

Making a Flemish Bowstring, From Start to Finish

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With thanks to Moira nic Connell, who taught us and many others.

1. Figure out how many strands of Dacron you need, which is based on the poundage of the bow. See the chart below. General rules are to never use less than 10-12 strands, and to use two different colors (half of each color) to make it easier to see what you are doing. Also, be mindful that your nocks have to work with whatever the finished (served) string thickness is. If a poundage is between two measurements, it is best to round up.

Strands	Poundage
10	20 #
12	30 #
14	40 #
16	50 #
18	60 #
20	70 #
22	80 #

2. Determine the length of the strands. It should be the following:

For a recurve or longbow – the unstrung distance between string nocks, plus 18” to 20.”

For a horsebow – it becomes a little more of a pain since the loops on the end of the string need to be huge in comparison, in order to fit over the larger ears... You need to make the strands much longer, perhaps the distance between string nocks plus 30”...? The best way to figure it out, if possible, is to dissect and measure an old string.



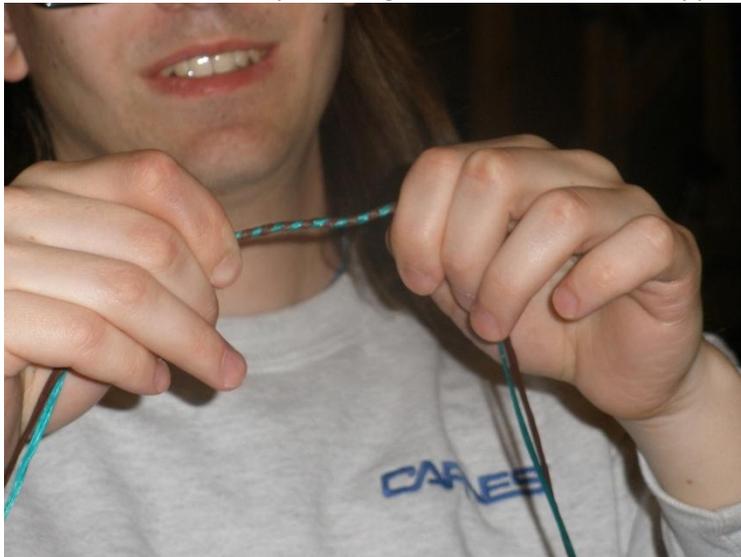
3. Measure and cut strands of the right number and length. It is easiest to measure one strand of one color, then fold it back on itself, and measure the other strands off of it. Make one snip to cut it off the spool at the end, and go back and cut the folded loops. This method is much faster and usually makes for more even lengths. Do the same with the second color. Then, taking all strands of one color, rub your hand or a piece of leather across them, to melt the wax and bind the multiple strands together. When you do the same with the other color, you will end up with two thick strands of different colors.



4. Start the loops about 9" down from one end (for non-horsebows). Hold both strands in your left hand, at this 9" point. Have the cut/short ends pointing to your right. With your right hand, grab one thick strand of one color, and twist it toward you (counter-clockwise if looking at the short end of the string.) Pinch and hold it with two fingers, so that it does not unwind.

5. Repeat this process with the strands of the other color, twisting in the same direction.

6. Put the two twisted pieces together, and twist in the opposite direction (away from you/clockwise.)



7. If you need a larger loop, repeat 4-6 until the pieces that are twisted together will be long enough to form the desired loop. Be aware that the loop will stretch a little though, so don't make it too big...

8. Pinch together where the twist starts (the point in your left hand) and stops (the end of what you are creating in step 6.)



9. Put the “extra tails” together with the long strand of the same color. Hold in your left hand, with the loop pointed to the left, and the strands pointed to your right.

10. Twist one of the individual colors toward you (counter clockwise.) Pinch and hold it; do the same with the other color.

11. Put the two colors together, and twist in the opposite direction (away from you/clockwise). This is just like how you made the loop in the first place... This is also the point at which the loop will seem to grow bigger.



