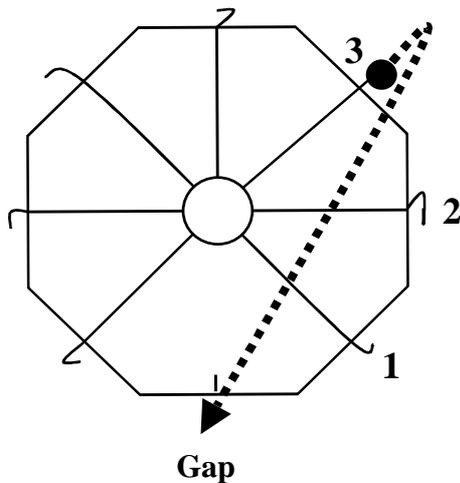


## Fill the Gap



Based on a seven thread  
straw-plaiting braid

Try me!

## But what do you do with it?

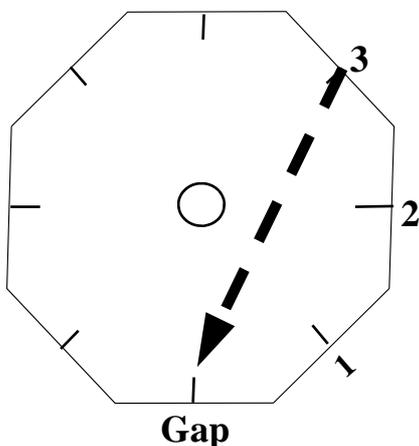
Key fobs, jewellery, dog leads, cushion piping, bag handles, bathroom light cord, shoelaces, buttons or other closures, passementerie, special cord for hanging objects or wrapping (small) presents



*Books about straw-work have many similar patterns, but they are not all suitable for using yarn. Straw was plaited for hats in Switzerland, Italy and England from the 1700's on. You may be familiar with corn-dollies and other decorative straw pieces.*

*More recently, Braid Society members, especially Jean Thornton and Anne Dyer, have given it new life.*

*These directions are thanks to Veronica Johnston, Margot Lees, Ruth MacGregor and Shirley Berlin.*



### How to braid:

1. Hold the card with the gap at the bottom, towards your tummy. Cover the centre hole with your left thumb.
2. Starting with the thread to the right of the gap, count **upwards** 1 - 2 - 3.
3. Lift the #3 thread out of its nick and place it firmly into the gap.
4. Turn the card until the new gap is facing you.

**Repeat steps 1 to 4. You can mutter "jump 2 and fill the gap" as you work.**

**Keeping your thumb over the centre hole helps to make a smooth braid.**

**Every so often tug the braid gently downwards and look under the card to admire your creation.**

**Another way to think about it:** If you think of the card as a clock, the gap is at 6 o'clock. Lift the thread at 2 o'clock out of its nick. Move it down, jumping over the next two threads. Set it into the gap - as in "fill the gap." Rotate the card clockwise until the new gap is at 6 o'clock.

Small children might like to chant "Turn to tummy, 1 - 2 - 3, fill the gap."

**Left-handers** hold the card in the right hand, right thumb over the centre, gap at the **top** (12 o'clock).

Starting with the thread to the **left** of the gap, count the threads downwards 1- 2 - 3. Lift that #3 thread out of its nick and move it up into the gap. (7 o'clock **up** into the gap at 12 o'clock.) Turn the card to put the new gap at the top.

## For the next project, let's make a bracelet.

**The card** - for when this one wears out, or to make one for a friend.

Trace around this card, or you can make a slightly smaller, stiffer one. Card from shoe box works very well or use the back of a notepad. (Cereal box card is a bit bendy but would work in a caravan in the rain!) Cut a square 3 inches/8cms across, then cut the corners off to make an 8-sided card. Cut a slit in the middle of each side. Pierce a hole in the centre of the card with the tip of a pencil, the blade of a pair of scissors (adults only!) or a leather punch.

**Yarns** - cut seven threads, 24inches/60cm long for a bracelet length. Knot them together at one end. Then make a second knot about 5/8 of an inch or 1cm away. (This gap between the knots will hold the knot that you make at the end of the finished braid.)

**Setting up the card** - put the knots through the centre hole and hold them with your left hand *under* the card while you spread out the seven threads *on top of* the card and set them in the slits. Remember that there will be one *empty* slit, "the gap."

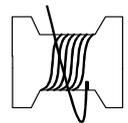
### Finishing the bracelet

When you have braided enough length to go around your wrist, remove the threads from the disc. Knot the ends of the braid together. Slide the knot through the gap that you made earlier between the two knots at the beginning. You have made a friendship bracelet.

**Tip:** Sew a few beads into the knots to make them pretty. Now cut off the straggly ends and dab on a drop of glue.

### Note about threads

It's hard to add on longer threads neatly in this technique, so make the original threads **at least 2** or even 3 times the desired length of the braid. Longer lengths of thread (for a necklace, for example) can be wound onto small squares of left-over card. Cut a nick to hold the thread. Unwind this "bobbin" as you work.



