

# Multi Strand Finger Loop Braiding

by [SFHandyman](#) on September 18, 2008

## Table of Contents

- intro: Multi Strand Finger Loop Braiding ..... 2
  - Video ..... 2
- step 1: Braid number 1 - Flat Braid ..... 5
  - Video ..... 6
  - Video ..... 6
- step 2: Finger Loop Braid 2 - Square Braid ..... 8
  - Video ..... 8
  - Video ..... 9
- step 3: Braid 3 - Split Square Braid ..... 9
  - Video ..... 10
  - Video ..... 10
- step 4: Braid 4 - 2 Color Flat Braid ..... 12
  - Video ..... 12
  - Video ..... 13
- step 5: Braid 5 - 2 Color Square Braid ..... 13
  - Video ..... 13
  - Video ..... 14
- Related Instructables ..... 14
- Advertisements ..... 15
  - Make Magazine Special Offer ..... 15
- Comments ..... 15

## intro: Multi Strand Finger Loop Braiding

In this Instructable, I'm going to teach you how to make Finger Loop Braids. With this technique you can make braids with just your hands that have 10 or more strands each. They can be used for anything. Bracelets, chokers, belts, hat bands, as trim on clothing, or furniture... If you need a strong lacing, a finger loop braid will multiply the strength of your string/rope by 10. To make the videos easy to follow, I made the braids out of rope.

Finger Loop Braids were popular from the 15th to the 17th Centuries in Europe, There are still some forms of similar braids made in isolated areas of South America, Asia and the Middle East. In Europe they seem to have been forgotten after the 1600's. Fabric and fiber art does not survive centuries. So examples of the original braids are very rare. You can sometimes spot them in old master paintings. They look like they take days to make but I'll show you some complex braids that can be completed in 5 minutes.

This is the style of braiding that was done in Medieval Europe and all the patterns are translated from Medieval manuscripts by the great folks at [Fingerloop.org](http://Fingerloop.org). I want to thank the producers of that website for showing me this ancient and almost forgotten art.

Supplies: some kind of rope, string, yarn,...

Tools: Hands

Time: Depends on the length and pattern of the braid but the ones I'm making only take a few minutes to complete an entire braid.

It is difficult to describe and annotate the patterns. The folks at [Fingerloop.org](http://Fingerloop.org) have done a good job of documenting the patterns. I'm going to try to write up some instructions for the braids I'm showing you, but the best way to learn the braids is to just watch the videos. Each video has a photo of the completed braid.

I'm going to publish this with 5 or 6 different braids and will add more as I create the videos. They start very easy, and I'll introduce new techniques as we add new braids. The braids I'm going to show you are made by one person. There are also patterns for braids that are made by two or three people working simultaneously on one braid.

Lets go. Have fun.

This is the introductory video for Finger Loop Braiding. I'll tell you how it is done and show you some examples of Finger Loop Braids that I'm going to teach you how to create.

**New: I made close up videos of my hands are up for all braids. They are very easy to follow.**













### **step 1: Braid number 1 - Flat Braid**

This is our first braid. Watch the video and look at the photos to see how it is made.

You start with some kind of rope, string, etc. Hook it onto something sturdy and create 5 loops. I'm going to hook it over my bedpost. Then I'll loop the rope around the post until I have 5 loops. The rope is tied in one continuous loop. After I've hooked the loops, then I pull the rope back and forth to get all of the loops to the exact same length. These loops are called "Bowes" in the original manuscripts. Sometimes I say bow and sometimes I say loop. They are the same thing.

I'm going to add a L or a R to the front of the names of the fingers so you know which hand I'm talking about.

For this braid, start with two loops on your left hand. One over your LMiddle finger and the other over the LRing finger. On the right hand put one loop over your RIndex finger, one on the RMiddle finger and the last one on your RRing finger.

In the first move, we start from your left hand. Reach your LThumb and LIndex finger through the back of the loop on your LMiddle finger. With your LThumb and LIndex finger, grab the lower string of the loop on your RRing finger. When you take the top string of a loop, that is a straight exchange, taking the lower string is a reverse exchange. Pull that through the loop on your LMiddle finger as you transfer it to your LIndex finger.

