

Making A Flemish Braid Bowstring

Originally written by Ron Harris

Html, text and images edited by RJ Bachner

Editor's note:

Ok Folks some of you are gonna say hey there, I saw that somewhere else and in fact I admit I did not write the original article but I did make some significant changes, improved the text and redesigned the jig. So to avoid anybody claiming I committed some heinous thingy, here is the link to the original article which I co-opted. You will note that mine is better. :)

[The original article as published by www.stickbow.com](http://www.stickbow.com)

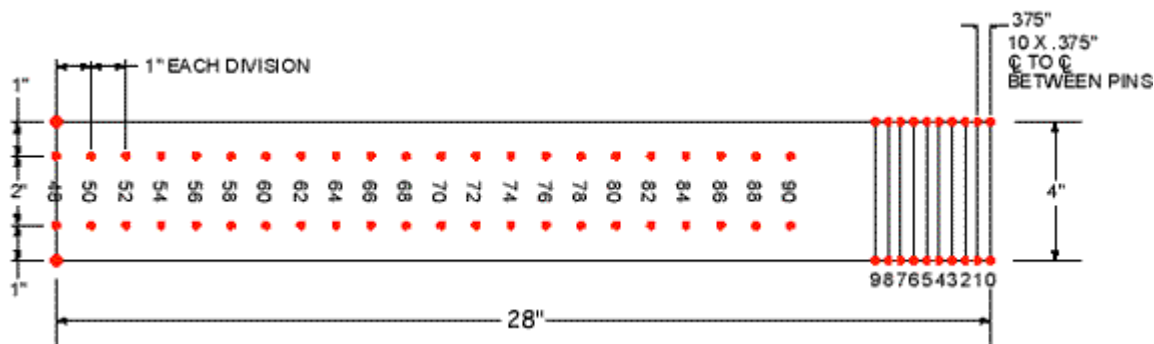
Mr. Harris, if you come across this, let [me](#) know please, I have tried to contact you for permission but to no avail.

The techniques I use to make a Flemish Twist bowstring are not necessarily the only way to do it, but it works for me. Making a Flemish Twist string is relatively simple. It's sort of like tying your shoes--easy to do, but difficult to describe and a whole lot easier if someone shows you how.

The first thing you will need is a string making jig. For this you will need the following materials:

A 1X6 pine board 28 inches long. It should be fairly straight and free of knots.

About 2 dozen 1 inch long finishing nails.

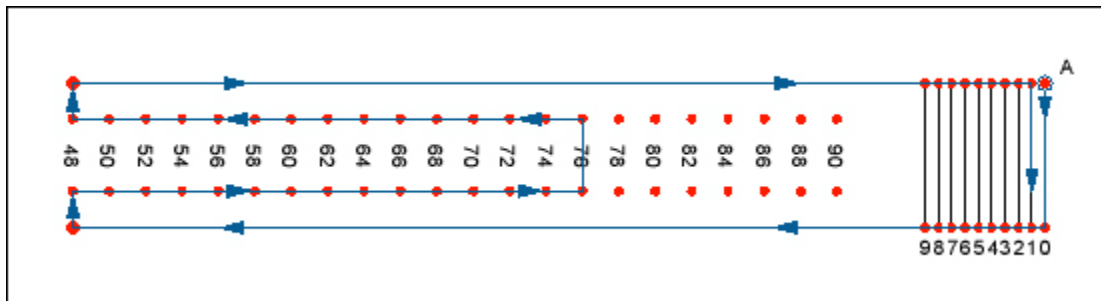


Lay out the board dimensions as shown on Figure 1. Your measurements don't have to be precise, but try to follow them as closely as possible. I suggest that you start with a well

defined center line down the long axis of the board. This will allow you to set the dimensions off of the centerline and helps to maintain accuracy.

Go ahead and drive a finishing nail about halfway into the board at each nail location shown but make sure that it is in securely. Pine is rather soft and you could pull the nail out halfway through a wind if it is too tight.

