

# SOUTH AFRICAN PONY CLUB



## Plaiting Achievement Badge

### WORKBOOK



**Objectives:**

- To know the principles of plaiting a mane and tail
- Know on which occasions your horse/pony should be plaited
- To recognize a well plaited mane and tail

**Key points:**

Members need to know :

- Which tools to use
- The method and sequence of plaiting
- What a well plaited mane and tail look like
- Plait a minimum of 3 plaits

**Additional reading:**

*The Manual of Horsemanship pg. 216 – 220*

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**BRANCH** \_\_\_\_\_



## Why do we plait or braid a horse's mane?

- Manes are plaited for neatness, to show off the neck and its surface line or crest, and to train the mane to fall to a preferred side (normally the right /off side)
- Plaiting is done particularly for showing classes and dressage competition
- The way the hair is plaited will depend on the build of the horse and the reason for the plaiting. For example, a horse entering a show hunter class will look better with chunkier plaits whilst for dressage they may be graduated in size to show off the outline of the neck
- A horse that is lacking in neck muscle will benefit from high plaits that sit on top of the neck, while a horse with a strong crest will look best with tight plaits that sit along the neck
- There are no set rules regarding the number of plaits, but traditionally there should be an odd number down the neck plus the forelock. Remember the more you plait the longer the neck will look

## Preparation before you plait

- If you need to pull the horse's mane this should be done on another day, not right before plaiting, so that the horse isn't expected to stand for an extended period of time
- [http://www.newrider.com/Library/Horse\\_Care/pulling\\_a\\_mane.html](http://www.newrider.com/Library/Horse_Care/pulling_a_mane.html) describes mane pulling as 'tidying the mane, rather than pulling to shorten or thin the mane.' This website gives step by step instructions (with pictures)
- Wash the mane and let it dry before you plait it so it is clean and easier to manage. It may not be a good idea to wash the mane on the same day you must braid (regardless of whether conditioner is used) since it gets very soft and slippery

## Things you will need to plait

- Mane comb / plaiting comb
- Soft body brush
- Small elastic bands in the color closest to the colour of the horse's mane. (If you are doing training braids, it is fun to use other colors)
- A blunt ended needle with a large eye , strong thread the colour of the mane and a pair of scissors for the second method
- Water & sponge and/or hair gel



Mane comb



Body brush



Plaiting comb



### Some plaiting tips

- If your horse is tall, get a stool or a bucket to stand on so that the top plaits are neat
- DO NOT condition the mane before you plait it; it will make the mane slippery and hard to work with
- Use a plaiting comb to separate the hair into 3 equal sections for easy plaiting
- Be gentle and try not to tug the mane; horses may become irritable
- Make sure that the plaits aren't too tight close to the neck; they could become really uncomfortable
- Check that your horse is not allergic to hair gel

### Steps for plaiting the mane using elastic bands

1. Either tie up your horse/pony using a quick release knot, and/or offer him a full teff net to get him to stand still
2. Position yourself on the side of the neck that the mane is on. That is the direction you will braid in, unless you wish to make the mane fall on the other side.
3. Brush the gently with a soft body brush to remove all tangles. Also, brush the forelock.
4. Divide the mane into equal sections using the mane comb. You may find it helpful to dampen the section with water before plaiting
5. Start at the top and work your way down. As you get further down the mane, the hair gets thinner, so your sections will need to be wider in order to ensure evenly sized plaits. Secure each section with an elastic band.
6. Plait each section tightly down to the bottom of the plait, and then secure it with a band at the end.
7. Fold the plait twice and secure tightly with an elastic band at the base. If the mane is not long enough, you may only be able to fold once.
8. Repeat down the length of the neck. Make sure it is done neatly, with no stray hairs sticking out.
9. Put some hair gel in your hands and put a small amount of gel on each plait to create some hold. (This is optional.)
10. For the forelock, do a French braid (like a tail plait) down toward the nose and then fold and secure the plait as described above





## Steps for plaiting the mane using a needle and thread

Another method would be to use a needle and thread to secure your plaits.

1. The first 5 steps remain the same as above
2. When a plait is completed, loop the ends of the thread around the plait and secure it
3. Push the needle through the plait from underneath and close to the crest, doubling up the plait
4. Fold the plait as many times as required to achieve the appropriate shape. Finish by stitching through the underside of the plait to secure it.

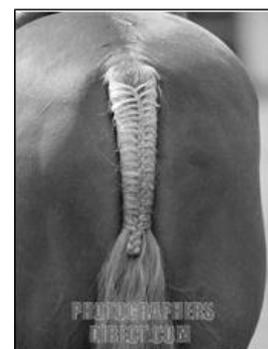
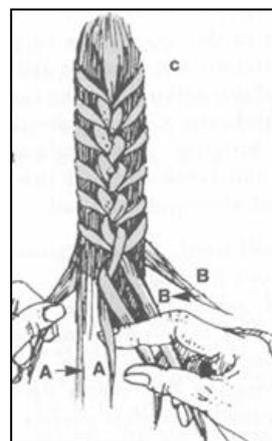
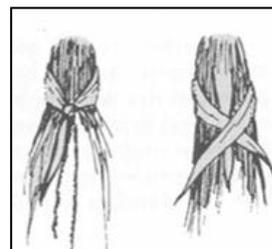
## Plaiting your horse's tail

### *Why would we plait a horse's tail?*

The unpulled hairs of the dock can be plaited to make them look neat and tidy for special occasions or showing classes. Only tails with long hairs at the side of the dock can be plaited successfully.

## Steps for plaiting the tail

1. Using a body brush, thoroughly but gradually brush small sections of the tail at a time. Now dampen the water brush and brush the top of the tail and the hair on either side of the dock
2. Beginning at the top of the tail, take a small section of hair from the left hand side. Take another section of hair from the middle, and another small section of hair from the right hand side. Plait once with the three sections
3. Then take another small section of hair from the left side and add it to the left side of the plait
4. Cross it over to the middle section of plait
5. Then pick up a small section of hair from the right side of the tail and add it to the right side of the plait
6. Then cross it all over to the middle section
7. Repeat the plaiting process, to three quarters of the way down the tailbone. Maintain even and constant pressure when plaiting each section and always keep the plait in the centre
8. Now plait the long remaining hair, as you would a normal plait, to the end of the tail
9. Secure the end with a few twists of a plaiting band. Fold the long plait once underneath. Now tuck the end of the normal plait under the French plait. Secure the top of the normal plait with your other plaiting band





## Self-test

Can you name three different reasons why you would plait your horse or pony's mane?

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How many plaits should your pony have *including* the forelock?

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On which side of the mane would you make the plaits?

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What 2 things should you do to prepare your pony's mane for plaiting?

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Give 3 reasons why you may choose to 'pull' your pony's mane before plaiting.

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Put these steps in the right order, by numbering them correctly:

Step	Number
Separate each section of hair into 3 parts	
Fold the plait, then secure it neatly with a band or thread	
Pull the mane	
Divide the mane into sections using a mane comb	
Wash the mane	
Plait each segment of hair right to the bottom; secure it with an elastic or thread	
Brush out any tangles using a soft body brush	