You should now have three loops on your left hand. One each on LIndex, LMiddle, and LRing. On your right hand you have two loops. One each on RIndex and RMiddle.

Now we need to move the bows from RIndex and RMiddle, down one finger so they are on RMiddle and RRing. This is called Walking the Bows. You now have the same set up we started with, but on opposite hands. Next is the same move as before.

Reach your RIndex and RThumb through the back of the loop on RMiddle and take the loop on your LRing finger reversed (grab the lower string on the loop). Pull it through RMiddle. Then Walk the Bows on LIndex and LMiddle, down one to LMiddle and LRing. We are back to the beginning.

After each transfer, spread your arms wide apart to tighten up the braid that is forming at the far end of the string. Do this every time to keep the braid tight and even.

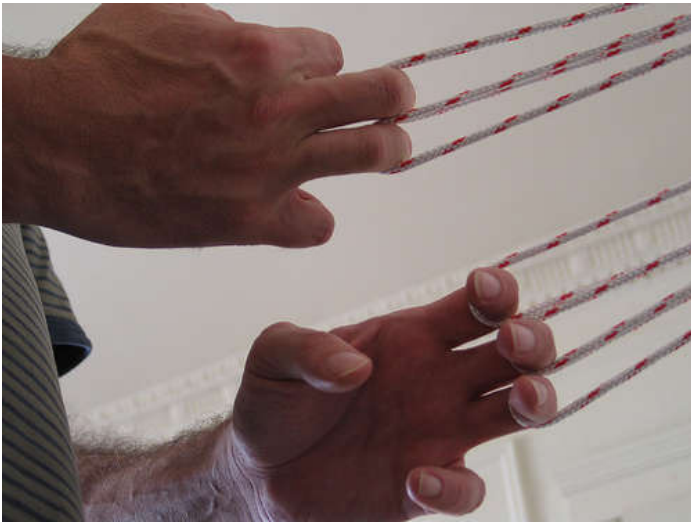
Just repeat those moves.

I've attached a series of photos illustrating the moves but the video will really be easier to understand. The first and second photos are the braid that we end up with at the end of the video.

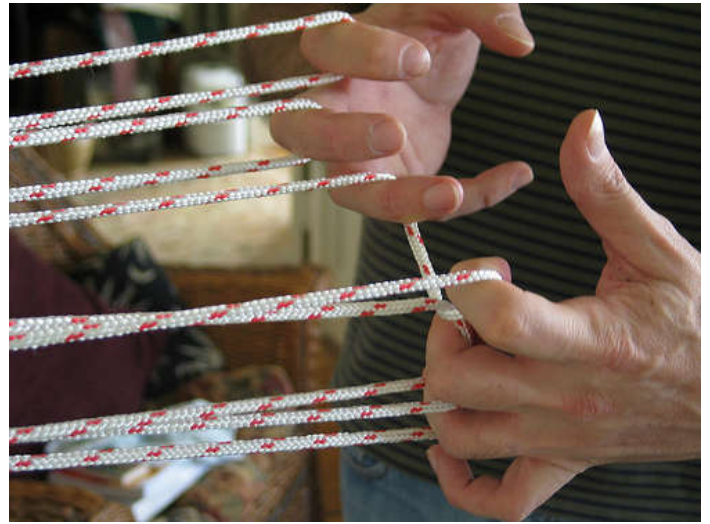
These are new videos. The first one is a full view that shows you how I load the rope onto my post to make the loops. The second video will show you how to do the braid. It is a close up on my hands and will make it very clear how to make the braid.











## step 2: Finger Loop Braid 2 - Square Braid

This pattern makes a really nice square braid.

We will start out the same way as the first braid.

2 Loops on the left hand - LMiddle and LRing.

3 Loops on the right hand - RIndex, RMiddle and RRing.

Move your LIndex and LThumb through BOTH the LMiddle and the LRing loops. Just like you did on the first braid. Then take RRing Reversed.