If you are using a variety of yarns and require a braid of a certain length, it would be a good idea to make a short sample first. Sometimes yarns get used up at different rates - some might be stretchy, others not. For instance, if you have combined different weights of yarns, as you braid you'll notice that the thin threads seem shorter than the fat threads. This is because they have to travel further to pass over the thick threads. You will need to cut the thin threads longer to compensate. (You really, really don't want to come up two inches short on piping for a cushion.)

### Making a beaded braid

Measure and cut six threads 2x as long as the braid you want to make. Cut another (strong) thread twice as long as the other threads. Knot the seven ends together. String about 6 inches/15cm of beads on the very long thread. (You can add more beads later as required. Just unwind the beading thread from its bobbin or card and thread on more beads.)

Braid as normal. When the beading thread comes into play, push one bead down into the centre hole as you move that thread. Hold the bead in place under your thumb, below the surface of the card, for the next two moves, after which it will be locked into place on the outside of the braid.

**Tip 1:** Keep one bead visible on top of the card to remind you when it's time to place the next bead.

**Tip 2:** Use a single colour for your threads. Let the beads be the stars of the show.

### Setting up for patterns

*The numbers below refer to the diagram at the right and show the placement of the threads when you set up. As you work, each thread will show up in different slots, eventually returning to the original position.*

\***1,2,3,4** in one color to make a diamond shape, **5,6,7** a contrasting color

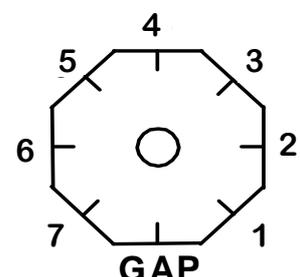
\***1,2,3** fat, the rest thin, to make a braid with texture

\***1,3** fat, the rest thin

\***1** and **3** red, **2** and **4** white, **5, 6,** and **7** black (or use your own colours.)

\***1,2** a strong colour, **3,4,5,6,7** background colour

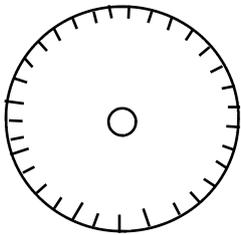
\***1,2,4** a strong colour, **3,5,6,7** background



## Developing More Fill-Gap Patterns

### Number of threads

You can use more than 7 threads but be aware that not all combinations of threads and jumps will produce an exciting pattern or even a braid. When you try more threads, don't forget that you always need one nick more than the number of threads. (Remember this braid is called "Fill the **Gap**")! A circular disc makes it easier to accommodate more than 8 threads.



Mark the number of nicks that you require on the disc, using a marker pen or similar. Most discs have 32 nicks, so for 8 threads, you skip 3 between each mark. 10 threads divides unevenly but that is do-able. Just spread them more or less evenly and then mark their places - you need the mark to find the "gap" nick.

You could use both sides of the disc and possibly different coloured marks while you are experimenting.

### Colours and Layout

A regular pattern will emerge, depending on how many colours you use and how you arrange them at the start. Experiment! Keep notes if you can, so that the wonderful braid you made accidentally can be repeated.

Each thread will show up in different slots as you work, so for any one braid many of the possible layouts will result in the same pattern. For the same reason, writing the numbers on the nicks in the card is not useful, except if you need them temporarily to set up the colours.

Here are some combinations that work. They make spiral patterns.

10 threads, (11 slits), jump 2.	colour A: <b>1,2, 6,7,8</b>	colour B: <b>3,4,5, 9,10</b>
10 threads, (11 slits), jump 3.	colour A: <b>1,3,4,6,9</b>	colour B: <b>2,5,7, 8,10</b>
14 threads, (15 slits), jump 3.	colour A: <b>1,2,3, 8,9,10,11</b>	colour B: <b>4,5,6,7, 12,13,14</b>
20 threads, (21 slits), jump 7.	colour A: <b>1,2, 11,12,13</b>	colour B: <b>3,4,5, 14,15</b>
	colour C: <b>6,7, 16,17,18</b>	colour D: <b>8,9,10, 19,20</b>

### More ideas for varying your braids

- Use a mixture of thick and thin threads. A "thick" thread can be two or three strands of a thin thread used together in the same nick. Just watch to pick up all the threads in each nick every time.
- To make a thicker cord, you can braid around a bunch of "core" threads. Hold these in the same hand that holds the disc and they will travel around as you braid. The working threads of the braid will wrap around the core by themselves.
  - This would be the way to make a pull cord for the bathroom light. Use a nylon cord for the core (because it won't stretch with use).
- If you want to use a fine thread, perhaps a lurex or novelty yarn, that is too fine to work on its own, you can run it along with a sturdier thread in the same nick. This also applies to adding beads. If the beads have tiny holes, thread them on a beading thread and run it along together with a thread like the others in your braid.
- A little bit of glitter can be a fine thing. Try 4 strands wool and 3 of fine glitter yarn. Or just add one thread of glitter any old time to cheer up the world!
- Use one thread of bobble yarn. The bobbles will look like beads as the thread works down the braid. You might have to "cheat" a bit - push the bobble down the hole if it arrives a bit early or a bit late at the point of braiding.
- Start the braid by threading doubled threads through the shank of a button, or a Christmas bauble, or something with a loop that you want to hang up. (You'll have 8 threads, so use two in one nick.)

Most of all - have fun!