

Welcome to the first issue of **Begin Braiding**. I would like to introduce you to the world of braids and narrow bands. You are welcome to make copies of this issue and give it to others.

These small textiles were a vital part of life in the past. Bands could be used as ties and trims on clothing and objects. They were also things of beauty. They are still present in our daily life but are usually made mechanically and they get taken for granted.

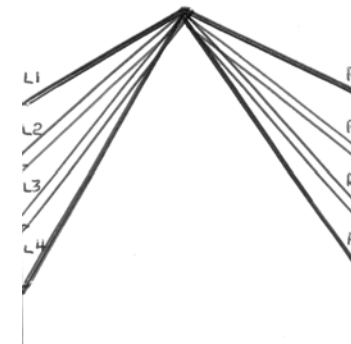
You can make braids using many different methods. I am going to introduce them to you one by one in this publication and hope you will find it interesting enough to practise the methods. Once you understand a method, you can use all sorts of material to make the Braid and see if you are satisfied with the results. You can alter the scale of the materials - thick or thin and vary the colours. Above all, do have fun

### Practical things

You will need a board to enable you to pin threads down, so that you can work firmly and evenly. You can use partical board or thick cardboard or glue two sheets together. Thick polystyrene sheet is useful. The nicest pins to use are special T shaped pins used for macrame . PVA glue can also be used to secure ends of braids. You can also sew or whip the ends of braids so they look good, so a large needle will come in handy and some matching thread. Embroidery threads come in many colours.

When you are manipulating threads, you will need to produce a consistent, even result for the end product to look attractive. The pull you need to exert on threads is called tension. It is very important and it is something that will come with plenty of practice.

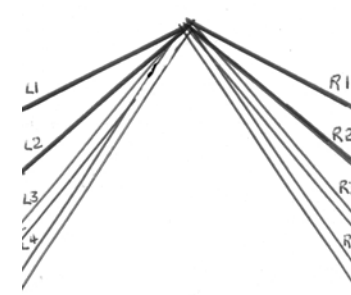
**A Simple Braid from Latvia.** This braid is made with 8 Strands. To help you follow the instructions, colour in as red, lines R2 and L2 and colour in as blue, R3 and L3 in the diagram below. These yarns should be thicker than the black ones – or you use the same yarn doubled.



Pin the strands to a piece of thick expanded polystyrene or thick cardboard  
Initial position 1

- Move 1. Move R2 over to left, below L4.
- Move 2. Move L2 over to right, below R4.
- Move 3. Move R3 over to bottom left, below the red thread.
- Move 4. Move L2 over to bottom right, below the red thread.

Your yarns should now be in this order: Colour the diagram to match R1, L1 and R2, L2 are black, then R3, L3 are red and R4, L4 are blue.



- Move 5. Move R1 **under** the new R2, **over** R3 and R4, and place below L4.
- Move 6. Move L1 **under** the new L2, **over** the other threads on the left, and place below R4.

Tension the braid by holding the threads, and pulling your hands gently apart.  
Repeat moves 1 to 6

Directions supplied by Sandy Jessett



**Plaiting.** You probably already know about the three strands hair plait which looks like this first diagram You can use knitting yarn for the three elements and use several strands to make a fat plait. Cotton yarn will look crisper.



Pin down the strands on to your work surface. Make the plait by working the outer strand into the centre, first from one side and then from the other side. In the illustration the next move will be from the left into the centre.

As you can see, the colours used will work their way from side to side. You can experiment with thick and thin yarns and different colours. You can use paper strips, raffia or straw and recycled plastic bags cut

into strips. Plaits can be sewn together to make mats and bags and coiled round and sewn to make containers. By overlapping a new strand before reaching the very end of one, you can carry on plaiting. Move the pins up the plait as you work to keep an even tension and the plait looking the same.

This next diagram is for the seven strand plait, illustrated as four light and

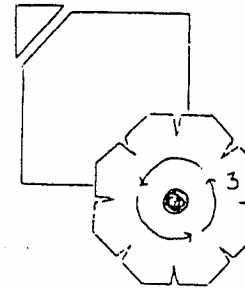


three dark strands. When you have many strands, put them over a cord or lolly stick pinned down on the board. The next move is to bring the outside left hand light strand over the other three into the centre followed by the outside right dark strand into the centre. If you hold the groups of threads, one in each hand, the group that has four strands held makes the next move. Play around with the colours for this plait and find out the effect on the appearance of the plait and which combination you like best. Keep the tension firm.

