

Basics; - Securing Braid Ends

Once you have completed your braid, you need to decide what you want to do with the ends. They need to be secured so that they don't unravel, and then beyond that, they can be used to attach jewellery findings, caps, clasps or other fittings, trimmed close, or left free as fringes.

Knotting

For the simplest option - secure the braid end with an overhand knot - this works best with slimmer braids - for chunky braids, the knot can sometimes be harder to do neatly.

Hold all the ends together smoothly, and tie an overhand knot. Pull the knot tight to secure it, so that it sits directly at the end of your braid.

Pull each thread tail one by one to ensure the knot is evenly tightened and there are no loose threads or loops. Trim the thread ends neatly to your chosen length - use super sharp embroidery scissors for the cleanest cut.

If desired, use a small drop of glue in the centre of the knot before you pull the knot tight to ensure it stays in place.

If using glue - check it on some spare threads first to see how much it spreads - you don't want to see a section of glue soaked braid.

Traditional Fringe

For a traditional style fringe - the braid end is bound tightly and neatly to start with, leaving the silk tails loose. The tails are then smoothed and straightened, and then trimmed.

Most fibres can be steamed, which will relax the threads and allow you to smooth them out. You can also steam a braid, to stretch / flatten and arrange it to its best effect by pinning it out (or more traditionally - laying it into a flat channel and rolling it flat) - just as you might block a finished section of knitting.

Once you have your fringe smoothed (and combed out - if needed - to make sure all the threads are lying evenly) pull it taught, and wrap it tightly in a roll of paper. This will keep it even as you cut across the ends - cut right through the rolled paper. Braids may be stored in this fringe wrap to stop the fringe getting disturbed, until they are first used.

Beaded Fringe

One option for fringes is to bead the fringe - you can add beads directly onto the fringe threads - either just some, or all of them. You can also stitch beads into the fringe on additional threads.



A fringe can also be built up with additional threads to make a larger tassel.

Melting

If a braid is made using nylon or polyester fibres, these can usually be melted (test on a spare bit before trying on your braid). As these threads melt, they will stick together, sealing the end of the braid together.

Natural fibres like cotton, silk or wool will not melt, they just burn, so finish these fibres differently - with a knot or binding.

Tip - If you plan to attach an end cap or clasp to fit over the braid end, you will need to ensure the end is melted or bound as evenly as possible so that it fits neatly into the chosen cap. A knot makes a larger bump so wouldn't usually fit an end cap over.

You can (very carefully) use the flame from a candle or lighter to melt off any stray thread wisps along the length of a braid, or to seal the loose ends of a braid together. The best option is to grip the end of the braid in tweezers or pliers and carefully bring the flame close to the thread ends until they start to melt back towards the tweezers - don't put the threads directly in the flame. As the threads melt - you will see them start to shrink away from the flame and create blobs on their ends - use tweezers or another heatproof tool to press or shape the melted blob if needed (to ensure it'll fit into an end cap, for example).

An alternative to a flame, is using a tool like a 'thread zapper' which has a wire tip that is heated and can then be touched onto a thread to melt it - this gives a more precise heat than a flame.

Binding

A good option for braid ends is to use needle and thread to stitch through and bind them securely. You can do this binding with any strong thread.

If the binding will be on show - use a thread that works with the colour and texture of your braid. If the binding will be fitting into an end cap, make sure to keep it neat and streamlined without big knots that will make it more bulky and may stop it fitting the cap. Thread around 50cm of thread onto a sharp sewing or beading needle and pull through so that it is doubled.

Stitch through your braid at the point where you want to secure it, leaving a 10-15cm tail.

Pull the thread tight and bind/wrap around the braid 5 or more times (hold the tail so it doesn't pull through).

Keep the thread pulled up tightly, and then stitch back through the braid close to your binding at least twice to hold it in place. Tie your working thread to the tail thread to secure them. Cut the thread ends, or stitch them through into the centre of the braid where they can get lost amongst your other threads.

Trim the end of your braid with sharp scissors, neatly just above the bound section, or leaving a decorative fringe.

