

## Different Braid Starts and When to Use Them

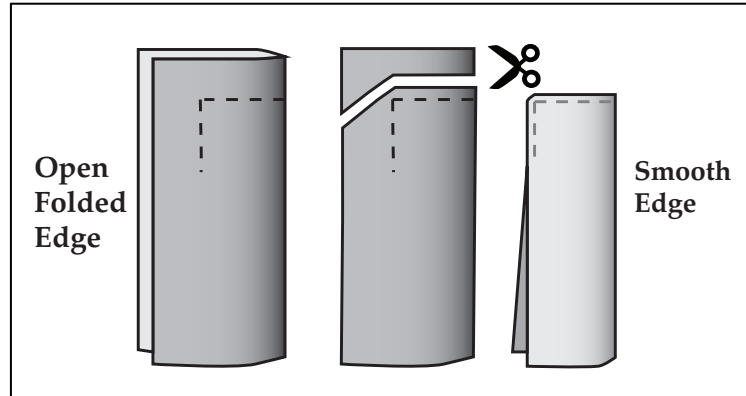
### A. Starts for a 3-Strand braid – Continuous Braiding

#### 1. “Enclosed End” Start

Each strand has its end finished and enclosed.

The strands are either hand-stitched to each other, or a piece of lacing thread is run through them with a tapestry needle when lacing around the Start.

Many like this braid start and use it as their first-choice method. Personally, I can never get this start to lay neatly... but each Start has its own plusses and minuses.



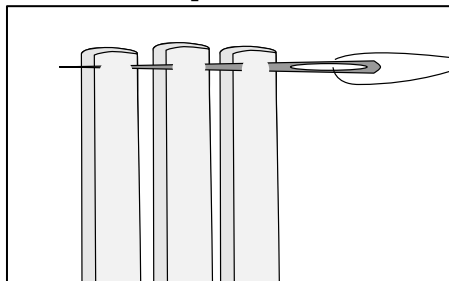
- Fold a strip right-sides-together along its length.
- With sewing machine or needle and thread, stitch about 1/2 to 2/3 of the way across the end of the strip, about 1/4 inch down from the edge.
- Make a right-angle turn and sew another half inch down the side.
- Trim the corner and end (not the side: you need the bulk of the seam allowance to make this end look like other loops).
- Turn right side out. Push the corners out.

f. Repeat for all 3 strands.

**Note:** a common error made with sewing these ends is to sew too far across the end of the folded strip before making the right-angle turn. This leads to a very wide end that doesn't look like the rest of the loops. The width of this end should look like the rest of the strands folded for braiding.

#### Stitching the Enclosed End Start: Thread or Lacing Cord

There are two ways to stitch the Enclosed End Start together. One is to use needle and thread before you ever start braiding and stitch the ends together, either side-by-side or with a bit of overlap, which I think looks better:



- Thread a needle with thread and tie a knot at the end.
- Overlap the ends slightly and stab through either all at once (shown) or one at a time.
- Go back and forth through all strands several times. Knot off.
- Begin braiding with either the right or left strand unless otherwise specified in a pattern.

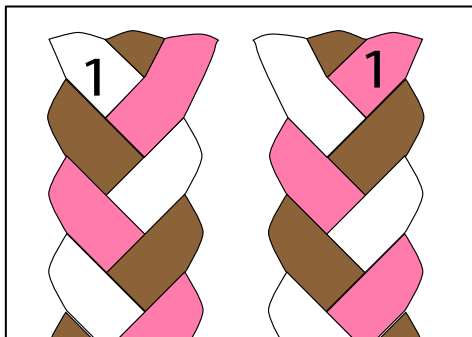


Diagram left shows beginning to braid with either the left or right strand – see #1 indicating the first loop braided.

