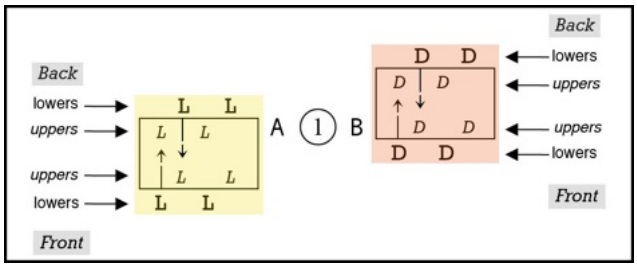
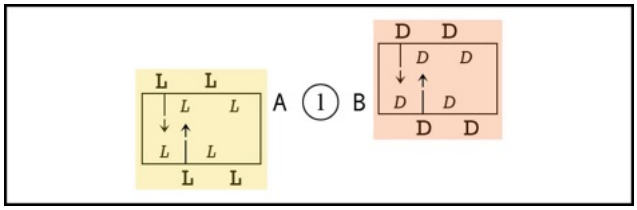
SLING BRAIDS WITH SPIRALS & VERTICAL STRIPES

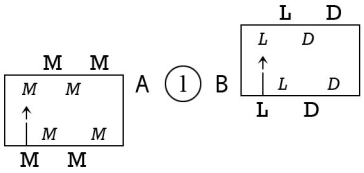
While step-by-step instructions are useful for the first braid, a more concise way of indicating how these sling braids are worked is needed as they become more complicated. I have found that the diagrams that Adele Cahlander uses in her book to indicate which strands move when and in what direction work well for me and hope they will work for you too.

The diagram below has all the information needed for working a spiral 16-strand braid. The yellow square on the left has letters representing the strands with L (= light) for the lowers and *L* for the uppers. The letters are placed so that the lower strand to be moved first is on the far left. I have added arrows showing the direction of the first two moves, the next two are the same. The braid is then rotated and the orange strands (D = dark) are worked in the same way starting at the lower left. The direction of the spiral is changed by making the first move from the back instead of the front as in the lower diagram. The strands are still the same but their position in the diagram has changed to indicate which ones should be moved first.

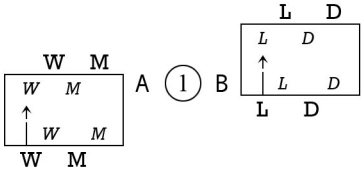




Diagrams for spiral braids with more than two colours



Left: diagram for braid worked with 3 colours
Right: The worked braid where red = M, L = yellow, D = dark blue



Left: diagram for braid worked with 4 colours
Far right: The worked braid where white = W, orange = M, L = fawn, D = brown



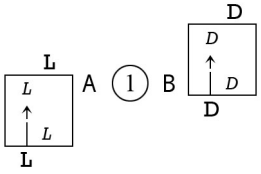


To change the direction of the spiral make the first move from the back as with the 2-colour braids.

An **8-strand spiral braid** made in a similar way can be used to make a loop either at the start or within a 16-strand braid. At the start of a braid the strands are secured near the middle with a slip knot, a suitable length is worked with 8 strands at one side of the knot, then the knot is untied, and the loop folded to bring all sixteen ends together to begin the 16-strand braid. For a loop within a braid the strands are divided and two 8-strand braids are worked separately before being rejoined.



Right: diagram for an 8-strand braid worked in 2 colours
Far right: Loops worked at the start and within a 16-strand braid



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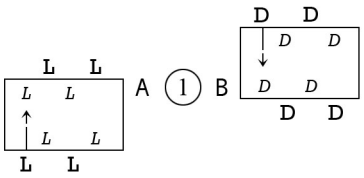
In the spiral braids both the A and B sets of strands are moved in the same way with the first move being either the front lower moving to the back, or the back lower moving to the front. This means that any pattern in the braid is limited to changes in the direction of the spiral and the arrangement of colour. However, if the A set of strands starts with the front lower and the B set of strands starts with the back lower (or vice versa) the pattern variations increase considerably. Most of these are worked with several steps but for the simplest, a vertical stripe, the only change is that the B set starts in the opposite direction to the A set.

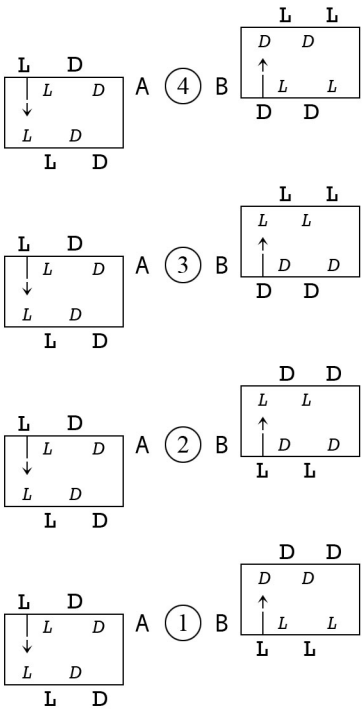
1. Vertical stripe pattern





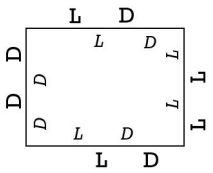
This will give you vertical stripes with light and dark stripes on opposite faces. The only difference between the diagram and the first one for the 2-colour spiral is the direction in which the B set of strands are moved. Note that the white A strands slope up to the left (S) and the orange B strands down to the left (Z). The diagrams for vertical stripes with 3 or 4 colours are similar — just change the letters for the colours you would like to use.

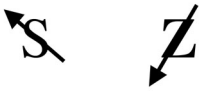
2. Vertical stripe variation



In this variation the A set of strands starts from the back and is moved in the same way each time but the B set of strands starts from the front and is arranged differently with all the light threads at one side and all the dark ones at the other. This colour arrangement which gives squares on the B sides and stripes on the A sides of the braid, is made up of 4 steps.

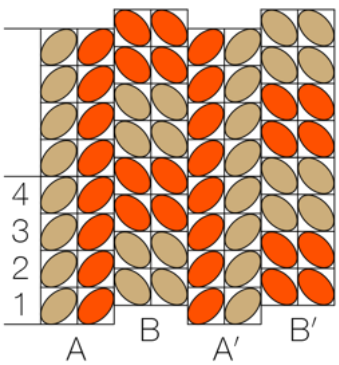
The diagram here tells you how to make the braid but does not really tell you how the braid will look when it's finished. Combining the A and B sets as on the right would give that information but it is rather awkward and also includes the upper strands which do not show on the surface of the braid. The solution in Adele Cahlander's book was to lay the letters for the lower strands in a staggered line instead of around a square as shown in the diagram below.











From left to right: S direction, Z direction, A side of the braid (Z), B side with squares (S), pattern diagram showing the slope of the strands and their colour

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