Walk the bows on the Right from RIndex and RMiddle, to RMiddle and RRing.

Now we do the same pattern.

Move your RIndex and RThumb through BOTH the RMiddle and the RRing loops. Then take LRing Reversed.

Just repeat that to the end.

Video with Close Up on my hands:

## Video





Full view shot:



### step 3: Braid 3 - Split Square Braid

For Braid number 3, we are going to make a square braid, but I'll change a step part of the way through and make it split into two separate braids. I'll do that pattern for a while, then switch back to square braid.

We start with the same pattern as the previous braid - the square braid.

2 Loops on the left hand - LMiddle and LRing.

3 Loops on the right hand - RIndex, RMiddle and RRing.

Move your LIndex and LThumb through BOTH the LMiddle and the LRing loops. Just like you did on the first braid. Then take RRing Reversed.

Walk the bows on the Right from RIndex and RMiddle, to RMiddle and RRing.

Now we do the same pattern.

Move your RIndex and RThumb through BOTH the RMiddle and the RRing loops. Then take LRing Reversed.

[http://www.instructables.com/id/Multi\\_Strand\\_Finger\\_Loop\\_Braiding\\_or\\_How\\_to\\_braid\\_/](http://www.instructables.com/id/Multi_Strand_Finger_Loop_Braiding_or_How_to_braid_/)

Now - do several rounds of the square braid pattern and then change it like this:

Move your LIndex and LThumb through BOTH the LMiddle and the LRing loops. Then take RRing **UNReversed**.

Walk the bows on the Right from RIndex and RMiddle, to RMiddle and RRing.

Move your RIndex and RThumb through BOTH the RMiddle and the RRing loops. Then take LRing **UNReversed**.

Do that for several rounds, then switch back to the square braid and repeat that to the end.

We end up with what looks like a normal square braid, but half way through it splits into two separate braids, then comes back together into a square braid. Look at the video and photos to understand.

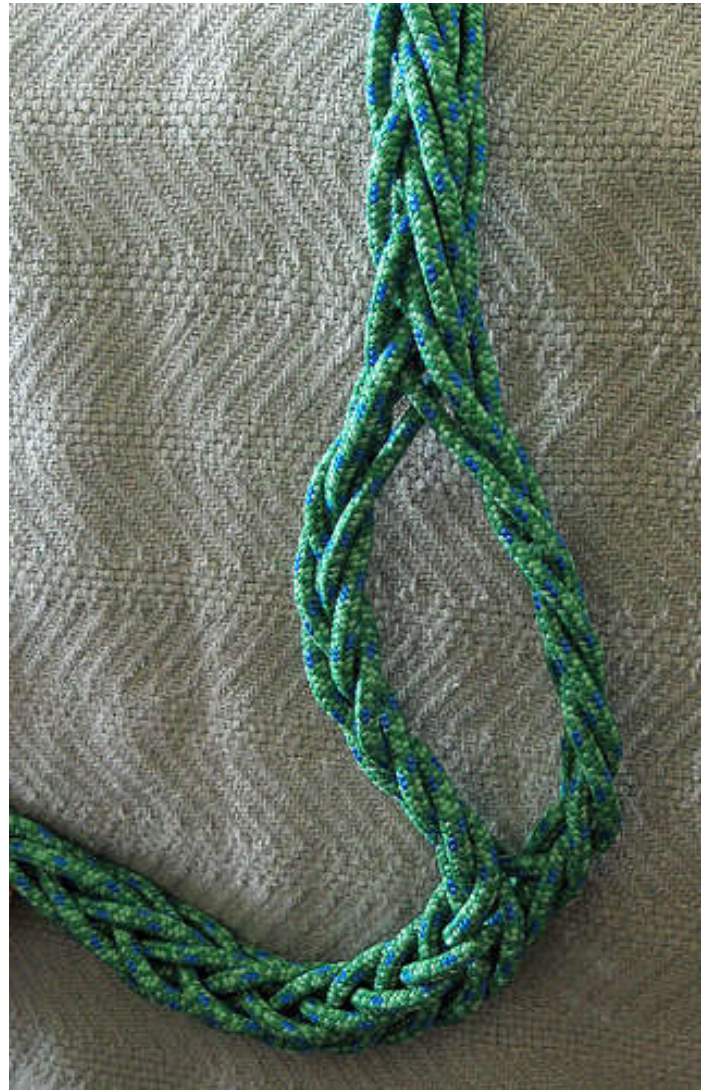
Here is the new close up video. It is a close shot of my hands with good lighting. It is very easy to follow. The second video is the original full view.