The other way to manage an Enclosed End Start is to keep the strands on the Start Safety Pin, and begin braiding. When it is time to lace through the Enclosed End Start, stab through in one direction (folded edges side to smooth side) with lacing cord, then back again, and resume regular lacing. You have to switch to a thin tapestry needle (18, or even 20) to pierce through the ends. You might have to grab the needle tip with rubber grippers or a hemostat to

help pull it through the ends.

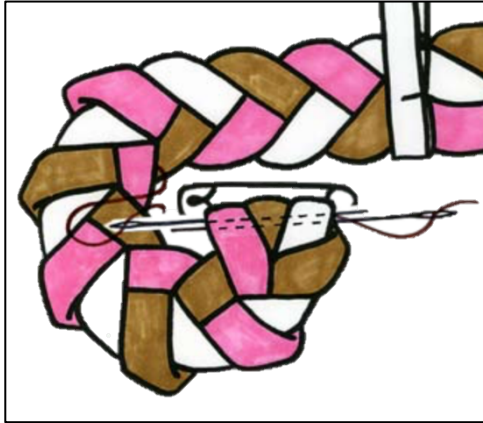


Diagram left shows stabbing through the start in one direction, then back in the other direction, with a tapestry needle and lacing cord.

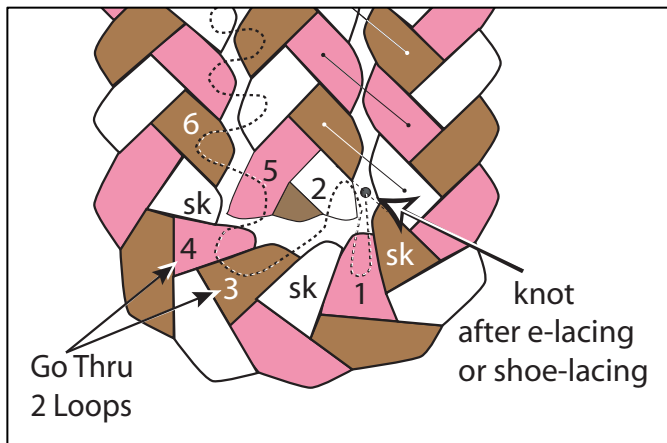
I used to recommend this method as a quick and simple way to handle the enclosed ends. For those who hate hand-sewing, it's a quick alternative. But if you run into seams with your tapestry needle, it can be really difficult to shove the needle through the fabric... so I don't recommend this method any longer.

### Lacing around an Enclosed End Start

Lacing around an Enclosed End Start involves only the first two loops braided.

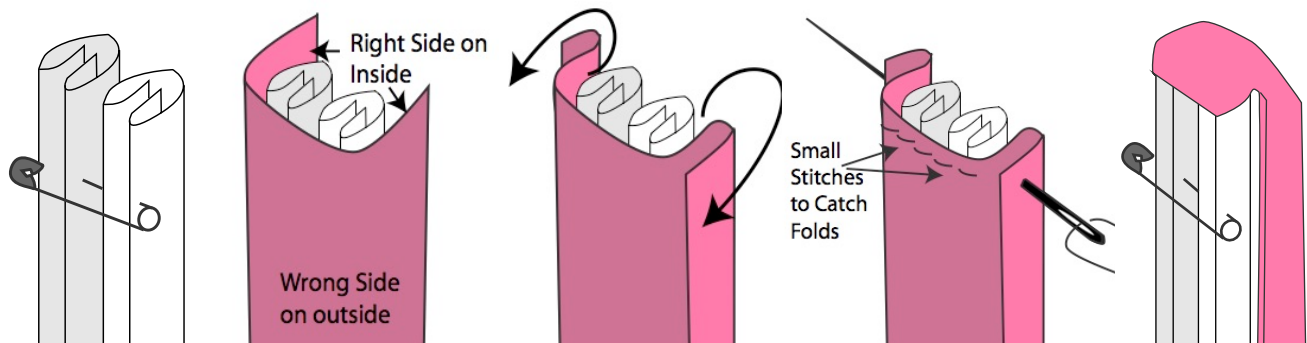
Left is a diagram showing the beginning of an oval rug, in which one is lacing into the Enc. End Start's first loop braided (#2 in diagram) and then a few loops later lacing into second loop braided (#5 in diagram).

