

# Tutorial - Coiling on a Gourd with Danish Cord Using Straight Stitches

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*About this Gourd:*  
*I used the bottom half of an 8.5" canteen gourd.*  
*The finished piece is only 4.5" tall.*  
*There are about 3" coiling on the rim that slopes inward.*

## Supplies

- Cleaned and cut gourd
- Awl
- Drill with 3/32") bit
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Measuring tape
- Baby wipes
- 1/8" Danish Cord
- Tapestry needle (because it has a large eye and will not nick the cord like a sharper needle)
- Waxed linen 3-ply thread, artificial sinew, and/or waxed Brazilian polycord

OPTIONAL: Leather lacing to cover the holes at the rim and glue



## 1. Creating the Holes

On a cleaned, cut gourd, mark where the holes will go with a pencil. Using a measuring tape, place the marks 1/4" down from the top and 5/8" apart. If the last mark is too close or too far from the first mark, then erase about four marks and place the last few marks by dividing the remaining space evenly. To keep the drill bit from slipping, first punch a hole partway through the marks on the gourd with an awl, then drill the holes through the pencil marks.

## 2. Applying the Finish to the Gourd (Inside and Outside)

After all the holes are drilled, use baby wipes to remove any traces of pencil marks. Finish the gourd inside and out with the finish of your choice. In this example, leather dye was used on the outside of the gourd and acrylic paint on the inside. Danish cord can be painted or dyed, but be careful not to soak the cord, or it will unwind. Be sure the cord is completely dry before coiling.

## 3. Estimating How Much Cord Will Be Needed

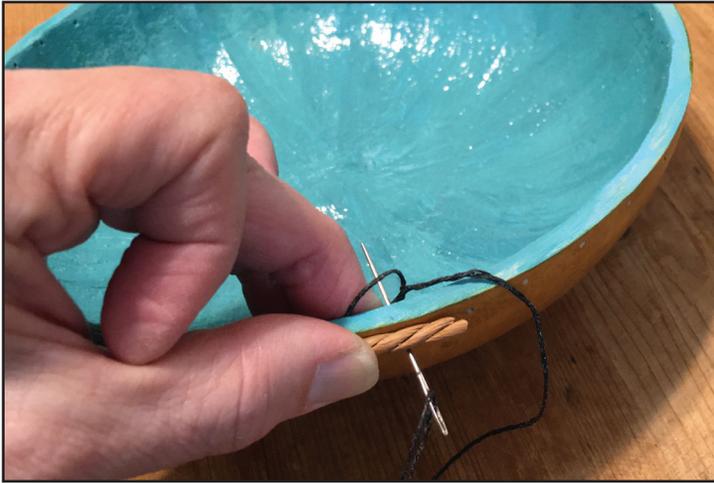
To roughly estimate how much cord the project will require, measure the circumference of the rim and the desired number of inches of coiling. Estimate how many rows to an inch of coiling. When using 1/8-inch cord and 3-ply waxed linen thread, there are six rows to an inch of coiling. Fewer rows to the inch occur when the thread is thicker. Multiply the circumference of the gourd by the total number of rows of coiling to get the total number of inches of cord needed. For example, if the distance around the rim of the gourd is fifteen inches and the project requires two inches of coiling at six rows to the inch, the result would be  $15 \times 2 \times 6$

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# Coiling continued

or 180 inches or fifteen feet. This estimate should be more than enough, because the opening at the top gets slightly smaller with each row of coiling.

## 4. Coiling the First Row



Thread a needle with about two arm's length of thread. Choose the spot for beginning and ending the coiling. This is a design choice. On a gourd where there is no obvious front or back, it doesn't matter. To begin coiling, cut the end of the Danish cord diagonally so it comes to a point. Make a loop at the end of the thread and hold the loop inside the gourd just behind the hole where you will take the first stitch.

