



# BRAIDS

## *Friesian Mane Braiding & Banding Techniques*

Article and Photography © by Melissa Fischbach

Welcome to braiding and banding for show and home hair care.

Start first by brushing and untangling the mane. Using a spray bottle, mix 2-4 tablespoons of leave-in conditioner (Mane and Tail®, or the brand of your choice) to a bottle of water and spray the mane until just damp. DO NOT use a detangler such as Cowboy Magic® or Show Sheen®. If you desire a slightly shiny look, I suggest a human product such as Palmers® cocoa butter hair treatment. It is very thick, so use a small amount and rub it between your hands before applying to the mane. Work it through the mane to detangle and add sheen. It will also give a little grip to help hold the braids in place for longer.

### ***Style #1: The Banded Woven Diamond***

This is a very simple and elegant way to dress a mane.

Uses: Approved and accepted for dressage/shows and excellent for exhibition.

What you need: 1 bag of rubber bands. For horses with extremely long manes, you can precut 4 inch pieces of yarn and tie each portion, rather than banding it.

Each paragraph number corresponds with a photograph.

**A** Separate hair into equal portions. Place a small mane rubber band (approximately 2-3 inches from scalp) around each portion, pulling downwards so that the hair lays flat along the crest of the neck. The number of portions, or small pony tails, must be an ODD number.

**B** Separate each portion again into halves. Each half will be banded to half of the next portion. DO NOT separate the first and last portions, but use them as a whole. Continue on to make diamonds. You can make the diamonds smaller or bigger depending on your portions and band spacing.



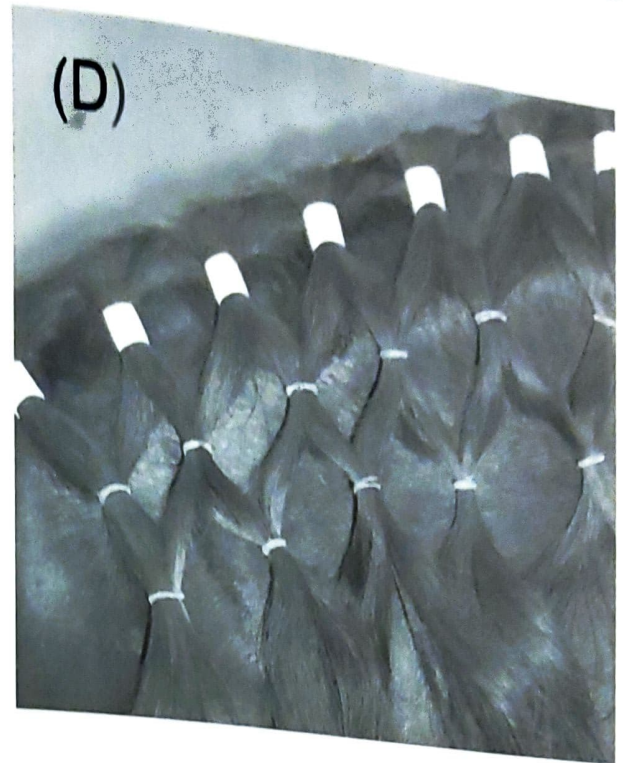
**C** You can do as many rows as you like. Because of the fact that the first and last portion are never halved, the entire weave will start to taper narrower and narrower. Generally 4-6 rows are a good number, but it depends on how much mane you are working with and the affect you wish to create.





D

Banding with surgical tape, dressage mane tape or plastic braid bands can be used for dressage shows. Wrap them around the first row of rubber bands only. This creates a professional dressage look, which accents the crest of the neck. I do not suggest adding white tape to all the bands unless for an exhibition. It can be distracting to the eye and judges prefer a clean, understated look. For exhibition, you may want to use colored rubber bands or decorate each banded portion. The forelock should also be braided for competition.



## Style #2: Reverse French Braid

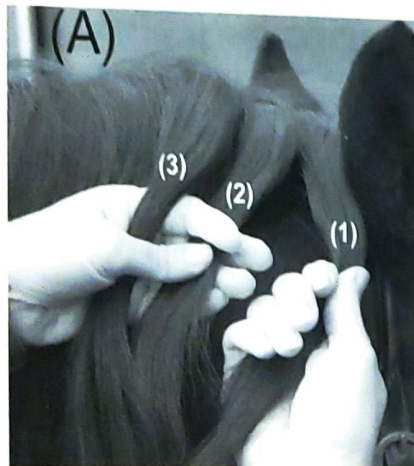
The French braid is again fairly simple. Unlike the traditional French braid for humans, the French braid for horses is reversed. You braid under rather than over and you only add hair to one side.

