

# Making HairNets

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Lastupdate:24/03/02

## Background

More and more ladies in SCA are using hairnets. Several of these ladies have expressed an interest in having a period hairnet. Making a hairnet is very easy. The technique is more or less the same as making nets for fishing, but much more tiny. In the beginning, you should estimate about 6 to 8 hours for your first hairnet. After that, it will be faster and faster as most crafts.

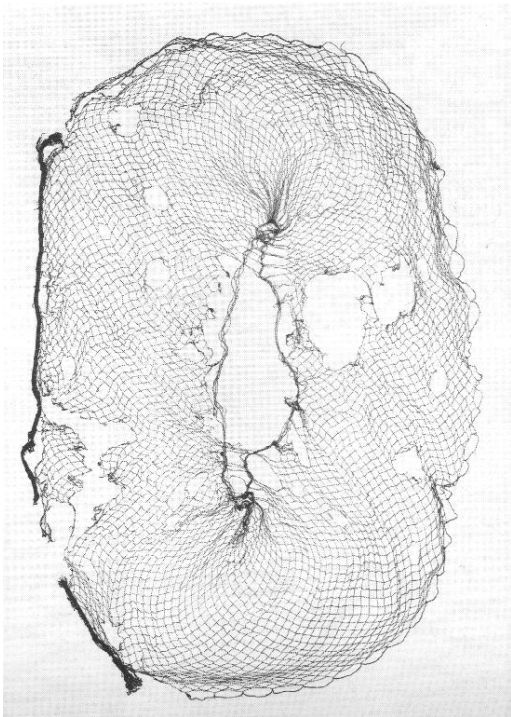
## Historical facts

There are 4 early finds of knotted hairnets in London. The earliest find is from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Two finds are from the second quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and one from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Hairnets have also been found in Amsterdam (14<sup>th</sup> century) and in Germany 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The German hairnet has a tablet woven silk braid around the edge.

Hairnets can also be found in several paintings. One of the earliest illustrations is from 1270 - 1280 "a prefatory miniature to a psalter, St John's College, Cambridge MS K.26f.231". Hairnets can frequently be found in paintings/illustrations through the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

These finds and illustrations indicate that hairnets were a common and frequently used accessory during the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



## Thread type, colour, ply...

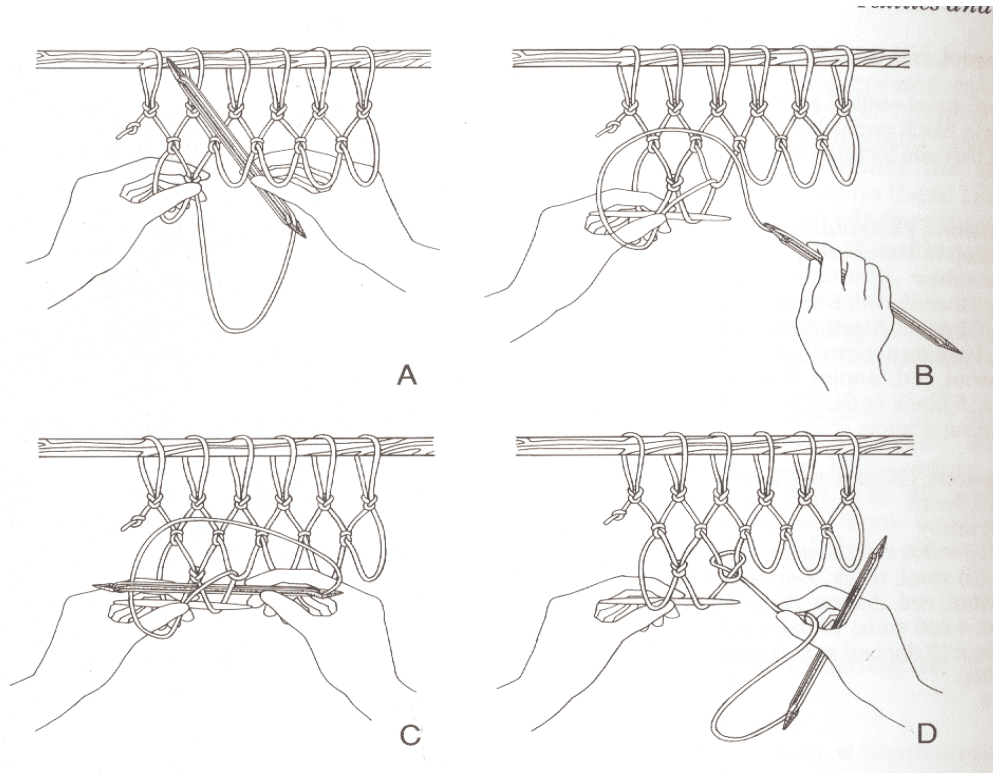
All the archaeological finds were made from silk in different shades of brown. The fineness of the finds varies from 3 mm to 9 mm loops. The threads are single ply, spun in a Z direction and plied in an S direction, which gives a balanced thread that won't twist.

