Loop Braiding Tutorial
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for the Braids and Bands on-line discussion group of the Braid Society
Part 4: 8-Loop Spiral Braid

The 8-loop Spiral braid is documented in several loop braiding manuscripts from the 15th Century.*

It has an even more well-defined spiral pattern than the 6-loop version, and more possible pattern variations.

In the 8-loop Spiral Braid, four fingers on each hand hold loops. The following pairs of fingers are loop-exchange partners:

- Right index and Left little finger
- Right middle and Left ring finger
- Right ring and Left middle finger
- Right little finger and Left index
BRAIDING PROCEDURE FOR THE 8-LOOP SPIRAL BRAID

(Middle fingers do **not** meet in the 8-loop braid.)

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

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

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

4. Right little 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

The photos below show this sequence:

R index and L little finger exchange

---*tighten loops*---
R middle and L ring finger exchange

---tighten loops---

R ring and L middle finger exchange

---tighten loops---

R little and L index finger exchange

---tighten loops---

End of braiding cycle—all colors have switched hands.
One way to start an 8-loop Spiral braid is to braid two **4-loop Spiral braids** as a loop/buttonhole start.

The loop at the top of the braid is two 4-loop Spiral braids that were braided simultaneously.

I showed one way to make this loop-start in Part 3, on the 6-loop Spiral braid.

For an 8-loop braid you could follow the exact same procedure, using 2 linked sets of 4 loops. (I call this type of linked start a “handshake start.”)

For mini-spiral braids, each linked set of 4 loops should have 2 dark and 2 light loops.

[See part 3 of this tutorial for the rest of the procedure]

Below I will show another way to braid a divided loop start for an 8-loop Spiral Braid. This way creates a seamless join at the top. Once you get the hang of it, it’s faster to do than the handshake start. That’s because the two mini-spiral braids are braided simultaneously, with no need to set down and pick up one of the sets of loops.
Make 2 separate, *double-length* dark loops and 2 separate *double-length* light loops.

Lay them straight, all together, and loop a header cord around them at their midpoint.

Fasten the header cord to a fixed point, keeping the two halves of the loop bundle separated.
Pull and adjust the two halves until they are the same length—the header cord should be in the exact center of the loop bundle.

The loops from the left side of the header cord get loaded onto the lowest 2 fingers on BOTH hands.

These 4 loops will end up forming one of the two mini-braids.

The 4 loops still hanging will form the other mini-braid.

Now the loops from the right side of the header cord get loaded onto the upper fingers of both hands.
At the start of braiding, each hand holds only one color.

For this 2-braids-at-the-same-time method, the following fingers will be loop-exchange partners, in this order:

1. Right index and Left middle
2. Right middle and Left index
3. Right ring and Left little
4. Right little and Left ring

1. R index and L middle exchange loops.
   –tighten–

2. R middle and L index exchange loops.
   –tighten–
This sequence keeps repeating. You will find yourself braiding two 4-loop spiral braids at the same time—joined together at the top of the braid. The four upper fingers will be braiding one braid above, and the four lower fingers will be braiding another braid below.
When the divided part is long enough, start braiding with the loop movements shown above for an 8-loop Spiral braid. That will join the two parts together into one braid.

For making a loop in the middle or at the end of your 8-loop Spiral Braid, you can either drop half the loops and braid one mini-braid at a time, as in the 6-loop braid, or keep all your loops on the fingers and use the braiding moves above to make two spiral braids at the same time.

**Vertical/ lengthwise Striping Pattern:**
In my little red and navy sample braid, I ended with a loop, followed by a short single braid section, with a non-spiral pattern—the wide vertical stripes pattern.

Rearrange loops onto fingers so that loop-exchange partners are the same color.

(For thinner stripes, arrange loops in *alternating* color order on the fingers.)

Then braid normally. The color arrangement on “striping” fingers will stay the same with each braiding move:

1\textsuperscript{st} exchange
2\textsuperscript{nd} exchange

3\textsuperscript{rd} exchange

4\textsuperscript{th} exchange

One braiding cycle done.
Color distribution has not changed.

After a very short striped section, I finished the braid with four 2-loop braids.
These amazing documents, together with another set from the 17th C., contained scores of instructions for loop braids. The main authority on these documents is Noémi Speiser---her major work on them, and on loop braiding in general, is *Old English Pattern Books for Loop Braiding*, self-published in 2000, available from the author in Europe and from various sources in the U.S., including BraidersHand: http://shop.braidershands.com/category.sc?categoryId=36

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