Knot-A-Tail presents...

Create Your Connection: How to Make Your Own 3, 4 Strand Horse Hair Bracelet

For centuries the craft of braiding horse hair has been handed down from one generation to the next. Braiding consists of a craft that came from the necessity of making something basically out of nothing. Crafty crafters looked to any available source that was around, and with a Cowboy, it was his horse.

You can learn the transformation from horse hair to the most amazing works of art in belts, bridles, hat bands, bracelets and the list just goes on. Horse hair items can be as vivid in color, so alive with imagination in design in a craft that is not only a fun craft but it can be a profitable one as well.

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1.0 Ways to Craft

1.1 Braiding
Braiding is begun by twisting tail hairs together to create what are called pulls, twists, strings or strands. Working with 8-12 strings, the braider moves the outside hairs in an established pattern, under and over the inside strands to create a design. Each of these sets of strings forms square braids or strands that, when completed, can be sewn together to create the finished product. Our hatbands are referred to as 3, 5, or 7 strand. That is the number of square braid lengths combined for the desired width. Most people when discussing braiding call them strands. Several strands are attached at one end and then pinned to a board, to hold them in place. The strands are then braided together in a pattern.

The simplest braid that most people are familiar with is the three strand braids, you see it used in pigtails on little girls. Most of the braiding done with horse hair is a little more complicated. The 8 or 12 strand square braid is used quite often for stampede strings on cowboy hats. Several 8 or 12 strand square braids can also be sewn together to make items such as belts, hat bands, suspenders, bridles as well as many other items. Braiding can also be incorporated in a hitched piece of art such as a hat band or bridle.

1.2 Hitching
As with braiding, a string of horsehair is twisted to begin work. Hitching is possibly the most time consuming of horsehair arts. By incorporating colors into the work a hitcher can create patterns like diamonds or spirals. Many times, the support is removed and the work is flattened in a press. The larger tubes are flattened, hand tooled leather billets are added, and distinctive patterns are created. Smaller tubes created from a wire dowel, produce a solid cylindrical shape found in our key chains, hatbands and bracelets.

"Hitching" with horsehair involves making stitches similar to half-hitch knots in a concentric arrangement on a wooden or wire dowel. This technique is the method for making the exciting geometric designs.

Hitching horsehair is more intricate and time-consuming than braiding. Thus, hitched items are more expensive than braided ones.

1.3 Weaving
Also called finger weaving or flat braid, a series of strings are used forming a warp. When the outside strings are brought under and over they form the woof of the weave. Using the same principles as loom work, finger weaving tends to be flat and not tightly formed like the square braid. In this type of work the entire width is woven as one piece. Though used with horsehair, this type of braiding is more often seen in leather for belts and hatbands.

1.4 Twisting
Mainly used for making ropes to begin twisting, loose hair is spun into a strand, much like wool. These strands are then twisted back upon themselves to form ropes. When the rope is completed
the short ends of the twisted hair stick up and feel prickly. Spiral and checked patterns are often seen in this type of work. Horsehair ropes are described by the finished diameter and the number of strands.

1.5 Hair Work
A popular art of the 19th and early 20th centuries, elaborate jewelry was often created from the hair of a loved one. Braiding tables along with tapestry style bobbins and counterweights are carefully moved to create intricate braids, often over slender wire forms. Hair work patterns use openwork, shape, and texture as design elements to create watch chains, necklaces, bracelets, pins, and a variety of charms.

2.0 What if I want to learn how to do this myself?
Completely learning the craft of braiding horse hair, takes work, however, I think anyone could learn if they really wanted to. It is a difficult craft, you have to work hard at it, practice and stick with it.

In order to learn how to braid you might want to braid something else first. Then, when you know the basics of braiding, tackle braiding horsehair. Horsehair is not a cooperative median. The horse hair will not want to stay where you put it and the braids look very different and have a very different feel. Sometimes, they look almost like braiding plastic and the hair will determinedly fly off in many directions.

If you are interested in going on with this craft, then I would suggest a few more sources of information. Along with the Braiding with Horse Hair book there is also a CD that has the instruction on it as well.

There is a book and a video available to help.

Braiding with Horsehair

Click Here to View the Braiding with Horsehair Book on Knot-A-Tail

Click Here to SAVE when you buy both the "Braiding with Horse Hair" book and the "Making Horse Hair Rope" Book on Knot-A-Tail
The book has several easy to follow illustrated instructions making this 26 pages and it is a must for the new artist.