## Technique

Making hairnets are done the same way as making a net for fishing. A net is basically constructed by knotting row after row of loops. The knots are the key. If the knots are done the wrong way, you end up with a net that will fall apart or lose the shape.

might end

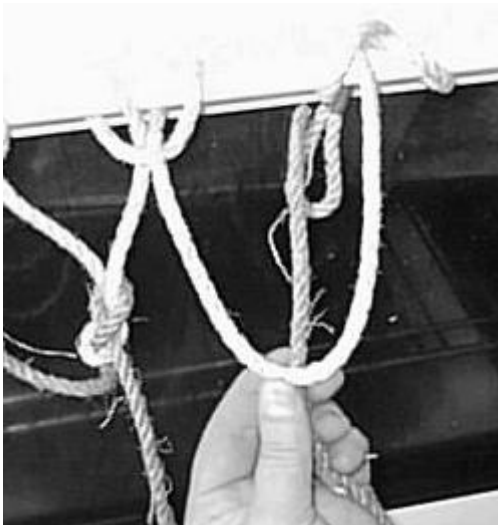
The following pictures will show you how to make a knot based on the book;



The following illustrations show how to do a knot, in my opinion, the right way.

### Step 1

Note, when I refer to the loop, I'm talking about the light rope. The thread is the dark rope. Start the knot by guiding the thread through the loop **from behind**.



## **Step2**

Movethethreadbehindtheloop.



## **Step3**

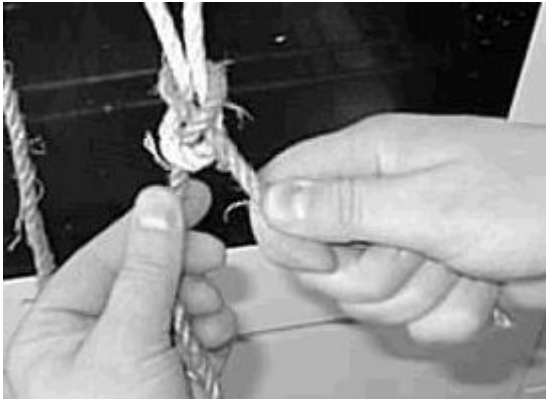
Continuetomovethethreadaroundtheloopsoitendsupinfrontof  
needstogounderitselfbutstillovertheloop.

theloop,pointingright.Thethread



## Step4

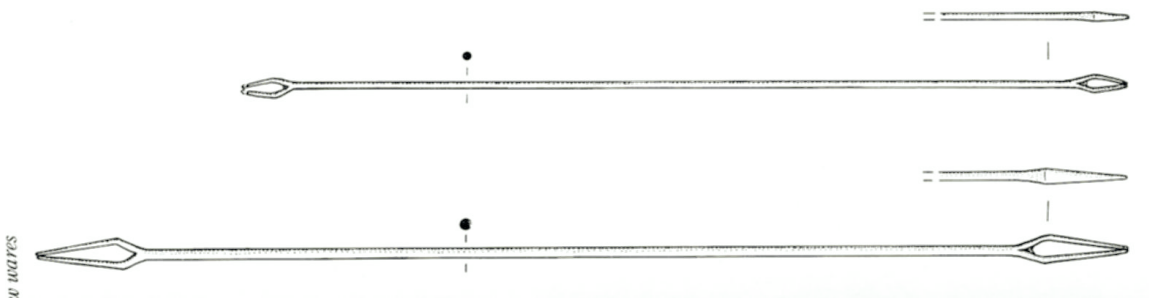
Finish the "new" loop by adjusting the length of the thread and then tighten the knot. It is now time to start over with step 1 for the next loop.



## Tools

### Needle

The classical needle used for netting looks like the following pictures.



These needles are hard to find. I have therefore constructed my own tools, using...Nr8 wire. You can use a clothes hanger made by wire.

Very little is known about what was used to hold the net when making them. There are two alternative ways of making a hairnet. Either a cylinder-based net or a square net which is sewn together to make the cylinder. I'm making nets as a cylinder.

These are the steps I'm doing:

Needle

Remove plastic

Twist the wire

Cut the wire

open up end points

Soldering

## Nettingstand

I suggest making a netting stand. I have not found any period tools or frames for this. I have therefore designed my own stand to make it easy to do the netting.

The stand is quite simple to make. Make a round disk of particle board. About 600mm around, i.e. approximately 95mm diameter. Evenly nail about 74 nails to the edge of the disk.

Take another piece of particle board (350x250mm) and mount a piece of 2X2 or similar in the middle of it. Screw the disk on top of it. I recommend that you do it so you can rotate the disk. You can now put the stand in front of you and start working. The disk will slowly rotate when you are working.



## Step by Step

- 1) Make loops and hang on the nail. You can use any non-sliding knots if you want or a double "standard knot".
- 2) Finish the first row by tying the end and beginning together.
- 3) Create the first loop.
- 4) Depending on your head shape, you might want to add one extra loop per row or one extra loop every 3 rows. I would suggest to do 5 standard rows and then add one extra loop per 3 rows.
- 5) Add rows still you have a net that has the height as from the middle of your head down to the hairline, plus one inch.
- 6) When done, take a double thread and thread it through the loops at the top. Lift them off the pins and tie it together.
- 7) Now, quickly take a band that is long enough to go around your head plus an extra bit that you are going to use to tie a bow tie knot. Sew the net to the band. Just make sure that the net is placed so that you still can tie it to your head.

## References

Textiles and Clothing c. 1150 – c. 1450, Museum of London, Medieval Finds from Excavations in London by Elisabeth Crowfoot, Frances Pritchard and Kay Staniland. ISBN 0 11 290 4459