*Diagrams by June Barker*



**Fill Gap.** The fill gap braid is very popular but it requires a special board which you have to make yourself.



Take a square of firm cardboard (about 7 cm to 10cm square). Cut off the corners evenly and cut a narrow notch in each side. Push a pen or knitting needle through the centre of the card to make a smooth hole for 7 strands of thread to go through

*Diagram Ann Dyer*

Seven threads are required, leaving one slot empty. You can try with knitting wool

to start with. To begin with, use 5 main colours and 2 strongly contrasting ones. For normal thicknesses, you need threads one and a half times as long as the braid you want to make, plus about 20cm for the unbraided ends. Put one thread in each of seven slots, push the ends through the hole and knot them right underneath the board.

Position the the board with the empty slot at 12 o'clock then weave by taking the thread from the third slot to the right of the empty slot, out of its notch and then put this thread into the empty slot to the left. The illustration above shows the direction arrow marked on the board and the number 3 as a reminder.

Keep repeating the process.

Ann Dyer recommends this method of working;

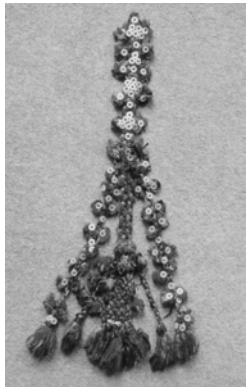
“Balance the board on your thumb and first finger which holds the tied ends of the threads. Later these fingers will hold the top of the braid, all the time easing the finished braid down through the hole, then tuck your next two fingers into your palm and pretend they don’t exist. Bring all the threads together and slip them under your little finger. This gives you space to get hold of the thread you want under the board and stops them jumping out of the slots.”

For a very long braid, wind the threads on to cardboard bobbins.

Please send an envelope marked **fill-gap**, with your name and address if you would like a longer explanatory leaflet on this subject.

Welcome to **Begin Braiding** the publication that introduces you to the world of braids and narrow bands. Issue 1 introduced you to plaits; fill gap braids and a colourful Latvian braid, if you missed that issue write to me with an S.A.E. marked **BB1** .This issue tells you more about plaits, plus knots, weaving and ply-split darning. You may make copies of this publication to give to others.

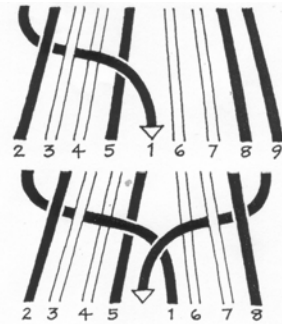
**More plaits**



This bride's wedding ornament, now owned by June Barker, is made of plaits assembled in colours of red, blue, green and yellow.its is very splendid. The Bride would have worn a matching pair..

In order to build on what you learned earlier in **Begin Braiding 1**, here are some other plaits to try.

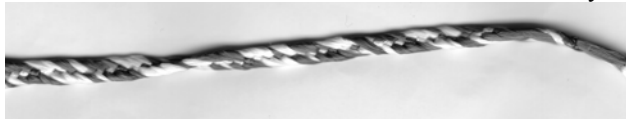
Armed with your piece of soft board and T pins, try a nine strand plait worked from left and right alternately under two



strands and over two.

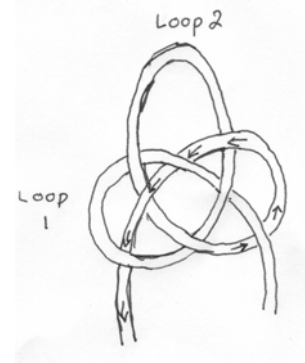
An eight strand plait could be made with five strands in the left hand and worked alternately from the left under three and over one, from the right over three.

Here are the recipes for more,  
Eight Strand, five on left, three on right, work with two strands over two and under one from each side in turn  
Eight Strand, left over three into centre, right over four into centre,  
Eight Strand from right to left over one under one to other side. Repeat  
Try different colour combinations with these plaits and vary the material used from stiff raffia to soft wool and see what results you can obtain.