Uses: Approved for dressage/shows and exhibitions. Great for at home mane care.

What you need: 1-2 rubber bands.

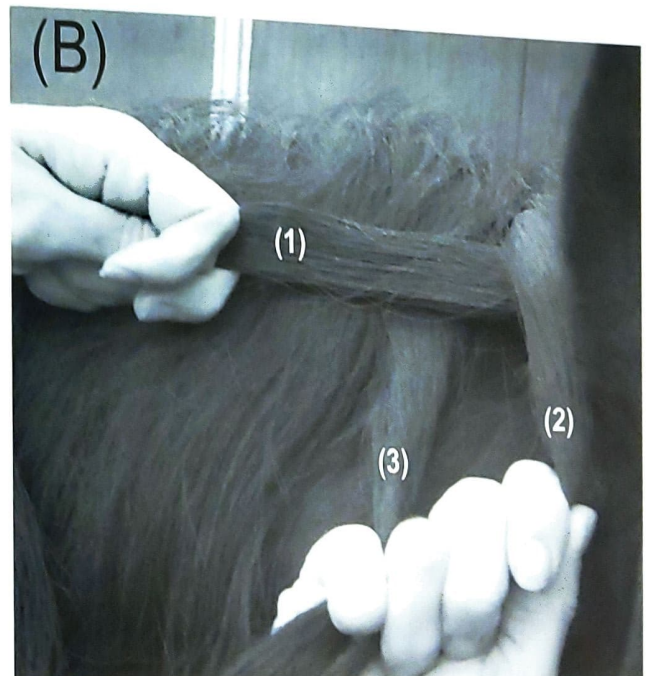
A

Separate hair behind the ears into 3 equal sections. You will want to form the braid PULLING back towards the horse's withers. I have numbered the sections 1, 2, 3.



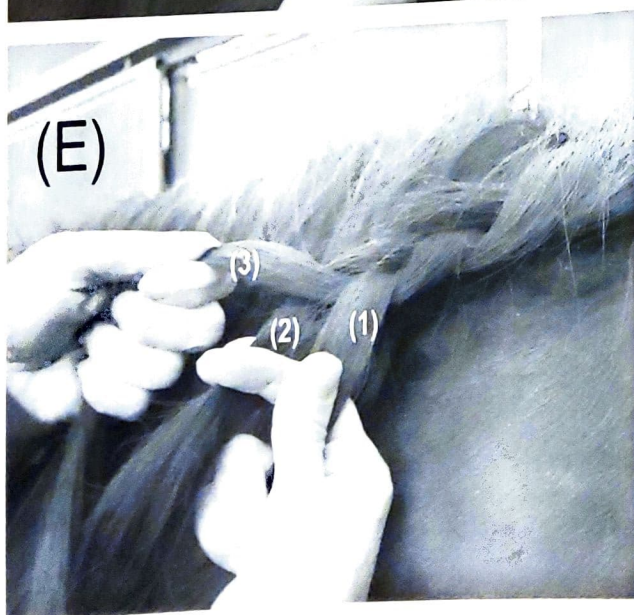
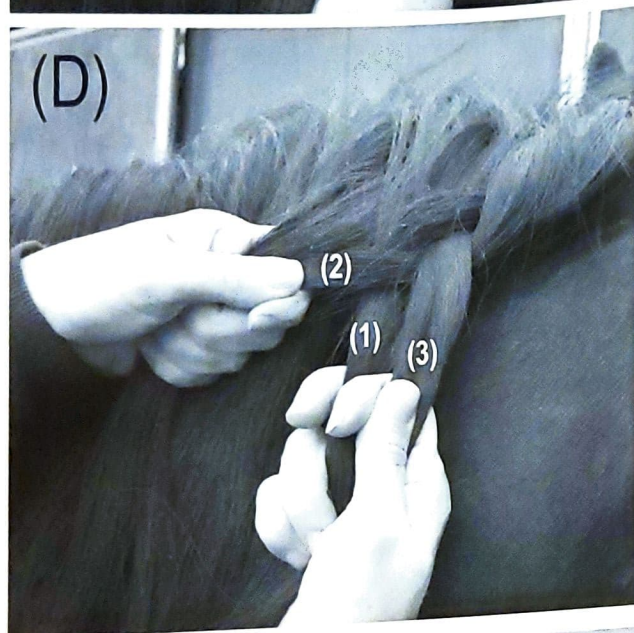
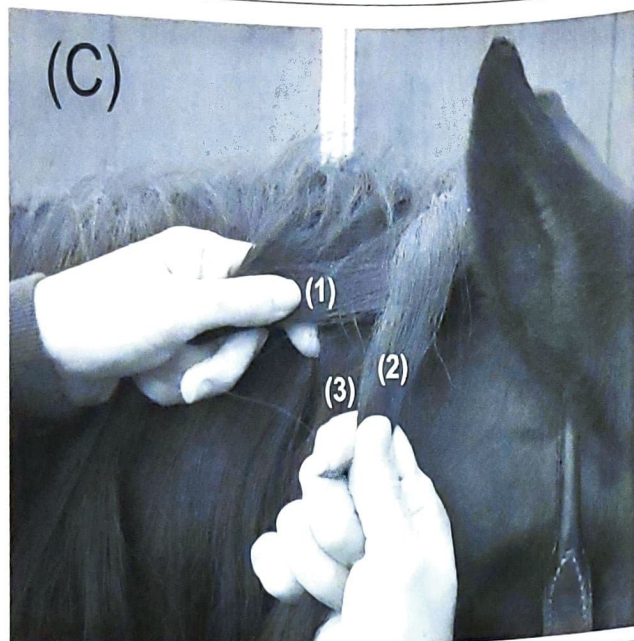
B

