

# The Flemish Bowstring

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*The Flemish string usually has a single nock loop at the top end and the other end without a loop. The free end is tied to the bow with a timber hitch and the bow strung/unstrung by slipping the looped end on and off the nock.*

## Method

Measure the length of the bow, and add 18". This will be the length to which the strands will be cut.

Take the maximum draw weight of the bow required and multiply it by 5. ie a 50 lb bow will require a Flemish string of 250 lbs. Check the breaking strain of the material used (linen thread, silk, dacron etc). Divide the total stringweight by the breaking weight of the strands to work out the number of strands required. Hence, if the thread used has a 10 lb breaking strain, and we are making it for the above 50 lb bow, we will need  $250/10 = 25$  strands. Cut this number of strands to the length specified earlier (bow length + 18"). Holding this bundle of threads tightly, use a sharp, flat edged knife to scrape the top 3-5") of the bundle of threads. This is intended to wear away part of the ends, giving them a slight taper so that the threads end at different places, rather than all at one place when braided into the line. Divide the strands into 2 bundles and wax the tapered ends of both bundles thoroughly for about 10" using a block of beeswax.

## Optional reinforcing for the nock loop

Take half again the number of strands and cut these to about 18". Taper them as above by scraping the ends, and lay them along the waxed portions of the bundles, waxing them into the main bundles thoroughly. You can do the same with the free end.

## Braiding the string

Hold both bundles together in the left hand about 10" from the ends, with the short ends towards you. With the right hand, twist the farthest of the two bundles tightly towards the right and lay it over the other one towards you to the left. Take the second group, twist it tightly to the right and lay it towards the left. Continue twisting each bundle of threads to the right and turning over to the left in turn until about 3-4" has been twisted for the loop. Turning this loop around, lay one of the short bundles of thread along the main string and wax it thoroughly into one of the long bundles there. Repeat this with the second short bundle, giving a loop formed at the end of the string and both bundles of ends well waxed back into the main string.

From here, continue the process of twisting to the right and laying over to the left using the groups made of the short and long strands together. Gradually the tapered ends of thread will be braided into the main bowstring as the bundles of thread are braided together. Hopefully the tapering and twisting have been done smoothly and consistently. If so, the ends should disappear into the main string without trace. Once the ends are braided away, you should have a pair of bundles of thread with a single loop at one end. Wax all the remaining threads together for the rest of their length, stretch them to an even tension and twist the complete length of them to the left (anti-clockwise) about 30-40 turns.

Once the main length is twisted to within about 12" of the end, fold a piece of leather over the string and rub it rapidly up and down the full length of the string, allowing the heat from the friction to melt the wax, making it sink deeper into the full string. The bottom section is treated in a similar manner to the upper section, except no loop is formed. Divide the main string into two bundles as was done at the start. Now, as before, twist each bundle of threads to the right and lay it over its companion to the left. Continue this twisting to the end of the string and tie an overhand knot to hold the work in place.