

THE GUILD OF STRAW CRAFTSMEN

7 Straw Flat Plait

This is a "flat plait" and is known as the Dunstable Plait (named after one of the towns involved in producing straw plaits for the hat industry).

Remember the little plaiting rhyme:

"Over one, under two, pull it tight and that will do."



Plait from the front.



Back of the plait

You will need:

Tools

- Sharp scissors

Materials

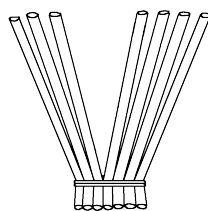
- supply of straws without heads
- Strong thread for tying

Preparation

Before you start make sure the straws are pliable. If they have been stored for a time they will need to be dampened. To do this put the straw in a container (like a plastic garden trough) and cover with warm water. Leave for a few hours until the ends of the straw bend without breaking. Try not to get the straw too wet as it will be limp and lifeless. When you are working with the straws keep them wrapped in a damp towel.

Making a 7 Straw Plait

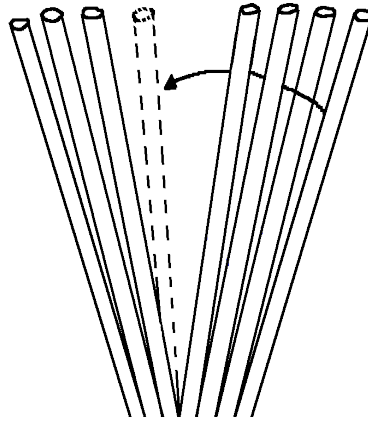
Step 1



Tie your seven straws together using a clove hitch and divide them, three on the left side, and four on the right hand side.

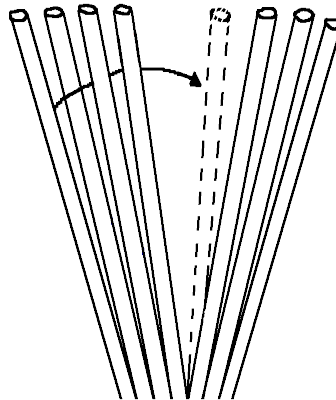
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Step 2

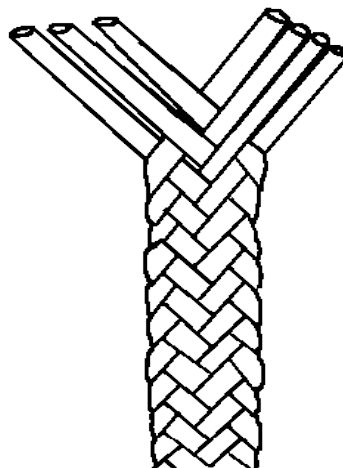


With the group of four, take the very outside straw on the right, pass it over the next one, then under the next two, so that it goes over to the left and becomes the inside straw of the left-hand group of three (so you've then got a group of four straws on the left hand side).

Step 3



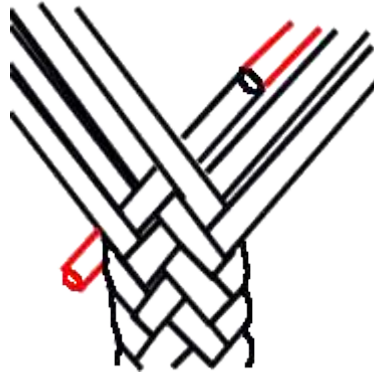
Then you go over to the left hand side, and do the same thing the other way, taking the extreme outside left straw over the next one on its right, and under the remaining two, so that it goes over to the right to become the inside straw of the right-hand group of straws. Then give each side a little tug to pull it tight. Then start again on the right hand group of four, repeating the moves you've just done..... You would carry on like this, but would need to add more straws as they get used up.



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Inserting new straws

The straw will gradually become shorter and shorter, so you will need to add more straws.



Insert a new straw (as shown in the diagram above). Do not cut off the ends until the plait is dry.

Further Reading

If you would like to find out about the Straw Hat industry the web has many links that you can follow. The following books are worth searching out.

Author	Title	Details
Jean Davis	Straw Plait	Shire ISBN:0 85263 580 X published 1981
Charles Freeman	Luton and the Hat Industry	Luton Museum and Art Gallery published 1953
June Kraft Garges	Handcrafted Straw Hats	Private publication published 1982
László Gróf	Children of Straw	Baron Books ISBN:0 86023 672 2 published 2002
compiled by Mrs. Hughes in collaboration with Mrs. and the Misses Batchelor	A First Course in English Straw Plaiting	Reprinted from the original Victorian publication by Cuckoostone Productions
Luton Museum & Art Gallery	The Little Straw Hat Book	