#### step 4: Braid 4 - 2 Color Flat Braid

This is the same braid pattern as Braid 1, but I'm going to use two colors so you can see what that looks like.

First Color - 2 Loops on the left hand - LMiddle and LRing.

Second Color - 3 Loops on the right hand - RIndex, RMiddle and RRing.

Move your LIndex and LThumb through the LMiddle loop. Then take RRing Reversed.

Walk the bows on the Right from RIndex and RMiddle, to RMiddle and RRing.

Now we do the same pattern.

Move your RIndex and RThumb through the RMiddle loop, then take LRing Reversed.

Repeat to the end.

New Close up video on my hands. Very easy to follow the steps. The second video is the full view.







### **step 5: Braid 5 - 2 Color Square Braid**

This is the same pattern as the Square Braid, but with two colors

First Color - 2 Loops on the left hand - LMiddle and LRing.

2nd Color - 3 Loops on the right hand - RIndex, RMiddle and RRing.

Move your LIndex and LThumb through BOTH the LMiddle and the LRing loops. Just like you did on the first braid. Then take RRing Reversed.

Walk the bows on the Right from RIndex and RMiddle, to RMiddle and RRing.

Now we do the same pattern.

Move your RIndex and RThumb through BOTH the RMiddle and the RRing loops. Then take LRing Reversed.

Repeat to the end.

There are more patterns and braids coming - I've worn my fingers out for today though.

This is a newer video. It is only a close up on my hands with better lighting so you can see exactly what I'm doing with my fingers. The second video is dark, but you can see what this looks like from my hands to where the end is anchored.

### **Video**



CLICK TO PLAY VIDEO 



CLICK TO PLAY VIDEO 



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## Comments

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 **maracate** says: Apr 27, 2009. 2:13 PM [REPLY](#)  
really cool. I made one, but i made it agenst the leg of a table, so now I cant get it off...


 **garside** says: Apr 14, 2009. 2:50 PM [REPLY](#)  
WOW!!! This is a great instructable! I feel that those close up vids were very helpful. I feel a new hobby coming on.....!!!!

 **SFHandyman** says: Apr 25, 2009. 11:39 PM [REPLY](#)  
Thanks. I'm glad you liked it.


 **thickneckarts** says: Apr 16, 2009. 7:58 AM [REPLY](#)  
How do you measure the cord for a necklace or bracelet?

 **SFHandyman** says: Apr 17, 2009. 11:58 AM [REPLY](#)  
I can't determine that for you. Different cords and different braids will lose different lengths. Since you don't have to cut the rope, just tie a loop, braid it and measure. You can then take it back out, change your loop the the correct length and rebraid it. A full braid takes around 5 minutes so it isn't that big of a deal to redo. It will probably come out better the second time around also.

 **thickneckarts** says: Apr 18, 2009. 8:40 AM [REPLY](#)  
Cool. Thanks. I'm so happy I found your instructable btw! :D

 **ThomasvanZwol** says: Apr 7, 2009. 1:34 PM [REPLY](#)  
Great i'ble!  
I made one, or actually a couple, myself, it's very easy to learn!  
  
I finished one into a bracelet.  
  
I did this by taking the loops from the start and acting as if it was one loop. Then I took the loops from the end and acted as if that was one loop as well. I brought the 'two' loops together while making a circle of the braid.  
I took another cord and went a couple of times through each loop: down through the one from the start, up through the one from the end, and down through the start again, etc.. I did this till a decent amount (at least five when using the same kind of cord) of circles bound the two loops together. I tied the cord and trimmed it, looks pretty cool and won't break easily I think.  
  