Pictured above, soft blue and white raffia - a rather twisty plait

**Decorative Knots**



You can use a cord or braid to tie very attractive knots.

This is the Chinese double coin knot. You can tie it by tying down the loop 1 on the left followed by the loop 2 on top, then feed the left hand cord from loop 2 under the right hand cord of loop 1 and over, under, over and finally under the last cord of loop 1. Coax the knot into a tighter and good shape. If you get good at tying this knot you can make multiple knots spaced an equal amount apart on a single cord and

use the cord as a bracelet or necklace. You can find out more about Chinese Knotting on Carol Wang's website [www.chineseknotting.org](http://www.chineseknotting.org) You can buy glossy cord in many



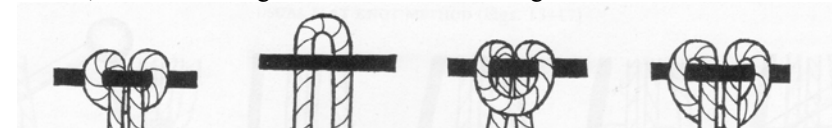
colours called rattail.



On the left is the Josephine Knot or Carrick Bend tied with two cords. It has some similarities with the Chinese knot above. You can tie knots with doubled cords or knotted cords

Example Maureen Jennings

This is a diagram of the Lark's Head Knot, which is useful to fasten on to a header, .or to knot fringes into the end of knitting or fabric..

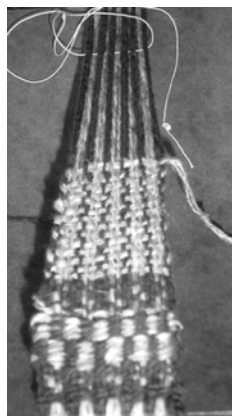


You can order books on Macramé, or the Ashley Book of Knots from your local library and do note that designs worked to a fine scale with attractive cords will look very sumptuous

The Ashley Book of Knots has 3854 illustration of knots in action.

**Try some weaving**

You can weave a narrow band over a piece of dense cardboard. Wind two rounds of each chosen colour round the cardboard and pull so that the cardboard bends, (Tie the end of the each round together). This makes it easier to insert the shuttle. Index filing cards make good little looms.



With one of the colours wound round a shuttle

as pictured above, weave from right to left over one thread and under the next. When you reach the other side, weave back but this time choose the alternate path, under and over, to the previous one.

The thread heddle loop, at the top of the picture (left) picked up all the double dark threads in one go so the shuttle could pass between the two sets of light and dark threads. Experiments appear at the front of this piece of over and under two threads repeated more than once.. Above that, is the result of using a

dark weft thread in the shuttle. The best result, however, comes from the over one, under one pattern using a pale fawny pink yarn which produced a pleasing striped pattern with the dark blue, both yarns were silk and linen. Patterns produced automatically like this from the placing of the original threads are called colour and weave. There are many of them and they are very interesting to study. They can change in dramatic ways when the colours are varied.

If you find you like weaving, use a rigid heddle to hold the threads and speed you up. This will allow each set of the threads (the ones in the fixed holes or the ones in the slots) to part alternately (shed) and you can then weave with the bundle of threads tied to a hook and the other end tied to your belt. The small heddle alongside is French - modern ones are made of metal. You can weave a tube by weaving in one direction only passing the shuttle across the

back of the work, giving a tug to close the tube and weaving the next pass. Try with alternate colours in pairs - a variation will mean you can spot if you miss a thread. The library can order for you *The Weaving, Spinning and Dying Book* by Rachel Brown which is informative about techniques.



**Ply-split darning Bookmark from Rachel Hardy:**

Cut the following lengths of your chosen yarn :

One 3m length of blue, one 3m length of brown, , two 1.5 m lengths of blue, two 1.5m lengths of brown

Make four cords, 1 blue, 1 brown, 2 mixed, by doubling them up, fixing one end to a post or doorknob, twisting the two strands together anti clockwise



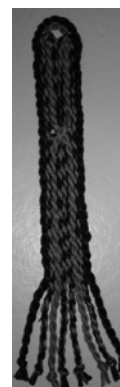
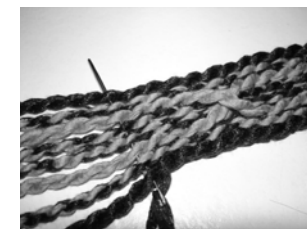
(you can use a pencil or rod or even an electric screwdriver with a hook) until they start to coil up if tension is released. Attach a heavy item like a pair of scissors to the cord (with a S hook) and double it back on itself. Let the scissors hang down and hold both ends while the cord starts to form.

