

March 13, 2021 Braiding Technique Demonstration: 8-Loop Center Instructor: Christine Manges

8-Loop Center

The 8-Loop Center is an interesting little braid. It is made with one long strand and only one butting seam. These centers are used in a few designs: as “wheels” in a decorative border, as centers in all-butted squares and some octagon patterns, and as ornaments.

A. Width of Strip

For Row 1 of a butted square or octagon, the strand you use to make an 8-Loop Center should be **NARROWER than your usual strands.**

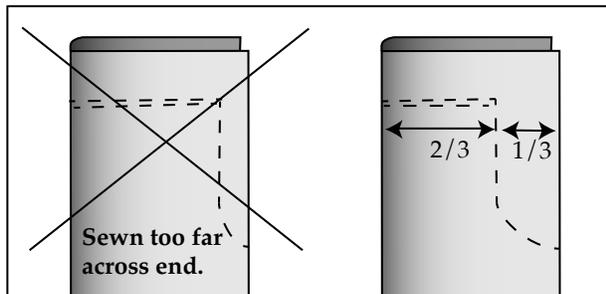
Ex: If you usually use a 2” width, make your center strand 1.75”. If your usual width is 1.75”, try 1.5”.

If you are using the 8-loop center as part of a Wheel Border (see photo, right) or as an ornament, it is not necessary to make your strand narrower than your usual braiding strands.

B. Length of Strip

What about length? The answer may take some experimentation. You want it as small as you can comfortably work with.... Somewhere around 17-19”.

Try it, and make adjustments as needed. It should be tight where the Finish and Start meet.



When making the Enclosed End, it is important to obtain an end that is the **same width as a strand** folded for braiding.

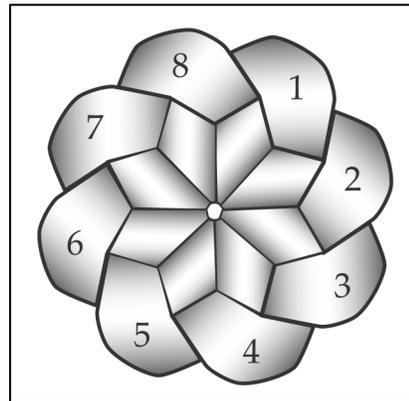
Do not sew all the way across (left diagram), because your end will be too wide. Sew across 2/3 ONLY, then turn and sew down along the side.

C. Seams

I find it easier to *enclose* either end of my 8-loop center before braiding. Once the ends are enclosed, braid the 8-loop center and then stitch the enclosed ends together to butt the braid. A few quick adjustments with a hemostat or pliers, and the seam is well-hidden on both front and back of the braid.

Some choose to use a diagonal seam for the butting seam.

Although I have a preference for diagonally-seamed butts on larger pieces, in a tiny braid like this, I don't find it of any advantage: you have to distort the braid *more* to get enough length to sew a diagonal seam (remember that your initial strand will be longer for a diagonally sewn butting seam, also). The 8-loop center seam hides pretty easily no matter which butt you use, so I think it's easier to just enclose the ends and stitch them together.



Instructions for 8-Loop Center

1. Cut a strip of fabric that is $\frac{1}{4}$ " narrower than your usual strip. It should measure between 17 and 19 inches long – make a note of your length so that you can adjust it after braiding, if it is too loose or too tight.
2. Enclose the Start End and Finish End.

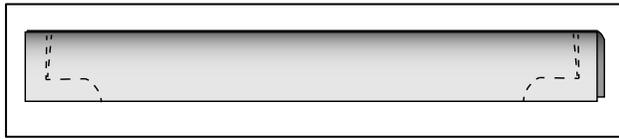
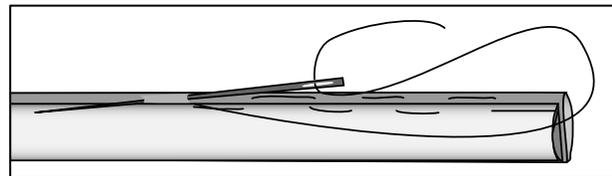


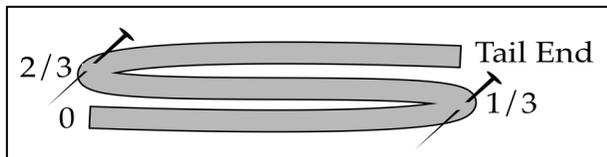
Diagram left shows the 17-19 inch strand enclosed at both ends. Trim corner and ends but NOT along the sides.

(The little swoop at the end of the L-shaped seam is just where I sew out to the edge to clip my threads. You don't have to do that if you don't want to).