12. Check the loop length on the bow – make sure it fits over the ear of the bow but isn't too excessive. If it is too small to fit, start over now by untwisting. Note that having one larger loop and one smaller loop is usual (the larger loop can slide down onto the limb of the bow when unstringing, whereas the smaller one will stay put on the string nocks.) If this first loop tends toward being one or the other, keep that in mind as you make the second loop.

13. Move your left hand – instead of pinching at the bottom of the loop, pinch as far down the string as you have twisted the colors together. Repeat steps 9-11 until you have reached the ends of the “extra tails.”

One end of your bowstring is now finished.

You should have 3” of twist between the bottom of your loop and the ends of the tails. If you do not, start over. This 3” of twist is required for stability of the string, and it is unsafe to have it be shorter (it can unravel and break the string while the bow is strung or in use...)

14. Put the finished end under your foot.
15. Stand up and pull all the strands tight so that there is no slack in either strand.
16. Measure down from the untwisted end about 9", to start the bottom of the second loop. Keep in mind the note in step 12.
17. You can sit down/take the tension off at this point. Keep your foot on the other loop though.
18. Repeat steps 4-13, keeping in mind to make the loop smaller or larger as need be.
19. Stand up, keeping your foot on the first loop. Pinch the second loop at the bottom of the tails, and twist clockwise.



20. It will look like you are undoing the twist in the middle – you are. Putting loops on puts the wrong direction of twist in the middle, this step takes it out and puts it in the correct direction.
21. Once the middle of the string starts to twist, run your hand from the center to one end, then from the center to the other end, to spread the twist out more evenly across the length of the string.
22. Continue twisting until you think the string is about the right length.
23. Test the string out on the bow. Put one loop on, and see where the other loop lies. If it looks close, try stringing the bow. If it needs to be shorter or longer, twist or untwist as necessary, until it fits on the bow.
24. Bow should be slightly over-strung, as the string will relax slightly as the strands stretch under tension.
25. With the string on the bow, trim any pieces of tails that stick out. Make certain that you do not sever or nick any of the other threads!

26. Wax the string. Apply string wax or beeswax to the entire length of it, and rub it in/melt the wax by briskly rubbing with a glove or leather scrap.

Serving

1. Pull out a tail of ~18" from the serving spool and jig.

2. Start serving about 2" above where you want the nocking point to be. More than 2" will be below the nocking point in case of string contact with arm or armor. You will end up with 2 ½" to 3" above the nock point.



3. Start wrapping the jig over the top, toward you (counter-clockwise) moving up the string (away from where the nock point will be ½" to 1").

4. Reverse the direction of your serving by flipping the jig over. Go back over what you already wrapped, and continue onward. You should still be rotating the jig counter-clockwise.

5. Pull the tail out straight when it starts to wrap around the string. When you get back to the loops created by wrapping in the original direction, you can get them out of the way by unwrapping the tail a few times.

6. Continue in the downward direction, pulling the tail out and unwrapping if/when it goes around the string.

7. When you get ½" to 1" from where you want to stop (~8" of total serving should be present at the end of the process) make a loop out of the tail. You do this by pointing the end of the tail back up the string. Make sure the loop sticks out further than the point you are going to stop at. Hold the loop tight against the string, and continue wrapping over it.

8. Continue on for that last inch or so. Pull more serving out of the jig, and snip it. Put the newly cut end through the loop.

9. Pull on the tail of the loop. This may require wrapping your finger with a scrap of leather, as the serving string may cut into you if you do not. Pull just until the loop starts going ~1/4" under the wrap.



10. Snip off the loose end (the one you tucked through the loop, NOT the tail you just pulled on!) Pull a tiny bit more so that the snipped end disappears under the serving.

11. Snip the tail you were pulling on.

Nocking Point

1. Use a nocking point measure (or arrow) to figure out where you want your nocking point to be. Some prefer to nock under a point, some prefer above. Others will use two nocking points to bracket where the arrow goes – there is no one “right” way to do it – use whatever works for your shooting style.
2. Using nocking pliers, put the nocking point on in the desired location.

Your bow should remain strung for 20-30 minutes after you make a new string. This time allows for the string fibers to stretch.