Loop Braiding Tutorial
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for the Braids and Bands on-line discussion group of the Braid Society

Part 3: The Six-Loop Spiral Braid

In the 6-loop Spiral Braid, these three pairs of fingers exchange loops:
- Right index with Left ring
- Right middle with Left middle
- Right ring with Left index

In the 6-loop version of the Spiral braid, the ring fingers are added to the braiding procedure. In this version, the middle fingers meet and exchange their loops, unlike the 4-loop and 8-loop versions. It’s a much more substantial-looking braid than the 4-loop Spiral braid, with a better-defined spiral.

More pattern variations are possible, including 6 lengthwise stripes, 2 wide and 2 narrow lengthwise stripes, “polka-dot” stripes, etc. The same principles hold for color-planning as in the 4-loop version. If a loop-exchanging pair of fingers hold the same color loops, lengthwise stripes of that color will form on opposite sides of the braid. In the purple braid below, 5 loops were purple and one was gold rayon. It formed a gold polka-dot stripe, alternating with the purple loop of its loop-exchange partner.

Some non-spiral pattern variations of the 6-loop Spiral Braid
First I’ll show a new way to start a braid with no loose ends at the top, and a nice eyelet or loop made with 3-loop braids.

Skip this fancy start if you are making your first 6-loop Spiral Braid (and if you haven’t yet learned how to make a 3-loop braid.) For now, start the 6-loop Spiral Braid the same way as the previous braids, this time making a bundle of 6 loops: 3 of one color, and 3 of a contrasting second color.

Even if you haven’t yet learned a 3-loop braid, you can still use the new ‘eyelet-start’ method to start a 4-loop braid with a loop at the top.

Follow the instructions, using 4 loops instead of 6. Then braid two 2-loop braids to form the eyelet or loop at the top of the braid. Join all the loops together into a 4-loop Spiral braid to close up the eyelet.
Loop/ eyelet start with no ends.
Skip this part the first time you make a 6-loop Spiral braid—just set up a bundle of 6 loops as shown in the 4-loop instructions, and proceed to the next part that shows the sequence of the braiding moves.

Cut 3 lengths of a dark color, and 3 lengths of a light color.
Tie each of the 3 lengths of light yarn (separately) into a loop.

Thread a dark length of yarn through all 3 light loops, and tie it into a loop that is linked onto the light loops.

Do this with all 3 dark lengths, one at a time.
Cut a header cord of a finer but strong thread—maybe fine perle cotton or embroidery floss.

Insert the header cord through all the dark and light loops. Be sure it goes through both sets.

Keep the two sets of loops separated.

Start braiding a 3-loop braid with one of the sets of loops.

The knotted ends will be at your fingertips.

They can occasionally catch on each other while braiding, be careful when pulling loops through loops.
You may need to tug on the other set of loops after the first few braiding moves, to clear them out of the way of the braid.

Tighten the first move or two gently, but after the second move, tighten the next few moves very firmly to squeeze the top of the braid tightly onto the other set of loops. (avoiding looseness at the join)

Braid for as long as you would like your loop / eyelet opening to be.

Then drop your loops, or set their ends on a holder. 3 loops is so few I usually just drop them. The loop order will not really matter when you pick them up again.

Now you will braid with the other set of loops.

I normally leave the first braided section’s loops hanging, but if they were silk or other slippery fiber, I would put a clip at the fell (base) of that braid.
A clip helps keep it from loosening while you braid the other loops.

With cotton, a clip isn’t usually necessary. Any loosening should be easy to tighten up when you pick the loops back up.

After braiding approx. the same distance with the second set of loops, place those loops all on one hand. Pick up the first set of loops, untwist them into a neat-looking order, and place them on your other hand.

Now you are ready to join all the loops into one braid, which will connect the two mini-braids, forming a nice loop at the top of your braid.

The first few tightening moves in the next part of the braid should tighten up any looseness at the bottom of these mini-braids.
Braiding procedure for the 6-loop version of the Spiral Braid:

Index, middle, and ring fingers hold the loops.

Start with 3 dark loops on one hand; 3 light loops on the other.

Colors will switch hands after each braiding cycle.

BRAIDING PROCEDURE FOR THE 6-LOOP SPIRAL BRAID
These moves will feel very asymmetrical! Tap them out to practice first.

1. Right index finger and Left ring finger exchange loops*.
   -----------TIGHTEN LOOPS-----------

2. Right middle finger and Left middle finger exchange loops*.
   -----------TIGHTEN LOOPS-----------

3. Right ring finger and Left index finger exchange loops*
   -----------TIGHTEN LOOPS-----------

REPEAT, starting at step 1

*Exchange loops by pulling one through the other, as in the 2-Loop Braid.
  Right-handers pull left-to-right; Left-handers pull right-to-left
Right index and Left ring finger exchange.

Tighten.

Right and Left middle fingers exchange.

Tighten.
Right ring and Left index exchange.

After this move, loops will all have switched to their “partner fingers” on the other hand. Colors should be on the opposite hands from their starting positions.

Tighten, and check to make sure all the dark loops are on one hand and all the light loops on the other.

If they are not—if they are mixed on the two hands, get them onto the right hands any way you can before starting step 1, or your spiral pattern will disappear.

Repeat from the beginning.

Back to step 1—(all the way back, don’t throw in a step 2 first!)

Right index and Left ring finger exchange [sorry---colors should be opposite here]
Developing spiral pattern.

After finishing the braid, you will cut the header cord and pull it out from the top of the braid.

A possible ending for the braid:

Drop 4 of the loops, leaving 2 loops on your fingers. Pull those other loops out of the way.

Braid a two loop braid to the ends of the loops. Then pick up two other loops and braid them. Finally braid the last two loops. The 3 fringe braidlets will be a bit wild and curly. You can leave them like that, or tame them.

I forgot to take a picture of their wilder state. Here they are the next day, after I wet the fringe with hot soapy water, rinsed it under the tap and hung the braid to let the fringe dry. The loop-ends are trimmed off and tied in overhand knots.
The finished braid would make a nice key fob.

If you braid a loop into both ends of a braid, one end can be put through a belt-loop near your pocket, and then the braid fed through it (as in a larks head knot), and the other end used as a key fob. Much better-looking than a chain!

6-loop spiral braid with 2-loop braided finish

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