Next, use a permanent marker or ball point pen and mark the board as shown on Figure 2. You don't have to mark the string path I've shown, but I do just in case I forget which way to wind the strands on the jig.



Now you're ready to make the bowstring. For this you'll need the following materials:

Dacron B-50 or other such suitable materials as Fast Flight or linen and hemp thread will work well but these instructions are for B50.

The other materials have different properties and will require more or less strands to do the job based on their respective breaking strengths. However this is beyond the scope of these instructions, note also that the use of fast flight on bows that are not made for it should be avoided at all costs, unless you want to break your bow.

I recommend at least two different colors of string. It makes for a prettier string and is easier to keep track of what you're doing while making the string.

You will need wax to lubricate the string and hold everything together while you do the braiding. Some like beeswax or specifically string makers wax but I prefer a plain soft string wax for polyester strings.

A spool of monofilament or nylon serving line and a server.

These supplies can be ordered from most archery supply mail order companies or purchased at your local dealers. In Canada I recommend [Heights archery supply](#)

Next, you'll need to decide if you want to make a two ply or three ply string. A two ply string is made from two bundles of twisted strands while a three ply string uses three

bundles. A two ply string is easier to make and for this article I have chosen to illustrate the two ply process.

How many strands do you need for your B50 bowstring.

40 to 50 LB range	12 strands
50 to 70 LB range	14 strands
70 to 80 LB range	18 strands

Ok Now say you have a 50 pound bow, you will need 12 strands of b-50. I will suggest 2 bundles of 6 strands in colors that work well together and allow for easy identification.

There is of course the choice to make your bowstring with more than 2 bundles and it is just as easy to do but for now we will stick to 2. If you want a quick explanation of how to do more than 2 bundles then read [here](#).

Be forewarned; some of the dark colors in b50 run so white and red for instance will become a red and pink string or black and white makes a grey and black string.

to figure out how long to make the strands, take the amo length of your bow, say my recurve at 64 inches, subtract 3 inches for a longbow or 4 inches for a recurve. I am left with 60 inches, then you figure in the length of the extra for braids. I started doing this with 8 inches extra but I have found it insufficient so I doubled it. 16 inches will give you about 8 inches of tail on each end to braid in to the loops.

Note: This has already been figured into the design of the jig so you do not have to worry about it. Just wrap your string to the length you need. (for a 60 inch string, wrap to the 60 inch position, you will get a bundle 76 inches long.)

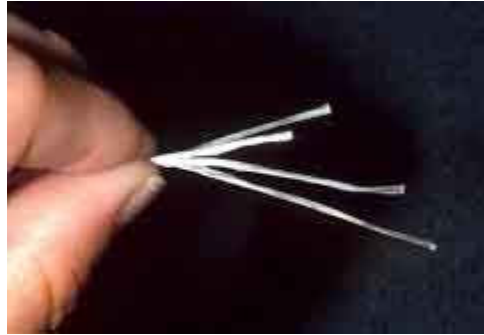
AMO - 3 or 4 inches = bowstring + 16 inches = strand length.
therefore, $64 - 4 = 60 + 16 = 76$ inches.

Now, Grab your jig and tie the end of the string to the top left-hand nail (Position A) as shown in Figure 2. If your desired string is, as it is for me, 60 inches long, find the 60 inch position marked on the board and start winding the strands onto the jig until you have 6 strands of string on the jig. when you have done that, run the spool to the next pin as if to wind another strand and carry it across to the other pin. You're not going to wind another but when you cut the string it keeps all the strands at the correct length.

Now cut the strands with a sharp knife or razor blade right down the center line between the top nails.

Carefully pull the bundle off the jig making sure that the ends of the strings don't move. You'll notice that the ends of each strand is slightly shorter than the others as illustrated in

Figure 3. Staggering the string ends helps to lock each strand in place as you make the bowstring loops. Set this bundle aside and repeat the process using a different color of B-50 Dacron string.



Wax both ends of each string bundle for about 10 inches. You may have to warm the wax so that it will stick to the strings. Use a candle or alcohol burner. Thoroughly work the wax into the bundles.