This book will enable you to do many braiding projects with horse hair. All the basic steps are included. The braid itself is a square or flat braid. The book will show you how to attach tassels and parts and how to cover joins with a beautiful Button Knot. To do this, you will use two styles of hat bands as a project. These will include all the basic steps, and you can go from there to make whatever you want.

You will begin with the preparation of the hair to braid then onto the braid work. Next will be how to assemble the project and finish it with the Button Knot and Ring Knot.

The bowline Quick Release Knot, as seen below, is a good knot that holds tight, but is easy to untie. You will want to master it, as you will use it when making the Button Knot. This page from the book is an example of the easy illustrated instruction you will be working with.

The DVD is filmed in Mexico. The DVD goes step by step through the process of making a braided horsehair hatband.

It is designed to be used with the book Braiding With Horse Hair.

The video is a must for anyone interested in horse hair crafting. It is approx. 90 minutes in length, very informative, even if you wish not to purchase the booklet.

It is a great DVD with sound, to use for educational purposes. Show in schools, crafting classes, events and other organizations. The DVD comes in covered plastic case.
3.0 Getting Started

The instructions are for a very simple, no knots, 4 strand horse hair braided bracelet. These are simple to follow instruction for a Do-It-Yourself, very simply made Horse Hair bracelet.

Charms and beads can be easily added and are very fun to add so you can get as creative as you would like. Most craft stores have western styled charms for a very minimal cost. You can certainly make a few of these for your friends and family as personalized gifts.

3.1 Measuring for your Horse Hair bracelet

You will need to know how long your bracelet will need to be, so I have included the instructions on how to measure. If you decide to order one of our custom bracelets, you will also need to know how to make sure you order one that will fit.

Please use a plastic or cloth tape measure so it will wrap around your wrist
Directions:

- Measure your wrist at the largest part.
- Add 1/2” for a tighter fit or up to 1” for a looser fit to this measurement depending upon preference. This is your final bracelet length.

Average women's size is 7-7 1/4". Average men's size is 8".

*Knot-A-Tail's model size is 6 3/8”. We would ship a 7” bracelet.*

3.2 Collection of the hair:

Before you start you will need:

- a very sharp pair of scissors
- a rubber band
- a plastic bag.

First make sure that the hair you are about to trim off of the tail is clean. Do not use any softeners, conditioners, or products to make the hair shiny. A mild soap, like Ivory Soap that is 99% pure soap is perfect.

You will want to wash the hair very thoroughly. It is naturally strong and shiny. It will look and feel very different when it is braided. I have customers tell me that it is plastic, but it takes on a natural shine of its own when it is braided, so you will not need to add any conditioners. In fact, adding more conditioners or any chemicals to the hair will shorten the life of your finished bracelet, so go as natural as you can go when washing the hair.

When you are getting ready to trim the hair from the tail, try to get the longest pieces as possible. In order to make a 7 inch bracelet, you will need hair that is at least 24 inches long. *Remember, do not use mane hair!* This is just too soft, it will not work and your piece will not last.

Next make sure the tail is completely combed out and free of any tangles after you have washed it. Start on the bottom of the tail and look for the longest section of hair. Next, lift up the tail of the horse and select a lock that is about half the way up the dock, and yet goes all the way down into the brush of the tail. You want the longest hair you can find on that particular horse. Snip the lock off as close to the skin as you can and put the rubber band around the cut end right away. Put it in the plastic bag.
Do not braid it or tie it in a knot. Just simply loop it and put it in the bag to help keep the hair from getting tangled into a mess. Keep it in the bag, until you are ready to start braiding the hair.

For each bracelet it will usually take a piece as big around as your finger.

Remember, you will use only tail hair for braiding. Mane hair is not suitable for braided horsehair jewelry. Mane hair is very fine, compared to tail hair, and the individual hairs are not very strong. Since they are so thin and weak they simply make a very bad bracelet that will not last. In addition it takes a great deal of time, somewhere around 4 times as long to work mane hair, and then when you are all done you will simply have an item that will not last.

