

Zigzag Tote Bag II -- Class Prep

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Valley Forge Rug Braiding Guild



This class will teach you how to braid the Zigzag tote bag shown left. It is 15" wide and 11" high (to the top of the bag).

The bag begins with a 2-braid oval spiral. Both braids begin with a 3-strand T-Start, and are laced into a flat oval that is 6 to 8 braids in width.

No increases are made to start the braids coming up the sides. Then both braids are converted to 4-strand Diagonal Stripe braids, by adding a strand and changing another strand's color. One Diagonal Stripe slants in one direction, and one in the other.

Lacing the braids together is easy: one path is laced regularly with Inward Lacing (the braidkin heads *into* the crevice between the braids), while the other path is laced like a right opening braider with Outward Lacing (the braidkin heads *away* from the crevice between the braids).

At the top, the braids are converted back to 3-strand braids by losing a strand and changing one of the remaining strand's colors.

Handle options will be presented in class.

This bag is made in a continuous fashion until the final row with handles, which is butted. If you wish to make the tote bag either all-butted or

all-continuous, you are welcome to do so – please contact instructor for additional instructions.

Supplies: Multistrand braid stand optional but helpful, although the 4-strand braid is not so much larger than a 3-strand braid, so you can probably use your current table clamp or stand for this project. If you don't have one, you can get plans for making one from Donna McKeever for \$8 (pdmckeeper4@aol.com). If you live near the teacher, I have some for sale.

Folding the raw edges of 4 strips inward while braiding is not practical just using your fingers – it takes too long. Pre-fold the strips by pre-sewing the folds shut – leave the ends open for seams – OR by pre-pressing the raw edges to the center and rolling them up around a rubber band. Another option for folding the strands is using braid-aids. Braid master braid-aids (accommodate 1.5" wide strips) are available from Halcyon Yarn in sets of 3. If you prefer working with wider strips, Vari-folder braid-aids are available used from eBay and Etsy.

5" alligator hair clips (toothed kind) are helpful when managing more than 3 strands but not necessary.

Fabric: Flannel weight recommended (12-15oz /yd) in two contrasting colors: 1.5 yds light and 2.5 yds dark. It is fine to use wool-blends. It is best to use solid colors rather than plaids; small tight patterns that "read" as solid colors are also fine. The light & dark fabrics must be the SAME WEIGHT.

Plan for Class: (this is a rough plan and subject to change depending on students' interests & progress)

Week #1: Make the tote bottom with two braids. Come to class with two solid-colored T-starts and about 30 inches of straight braid. We will set up the two braids for shoe-lacing, and then lace around the other braid's T-Start and the next curve as well. (Note: there is no hairpin turn or double corner turn in either braid).

Week #2: Stop making increases around the sides and come straight up with both braids for one row. We will add a light-colored strand, and change colors for one other strand, to make one braid with a diagonal stripe heading back left and the other braid heading back right. We will use the weaving method of making a 4-strand braid, and cover the “tightening up” process.

Week #3: We will cover Inward (regular) lacing for one set of braids, and Outward lacing for the other set. Instructor will demonstrate how to revert back to solid-colored braids at the top of the bag: losing one strand, and changing colors on another.

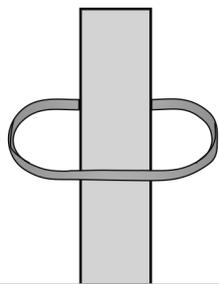
Week #4: Demonstration of Tapering. Some students will be ready to work with the Instructor on losing strands, changing color back to 3 dark, and tapering. Instructor will demonstrate different handle options.

Class Prep: Come to class with the T-Start sewn and braided for two braids, each about 30 inches long. Your multistrand strip prep-method (pre-sewing, pre-pressing, or braid-aids) should be ready and several strips rolled up from both colors.

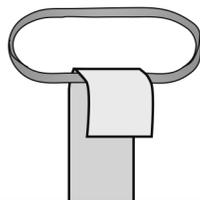
Prepare for Strips for Class:

Pre-wash fabrics if desired. Tear into strips of your desired width.

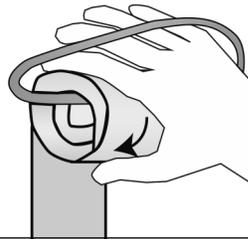
Strip Prep Method 1: If using Braid Master braid-aids, strips must be no wider than 1.5”; roll them up on a rubber band as shown below. By convention, the “good” side of the fabric is on the outside of the roll. A selvage-to-selvage strip is 54 to 60 inches, and rolls up to about a 2” diameter roll. Keep your rolls about 2” so that they don’t interlock while braiding.