Diagram left shows the lacing pattern for the beginning of an oval braided rug, in which only the outer two loops of the enclosed end start, or the first two loops braided, are involved in lacing around the braid start.



## 2. "Cobra Head"

This technique is a quick way to start. I think it has an overly-large first loop. However, some people choose to start this way because it is quick and simple. Some people choose to start this way because they learned to braid from Fern Carter's Braided Rug Book, where this method originates.



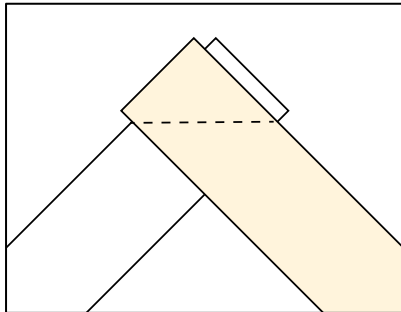
1. Arrange 2 of the strands so that folded edges are aligned. Pin thru folds about 1" down from top.
2. Wrap the 3<sup>rd</sup> strand, wrong side out, around the other two strands as drawn.
3. Turn the edges of the 3<sup>rd</sup> strand outward along the sides of the other two strands.
4. With needle and thread, pierce several times back and forth through the top of the 3 strands, about 1/4 inch from the top. Catch the folded edges with small stitches. Knot off.
5. Turn the 3<sup>rd</sup> strand right side out over the top of the other 2 strands. Tuck the 3<sup>rd</sup> strand's folded edges together, and begin braiding, keeping folded edges together facing either all left or all right as you prefer.

This "cobra head" is so named because it creates a very large knob of the 3<sup>rd</sup> strand's color at the start. It has an interesting lacing technique, involving both a large gathering stitch of loops

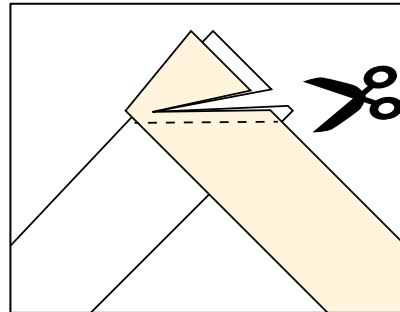
around the Start to hold them in place, and then stab-lacing to secure them. I'll demonstrate but I haven't diagrammed it.

### 3. T-Start

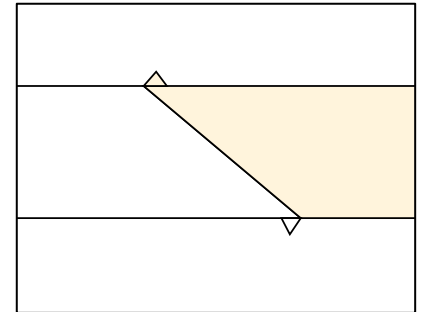
The T-Start is the classic method for starting a continuous rug. If you are using braid aids, place them on each strand before starting to sew. If you are NOT using braid aids, you have the option to skip steps 1 through 3 and use a solid strand as the cross-piece.



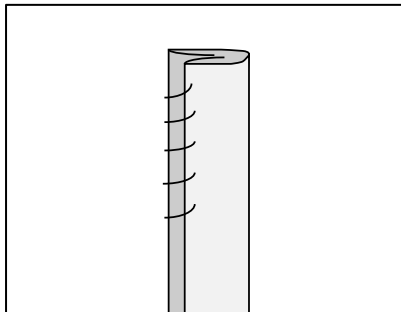
1. Make a diagonal seam. Arrange strips right sides together as shown. Either triple-sew on a sewing machine (forward, reverse, forward) or tightly hand-sew with a back-stitch.