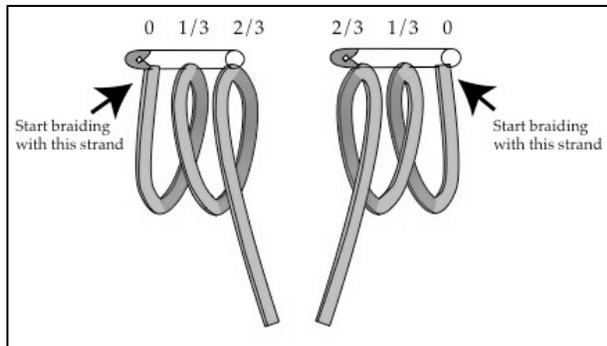


3. Trim end and corner; turn right side out. Push out the corners: the sewn ends should be straight across.

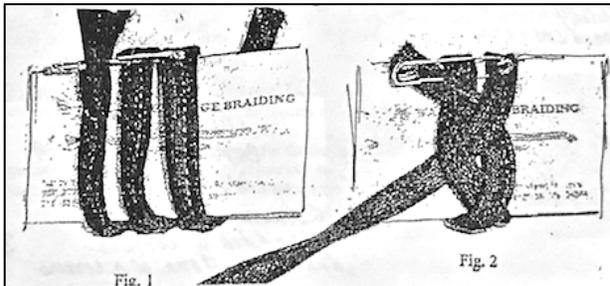
4. Sew folded edges together with a ladder stitch (or other stitch of your choice). An alternative: iron your folded edges.



5. Divide your strand into thirds. Put straight pins at the $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ marks.

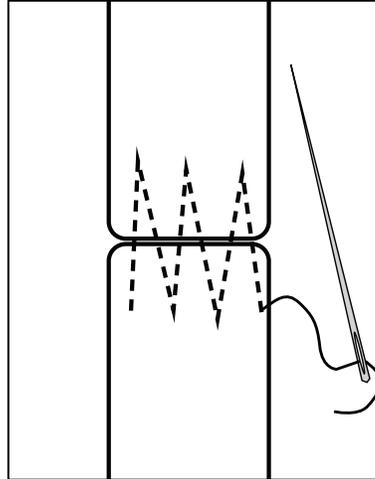
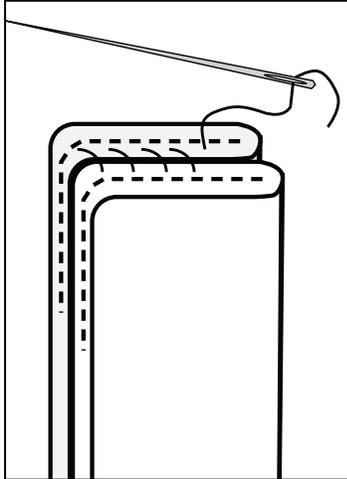


6. Wrap the strand according to the diagrams left. Safety pin at the 0, $\frac{1}{3}$, and $\frac{2}{3}$ marks, leaving the tail free. *Keep folded edges left.*



Alternatively: wrap by Nancy Young's method. Get a business card (2" X 3.5"), and wrap the strand around the business card. Pin across the top, leaving the long end free – note that the free end is on the right side of the wrapped card. Begin braiding with the pinned end. (From Nancy's book "Braid On")

7. Braiding the 8-Loop Center: Begin braiding with the "0" loop (i.e., DON'T begin braiding with the free end or "tail.") Braid by weaving the tail in and out of the 2 pinned loops. Braid a bit tightly.
8. Sew the seam on the 8-Loop Center: When you have braided 8 loops, your tail should just reach the start loop. Pin the 2 ends together. Stitch with matching thread. See diagrams next page.



If you have used the Enclosed End method described above, pull on the Start and Finish Ends to get some length. Place the ends back-to-back as shown in upper left diagram. Whip-stitch the ends together, catching only the backs, with tiny stitches using matching thread.

Diagram upper right: straighten out the ends so that the fronts are touching, as shown. Stitch the fronts together with long diagonal stitches. Be sure to catch front, back, and sides of the enclosed ends: if the corners aren't firmly attached to each other, the strand will look bad.

9. Hiding the seam

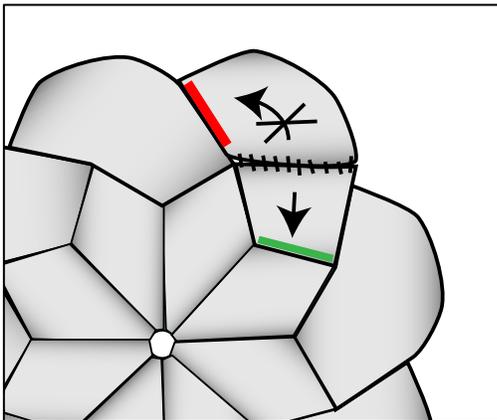


Diagram left shows the direction to move the loop to hide the seam best: toward the center.

Flatten the 8-loop center so that folded edges are turned inward toward the center, and the smooth edges are at the outside.

The enclosed end seam hides better if hemostats or pliers are used to pull the seam down to the bottom of a loop rather than the top of a loop. See the diagram left – if the seam is pulled back into the center (green line), rather than to the outside of the 8-loop center (red line), the seam hides better on both front and back.

10. Closing the 8-loop center

Using a piece of lacing thread, lace through the 8 center loops and pull tight. If you can't get the loops to close, steam or mist the wool and try again. Knot the lacing thread, bury your ends under 3 loops, and cut.