Holding the loop up against the inside of the gourd and the cord to the outside, bring the thread to the front over the cord and insert the needle under the cord from the outside into the gourd and through the loop. Pull the stitch almost through, then pull on the inside loop, creating a knot. Finally, pull the last of the thread through that knot to complete the first stitch. The tapered end of the cord should now be tightly sewn to the gourd. Insert the needle part way through the hole immediately to the left of the first stitch. *(NOTE: Right-handed weavers work from right to left, holding the cord against the gourd with their left hand.)*

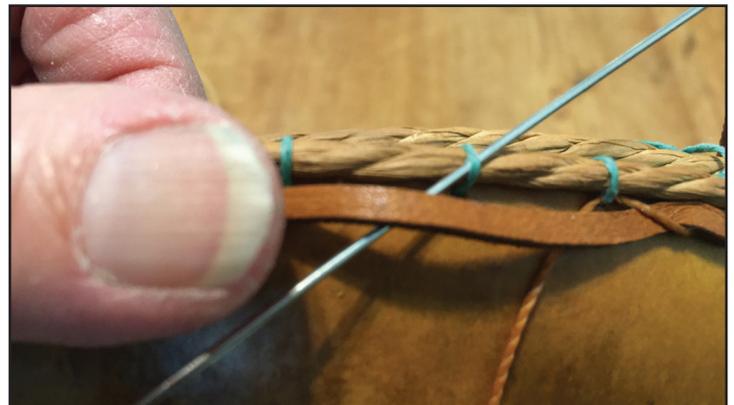


Pull the thread from the last stitch behind the needle and hold the cord up against the gourd while you pull the threaded needle all the way through the hole to the inside of the gourd, completing

the second stitch. Continue to do this all around the rim of the gourd until all the holes have been used. Those who have done embroidery may recognize this technique as being similar to a blanket stitch. The stitches over the cord on the outside are standing straight up, while the back of the stitches on the inside are lying down parallel to the rim.



## 5. Optional Step: Covering the Holes at the Rim by Lashing Leather Lacing



Covering the holes at the base of the coiling is a design choice. The best time to do that is after the first row. This tutorial shows covering the holes with leather lacing. Cut the end of the leather lacing on a diagonal. Thread a needle with about two arm's length of thread. Under the point where you started coiling, on the inside of the gourd, slip the needle through the back of a coiling stitch and tie a knot to anchor your thread. Leave about a three-inch tail on the inside. Place and hold the leather lacing against the gourd just below the first row of coiling with the diagonal end to the right of where the thread is coming out of the gourd.

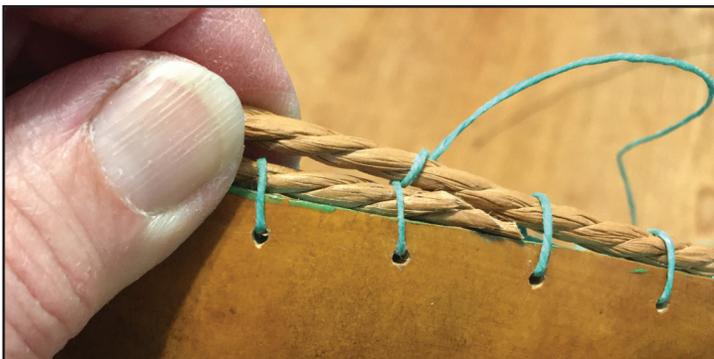
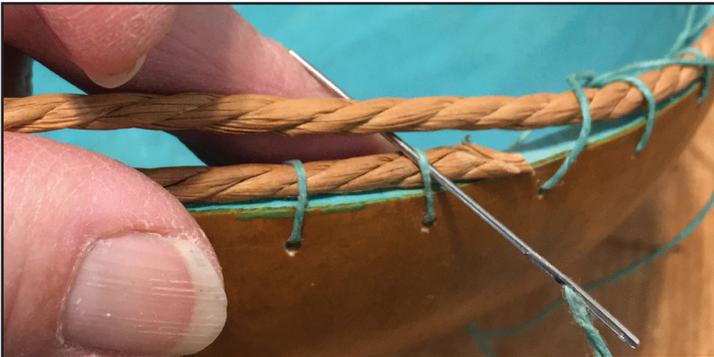
### *Tying on more thread:*

When a new length of waxed linen is needed, tie it onto to the remaining section of waxed linen with a knot on the inside of coiling. Placing the knot tight against the wall of coiling will make it so the knot cannot be seen. Cut off the ends close to the knot so no loose ends are hanging on the inside. Then continue coiling with the new thread.