1. Place a rubber band around the strip end.

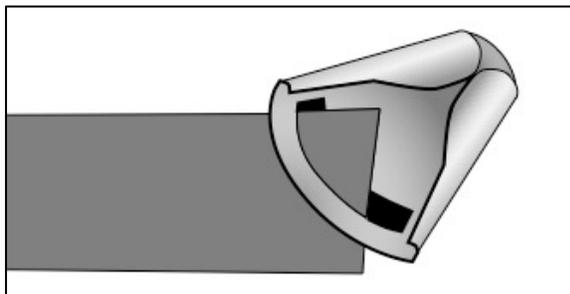


2. Fold the end of the strip down over one side of the rubber band.



3. Reach your hand into the rubber band so that your fingers are inside and your thumb is out. Roll the strip toward you.**

**If the rubber band is too loose, tie an overhand knot in it (pull the rubber band out away from the roll, make a loop with it around your fingers, and throw the end of the rubber band through the loop).



Above diagram shows a fabric strip being inserted into a braid-aid (Braid Master).

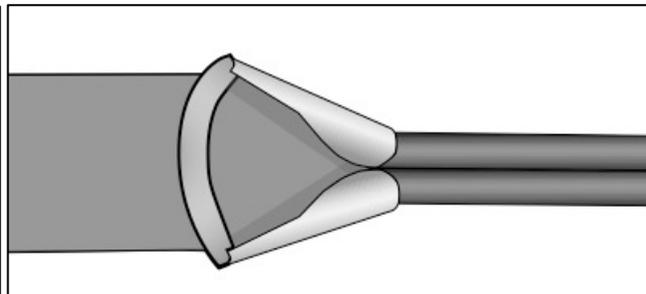


Diagram above shows the strip drawn through the coils at the tip of the braid-aid, yielding a neatly coiled strip with the raw edges turned inward.

Strip Prep Method 2: Pre-sew folds together, as shown below. If using braid-aids, these steps are not necessary.

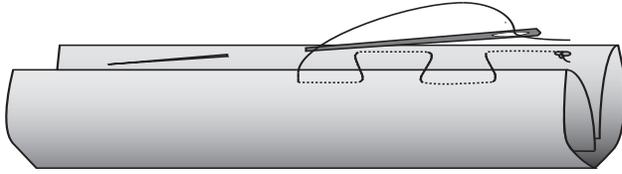


Diagram left shows ladder-stitching the folds of a strip together with a needle and thread.

Strip Prep Method 3: Pre-press folds to center and roll up. Use a steam iron to press the folds to almost – but not quite – touch in the center. Roll the pressed strips up immediately before they relax open. The final fold in the center is made while braiding. By convention, the seams and raw edges are tucked toward the inside of the roll, while the “good” side of the fabric is toward the outside of the roll. See asterisked comment top right regarding tightening a loose rubber band.

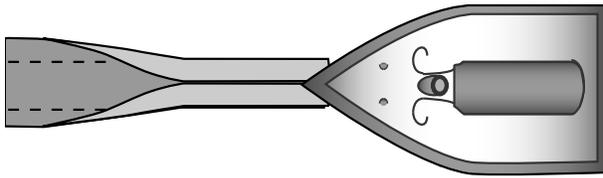
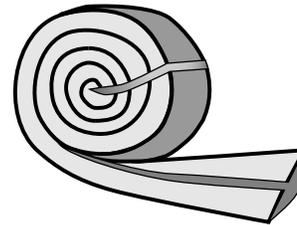


Diagram above shows pressing the edges of the strips into the center with an iron.



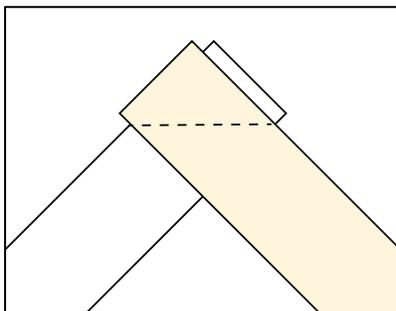
The pressed strips are then rolled up within a rubber band, with raw edges facing inward on the roll.

Making the T-Start for 2 Braids

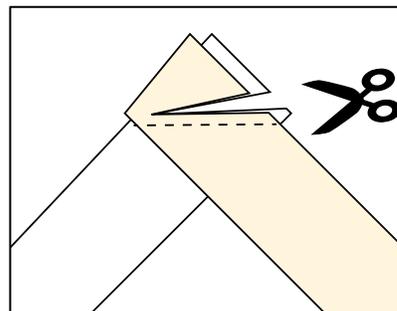
Prepare 6 dark strands for braiding.

Note: if using Braid-Aids, put them on each strand before you start to sew any seams.

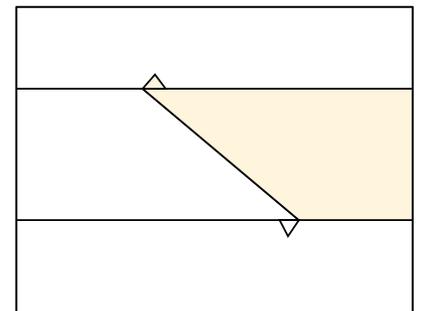
Note: if you have pre-sewn or pre-pressed your strips, you have the option of *skipping the initial seam* in the Crosspiece in Steps 1-3 and continuing from there.



