

Make a Viking Whipcord Braid

Braiding is a fun, period method of cord-making! Every ancient culture used twisting, braiding and knotting of fiber to make yarn, cording, rope and to trim fabric. The Vikings used a braid as straps for their embroidered aprons as well as other purposes. “**Ancient Danish textiles from Bogs and Burials**” by **Margrethe Hald** shows how braiding was done by swinging weights to twist the yarn. The Vikings could have used the overhead beams in their longhouses to hang the weights, making cords to pass the time during the long Norse winters.

Kumihimo is Japanese cord-braiding where the finished work is pulled down with a weight, and the strands are slowly twisted around each other in particular patterns. Viking Whipcord Braiding is similar, but hung from the ceiling and done much faster!

Materials required:

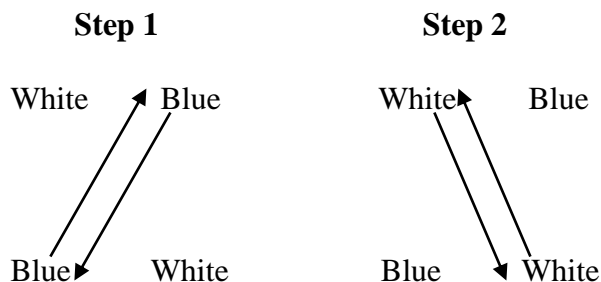
2 colors of yarn

4 small weights (we found a ½-filled mini-bottle of Coke works well.)

Get a couple of buddies! This part needs to be done by 3 people, 2 swinging the weights, 1 holding the cord. Measure and cut a 24 foot length of yarn (measure the side of a 6-foot table 4 times).

One person hold the yarn in the middle, the other hold the 2 ends, pull evenly. Tie the ends in a slip-knot around a small weight, like the “waist” of a small bottle, Wrap the yarn pair around the bottle up to 3 feet from the loop. Make a slip knot in the yarn, set aside. Make up 3 more yarn-wrapped weights, 2 of each color for a total of 4.

Gather the 4 loops together and make a knot to hold them all, leaving a 2-inch loop at the top. Try not to let the weights twist around too much as you get ready. Tie the big loop to a sturdy string or rope and toss it over a support higher than your head. Use the string to pull the whole assembly up so the weights are waist-high.



You and your buddy stand facing each other, and hold a weight in each hand. Dark color in left hand, light color in right. Make sure you have room to move and no one is in the way of swinging weights. At the same time (TALK to each other!), say “Ready, go!” and GENTLY swing the weight in your left hand across and toward your buddy’s left hip. It should swing inside the opening made by their 2 weights. Catch the weight they swing to you! Once you have both caught your left weights, swing the weight from your right hand to their right hip Repeat until you have 12 feet or so of cord! (see pattern on next page)

You will need to periodically raise the string, and release the slip-knot on the weights. You will find you get into a rhythm of swinging the weights. Try to keep the same tension as you pull on the weights and swing them, this will make the cording even. When you are near the ends, you will end up unwinding the yarn from the weights and braiding by hand. Tie a knot in the ends, and bring the finished braid down from the overhead support.