

See all the winners

BOXED IN

# Here's Proof That Box Braids Are the Most Versatile Protective Style

Braided bangs, Fulani flip-overs, crowns, and 12 more looks to try.



BY ANNIE BLAY

September 21, 2023





Courtesy of Subject / Getty Images

Box braids are a timeless staple in the arsenal of **Black girl hairstyles**. Whether you're two or 102, nothing beats the feeling of first seeing your hair in the neatly parted plaits. While the hair look is mainly worn as a protective style, its appeal doesn't stop there. Box braids can add length and even a stylish flare to your outfit — all while tucking your curls away to keep them protected and healthy. "Braids are protective because they shield the dry ends of the natural hair within the braid," shares **Ellen Marmur**, MD, a New York City-based board-certified dermatologist.

If you're unfamiliar with the style, box braids are created by sectioning natural hair into equal-sized parts, usually shaped like a box (hence the name). Those sections are then joined with extensions and braided into box braids. Despite the name, box braids can also have triangle parts and can take on other geometric shapes.

As versatile as box braids can be, it's easy to get overwhelmed with just how many ways there are to wear them — and the list only continues to grow. This year, spinoffs of the look like **goddess braids** (a revamped take on '90s pick-and-drop braids) and flip-over braids hit the scene, proving that there are still new iterations of box braids to be discovered.

If you've gotten bored with just throwing your braids over your shoulders or up in a ponytail, we've got you. Ahead, the freshest ways to wear box braids.

# Boho Braids

Instagram / @Jordyn Woods

Instagram / @Ryandestiny

**Goddess braids** are one of the trendiest braided hairstyles right now and we can see why. Simply weaving loose tendrils of curly hair into box braids gives you a whole new, perfectly undone look. Celebrities including Jordyn Woods, Ryan Destiny, and **Michelle Obama** have all been seen rocking the style this year. Be sure to use human hair since it's "more versatile and less harsh for this style," says Los Angeles-based hairstylist **Larry Sims**.

## Box Braids — With A Bang

Getty Images

Instagram / @Camrihewie

It's no easy feat to create bangs out of box braids — the look involves expertly wrapping box braids around themselves or employing cornrows to create fringes. Content creators **Yolande Macon** and **Camri Hewie** managed to do so with style. You'll definitely want to call up your stylist for this one, whether you're going for Macon's braided bangs or Hewie's wrap-around style that creates the illusion of curtain bangs.

## Bead It Up

Instagram / @Emilychengmakeup

Instagram / @slayedibraids

This nostalgic hairstyle will bring a child-like joy back into box braids. Play around with different-colored and -shaped beads to add a fun detail to your look. Yara Shahidi uses gold and pink beads on her collarbone length braids, while New York City-based braider **Helena Koudou** went for a more neutral look on her client who requested bob box braids with beads. No matter what length or color of beads you opt for, this look is sure to leave a stylish impression.

## Flip Over Braids



Instagram / @aceoflengths

Instagram / @aceoflengths

Despite the clean lines and angles, we promise you didn't need to pass geometry class to nail this look. You do, however, need to be an expert braider. Flip-over braids are the newest box braids style on the block and it's as intricate as it looks. The style combines cornrows and box braids (and curly pieces if you want to add a boho flare) for an eye-catching look.

## Bantu Knots Braids

Instagram / Jackieaina

Getty Images

Wrapping your box braids into cute little **Bantu knots** is an easy way to spice your protective style. Take a page from Marsai Martin's book and put the front half of your box braids into bantu knots for a cute half-up half-down style. Or follow Jackie Aina's lead and cover your whole head in braided bantu knots for a standout look.

## Claw Clip It Up

Instagram / @camrihewie

Instagram / @camrihewie

Claw-clipped braided hairstyles have been super popular on **TikTok**, and for good reason: It's a versatile look that incorporates an accessory that can match your outfit. Using your clip of choice, secure your box braids into an elegant bun or wear half of them up.

