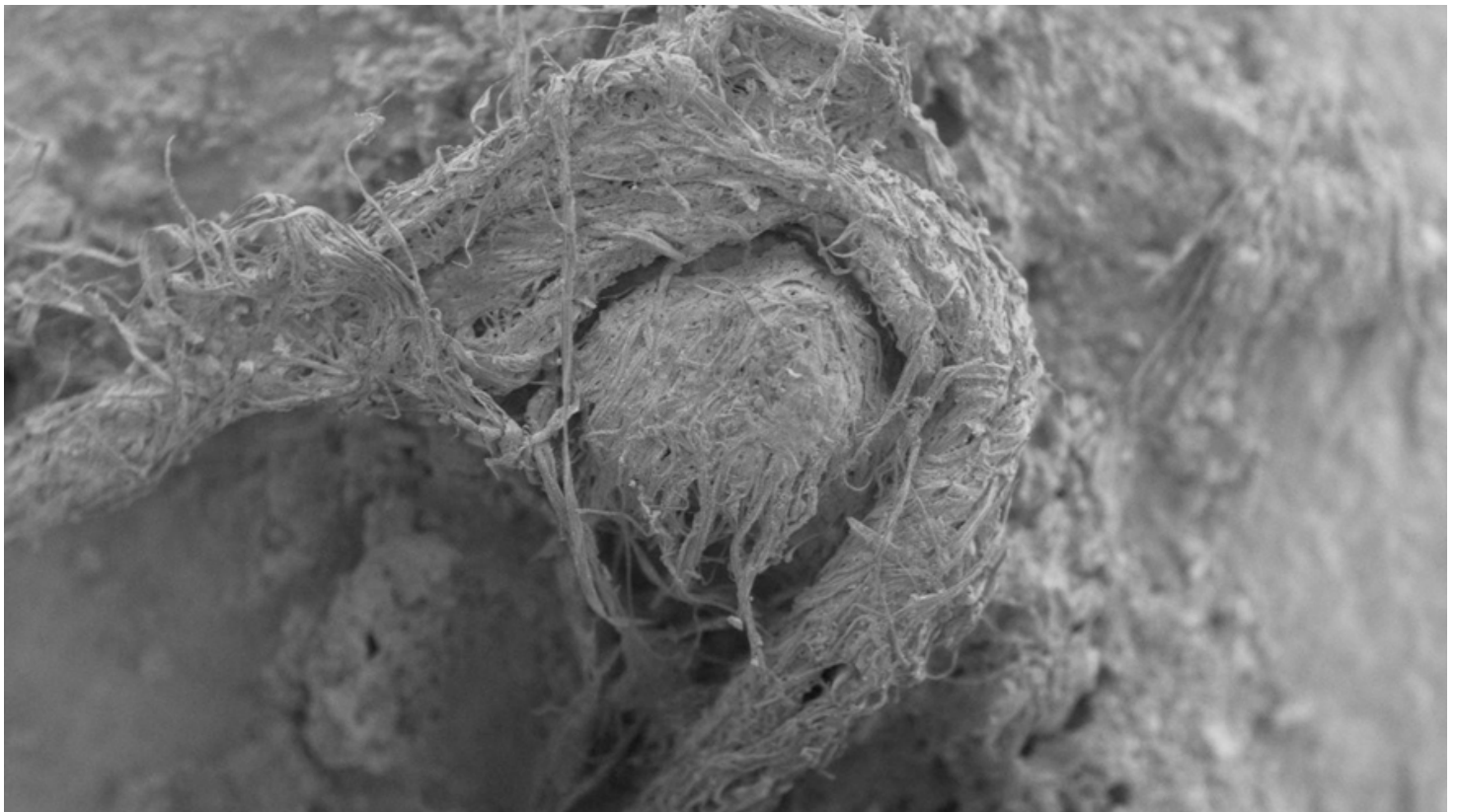


Image 1. This electron microscope image provided by Marie-Helene Moncel in April 2020 shows part of a Neanderthal cord from Abri du Maras, France. The specimen is 1/4 inch long and made of three bundles of tree-bark fibers twisted together. Photo: M-H. Moncel via AP

It looked like a small white patch. The patch was found on the bottom of a Neanderthal stone tool. A closer look with a microscope showed something different. It was a bunch of fibers twisted around each other.

The fibers proved something. They showed that Neanderthal people could make string. Scientists say it is the oldest known evidence for string-making.

Neanderthals were a species of early humans. They lived thousands of years ago. They moved from place to place and did not settle into communities. They found food by hunting and gathering.

