How to Draw a Braid

10 easy steps for beginners



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What you'll need

- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Coloring pencils
- Plain paper

How to use this guide

New lines for each step are shown in **blue**; lines you already drew are gray. Draw lightly first, then ink and erase near the end.

Read the full tutorial online →

STEP 1 Draw a long center line

Hold your paper upright and draw one light line from near the top edge almost to the bottom. Every segment of the braid will meet on this line, so it's the backbone of the whole drawing. A tiny wobble is fine. I let mine lean a little, because real braids rarely hang dead straight.

💡 **Tip:** Press so lightly that you can barely see the line. It gets erased later.

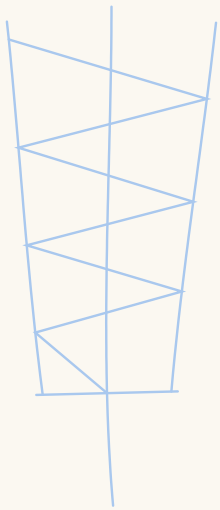
STEP 2 Add two tapering side lines



Draw one line on each side of the center line. Start them wide apart at the top, then bring them slowly closer as they go down, because a braid gets thinner toward the end. Stop both lines about three quarters of the way down. Join their bottom ends with a short line across: that's where the hair tie will sit.

💡 **Tip:** At the top, the gap on each side should be roughly as wide as your thumb is long.

STEP 3 Mark the segments with a zig-zag

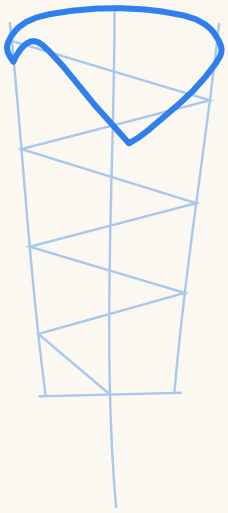


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This is the secret of the whole braid. Starting at the top left, draw a slanted line down to the right side line, then back to the left, then right again, like a lightning bolt bouncing between two walls. Each corner marks where one braid segment begins. Make the zig-zag steps a bit shorter as the braid narrows.

💡 **Tip:** Count your corners on each side. Four or five per side looks full without crowding.

STEP 4 Draw the gathered hair on top

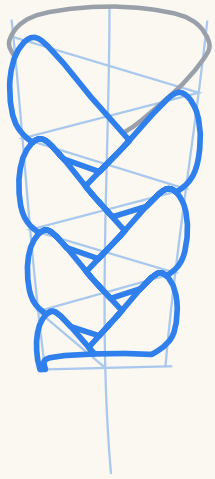


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Above the first zig-zag line, draw a wide rounded top that curves down on both sides into a soft point on the center line. Picture a fan, or a scoop of ice cream upside down. This is the hair being pulled together before the braiding begins, and it gives the braid somewhere to come from.

💡 **Tip:** Make the top piece a little wider than the braid so it looks gathered, not glued on.

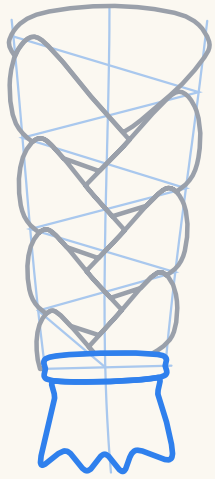
STEP 5 Draw the slanted braid segments



Now draw one segment at every zig-zag corner, working from the top down and switching sides each time. Each one has a rounded outer side that bulges just past the side line, then slants down and inward to a tip just across the center line. That tip slips under the next segment, so stop your line where it meets the segment below. When I teach this, I tell students to think of a row of leaves leaning toward the middle.

💡 **Tip:** Keep every segment slanted at the same angle, or the braid looks tangled.

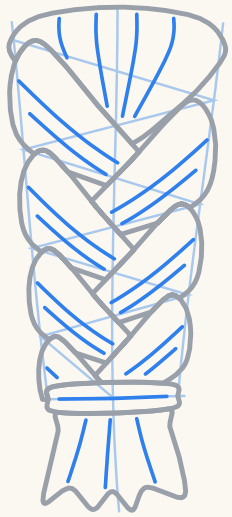
STEP 6 Add a hair tie and a loose tuft



On the short cross line at the bottom, draw a narrow band with rounded ends that sticks out slightly past both sides of the braid. Under it, draw the tuft: two sides that flare outward a little, finished with a wavy, pointed bottom edge. A tuft that spreads looks like real loose hair; one that stays straight looks like a paintbrush.

💡 **Tip:** Give the bottom edge three or four uneven points instead of a neat row.

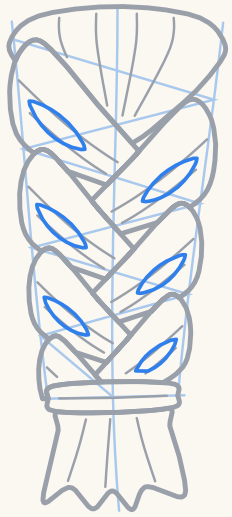
STEP 7 Draw the strand lines



Inside every segment, add two thin lines that follow its slant, one near the upper edge and one near the lower edge. Then draw a few lines in the top piece that curve together toward its point, and a few more in the tuft that spread apart. These lines tell the eye that the shapes are made of hair.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a gap between each strand line and the outline. Touching lines look busy.

STEP 8 Add shiny highlights



In the middle of each segment, between the two strand lines, draw a long thin shape with pointed ends, like a stretched grain of rice. Tilt it the same way as the segment. Honestly, this small step is what makes the hair look glossy instead of flat, so don't skip it.

💡 **Tip:** Draw each highlight with one quick stroke out and one stroke back.

STEP 9 Ink the braid and erase the guides



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Go over every keeper line with your black pen: the top piece, all the segments, the tie, the tuft, the strand lines and the highlights. Use a firmer line for the outer edges and a lighter touch for the strand lines inside. Let the ink dry fully, then erase the center line, the side lines and the zig-zag.

💡 **Tip:** Wait a full minute before erasing. Wet ink smears across the whole braid.

STEP 10 Color the braid



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Fill the segments, the top piece and the tuft with brown. Press harder with dark brown in the small gaps between segments and along each edge where a tip tucks under, since those spots sit in shadow. Color the highlights light brown and the hair tie pink. I always color in the direction the strands run, which keeps the texture looking like hair.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a hair-thin strip of paper white inside each highlight for extra shine.