Pull the thread over the leather lace and take a stitch into the bottom of the stitch immediately to the left by inserting the needle from right to left on the outside of the gourd. Do this all the way around the gourd. Note: In this case I used Brazilian polycord (a waxed polyester cord) from KnotMore for this sample piece, because a matching waxed linen thread was not on hand. I prefer to use a thread that matches the color of the leather.

At the end, cut the leather lacing at a diagonal so it meets the beginning cut. Put a drop of glue under both ends of the leather and secure them to the gourd so the diagonal points line up and touch. On the last stitch (covering where the leather lacing meets), push the needle to the inside of the gourd under the first row of coiling. Tie a knot on the inside of the gourd using the thread on the needle and the tail left at the beginning of this row.

### **6. Coiling Subsequent Rows**



As with all coiling, shaping depends on where the next row is laid down as coils are attached. This example shows adding the coils so that each row moves slightly to the inside. Note: I originally started this project with the Danish cord against the gourd using black waxed linen. I changed my mind and started over with teal waxed linen (to match the finish of the interior of the bowl) and this time I placed the Danish cord on the rim of the gourd bowl. I

use both placements for the first row, depending on how I feel at the time. Both work well.

On this second row (and all subsequent rows), stitch into the top of the stitches in the previous row. Insert the needle so it goes from the right front to left back, picking up the top of the stitch immediately to the left from the previous row. Before completing the stitch, pull the thread from right to left and wrap it behind the needle.

Continue doing this until the desired height and shape are achieved.

### **7. Finishing the Top**



To cleanly finish the top of the coiling, make one last row that sits inside and slightly lower than the row before.

At the place just above the first stitch, wrap the thread around the cord (for this first stitch only). Using that thread, push the cord being added to the back, so it sits behind the previous row. Insert the needle from back to front underneath the previous row to the left of stitch immediately to the left.



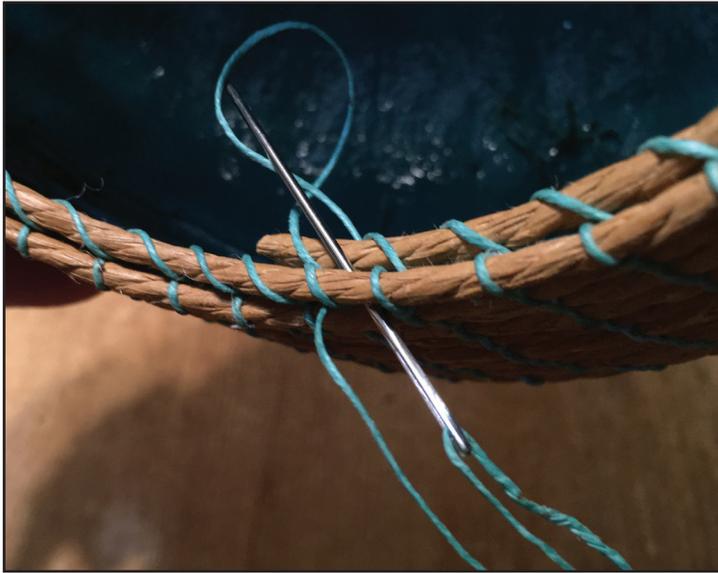
To finish the stitch, push the needle from front to back just to the right of the stitch in the row below. Come up between the two rows of cord, so you can pull the thread over the inside row and