When the cord stops twisting give it a few more turns by hand and then fasten the ends by Sellotaping round them at both ends, remove scissors,

I laid out the cords in a dark and light pattern as in the picture, but you can make your own design, of course.. Then take a single strand of either of the yarns, (I chose the colour of the outer cords) and thread a darning needle with it. Pass the needle through the cords, making sure to pass in between the two plies that have been formed, lining the cords up as you go.



Go back and forth like this for about 5 cm and then I added some interest by switching the position of two of the cords. Again, any design is possible - here you will be darning through the cords that stay in place for a number of rows until the crossed cords can lie in between again comfortably.



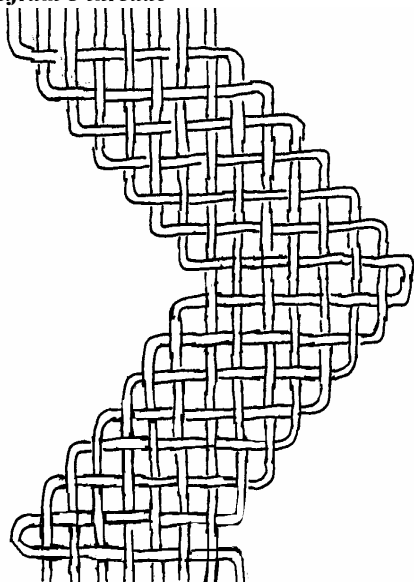
Continue as before the twist pattern until a reasonable length bookmark has been created. I then knotted each cord at 5 cm from the bottom row of darning and cut off the excess cords. The two ends of the darning yarn, I darned back into a cord of the same colour to finish it off.

**Welcome to Begin Braiding Issue 3.** the publication that introduces you to the world of braids and bands and associated matters, You may make copies to give to others. Write to the address below if you would like copies of issues 1 and 2.

**Rick Rack Braid or Zigzag Plait**

Rick rack is woven from side to side leaving a central strand taking a straight path. Pin the threads down on to a piece of soft board and weave as per the diagram. If you weave with soft threads the edge threads will follow a curvy silhouette round the corners but if you use stiff material the corners will have to be folded over (mitred) to turn the corner and double mitred at the point to make the return journey. The pictured example is woven with florists ribbon with 4 blue ends and 4 white ends and there are 7 steps to the right and then 7 steps to the left repeated and the eighth thread follows the straight path. You can have fun with the type of threads and the colours chosen. Copy the diagram and colour it in and see what effects you will obtain once the threads are pulled up firmly. (Hint alternate colours will give straight lines). You can use thick or thin threads, multiple strands, straw, raffia, and ribbons or rags. Experiment and have fun.

**Diagram 8 threads**



**Example 8 threads**

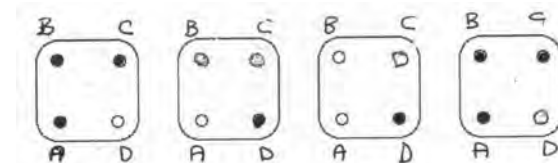


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**Introducing tablet Weaving**

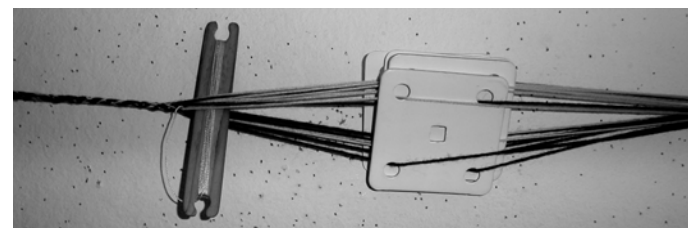
**page 2**

Tablet weaving requires the use of equipment, but you can make the tablets yourself using a pack of playing cards cut to be square. In this example each square tablet is threaded from one side with four threads and assembled as a pack of tablets. One end of the group of threads can be tied to a handy hook and the other end secured to your waist. (or if you are a much interrupted person, the back of your chair) You can obtain very strong bands with tablet weaving useful for handles on bags or luggage straps. The width of the band depends on the number of tablets and the thickness of thread used