3.3 You will need:

- Waxed Cobbles string or some quality thread.
- Larger daring needle
- Strong glue (I find that the Flip Flop glue works well)
- Two bracelet clasps (Knot-A-Tail’s are made with the Lobster Claw Clasp) available from our web site. We use the heavier duty ones so they will last. In the beginning, I purchased a few from the local craft store but they did not hold up and were not the quality ones that we now offer.
- Two small silver O-rings
- Two end caps
- 180-240 Strands of horsehair

(You can find these items on our web site in the craft and book section and they are very inexpensive.)
4.0 A 3 Strand Bracelet (Practice Piece)

Get the hair that you have collected out of the bag. If you want a two-toned look, you will need two different shades of hair. This makes the bracelet highly noticeable.

You do not want to use too much hair for each bracelet, but the most important thing is to separate the hair into pieces that are all about the same length. You might quickly see when you start separating the hair that you have not collected enough of the longest pieces, if so, head back out to the barn and try again.

Take the shorter pieces and start by doing a simple three strand braid. Since, most people already know how to do a simple tree strand braid; I will not show that here. However, if you are not sure, just Google “three strand braid” and you will find lots of articles on the subject.

Let’s start with less hair for the first trail. I started with between 60 to 80 stands of hair for each section of the braid. So to do a 3 strand braid you will need around 180 to 240 stands of hair. Don’t worry if they are not all exactly the same length, but make sure that you starting end is as even as possible so you do not waste any hair.

You are going to start with a practice piece, so make two piles of hair. Pick a pile to be your practice piece, perhaps the shorter pile.

Be careful not to use too much hair it will make the braid to thick and you will not be able to make the braid tight enough. Also, if you use too many strands it will not fit into the end caps.

Lets Begin:

1. Rubber band one end together as close to one end as possible.
2. Trim the end of the hair as close to the rubber band as you can get and still get the end cap over the all the hair.
3. Put your glue in the end cap and glue the end cap onto the rubber banded end.
4. Hold the hair tightly in the end cap per the instructions on the glue you purchased until the hair is set into the end cap. Be patient and read the instruction on the glue.
5. Let the hair sit overnight in the glue. I find that if the hair will not hold in the cap, you will need to start again and find a different glue to try. If too much glue remains in the end cap, just use a new end cap. The glue that is remaining inside the cap could prevent the hair from ever bonding inside the cap. This can be a little tricky finding the correct glue. Most of the crazy glues or hot glue sticks do not work to bond the hair inside the end cap.

6. Once the hair is securely glued inside the end cap, just start braiding. As you first start, don’t worry about how tight the braid is or if the braid is even. Just start practicing braiding the horse hair. The more times that you braid the hair at this point, the better your end results will be. Simple braid to the end, carefully undo the braid until you start to get the look you like.

Test to see how long if the length is correct and remember to have enough room to allow you to get the clasp on and off. I like mine a little longer. Sometimes a bracelet is hard to get on and the extra room is nice. If you are making a bracelet for a friend the average length for a bracelet for a women is a 7” and a man is around an 8”.

Once you have the look and length you want, wrap the thread about the hair and again follow the instruction from above to wrap the thread around the hair. This will keep it secure will you glue the end cap on the hair.

Finish up by:

- Gluing the end cap on
- Let the hair set until it is completely set
- Assemble the entire lobster claw claps and o-Rings onto the end caps.
- And.... Enjoy!

You have just finished a simple three strand bracelet, and below you will find several different instruction sets for doing the 4 strand braid, which is what I recommend for the Horse Hair bracelet. It will be tighter, stronger and prettier than the 3 strand braid.

Take a look at the different instructions and just pick the one that you understand the most.

Note: follow my instruction for the start of the bracelet. Otherwise that hair will not fit into the end cap with the hair folder over.

5.0 Four-Strand and Multiple-Strand Braids:

Four-strand braids (4-braids for short) are an advanced version of the basic braiding technique.
Obviously, the problem of strands versus number of hands is increased; you need to be well-grounded in 3-strand technique in order to do a good 4-braid with hair. In addition, 4-braids have a tendency to rotate/twist along their center axis like macrame. It seems as if odd-numbered strands do not have this problem. Keeping the tension even is the best solution--but a twisted 4-braid is also a cool thing!

5.1 Round 4-Part Braid

1. Clip the upper ends of the 4 strands securely, you'll need both hands.

2. Start with the outer strand on the right-hand side.

3. Weave the outer strand (on the right) under the two middle strands, then back to the right over the second strand you wove under.

4. Repeat this "under two, reverse direction, over one" weaving pattern, starting on alternate sides (you'd start with the outer left strand next).