Lay both bundles side by side so that the longest strand in each bundle is aligned with the other then lay the two bundles on the ruler you marked on your jig. Grasp both bundles about 8 inches back from the ends. Hold the bundles between your thumb and forefinger as shown in Figure 4.



Using your other hand, twist the top bundle six or seven times in a counterclockwise direction (twist away from your body). Now take the twisted bundle and rotate it over the top of the bottom bundle (towards your body). The bottom bundle is now on top and vice versa. See Figure 5. Keep repeating this twisting and rotating process until you have braided enough to form the loop for the top limb on your bow. The width of this loop will vary as does width of different bow limbs. The loop should be wide enough so that it will slide down the bow limb 5 or 6 inches when the bow is unstrung.



Form the loop as shown in Figure 6. Make sure you align the bundles as shown (same color over same color). Grasp the bundles at the bottom of the loop and twist the two bundles of same color together. Figure 6 shows white twisted onto white forming one large white bundle and yellow twisted onto yellow forming one large yellow bundle.



Holding these two bundles between the thumb and forefinger, perform the same twisting and rotating process until the last tag end of the strings have been braided into the bowstring. Your finished loop should look like that shown in Figure 7.



After finishing the top loop, separate both bundles all the way down to the bottom. Take your 8 inch measurement at the bottom of the bundles and repeat the whole process again just as you did when forming the top loop. When braiding the bottom loop you may have to stop occasionally to separate the bundles. The bottom loop has to be just wide enough to fit over the nocks on your bottom bow limb.

Rather than forming a permanent braided bottom loop you can also choose to just braid about the last 8 to 10 inches of the bottom bundles and tie a [timber hitch](#) for your bottom loop.

Now that you have completed the loops you will need to put a twist into the bowstring. Make sure you twist the bowstring in the same direction as your braids otherwise you will untwist the loops. Put the string on your bow and adjust for proper brace height. Allow the string to stretch for a day or two or go out and shoot the bow. Remember to keep adjusting the brace height by twisting or untwisting the string until all the stretch has been worked out of the string.

More don't make my mistake advice.

This is important to remember, if you serve and nock the string prior to getting all the stretch out, your nock will be in the wrong place and you will have to redo it again. This is a pain in the butt. I would suggest that you use some of your serving material and Tie a temporary nock in place while you stretch the string, which will greatly simplify the whole process.

With your bow strung, mark the string about where you think your nocking point will be. Mark the string again about 2 inches above the nock point and 6 inches below the nock point. This 8 inch area of the string is where you will apply the monofilament serving. Put your spool of monofilament on the serving tool and pull a few inches of line out. Now is a good time to adjust the tension of the serving tool. You want the line to come off the server with some tension so that you get a tight wrap around the bowstring. Don't use too much tension or your serving could cut through the bowstring.

Separate the bowstring at either end of the serving area and insert about 1 inch of the monofilament line through the bowstring. Begin wrapping the monofilament around the bowstring while keeping the loose end under the serving wrap. Keep wrapping the monofilament around the bowstring until you are about 1/4 inch from the end of the serving area.

Cut a 10 to 12 inch strand of the B-50 string. Fold the string back to form a loop at one end. Lay the string on the bowstring with the loop facing towards the end of the limb. Wrap the monofilament line over the Dacron string about 6 to 8 more times. Keep these last few wraps a little loose. When you get to the end of the serving area pull a couple of inches of monofilament off the spool and cut the line. Cut the line and insert the end of the monofilament through the loop in the Dacron string. Grasp the loose ends of the Dacron string and pull them back under the last few wraps of monofilament. This will lock the end of the monofilament under those last wraps.

Now that the bowstring is finished give it a good waxing with a quality bowstring wax. Rub the wax in thoroughly using a piece of scrap leather. Rub it hard and fast so that the wax gets hot from friction and flows into the strands of the bowstring.

Now, go out and enjoy shooting your bow, equipped with a string created by your own hands.

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