



*Achieve the ultimate tribal look -  
with  
cowry hair falls*



I remember seeing a performance of the Indigo Dance Troupe on the Bellydance Superstars tour and being captivated by how exotic they looked. They wore hair extensions and long cowry falls which really extenuated certain moves such as spins. I've never lost my childhood love of love of dressing up, and Tribal Dance has given me the perfect excuse to be a real diva who just has to wear more bling than everyone else, giving me the excuse to collect jewellery, fabrics, wigs, makeup and much much more!

Cowry falls or tassels are an amazing way of adding that Wow factor to your outfit. Not only can they be worn in your hair, but they can be added to your belt or to the sides of your turban. I should warn you that Cowry Falls can be quiet heavy, especially the longer sets. The falls in the photo weighs almost 2lbs - not for the faint hearted! However, don't worry as they can easily be mounted on a headband to absorb much of the weight. But no matter how you wear them, they look great.

Before we start I should say that there are many different ways of making Cowry Falls ranging from plaiting wool and attaching cowry shells with macramé knots to individually sewing each cowry shell securely onto a lacing cord – this is my preferred method as I have found that while the wool and macramé method is slightly less time consuming, the wool can easy catch on hair and costume, thus looking frayed and tatty.

There is no right or wrong way of making your falls, but hopefully these instructions will help you get started on the right path and then you can develop your own method.

### Where to get stuff?

- **Lacing Cord and embroidery thread – Any decent Haberdashery shop or of course Ebay!**
- **Colinette Yarn - [www.colinette.com](http://www.colinette.com) / [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)**
- **Cowry Shells - [www.firemountaingems.com](http://www.firemountaingems.com) / [www.constellationbeads.co.uk](http://www.constellationbeads.co.uk) / [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)**
- **Kuchi Coins - <http://www.tribalmax.com/> [www.sirik.com](http://www.sirik.com) / [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)**
- **Feathers - [www.kereds.co.uk](http://www.kereds.co.uk) / [www.ostrich.com](http://www.ostrich.com) / [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)**

## Materials needed

Lacing cord  
Embroidery/Tapestry thread  
Strong Button Thread  
Glue  
Cut/flat back Cowry shells  
Needles  
Scissors  
Sellotape  
Tape measure or ruler  
Tassel decoration - Colinette yarn,  
feathers, beads etc



## How to!

**Step 1** – The first and most important step in making your falls is to take the time to plan what you want!

- **You need to consider what length of fall** – I would suggest making a fairly short pair to start with as it allows you to get the hang of making them and also if you are not used to wearing them you can come accustomed to the weight and they are great for practising in. In the photo I am wearing two pairs of falls - the long set is 30” and the short set 14”.
- **What colour do you want?** – I would recommend that you decide on main colour of the falls and purchase matching lacing cord and embroidery thread. This hides any mistakes when wrapping the falls. When working with lacing cord, the best method of cutting or finishing ends is to wrap a small piece of sellotape around where you want to cut through the cord and to cut the cord in the middle of the tape. This stops the lacing cord from fraying. Once you have done this, Glue the end of the cord and allow to dry. You can then remove the sellotape.
- **Cowry shells** – You can use both cut /flat back cowry’s or a whole shell with a beading hole, both look great, but I have to say from experience that using cut back cowry’s are a lot easier to sew in a uniformed manner. You will need approximately 150 cowry shells for a short set of falls to 380 shells for a longer more heavily decorated set. Also when purchasing Cowry shells you will find that they will vary in size. I would recommend dividing them into three sizes and use the larger ones at the bottom of the falls varying up to the smallest ones at the top.
- **Tassel decoration** – What look are you trying to achieve? Colinette point 5 decorative yarn, ribbons, and feathers all look wonderful at the end of your falls. Take the time to collect a variety of materials; this is an opportunity to get that individual custom look you’ve always wanted.

I would strongly recommend that you complete each step for both falls before moving onto the next, as it is easier to achieve symmetrical this way.

**Step 2** – The next stage is to make the loop end, which is used to thread into your hair. The traditional way of wearing falls is to put your hair into two ponytails on the top of your head and to plait them tightly. Then thread the cowry falls through the plait. Once this is done wrap your hair into tight buns and securely pin in place, then attach any other hair pieces or decorations. I have fairly long hair which is very thick and curly, so I allow 9” of lacing cord to make my loop end.

To make your loop end create a 4 ½ to 5” loop allowing a 2” end that doubles back onto the cord (See Photo). With your strong button thread sew the loop in place; wrap the thread around the lacing cord, securely sewing in place until you reach the end of the 2” end. When attaching cowry’s to your falls always leave a 2” gap between the top set of shells and the loop. This allows the falls to sit more comfortably on your head.



**Step 3** – Next, make the tassel. Lay out your decorative yarn or colinette and cut out numerous lengths of approximately the same size, you can always trim the tassels at a later stage. Ensure the lacing cord has been sealed with glue to prevent fraying, and then glue the lengths of yarn onto the end of the lacing cord. Continue to glue the yarn onto the cord working up 2” up the cord. To secure the tassel, sew and wrap thread over the glue and yarn (see photo) with the coordinated embroidery thread. Once the 2” length has been tightly wound securely sew through the lacing cord and knot in place.



**Step 4** – Now add the cowry shells, I have found that working from the bottom up makes it easier to sew on the cowry's in a more uniformed manner. You need to sew 4 cowries around the lacing cord on each layer so it looks like a flower. As the holes in cowry shells can be sharp and cut through thread. Use extra strong button thread that is doubled over and sew through each cowry twice. It may seem time consuming but in the long term it will save you time and money as you will not have to repair or replace them at a later stage. It is up to you how many cowries you sew onto your falls, but I would recommend that each 4 or 6 layers leave a gap, as it defines the shells more (see Photo). Sew cowries onto lacing cord finishing where the lacing cord doubles up for the loop (step 2).



**Step 5** – Once the cowries are attached, start wrapping very tightly from where you finished off in Step 3, when you reach a tassel carefully work the thread around the shells and then continue wrapping the cord in any gaps. At the top of the falls carefully wrap the embroidery thread around the lacing cord loop and work back down to the cowry shells. When you reach the shells tie off embroidery thread and glue the knot.



**Step 6** – Finally finish off by attaching your decoration onto the tassel and tassel top. You can use what ever you like such as beads, bells or feathers, just remember that the falls will be near you face, so avoid anything sharp! And remember ENJOY!



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