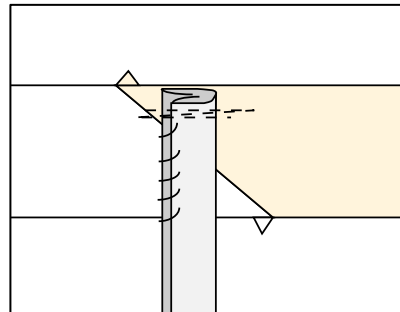
2. Trim seam allowance to 1/8". Discard triangles.



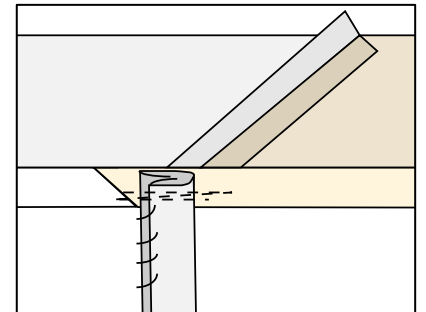
3. Open out seam as shown. This is the "crosspiece" of the T-Start.



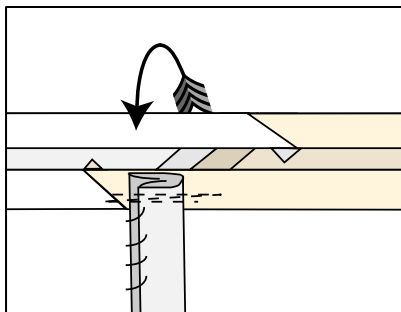
4. Take a third strand and fold it as for braiding. Stitch the folded edges together for about an inch with matching thread. This is the "spoke" of the T-Start.



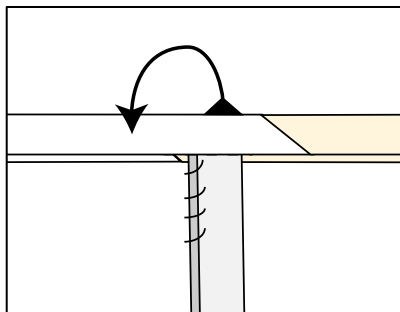
5. With folded edges facing left, center the strand on the diagonal seam, with the top of the spoke at the top of the crosspiece. Stitch the spoke in place in the upper 1/4" of the spoke.



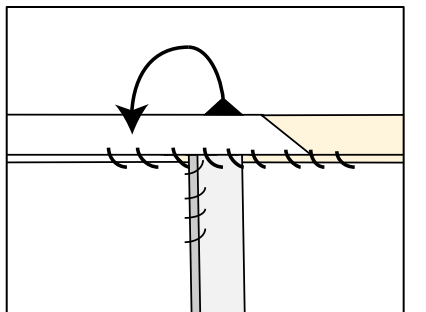
6. Keep spoke in place and turn the crosspiece backward and upward, so that seam allowances are visible.