5. After five or six repetitions you should see the round braid starting to take shape.

6. Put a bit of glue in your second endcap. Trim the end of the braid, and place it into your endcap, holding tightly per instructions on your glue. Let glue set over night before wearing.

Tips

- Reminder! Inner strands cross each other left OVER right, then the outer pairs cross left UNDER right.

5.2 Inner & Outer Pairs Method

1. Begin with four equal strands.

2. Secure the upper end into the end cap. Make sure the strands lay flat rather than overlapping in the clip.

3. Take two strands in your left hand, and two in your right hand. Separate these so that you have a distinct left and right strand in each hand. This is where using two different colors of hair comes in handy when you first start braiding the hair.

4. Beginning with the inner strands (right strand of left hand, left strand of right hand) cross the left strand above the right, switching each strand to the opposite hand.

5. You now have two pairs with new inner strands. In each hand, move the left strand over the right strand. You should do this simultaneously, which takes a small amount of practice.
6. Cross inner strands left above right.

7. Cross the outer pairs right above left.

8. Repeat for length of braid.

7. Put a bit of glue in your second endcap. Trim the end of the braid, and place it into your endcap, holding tightly per instructions on your glue. Let glue set over night before wearing.

*(Instruction Pictured Below)*

5.3 Four Strand Instruction with Images

1. Hang or tie the swivel snap on a nail or any firm object at a convenient working height. Adjust lace so snap is in exact center and all four ends are together.

2. Arrange the strands as shown in Fig. 2, and count from left to right numbering them from 1 to 4.

3. Hold the center strands, 2 and 3, with the forefinger and thumb of the right hand. Take strand 4 with the left hand (Fig. 3) and bring around the back to the left and forward to the front between strands 1 and 2 (Fig. 4). Fold over strand 2 so that it lies parallel to strand 3 (Fig. 5). Draw all strands tight.
4. Hold the center strands, 2 and 4, with the forefinger and thumb of the left hand. Take strand 1 with the right hand (Fig. 6) and bring around the back to the right and forward to the front between strands 3 and 4 (Fig. 7). Fold over strand 4 so that it lies parallel to strand 2 (Fig. 8). Draw all strands tight.

5. Continue braiding, repeating steps 3 and 4 alternately (Figs. 3 to 8). Remember that the working strand (the one that is woven into the others is always the uppermost outside strand either on the right or left.

6. Continue the round braid until the strands unit you are at the desired length. Put a bit of glue in your second endcap. Trim the end of the braid, and place it into your endcap, holding tightly per instructions on your glue. Let glue set over night before wearing.

5.4 Round Braid for Two-Toned example

5.4.1 Materials:
Choose 3 times the length of finished item:
3 feet of hair makes 1 foot of round braid
6 feet of hair makes 2 feet of round braid

5.4.2 Directions
1. Start with the end caps in place
2. For diamond stitch, arrange strips as in Fig. A (Pictured Below). Number strands 1, 2, 3, and 4 from left to right. You are ready to start braiding.

3. Place strand 4 under strands 3 and 2, then back over strand 2 (Fig. B). Pull strands tight (Fig. C).

4. Place strand 1 under strands 2 and 4, then back over 4 (Fig. D). Now pull strands tight! Untangle loose strand ends as you go and do not allow them to twist (Fig. E).

5. You have just completed the only two steps necessary to repeating steps (under 2 strands and back over 1) until desired length is braided.

6. The spiral stitch round braid is set up with 2 strands of alternating colors (Fig. F). Braid strands the same as for diamond stitch (under 2 strands and back over 1).

7. To fasten off, tie simple overhand knot to secure ends.

5.5 Numerical Method

1. Try using four colors to make the numerical pattern easier to follow.

2. If we number the strands 1-2-3-4, the numerical order would rotate as follows: 1.2.3.4., no crossings:
1. 1.3.2.4, with 2 crossing OVER 3.
2. 3.1.4.2, with 1 & 2 crossing UNDER 3 & 4 respectively.
3. 3.4.1.2, with 1 crossing OVER 4.
4. 4.3.2.1, with 3 & 1 crossing UNDER 2 & 4 respectively.
5. 4.2.3.1, with 3 crossing OVER 2.
6. 2.4.1.3, with 4 & 3 crossing UNDER 2 & 1 respectively.
7. 2.1.4.3, with 4 crossing OVER 1.
8. 1.2.3.4, with 2 & 4 crossing UNDER 1 & 3 respectively.

