



Braid Society
Sample Swap 2005

A Ply-Split Scarf

by Steve Pretty



Braid Society Swap 2005 – A Braid for a Gift by Steve Pretty

The Yarn - This project started as a gift. Last September, I visited the Quilt Exhibition at NEC with my wife, Lynne. Whilst we were there, she found some very nice Debbie Bliss silk / alpaca wool. She bought me a couple of balls (one black, one yellow) and said I should make something with it. I've used some remnants of the yarn as supplied to secure your braid sample.

The Design - I attended the Braid Society see and share day with Sandy Jessett last December, and she got me started on Ply Split Braiding. It occurred to me that it would be interesting to make a scarf from my wool using the technique.

There were, however, two problems to overcome a) how to make a reasonable size scarf with just 100g of wool and b) how to preserve something of the softness of the wool. Whilst browsing Peter Collingwood's *The Techniques of Ply-Split Braiding*, I came across a simple POT structure with periodic slits. This technique is traditionally used to make Mukhiarna (fringed bands worn by horses to protect their eyes from flies). This nearly doubled the possible size of scarf by using air as a second ingredient! To solve the second problem, I decided to use 2 ply cords, with half the amount of initial over-twist that I have used on previous samples.

Working Methods - Cords were made up in 4 meter lengths using an Apollo cord winder. The winder was given 100 turns (it has a 4 to 1 gearing, so that is an initial over twist of 100 turns per meter). I then halved the resulting cords, giving 14 yellow cords and 14 black.

For my design, I arranged the cords: Y Y B B B B Y Y Y Y Y Y

The working method for the braid is described in Peter's book on page 51. I used a slightly different approach to that described in the book, and have provided further information into my own approach to working the scarf on the following page.

Outcome – It was quite slow work making the scarf. However, it is a project that is easy to pick up and put down, working the odd row or two as time allows. The resulting scarf was 115cm long and 10cm wide – and is pictured overleaf. I have now given the scarf to Lynne, who seems pleased with it – indeed, I have now been commissioned by my sister-in-law to make her one! I'll be using three balls of the wool on the next one, to make it a little longer and wider (Note – that scarf has now been completed and is shown on the front cover. It used 32 cords rather than the 28 in the yellow / black scarf).

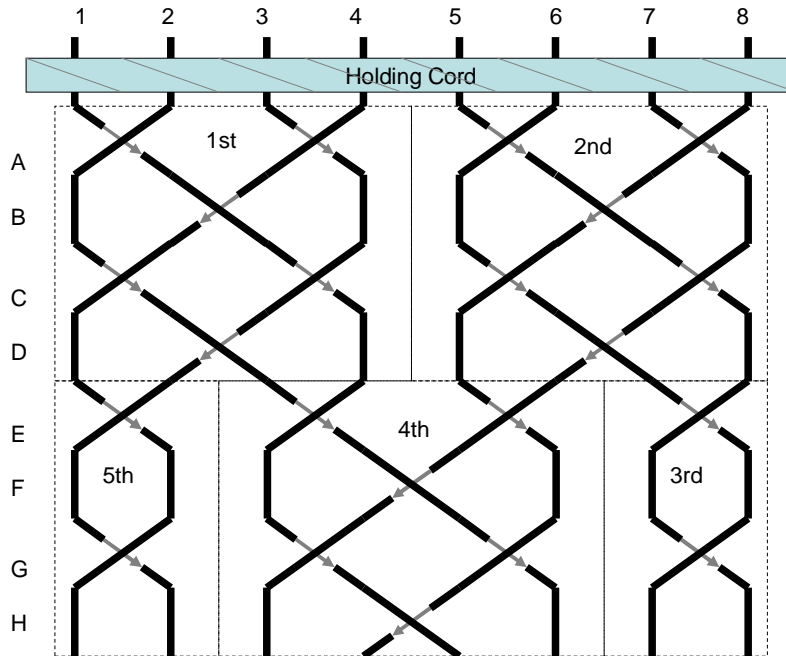
Ideas for future development

You may notice that the top and bottom of the scarf show different textures – you can decide for yourself which you prefer. It would be interesting to try varying between these two textures to create texture based patterning.

To my mind, the structure of the scarf could be thought of as a ply-split interpretation of the torchon lace half stitch ground. I'm currently looking at how other torchon lace concepts could be re-interpreted as ply-split. The whole stitch has been successful, providing different pattern opportunities (vertical stripes). Cloth stitch is also offering possibilities – but it is quite unlike normal ply-split as you need a long “weft” cord.

I'm interested in the North American Indian finger woven sashes (though I've never tried the technique). It would be interesting to make a scarf based on those designs, but interpreted using SCOT ply-split. I've made a small sample (again using my low twist 2 ply) and the results look promising.

My Working Method



I made the scarf working from the centre, and found this approach to work well. It means you only have to pull at most half the length of cord through each split, and there is half the “spaghetti” to deal with! All the samples were made in a similar way.

The above diagram shows how to make the ply-split braid design working with 8 cords. The 8 cords are secured at their centres through the holding cord (a 4 ply ply-split cord of suitable thickness is used). Leave a quarter turn of the holding cord between each working cord.

I placed the cord ends not being worked into a plastic bag (to keep them clean and tidy), and placed the work on a tray which makes it very easy to work the braid on your lap in front of the TV – and easy to put the work away between braiding sessions.

Braiding is carried out in blocks (shown as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th). In all cases, a half turn is left between splits in a given cord.

1st Block, Row A – Split cord in column 2 and draw through cord in column 1. Split cord in column 4 and draw through cord in column 3.

1st Block, Row B – Split cord now in column 2, and draw through cord in column 3. I do this using the splitting tool in the left hand – I don’t find it a problem.

1st Block, Row C – work as Row A. 1st Block, Row D – work as Row B.

Now set the group of 4 cords just worked aside to the left. Work the 4 cords of the 2nd block in the same manner as the 1st block. The full design has many more blocks of 4 – which are, of course worked in an identical way to the 1st and second block.

3rd Block – Split cord in column 8 and draw through cord in column 7. Repeat this step once more and then set aside this pair to the right.

4th Block – work this block in the same manner as 1st block.

5th Block – work as 3rd block.

Repeat the above process until you approach the end of cords. I finished my cords with the splitting seen in row C. and then applied the splitting seen in the 3rd block multiple times to form a narrow tassle braid, finished off with a simple overhand knot.

To braid the second half, it is necessary to remove the holding cord. You will need to start braiding according to the method for 3rd, 4th and 5th blocks, but NOT carrying out the splits seen in row E.