Understanding Of Numbers

The string tells a few things about the Neanderthals, scientists say. It shows they had some understanding of numbers. Also, they knew how to use trees to make things. The discovery shows that Neanderthals were smart. They were probably smarter than modern-day people often think.

Bruce Hardy works at Kenyon College. It is in Gambier, Ohio. He is a scientist and studies Neanderthals. Hardy and his team reported the discovery on April 9. The string hints that maybe Neanderthals could do other things, too. Maybe they made bags, mats, nets and cloth, they said.

It was found at an archaeological site in southeastern France. The bit of string is more than 40,000 years old. Scientists do not know how Neanderthals used the string. They also do not know if it was originally attached to the stone cutting tool.



Maybe the tool just fell on top of the string, Hardy said. The string underneath the tool was saved. The rest rotted away over time. The string is very thin and less than an inch long.

Made From Tree Bark

It was made from the inner bark of trees. Neanderthals twisted three bundles of fibers together. They twisted them counterclockwise. Then they twisted these bundles together clockwise to make the string. That task shows some sense of numbers, Hardy said.

Paola Villa is a Neanderthal expert. She works at the University of Colorado Museum. She was not part of this study. Villa said that Hardy had previously found proof that Neanderthals made string. The new find shows more direct proof, she said.

Quiz

1 Read the section "Understanding Of Numbers."

Which sentence from the section explains that scientists have questions about the Neanderthal string?

- (A) It was found at an archaeological site in southeastern France.
- (B) Scientists do not know how Neanderthals used the string.
- (C) The string underneath the tool was saved.
- (D) The string is very thin and less than an inch long.

2 Read the paragraph from the section "Made From Tree Bark."

It was made from the inner bark of trees. Neanderthals twisted three bundles of fibers together. They twisted them counterclockwise. Then they twisted these bundles together clockwise to make the string. That task shows some sense of numbers, Hardy said.

Which question is answered by this paragraph?

- (A) How did Neanderthals make the string?
- (B) How long did it take to find bark for string?
- (C) What kinds of trees were used for the string?
- (D) What did Neanderthals use the string for?

3 The main idea of the section "Understanding Of Numbers" is that scientists are learning more about Neanderthals from the string.

Which key detail from the section supports the section's main idea?

- (A) It shows they had some understanding of numbers. Also, they knew how to use trees to make things.
- (B) Bruce Hardy works at Kenyon College. It is in Gambier, Ohio. He is a scientist and studies Neanderthals.
- (C) Hardy and his team reported the discovery on April 9.
- (D) The string underneath the tool was saved. The rest rotted away over time.

4 Read the introduction [paragraphs 1-3].

Which sentence from the introduction states the main idea about the discovery of the string?

- (A) The patch was found on the bottom of a Neanderthal stone tool.
- (B) A closer look with a microscope showed something different.
- (C) Scientists say it is the oldest known evidence for string-making.
- (D) Neanderthals were a species of early humans.

Answer Key

1 Read the section "Understanding Of Numbers."

Which sentence from the section explains that scientists have questions about the Neanderthal string?

- (A) It was found at an archaeological site in southeastern France.
- (B) Scientists do not know how Neanderthals used the string.**
- (C) The string underneath the tool was saved.
- (D) The string is very thin and less than an inch long.

2 Read the paragraph from the section "Made From Tree Bark."

It was made from the inner bark of trees. Neanderthals twisted three bundles of fibers together. They twisted them counterclockwise. Then they twisted these bundles together clockwise to make the string. That task shows some sense of numbers, Hardy said.

Which question is answered by this paragraph?

- (A) How did Neanderthals make the string?**
- (B) How long did it take to find bark for string?
- (C) What kinds of trees were used for the string?
- (D) What did Neanderthals use the string for?

3 The main idea of the section "Understanding Of Numbers" is that scientists are learning more about Neanderthals from the string.

Which key detail from the section supports the section's main idea?

- (A) It shows they had some understanding of numbers. Also, they knew how to use trees to make things.**
- (B) Bruce Hardy works at Kenyon College. It is in Gambier, Ohio. He is a scientist and studies Neanderthals.
- (C) Hardy and his team reported the discovery on April 9.
- (D) The string underneath the tool was saved. The rest rotted away over time.

4 Read the introduction [paragraphs 1-3].

Which sentence from the introduction states the main idea about the discovery of the string?

- (A) The patch was found on the bottom of a Neanderthal stone tool.
- (B) A closer look with a microscope showed something different.
- (C) Scientists say it is the oldest known evidence for string-making.**
- (D) Neanderthals were a species of early humans.