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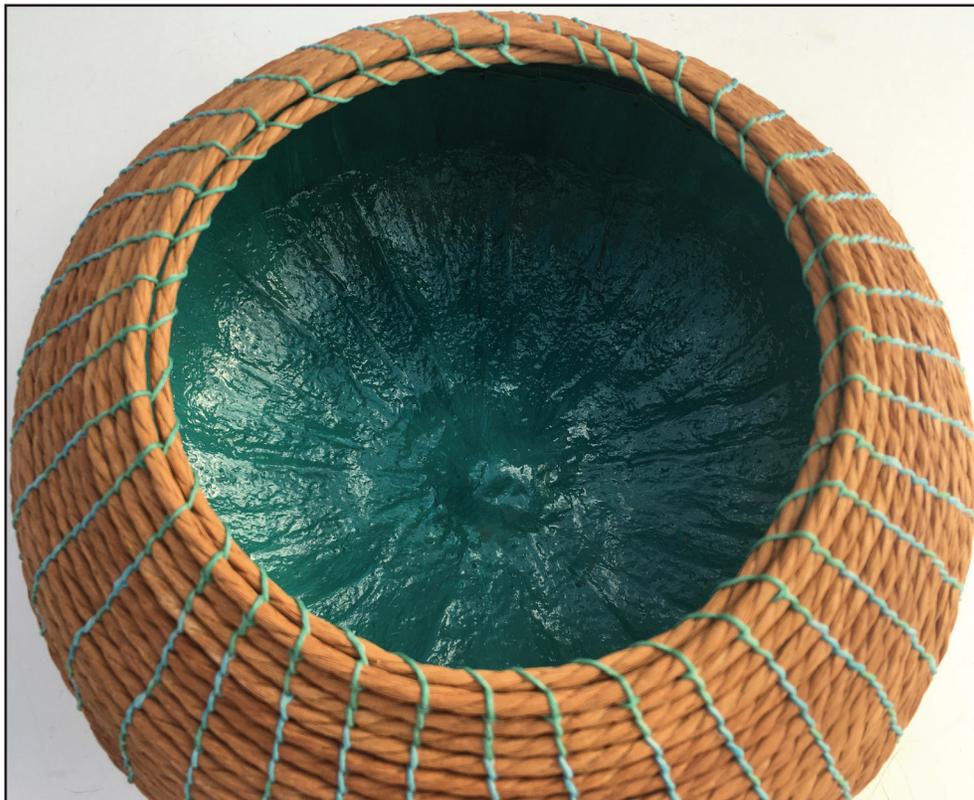
## Coiling continued

to the left to take the next stitch from back to front. Keep pushing the inside row to keep it behind the previous row instead of on top of it.

This creates little straight stitches parallel to the cord under the top row on the outside of the gourd and diagonal stitches on the inside row.



To finish this inside row, cut and tuck the end of the cord under the beginning of that row. Tie a knot on the inside and cut the thread.



Here is the top view of the finished gourd.



On this gourd, a wire-wrapped piece of glass was sewn to the coiling as an embellishment.

Basketweaver and gourd artist, Susan Ashley, was born and raised in West Virginia, but has lived in the Fort Worth, Texas area for over 40 years. She discovered her passion for basketweaving when she took a beginner class while visiting North Carolina in 1983. She has attended many Association of Michigan Basketweavers Conventions, and it was at one of those in 2001 that she took a class on preparing and coiling on gourds. She happily retired from her day job as a computer software analyst in 2012 and now delights in being able to spend as much time as possible creating woven art, playing with color and texture, and experimenting with new techniques. As an

environmentalist, she feels that her art is “up-cycling” humble natural materials, like pine needles and gourds, to create colorful art pieces inspired by nature. She has been awarded ribbons at the State Fair of Texas, Lone Star Gourd Festival and Southwest Fine Art Gourd Show. Her website is <http://www.txweaver.com>. 🧶