Thanks again!

 **SFHandyman** says: Apr 10, 2009. 7:57 PM [REPLY](#)  
Wow, very cool way of finishing the braid. I'll have to try that. Thanks for posting it.

 **jbulldog\_11** says: Mar 29, 2009. 7:25 PM [REPLY](#)  
Thanks so much man, I made one of these in like 10min that actually looks really cool after like the first inch of knotting (Haha) I'm just trying to figure out the best way to have to hook around my wrist. Thanks again for the great instructable. I was getting wicked fast at the end.

 **15zhangfra** says: Mar 5, 2009. 5:21 PM [REPLY](#)  
mu la la, do i see a split pouch sling??

 **SFHandyman** says: Mar 7, 2009. 9:30 AM [REPLY](#)  
Is that English? hahaha I don't know what that is.



**15zhangfra** says:  
yes its English.

Mar 7, 2009. 3:09 PM [REPLY](#)

and any ways, the way you braided then split off then re-braided made it look like a split pouch sling that David and Goliath used. the sling instructables here are trash, you without meaning to just made the best sling here.



**SFHandyman** says:

Mar 9, 2009. 8:29 PM [REPLY](#)

Great. I'd never heard of it before. That would be a cool use for the split braid.



**15zhangfra** says:

Mar 10, 2009. 1:50 PM [REPLY](#)

heh, you would be surprised at how much you could sell this too, if you had a loop at one end and a knot at the other (approx. \$15)



**SFHandyman** says:

Mar 10, 2009. 11:19 PM [REPLY](#)

Go for it, I'll take 10%. Ok 9% for you.



**15zhangfra** says:

Mar 11, 2009. 1:46 PM [REPLY](#)

me, sell?, no, i meant for you. if you tried slinging.org, you could make an account and trade them too, you would also have more people likely to trade too, as to the fact not many people think of it like that



**SFHandyman** says:

Mar 17, 2009. 1:54 PM [REPLY](#)

I was just kidding. I like to teach though. Once I've done a project I tend to move on to something new, learn how to do it, and then teach others. I don't tend to make any of these things very long after the lessons are done, unless I have a good occasion like a birthday. I actually hate selling. I don't know why. I'd much rather give stuff away.



**15zhangfra** says:

Mar 18, 2009. 1:12 PM [REPLY](#)

hmmmm, i guess we do need more people that are like you



**brettlandon** says:

Feb 27, 2009. 3:22 PM [REPLY](#)

I really enjoyed your tutorial. I used this method to make a flat braid for a quiver strap and it worked wonderfully. I had to get exactly (or really, really close to) 36 inches of finished braid. In working out this problem, I developed the following formula: loop length is 1.11 times the finished length. This formula worked really well and I thought you might be interested in sharing it with others using this tutorial. Thank you for taking the time to share this skill (art) with all of us. And congratulations on winning the contest.

-Brett



**SFHandyman** says:

Mar 18, 2009. 1:02 PM [REPLY](#)

Thanks so much, I'm glad you liked it.



**powel** says:

Mar 16, 2009. 8:29 PM [REPLY](#)

Wow this is really amazing!! But I do would love to know how to make a round braid...will you show us that later on?



**SFHandyman** says:

Mar 17, 2009. 1:51 PM [REPLY](#)

Thanks. I haven't found a fully round braid yet but there are probably some in the patterns. I did want to do a part two of these patterns but I might not get around to it. I get easily distracted and tend to move on to new projects. :)



**Shut Up Now** says:

Mar 9, 2009. 9:18 PM [REPLY](#)

extremely clear instructions. great info, im gonna try this once i find some good string!



**SFHandyman** says:

Mar 9, 2009. 9:27 PM [REPLY](#)

Thank you. It's a lot of fun.



**vectevs18** says:

Mar 9, 2009. 11:15 AM [REPLY](#)

?oti jauka mezglošanas tehnika. ?tri iem?c?jos labi viss paskaidrots. Nezinu tikai k? tev izdev?s v?i?u p?ctam izjaukt. Paldies par m?cibu.