Cut a square tablet from each playing card and use a hole punch to pierce 4 holes as

shown above. You can pierce a centre hole as well so you can tie the tablets together when not in use. You can write the letters on the tablets to help you in checking they are all correctly threaded **from one side** and both placed and facing the correct way. When threaded they can face all the same way \\\ or //// be alternate \^/ or grouped like this \\// to suit this pattern illustrated below provided by Annelese Hart. Instructions are on page 3.



**Begin Braiding is published by Felicity Tregear  
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**Pattern Instruction for a 4 tablet pattern**

**page3**

L =light thread and D= dark thread

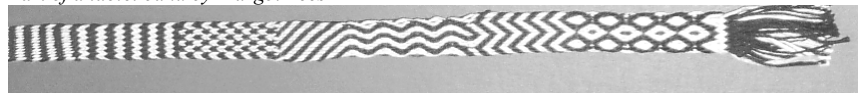
The holes in the tablets can be threaded in the two sequences, three light and one dark thread and three dark one light thread and then placed in the order of the diagram. Wind the longitudinal (warp) threads round the back of chair or round a clothes horse to get an appropriate length. say 2 metres. Use smooth yarns and bright colours

Thread Pattern				
Tablet	1	2	3	4
Tablet hole D	L.D.D L			
Tablet hole C	D L.L.D.			
Tablet hole B	D L.L.D.			
Tablet hole A	D.L.L.D.			
Thread direction	\	\	/	/

Line up the tablets together, remembering to place the same lettered holes side by side. In this instance two tablets face left and two face right. Practise turning the tablets forwards and back again as a group, one quarter turn. Weaving is done by passing a narrow (weft) thread through the space created by the quarter turn from one side to the other side giving the tablets a quarter

turn each time. The weft will only show fleetingly at the side of the work. Wind the weft on a stiff cardboard shuttle and give firm beat after each turn on the threads to compact them. The colours in the top rear holes lie on the surface producing the pattern. As you work, twist builds up behind the tablets. To eliminate this twist you count the number of directional turns, turning first forward and then in reverse, for a specific number. This will provide alteration in the pattern, which you can study to see which combinations are most attractive. If you have never heard of this very old technique before, it may seem strange, so you can ask your library to order a book to help you understand it. Card Weaving by Candace Crockett was published by the Interweave Press in 1992. You will also find some information on the internet. Type card Weaving or tablet weaving into your browser.

Part of a tablet band by Margot Lees

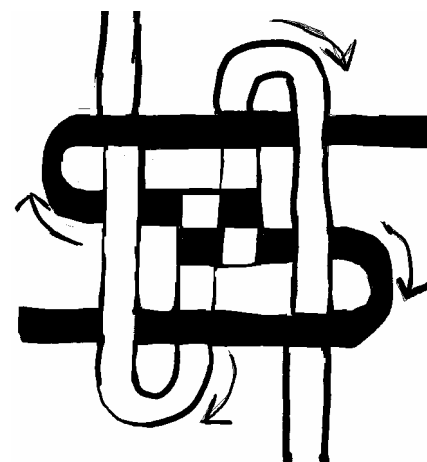


**Start with Scoobie-dou**

**page 4**

There is a current craze among student for making scoobie- dou plaits with coloured plastic strands and you can obtain pictures of the techniques on the internet. The basic knot for these braids is a crown knot and can easily be tied with cords instead. Shiny threads are best avoided as they can slip.

To start the plait you can cross two cords when using two colours or tie a knot with four separate cords of different colours. The diagram



shows the knot tied in a clockwise direction. Tucking in the very last strand locks the whole knot then you should pull all the strands up tight.. A little checked square, in the centre of the diagram, shows the correct appearance of the previous round when all the strands have been tightened. Repeating the moves – the first clockwise and the second anticlockwise will result in a four square cord with opposite sides the

same colour. Tie the knot continuously in the same direction –here clockwise and the colours will spiral and the form will be more rounded.

Example by Maureen Jennings