7. Fold the top edge of the crosspiece forward, so that the raw edges of the crosspiece almost meet in the center.



8. Fold the top edge downward again and cover the stitches anchoring the spoke in place.

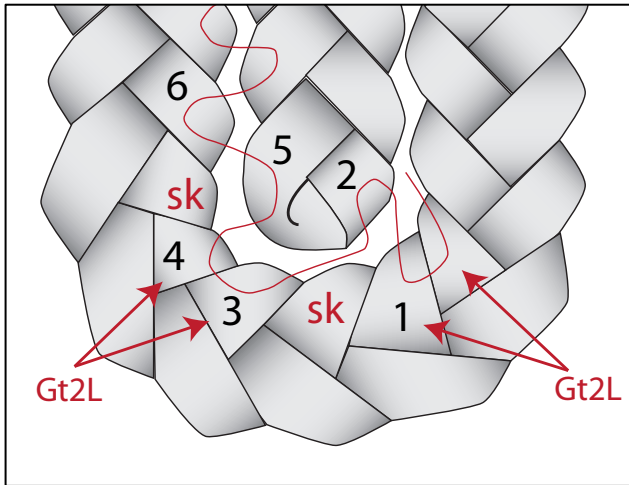


9. Stitch the folds together on either side of the spoke, and anchor the crosspiece onto the front of the spoke.

**Braid from a T-Start**

In order to get all folded edges facing left, it is necessary to “flip” the left side of the crosspiece at the Start.

1. Grasp the T-Start at the top of the spoke, as shown.
2. Flip the left crosspiece onto your thumbnail.
3. Remove your thumb and position the flipped crosspiece between the other two strands.
4. The next strand to braid is the right crosspiece



**Lacing around a T-Start with 4 increases (Oval Rug)**

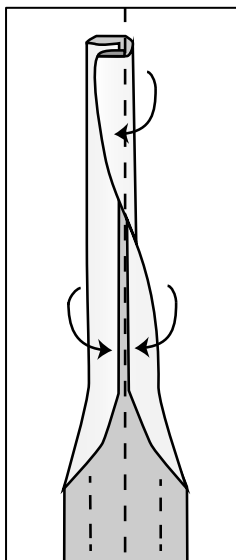
Diagram begins just after completing e-lacing or shoe-lacing. This is by no means the only way to lace around a T-Start, but serves as an example.

1. Go through two loops on the new braid, as shown. Numbering begins with the 2<sup>nd</sup> new braid loop.
  2. Go under the flipped T-Start loop, from right to left.
  3. Skip a loop on the new braid, and go through the next two loops (3 & 4).
  4. Go under the other side of the T-start (5).
  5. Skip a loop on the new braid, & go under the next loop (6)
- Total Increases around T-Start: 4.

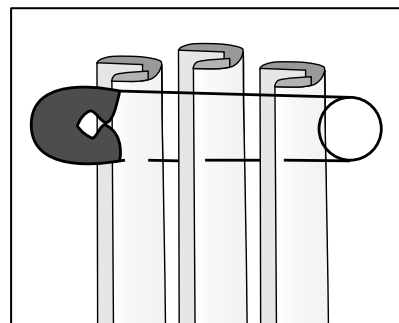
- 2 – Gt2L (Go through 2 Loops)
- 2 – skipped loops

**Comparison of Continuous Start Methods**

	<b>Enclosed End</b>	<b>Cobra Head</b>	<b>T-Start</b>
Advantages	Fairly neat; no large first loop.	Quick	Quick Easy to lace
Disadvantages	Time-consuming: 3 angled seams, turning right side out	Big knob as the first loop Lacing is weird	One big loop across the back of the start.
Where to Use	Anywhere for continuous rugs	Not really recommended except as an experiment	Anywhere for continuous rugs



**B. Start for a 3-Strand Braid – Butted Row**



**1. Pinned Start**

Place braid-aids on each strip, if using. Fold each strip for braiding without finishing the ends at all, and put a safety pin through the folds of all 3 strips. Begin braiding. Many begin braiding with the right strand but not all.