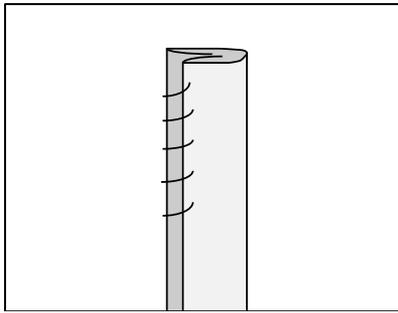
1. Make a diagonal seam. Arrange strips right sides together as shown. Either triple-sew on a sewing machine (forward, reverse, forward) or tightly hand-sew with a back-stitch.



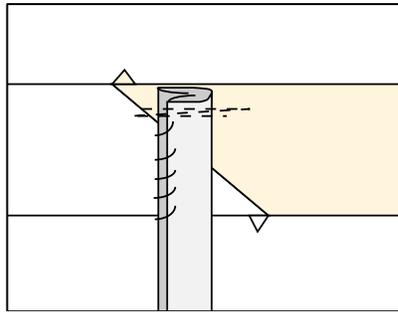
2. Trim seam allowance to 1/8". Discard triangles.



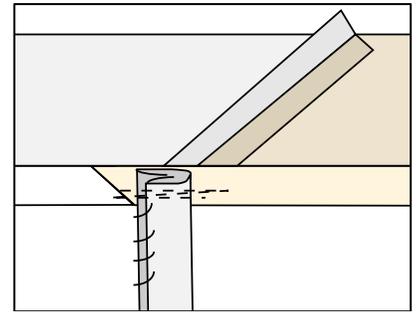
3. Open out seam as shown. This is the “crosspiece” of the T-Start.



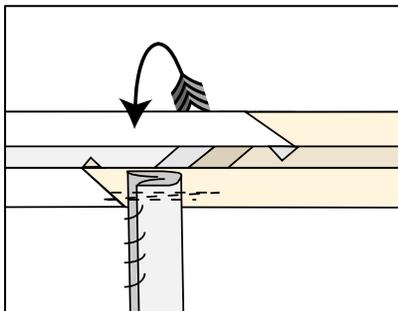
4. Take a third strand and fold it as for braiding. Stitch the folded edges together for about an inch with matching thread. This is the "spoke" of the T-Start.



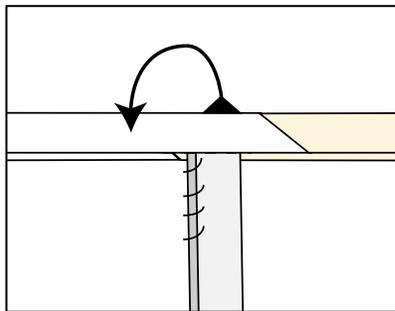
5. With folded edges facing left, center the strand on the diagonal seam, with the top of the spoke at the top of the crosspiece. Stitch the spoke in place in the upper 1/4" of the spoke.



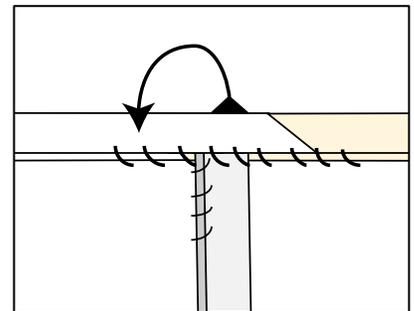
6. Keep spoke in place and turn the crosspiece backward and upward, so that seam allowances are visible.



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.

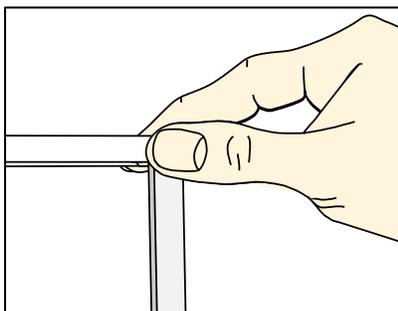


9. Stitch the folds together on either side of the spoke, and anchor the crosspiece onto the front of the spoke.

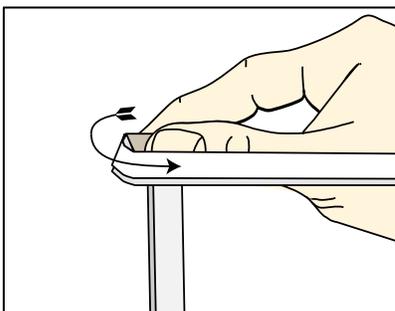
10. Repeat for the second braid.

Braid from a T-Start

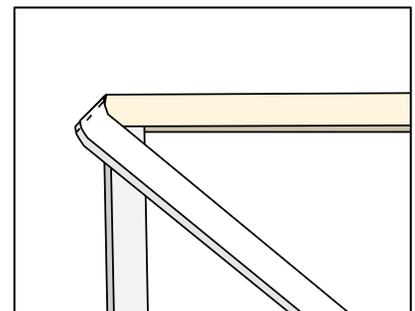
In order to get all folded edges facing left, it is necessary to "flip" the left side of the crosspiece at the Start.



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. Repeat these steps for the second braid. Braid about 30 inches on both braids, and clamp.