



The Mud Knot: how to Kaitlyn McAleese Kaitlyn McAleese

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For the show ring, I always prefer to start by braiding the dock as I normally would with a regular tail braid because it looks more put together. Sometimes, just for schooling, I will do just the mud knot at the bottom of the dock without the tail braid to keep the tail clean and out of the way in sloppy footing. Either way the technique is basically the same. If you braid the tail just skip the pinwheel, and simply tie off the braid with a piece of yarn when you reach the end of the dock. Unless the tail is insanely thick, I prefer to make the knot with a single braid so I will gather all the hair together and braid it right to the very bottom. As I get to the end of the tail I will incorporate the yarn. Because the knot ends up being quite heavy, I usually braid in two pieces instead of one for extra support. The loose pieces you are left with after you have tied off the braid at the very end of the tail should be at least 30cm long for an average tail, and 10-15cm longer than that for a thicker tail. Take the whole braid and tie it in one big knot on the end of the dock. It should be sitting over the bottom of the tail bone a little, not below it. From there it's just a matter of getting the rest of the braid wrapped up around the knot so the actual order of steps will depend on the length and thickness of the tail. Basically I would wrap the remainder of the tail above the knot once or twice. Then, I want to take the remaining braid and using a crochet hook, loop it through the center of the knot to hold the whole thing together. This can be done more than once if there is enough tail, you just need to make sure that the knot at the very end of the tail ends up being pulled up in the center of the knot to hide it and keep it secure. To tie it off, I again pull one half of the yarn back through the mud knot so I can tie a final double knot, preferably at the back so it's hidden. For a horse that swishes his tail a lot or for a thicker tail I might add a couple of extra pieces of yarn all the way around the knot, pulling each through the center of the braid and tying it discreetly with tight double knots. Add a tail bandage to keep it from being rubbed and you are ready to go to the ring!

As long as the final mud knot is tight and right up around the bottom of the dock you basically can't go wrong. Unlike tail braids, not every one is going to look the same. I like them enough, that I have had horses with really thin tails show in a mud tail all the time because it looked neater than leaving it loose. So be brave, give it a try, and break out the mud knot next time you brave the elements on horseback!