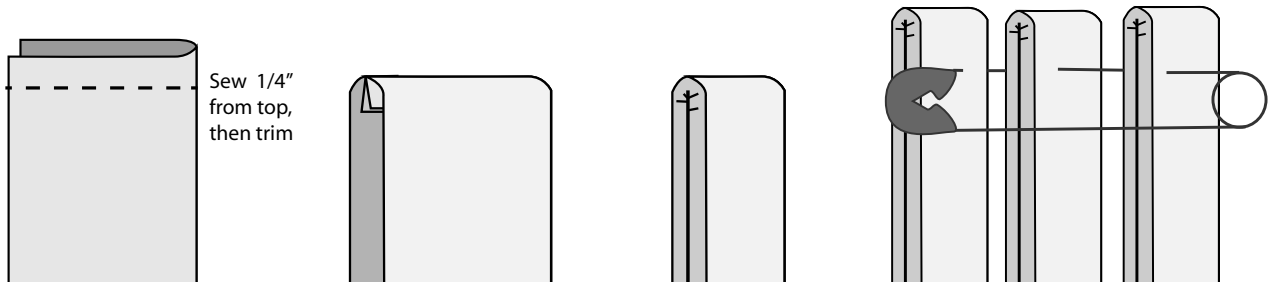
Diagrams left show: folding a strand into fourths for braiding, and pinning strands together for a butted braid.

Butt via your preferred method.

### 2. Capped End or Enclosed End Start

This method for creating butted braids begins with the strands already enclosed, so half of the work in the butt is already completed. To butt, the ends are sewn together straight across the braid.

The Capped End Start differs from the Enclosed End Start only in that no angled seam is made: only the strip end is sewn, and not the sides. The sides are simply tucked inward.



1. Fold a strip right sides together, and stitch straight across the end ¼ inch from top. Trim seam.
2. Turn right side out.
3. Use a thumb to tuck the raw edges into the center of the strip.
4. Put all three strands on a Start Pin and begin braiding.

The Enclosed End is diagrammed page 1.

To butt the braids, the colors of loops are matched and then the Finish loops marked. After enclosing the Finish Ends, the sets of ends are stitched together.

**Advantage:** Half of the butt work is done when you start braiding.

**Disadvantages:** One of the loops of the butt will have a seam straight across its center. Tedious hand-sewing.

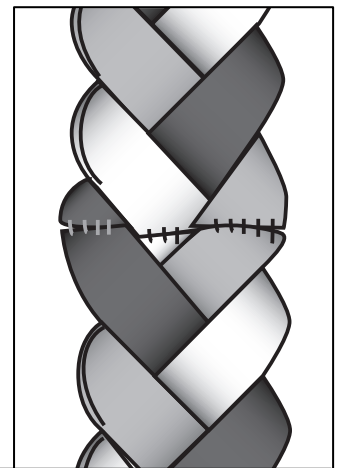
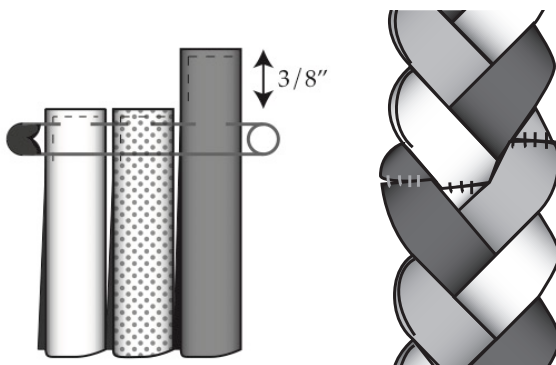


Diagram shows the 3 seams across loops for the Capped End or Enclosed End Butt. You can see that it will be easy to hide the dark seam upward, and the white seam downward, but the gray seam on the right is straight across the center and hard to hide.

Because of the difficulty in hiding the butt seam that is straight across the braid, the Modified Enclosed End Butt was developed. Basically, one end seam is shifted the length of half of a loop – about 3/8”.

### 3. Modified Enclosed End Butt Start

The right strand on the Start Pin is displaced upward 3/8”. Braiding begins with the right strand. At the butt, this strand end is enclosed shorter than the other two strands by 3/8”.



Far left: diagram shows the right strand displaced by 3/8” off the pin.

Near left: Now the butt seam is displaced 3/8” upward. It will be easy to move all of the seams to be hidden on the front of the braid (they’re still somewhat visible on the back).

**Advantage:** Pretty easy to teach non-braiders.

**Disadvantage:** Seams still show on the back. Tedious hand-sewing.