**SFHandyman** says:

Es esmu priec?gs jums patika to. Paldies.  
T? k? virves bija biezs tas bija viegli, lai nov?rstu šo lentu.

Mar 9, 2009. 8:33 PM [REPLY](#)



**Will Knot** says:

I am a rennie (ren faire goer) and I teach rope work to scouts and this is a wonderful addition to my knowledge base. Even better is the fact your instructable is so full of helpful videos. I do need to go back and read it closer to see how to set up the lines for two color braids before I make the bowes. I can see why this was a grand champion.

Dec 20, 2008. 7:22 AM [REPLY](#)

I use to live at the end of a airport so till you mentioned it, I never noticed the sirens and literly went back to watch the videos to hear LOL.



**SFHandyman** says:

*Sorry so slow in reply. Must have lost track during holidays.*

Feb 18, 2009. 2:03 PM [REPLY](#)

Funny how we get used to "our" sounds. I have a hard time sleeping when I travel because of the foreign sounds.

I'm really surprised that these things aren't already completely immersed in the Ren Fest crowd. I'm sure they will get there eventually. It's the real deal, and so cool to watch and do.

I need to learn how to tie knots! I only know macrame knots from the 70's.

For the two color braids use a single strand, two color loop. Say it is a 5' 3/2 color braid.

1. Make a 15 foot loop of one color. Don't tie it tight, or just hold the ends. Loop it around your post three times (keep the knot down by your fingers for now).
2. Then loop the second color 2 times to match the first.
3. Now undo the first rope knot and tie the two ropes together into one single loop.
4. Wrap your new single strand loop around your post, or through the hook. The knots will be lined up very close to perfect, pull them up to your post. Since it's tied in one big circle, you can still pull on the loops to adjust the length.

If you tie them in separate loops, unless you are very lucky, you will be adjusting the knots repeatedly, trying to get the loops even.



**Stanley The Snake Handler** says:

Cheers- this is a great instructable- ive made loads of them as bracelets and lanyards. Nice Job

Feb 18, 2009. 6:45 AM [REPLY](#)



**SFHandyman** says:

Cool. I'm glad you like it.

Feb 18, 2009. 1:44 PM [REPLY](#)



**ivy1990222** says:

Its a really great job  
I tried it myself today and found it easy to make~  
I have decided to make a few ones for my friends later.

Nov 11, 2008. 1:50 AM [REPLY](#)



**SFHandyman** says:

That is wonderful Ivy. That kind of comment makes a person who loves to teach feel so happy. Thank you.

Nov 11, 2008. 3:32 AM [REPLY](#)



**ivy1990222** says:

you're welcome:)  
you are a good teacher and i'm looking forward to learning more from you haha :P

Nov 11, 2008. 5:09 AM [REPLY](#)



**mum** says:

I really really love this and did it in no time at all! I was so happy with it!

Oct 31, 2008. 11:42 AM [REPLY](#)



**SFHandyman** says:

Thanks I'm glad you like it.

Nov 3, 2008. 8:30 PM [REPLY](#)



**Lorem** says:

? Congrats for winning the contest... ? hehe...

Oct 29, 2008. 7:53 PM [REPLY](#)



**SFHandyman** says:  
Thanks.

Oct 29, 2008. 8:35 PM [REPLY](#)



**TheCheese9921** says:  
dude these are sweet

Oct 24, 2008. 5:27 PM [REPLY](#)



**SFHandyman** says:  
Thanks.

Oct 25, 2008. 6:16 PM [REPLY](#)



**LuminousObject** says:  
I just started one, but the string broke. I was using really old string though. This is really cool.

Oct 25, 2008. 2:59 PM [REPLY](#)



**SFHandyman** says:  
Glad you liked it.

Oct 25, 2008. 6:15 PM [REPLY](#)



**jupiter999ac** says:  
Thanks for yr video and the way to explain how to make the braids.  
I want to make 100 of this finger loop braids. And give its to my temple. So others can take and use its as lucky braid.  
anyway... thanks a lot :)

Oct 16, 2008. 9:11 PM [REPLY](#)



**SFHandyman** says:  
You're Welcome. I'm glad that you liked them.

Oct 17, 2008. 4:26 AM [REPLY](#)



**jupiter999ac** says:  
Can you give me one, tht u make it by yrself ??? :)  
I will keep its very very carefully .  
B'cos I thought u are a great teacher .