#1 goes under #2, and over #3.



continued...





**C** Add a portion of mane hair to #1. This should be a portion equal to what you are already holding. You can start to chant to yourself: “Under, over, add hair!”

**D** #2 now goes **under** #3 and **over** #1. Add hair to #2.

**E** #3 now goes **under** #1 and **over** #2. Add hair to #3

**F** Continue to the point on the neck where you wish to stop and make a regular braid with the remaining length. Depending on the length of the hanging braid, you can feed it back through the braid along the neck to form a roll. You can also roll it under and secure with a rubber band.

This style equals a neat appearance in the show ring and keeps hair neat and clean at home. Have you ever wanted mane to the ground? This is how you do it. Manes are kept in a French braid unless you are showing...or showing them off!



### ***Forelock French Braid***

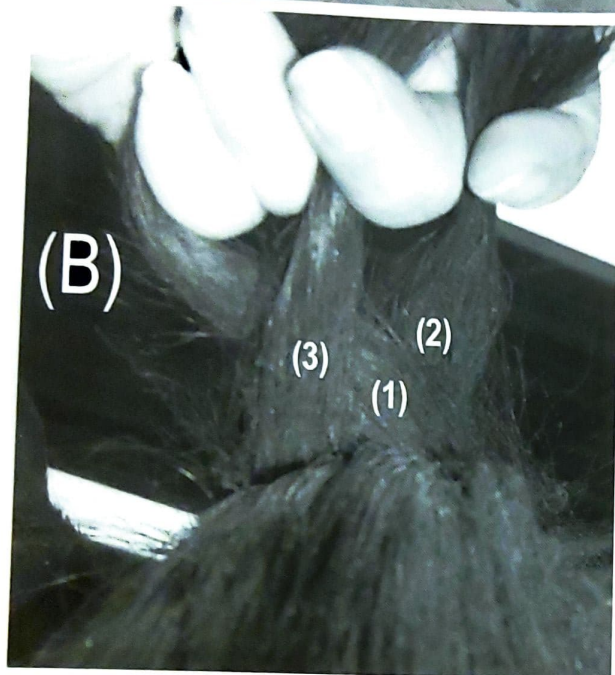
It's become common practice among Friesian owners to show their horses with a free flowing forelock. However, judges don't appreciate it, most especially dressage judges. A judge must be able to see the head and face of the horse. A flowing forelock obscures their vision of the horse's head and creates an untidy appearance. It is fine to have the forelock down for exhibitions but when you are entering the dressage ring, it is preferred that you braid the forelock. If you can't bring yourself to braid it, at least band the forelock to a tidy center pony tail and place the rubber band under the brow band.



