

Beaded Braided Boa

Diane Fitzgerald

Although it is made with sixteen strands of fiber, this tasseled rope is easy to braid using the centuries-old Japanese technique called *kumihimo*. It doesn't require any fancy equipment to make—just heavy cardboard and maybe some old plastic hair rollers.

Materials

- 60 g size 11° or 8° seed beads
- 16 yd thick acrylic yarn (4 pieces 3 yd long and 1 piece 4 yd long)
- 16 yd eyelash yarn (4 pieces 3 yd long and 1 piece 4 yd long)
- 24 yd eyelash yarn and/or other type of yarn or cord (6 pieces 3 yd long and 1 piece 6 yd long)
- 1 yd metallic cord or ribbon for tassel wrap
- Size D Nymo beading thread
- Synthetic wax
- Clear nail polish

Tools

- Beading needle
- 6" circle of firm cardboard or extra heavy folder pressboard
- Bobbins (hair rollers or cardboard rectangles)
- Paperclip

Technique

Kumihimo

Finished Size 54"

PREPARATION

Step 1: Using 7 yd of doubled waxed thread, tie one bead on the end leaving a 6" tail (do not use the tension bead technique here). String 3 yd of beads, ending with a tension bead. Repeat for a second strand of beads.

Step 2: Lay out the sixteen 3-yd strands so that the ends are aligned. If you are using doubled eyelash strands, be sure to lay the nap of both strands in the same direction. Add the bead strands with the tied-on beads at the beginning end. Use a needle with 3' of doubled thread to gather all the strands and wrap them tightly several times 4" from the end, being sure that the tied-bead ends are secured in the wrap. Knot the thread and trim close to the wrap.

Step 3: Cut a 1" hole in the center of the circle. Cut 34–38 slits 3/8" deep and about 3/8" apart around the edge of the circle.

Step 4: Place the wrapped end of the strands in the hole in the center of the braiding disk. Follow the diagram to place the strands in the slits around the edge of the disk. Wrap the end of each strand around a cardboard rectangle about 1 1/2" x 2 1/2" to prevent tangling. If you have old plastic hair rollers, roll each strand on one of them to hold them in place.

BRAIDING

Step 5: Hold the disk in your left hand. Pick up the lower left A strand and move it to the notch marked * to the left of the top A strand. While your hand is up there, take the upper right A strand and move it to the spot marked ** to the right of the bottom A strand (Figure 1). Turn the disk to the left so the pair of B strands on the right are at the top.

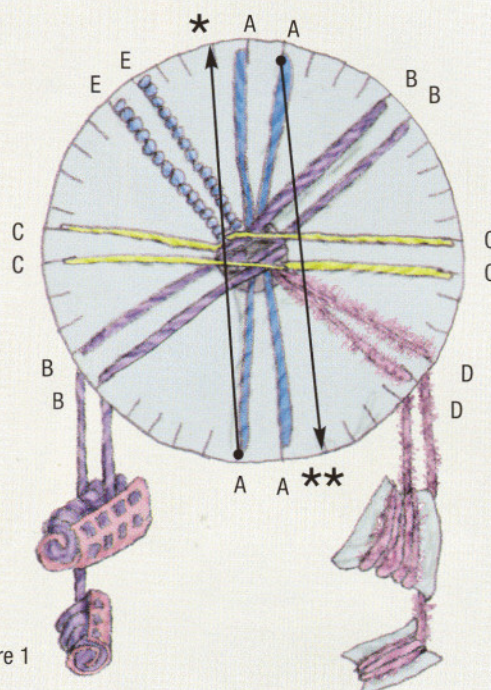


Figure 1

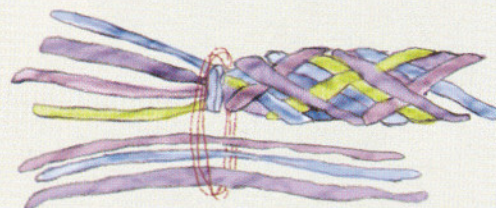


Figure 2

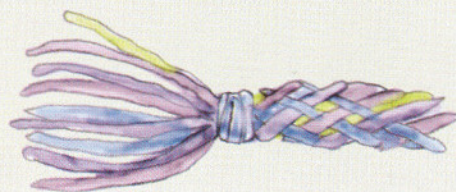


Figure 3

Step 6 Repeat Step 5, each time working with the strands at the 6 o'clock and 12 o'clock positions, and all the while repeating to yourself, "Left UP to the left, right DOWN to the right." Tug lightly on the braid to ease it down through the hole.

FINISHING

Step 7: Use thread to wrap the end of the braid near the hole in the cardboard as you did for the beginning of the strands, then carefully remove the braid from the cardboard disk. Remove excess beads from the strands and use a needle to work the tails back up the strand, knotting once along the strand; dab the knots with clear nail polish. If the eyelash yarn is woven into the braid, use a tapestry needle to carefully tease the loose ends out from the braid.

Step 8: Cut the remaining yarns into 8" pieces. Divide the pieces into two equal bunches and lay them so the ends are aligned. Lay one bunch around the braid so the center of the bunch is on top of the wrap (Figure 2). Secure the center of the bunch to the wrap with thread, sewing in and out a few times, then knot and clip the thread. Fold the yarn strands along the wrap to form a tassel over the end of the braided wrap. Bind the tassel top with metallic cord or ribbon (Figure 3).

Step 9: When the boa is complete, you will no doubt be tempted to wrap it around your neck and fling the end over your shoulder à la Isadora Duncan. But there are lots of other ways to wear a boa. Fold the braid in half, place it around your neck, then pass the tasseled ends through the loop made by the fold. Or you can tie the boa with an overhand knot or simply let the ends hang free. In any case, enjoy the admiring glances. ●

SUGGESTED READING

Beginner's Guide to Braiding: The Craft of Kumihimo. Tunbridge Wells, Kent, United Kingdom: Search Press, 1997.

Carey, Jacqui. *Beads & Braids.* Torquay, United Kingdom: Devonshire Press, Ltd., 1999.

Creative Kumihimo. Devon, United Kingdom: Carey Company, 1994.

Owen, Rodrick. *Braids: 250 Patterns from Japan, Peru and Beyond.* Available from Lacis, www.lacis.com.

Tips

- You can use almost any yarn to make this boa, but fuzzy yarn, eyelash yarn, extra thick yarn, ribbon and metallic cords, and, of course, strands of beads work the best. Double some of the yarn to make a fuller, fluffier boa.
- If you have to take a break from your braiding, you can tell where to begin again by locating the pair of threads lying on top of the braid. The threads to the left of them will be the next ones to work. Or just put a paper clip on the spot where you stopped.

REFERENCE

This pattern is called "kongo gumi" and is adapted from instructions for "Kumihimo the Easy Way," by Shirley Berlin; *Handwoven*, May/June 1999, pp. 31-36.

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