Oct 20, 2008. 5:17 AM [REPLY](#)



**SFHandyman** says:  
You should try to make them. Watch the Close Up video of Braid 1 - it is the second video on Step 1. It is very easy to follow.

Oct 20, 2008. 6:05 PM [REPLY](#)

One of the wonderful things about these braids is how easy, fast and fun they are to make.

You have heard the old saying - "Give a man a fish and he eats for one day. Teach a man how to fish and he will eat for a lifetime."

That is the power of Instructables. We don't give, or sell, the *things* we make. We give freely our *knowledge* of how to make them. If you learn how to make braids, you can give a free lessons for your friends at the temple.

If you give them a braid, they will only ever have one braid. If you teach them how to braid, they can have as many as they want forever.



**jupiter999ac** says:  
I can make it. I will send for u if u want to.  
I only want to hv one from you, and tht would be very special for me.  
But it is ok too if u won't.  
Thanks .

Oct 20, 2008. 11:57 PM [REPLY](#)



**SFHandyman** says:  
**Woo hoo - the braids won the Grand Prize in the Craft Skills Contest.**  
Thanks everyone. I'm glad that so many people are learning how to make these braids. Maybe they won't get forgotten again for another 300 years.

Oct 17, 2008. 3:21 PM [REPLY](#)



**zoned-out** says:  
Awesome! I just made two finger loop braid bracelets with embroidery floss and they turned out super :D  
Though I was wondering if there was any way to make them wider (without using thicker strings). I also wondered what would happen if you took a really long, finished finger loop braid and then finger loop braided that...? awesomeness??  
Thank you so much!

Oct 5, 2008. 3:59 AM [REPLY](#)





**SFHandyman** says:

Oct 5, 2008. 8:39 PM [REPLY](#)

There are some wider braids, but they use more cords, so they will come later after we learn some more complex moves. In one you have seven loops with two sets of two loops, each on one finger. I do plan on making more, but haven't gotten them done yet.

The two and three person braids are also wider, or fatter. The patterns I'm using are all on [fingerloop.org](http://fingerloop.org).

If you wanted to mount a braid to a backing, like a ribbon, you could squeeze it together (make it shorter) while stitching it to the ribbon. That makes the braids get wider.

Different cords will look like different braids with the same pattern. The brown string braid on my wrist in the first photo, is the same as the first pattern that I made out of the white and red rope. The stiffness of the string, and the fact that it didn't have much friction so it loosened up a little on each pass, made it look different.

You certainly can braid together braided strands. Since it is harder to do them in really long lengths, I'd just use a single braid for each loop.

If you want to make a really long braid, you can get a friend to help. They would use something that looks like a fork or a rake (or just their fingers). In the medieval manuscripts, they called this a "beater". Since you can't get your arms far enough apart, with a really long strand, to get it tightened, the friend would pull the rake over the strings and keep it tight for you.

In any of the braids, you can use 2 or more strands in each loop and those strands don't have to be the same color.

If you had a string and you needed a rope, you could make a 10 cord square braid, then braid that again into another square braid. That would make your single string a 100 strand rope.

The brown string in the wrist braid is rated at 100 lbs. Since it has 10 strands, theoretically you should be able to lift 1000lbs with it. Since the fibers don't have much friction in between them, I wouldn't do it, as a single strand could break starting a chain reaction.

If you had a starting material with more friction and tied it tighter, I'd think it would be as good as any spun rope.



**argosxilow** says:

Oct 1, 2008. 7:01 PM [REPLY](#)

Great Instructible! I've made cord before with kumihimo braiding, so I was really drawn to this. I'm also in a medieval recreation group (Society for Creative Anachronism), which is international, but I don't know anyone near my area that's into braiding like this, so I'll be sure to tell my friends about it. :)

[view all 75 comments](#)