3. Repeat until your braid is the desired length.

6.0 What Else Can I Make?

Here are some examples of what you can create when you master the art of braiding horse hair.

Hatbands: Most of the items are done in a flat braid and then the braids are stitched together. For example, one flat braid is about a 1/8 of an inch wide, so to make our 7/8 inch braided hair band you will need 7 strands stitched together. Now you have our 7 strand braided hat hand.

Click Here to View the 7 Strand Hatband on Knot-A-Tail!
**Bracelets:** Five strand horse hair bracelets that are in both natural colors and some dyed hair in vivid colors. It is very easy to dye horse hair and get very vivid colors. Some of the colors will not last but most will keep the original color. Purple is the hardest to get the color to last.

[Click Here to View the 5 Strand Bracelets on Knot-A-Tail!](#)

**Bridle & Rein Sets:** These are quite a task. Knot-A-Tail headstall and rein sets include button and loop design for traditional adjusting. Ask us about adding tassels to your braided items!

[Click Here to View the Headstall and Rein SET on Knot-A-Tail!](#)
6.1 Ready for More?

If you really want to learn how to create some of the most colorful items and use your creative skills to create outrageous patterns, you will want to learn how to hitch horse hair. As your skills advance, we also have several other books available.

*Hitched Bridle:* Just take a look at the color in one of our hitched bridles (*Pictured Below*). We also offer hitched belts, hat bands and bracelets in a variety of color and patterns.

[Click Here to View Knot-A-Tail's Full Catalog of Hitched Items!](#)

*Hitched Bracelet:* This one has sterling etched tips with a metal core so that it is easily adjustable to fit anyone.

[Click Here to View this Hitched Bracelet on Knot-A-Tail!](#)
The elements of hitching are twisting ten or eleven horse tail hairs together into a pull. The pulls are knotted over nylon string which is wound around a dowel. You are actually working with a tube when hitching. This tube is pressed flat after hitching is done (remove the dowel). For reins, the hitching is done over rope, and the rope left inside. Only two knots are used to create all the intricate patterns.

Note that hitched horsehair is not the same as braided horsehair. Hitched horsehair is a series of knots; while braiding is, well, braided - think like a girl's hair is braided. Hitched horsehair will last for generations, while braiding does not have the same lasting stability.

### 7.0 Craft Books on Hitching

#### 6.1 How to Hitch Horse Hair

By Clay Christensen: Step by Step instructions in this time honored craft, from first pulls to finished projects. Spiral bound lies flat for easy diagram. Soft cover, 8 ½ X 11 inches, 82 pages. $24.00

[Click Here to View the How to Hitch Horsehair Book on Knot-A-Tail!](#)

#### 6.2 Hitched Horse Hair

This book is the complete guide for self learning by Shoni Maulding. This is an instruction book with illustrations to help easily discover the craft of hitched horse hair work. Indebt instructions on using graph paper to create unique designs. Soft cover, 8 ½ X 11 inches. 192 pages  $32.00 plus shipping
Building on the success of their beginner’s book, this book fulfills the many requests for advanced patterns. Drawing from the award winning Shoni Collection, each graphed pattern guides hitchers through over 30 advanced patterns with complete directions, i.e. eagle, buffalo, bear, blue pony, rose in feather, End of the Trail, alphabet and numbers, geometrics, etc. You
must know how to hitch to use the patterns.

If you want to put hitched inlays in leather, this is the book for you. It explains how to design inlays for length and width so you have the inlay size you want. Inlay shrinkage makes a difference with size as do other factors. Learn how to work with these factors. Projects with hitched inlays in leather complete the book, i.e. buckle, belt, notepad, saddle, Indian cradleboard, quiver, etc.

A new technique of hitching patterns is also explained. You will be surprised how easy this is. It's great for making your pictorial designs look the way they are graphed.

240 pages, 8 ½" x 11", illustrated, 4 page color insert, softcover, supplier list. $32.00, plus shipping

Click Here to View the Hitched Horsehair II Book on Knot-A-Tail!

Additional Example(s): Although this is not one of Knot-A-Tail hitched bridles, just look at the amazing colors that are so vivid and the pattern is unbelievable in this hitched bridle.

The price of this bridle ? $18,000.00

Also if you have any projects you would like to share, a craft that you are learning, or questions, check out www.knot-a-tail.com forums on the web site.

Most of all have fun with your new bracelet and I hope that you create many more!

Roberta

You can email me at support@knotatail.com.