

Supplies; - Kumihimo on a Disk

Braiding on a Kumihimo disk needs minimal supplies - these are the key pieces of kit and materials that are useful to get started....

Disk

You can make a braiding disk by cutting a cardboard disk (e.g. from the back of a notebook, or a cereal box), cutting a hole in the centre, and cutting slots around the side. For a longer lasting disk, you can buy foam disks from most bead shops. Disks are available in a small and larger sizes - both do the same - some people just find one size easier to hold than others. Square disks (plates) are also available, which can make it easier to do flat braids, but flat braids can also be done on a round disk.



Threads

You can braid with any thread - wire, cord, rope - anything that is long and flexible, but some options that work particularly well include;

- Chinese Knotting Cord - sold for macrame and Shamballa bracelets
- Stranded Embroidery Cotton - sold for cross stitch
- Satin 'Rat-tail' cord - sold by bead shops and available usually in 1mm (fine) or 2mm (standard) thicknesses.
- The most popular cords for when working with beads are Beadsmith brand S-Lon cord (medium size) and Tex400 (thicker) which are great options that are both strong and colourful



Beading Needle & Thread

These will be helpful in stitching and binding the ends of braids. I use a beading needle (size 10) as these are particularly streamlined, making it easier to stitch through tight braids and bindings. Beading thread is nice and strong, but any strong thread can be used.



Sharp Scissors

Whether you are leaving the ends free to make a fringe, or trimming them right down, sharp embroidery or sewing scissors will allow you to cut threads neatly.



End Caps

Unless you plan to leave the thread ends on your braids loose as fringes, if you are using your braid for jewellery, you will need some sort of cap for the braid ends, to enable you to attach a clasp.

Some styles are glued onto the end of a braid and have a loop that you can attach your choice of clasp to.

Some combine the end cap with an integral clasp - glue these on and once the glue is set you are ready to wear.

The final main type are caps with a hole in the top - use a wire to hold the end of the braid, then post the wire through the hole to make a loop and



attach your clasp.

How many threads you used for your braid, and how thick they are will determine the size of end cap you will need. If you're not sure - do a quick test with some short lengths of spare thread, to measure / try out.

Strong Glue

Glue will often be needed to attach end caps or other findings to your braid ends - you need a glue that will securely attach your fabric braid to metal findings - two part epoxy glues such as Araldite are great and create the strongest joins, but specialist craft glues such as E6000 also work well.

Bobbins

If you are creating a braid much longer than a bracelet, you will probably need bobbins to stop your thread tails becoming tangled as you work - you can either wind your tails around a small pieces of cardboard, or use ready made bobbins such as EZ-Bobs (pictured). When working with bobbins - keep them all wound up so you have only short threads, and keep them all the same length so they don't tangle. Weighted bobbins are also available.

Beads & Bead Mat

To add even more decorative options to your braid, you can include beads on some or all of the threads. Any beads that will thread onto your chosen thread will work - the better they fit the thread the smoother and easier the braiding and finished braid will be.

Seed beads work well as they have proportionately large holes compared to the bead size - Size 6 seed beads are approx 4mm in size, Size 8 are smaller - approx 3mm, and will give a thinner sleeker braid. Sizes 11 and 15 are also widely available and even smaller.

A bead mat is available from any bead or craft store, and will help stop your beads rolling around and give you a work space while you thread them.

Big Eye Needle

Not essential, but this may help you thread beads onto your warp threads. These are large needles made of two parts that open entirely down the centre so they can work with any type of thread.

A **bead spinner** is useful to help with threading large quantities of beads

Thread Zapper

Not essential - This is a heat pen that will melt the ends of man-made threads, making it easy to stop them fraying and to secure the ends of braids. A match or lighter flame can also (carefully) be used. ****only man-made threads melt, natural threads will just burn****

Nail Polish

A quick and easy option to help stiffen the ends of threads or cords that you want to thread beads onto, or to prevent fraying. Dip into the varnish, let dry, then trim to a point to make it easier to thread beads on.

Jewellery Pliers

These will help when attaching findings or clasps, they can also help to pull stubborn needles if they get stuck in a braid, or in a bead.