## Half Up Braids

Getty Images

Instagram / @kyranikole

Bored of your look? You can always count on a half-up half-down moment to pull you out of a hairstyle rut. Whether you gather half of your braids into a cute top knot or a curly messy bun, it's guaranteed to turn heads.

## Messy Bun



Instagram / @sailemmitchell

Instagram / Jordynwoods

The classic throw-it-up-and-go messy bun looks even better with box braids, especially ones with curly ends. Leave a few tendrils sticking out for an even more effortless look.

## Jumbo Braid

Getty Images

Instagram / @camrihewie

Whether side-swept or bundled behind, gathering your box braids into one giant plait is a simple way to make a statement. Not only do you get a main character look, but your braids are tucked away from your face, making this style perfect for days when you want to highlight your features.

## Sky High Ponytail

Getty Images

Getty Images

The higher the hair, the closer to... however you'd finish the sentence, there's no denying that this high ponytail on box braids is as sleek as it gets. The look snatches your cheekbones and shows off the intricate pattern of your braids. Make sure to lay your edges to really pull the style together.

## Top Knot

Getty Imaged

Instagram / @Justineskye

When in doubt, knot it out — or rather up. Top knots are an elegant way to style your box braids. The spiral pattern of the knot creates a pretty detail that complements any look. You can create a tight top knot à la Zoe Kravitz or a loose knot with a few wispy tendrils peeking out like Justine Sky.

## Curly Ponytail



Getty Images

Instagram / @alissa.ashley

This bouncy curly box braid ponytail will put a pep in your step — or at least make you want to keep your braids in for another week. For this style, opt for **human hair at the ends** to avoid tangling.

## Side Part Braids

Getty Images

Getty Images

Switching up your part can freshen up your entire look and this is especially true for box braids. Both **Zendaya** and Jhene Aiko believe this philosophy; their knockout red carpet looks are all the proof we need.

## Undercut with Braids

Getty Images

Getty Images

Zoë Kravitz and Lupita Nyong'o always give major hair envy, especially in this side-shaved box braids hairstyle. This edgy look proves that box braids can be incorporated into just about any haircut you already have.

## Fishtail Braid

Getty Images

Instagram / @naivashaintl

**Mermaidcore** was a major trend in 2023 and nothing says siren beauty like a fishtail braid. Storm Reid has perfected box braids fishtail. On the left, her honey blonde box braids are wrapped into a jumbo fishtail and embellished with silver rings, while the second look actually creates a box braid look out of smaller individual fishtail braids — so innovative.

## Braided Updo



Getty Images

Getty Images

Have a special occasion coming up? Wrap and twist your box braids into a polished updo for an elegant look. **Zoë Kravitz** wrapped her micro braids into a folded mohawk while Danai Gurira bundled up her box braids into an intricate bun complete with gold adornments.

### Discover more braid stories:

- [Raindrop Braids Are the Box Braid Upgrade You've Been Looking For](#)
- [Boho Braids Are TikTok's Favorite Protective Hairstyle](#)
- [7 Braided Hairstyles to Wear for the Ultimate Hot Girl Summer](#)

**Now, watch Lucy Hale's Beauty Routine**



WATCH

## Lucy Hale's 10-Minute Routine for Real Skin and Feathered Brows



**Annie Blay** is the associate beauty editor at *Allure*. She previously served as the associate beauty news editor at The Zoe Report and her work as been featured on [Elle.com](#), Popsugar, Coveteur, Moda Operandi, Ebony, and Bustle. She graduated from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse... [Read more](#)

Associate Beauty Editor



KEYWORDS BOX BRAIDS BRAIDS PROTECTIVE STYLES NATURAL HAIR AFRO HAIR CURLY HAIR

KINKY HAIR KINKY CURLY HAIR BLACK HAIR BLACK HAIRSTYLES HAIRSTYLE IDEAS

HAIR INSPIRATION

[Read More](#)