The French braid for the forelock is the same as one would do for human hair with the one exception that you braid under rather than over.

Use: Dressage shows English pleasure classes

What you need: 2 rubber bands and a piece of bailing wire or hobby wire, twisted with a loop at the bottom.

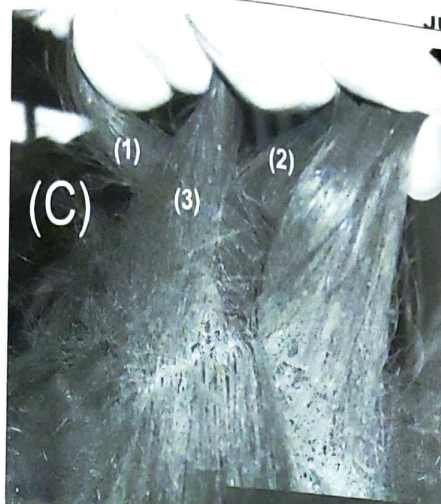


**A** Twisted hobby wire or bailing wire. Twist tightly, leaving a small loop at the bottom.

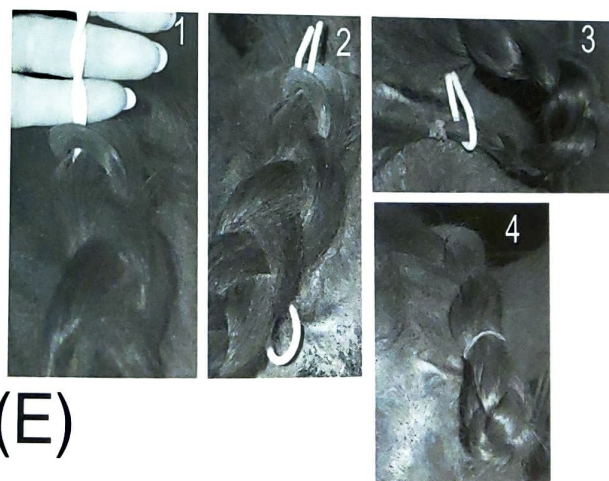
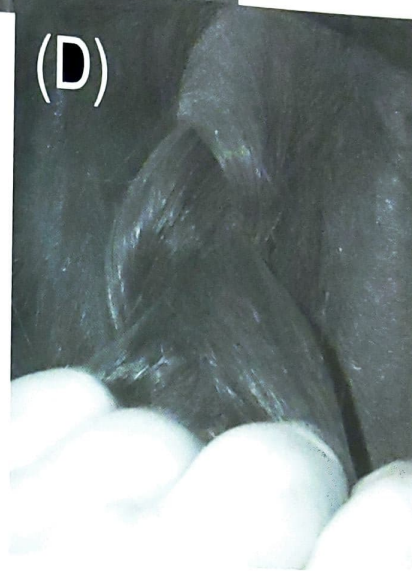
**B** Separate hair at the top of the forelock into 3 equal portions. You will want to braid pulling downwards towards the horse's nose. Note: I am pulling upwards only so that you can see the braiding. I have numbered the portions 1,2,3. #1 goes under #2 and over #3.

**C** Add forelock hair to BOTH #2 and #1 (photo shows adding hair to #2). Add a portion of mane hair to both sides each time. **"Under, over, add hair to both sides."**

**D** Keep braiding downwards, adding hair each "over, under" until the braid just becomes a regular braid. Band the end of the braid with a rubber band.



**E** To finish, follow the steps pictured below. Using your twisted wire, push the loop gently through the very top and middle behind your braid, until the loop comes out the bottom back. (There is actually a pocket in the middle of the braid). Take the end of your braid and feed it through the loop. Gently pull the loop back out the top. Unhook the braid end and pull it down a little from the bottom so that the end is not sticking up like a feather. Place a rubber band around the now rolled bottom. All done! Top it off with a nicely fitting bridle with a brow band that fits right over the band.



continued...





## *The Friesian*

*Braids, cont.*



*The finished braids: Reverse French Braid and Forelock French Braid.*

Melissa Fischbach has owned and trained Friesians since 1990. Prior to starting her own businesses, she was head groom to an Olympic dressage rider and judge. Melissa would like to thank her students for hand modeling and her horses for being so patient.



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