

How to Braid a Mane



Creating show quality braids takes patience and practice, so don't get frustrated if the braids aren't perfect the first few times. Just keep practicing and eventually you will get there. The horse on the left has bumped style braids.

You will need:

- fine toothed metal mane comb
- sponge & bucket with water or spray bottle with water or mane tamer
- step ladder
- large hair clip
- braid puller (latch hook or mane loop available at tack stores)
- yarn or braiding thread in a colour that matches the colour of your horse's mane
- scissors
- seam ripper

Before you can braid your horse's mane you need to make sure it is the correct length (4 "– 5"). You should do this ahead of time as is a length process and your horse will start to get fussy. You also don't want to braid your horse's mane when it has just been washed and make sure not to use any mane conditioner prior to braiding. This will make it very difficult to keep your braids tight enough as they hair will be slippery.

First you need to cut pieces of yarn. To do this take the end of the yarn and hold it in the palm of your hand. Then take the yarn and wrap it around your forearm, under your elbow and through the palm of your hand 20 – 25 times. Pull the loop of yarn off your arm and snip the loops in half where you held them in your palm. You should end up with 20 – 25 long strands of yarn. Keep the yarn on your belt or looped through your horse's halter so it is easy to reach. Gather all your tools before you get started. You may want to get a belt bag and keep your tools handy. You should always stand on a bucket or step ladder unless you are braiding the mane of a small pony. If you are looking down on the mane it will be easier to do the work and create better braids. Use the fine toothed comb and comb the mane through, making sure it is on the right side of the neck. Wet your sponge or use a spray bottle and wet a section of mane, starting at the top of your horse's neck. Then use the comb to separate a section for the first braid. Make this section about one inch wide. If your horse has a very thick mane it may need to be smaller or if it's very thin, make it wider. Take extra care to make sure the parting is very straight and perfect. When you are satisfied, use the hair



clip to keep the rest of the mane out of the way. Divide the section of hair into three even pieces and begin your braid. You will want the braid to be very tight. It helps to pull the piece of hair you just crossed under back up towards the base of the braid, this will help make them tighter. When you've braided the section $\frac{1}{2}$ way down, stop to add the yarn/string.

Fold the string in half, and lay the fold on top of the braid so that the two ends become part of adjoining sections of hair. Continue braiding normally, holding the strings with the hair sections to which you added them.

Once you've braided down as far as you can go, separate the strings from the hair. Hold the hair firmly at the base of the last braid so it does not loosen.



Holding the two strings together, pass them over the braided portion of the hair and back through the resulting loop. Pull firmly on the ends of the string to tighten the knot. For extra security, repeat the loop and knot with each string individually. Be sure that all of the wrap knots are up against or on top of each other, with no hair visible between them. When this loop

knot is pulled tight, the braid will be secure. Remember, the yarn should match the mane; the hot pink is just for demonstration!



When you have finished the first braid continue onto the next using the same process. Try to make the braids themselves all the same size so you may have to adjust the width of your braid sections as the thickness of the mane changes.

When you have braided the entire mane you next need to "bump" your braids. You will need your braid puller or pull through. I suggest going back to the top of your horse's neck, by the ears. Insert the pull through into the base of the braid so that it comes out the underside of the braid. Once through hook your yarn on the loop or into the latch hook and pull the braid puller back out so that the yarn comes with it. Pull the yarn until the bottom of the braid has been pulled to the top. Take the two pieces of yarn sticking out the top, split them, cross them underneath the braid and bring them back up to the top. To create "bump" braids, tie a loose knot with the strings and push $\frac{1}{3}$ of the braid above the knot. Tighten the knot slowly to make sure you keep the proportions right ($\frac{1}{3}$ above the knot, $\frac{2}{3}$ below). When you have the right size bump, tighten up your knot and double it. Bumping the braids keeps them flat against the horse's neck. If your horse has a very thick mane, it may look better with button braids. To do this, pull the yarn through, same as before, then simply tuck the bottom of the braid back underneath. You'll need to wrap the string around the braid and double knot it. Pick which looks best and repeat for the rest of the braids. Try to keep the bumps or buttons even, it looks much more polished and tidy. When you are done cut off the excess yarn at the knot. Then use the same process (or French braid if you know how) on the horse's forelock to finish off the look!

It is best not to leave braids in for longer than necessary. To remove the braids use a seam ripper or small pointed scissors to cut the yarn. Be very careful not to cut any of your horse's mane especially when using a seam ripper. When you have removed all the braids wet the mane down and comb the water through. This will help reduce the curls.