

Tips and Hints

General Tips

A beautiful beaded necklace is a combination of the elements (1) design and (2) quality workmanship. Good design combines the colour, bead shape and size in an interesting, creative manner. Good workmanship incorporates the correct materials in the correct way. Don't be afraid to try different combinations of beads and techniques.

- If a bead needle will not go through a bead, try a smaller size bead needle. Forcing a needle through a bead can result in the needle getting stuck, or breaking the bead.
- If the needle comes off and it cannot be replaced, create a "self needle". Run cement glue along the last two to three inches and let the cement dry. When dry, snip off the thread tip at an angle.
- To stretch and straighten a necklace, hang the necklace over a doorknob and hang a small fish line weight in the middle, at the bottom. Let the necklace hang overnight. Do this on any newly beaded necklace to allow the beads to settle into place.
- Round nose pliers work best when rolling the end of a bead tip.
- When buying beads, pass the needle through the beads to make sure the needle will work.
- Use the same colour beads in different shapes or textures together to add appeal and variety to basic projects.
- Dental floss is a quick and strong thread for beads if nothing else is available.
- Use a small amount of cement glue when seal knots. Too much cement may glue together several bead. Too little cement may make the knot come untied.
- The best way to thread thin needles is to wet the thread tip, cut it off at an angle, and then run the thread through the needle eye. Clear nail polish can be used to stiffen the thread.
- To pick up loose beads, place an old nylon stocking over the end of the vacuum cleaner attachment. Secure the nylon stocking with rubber bands. Just vacuum and then remove the beads trapped in the stocking.
- Wrap the ends of your pliers with two or three layers of masking tape. This will avoid scratching wires and beads.
- Try to thread all your needles in very good light and then stick them in a pincushion to be used later.
- Ensure you are working on a flat surface. Beads roll!
- Buy enough beads for your project. Just like yarn and fabric, beads have dye lots and the colours can vary from one dye lot to another.
- Make sure that you have sufficient beads, thread, and the correct findings before starting your project.
- Always add a dab of glue to the knot before closing the bead tip (aka clamshell).
- Set out all your materials within easy reach so that they are easily accessible.
- An old terry cloth towel makes a great work surface for beading – the terry cloth keeps the beads from rolling around.
- Work over a plate, or a tray with sides, to catch any dropped beads.
- If your feature bead slips over the head pin base or eye pin, use a small Seed bead to keep it in place.
- An old mouse pad makes a great non-slip surface.
- To prevent the crimp bead from catching clothing, use a pebble bead to cover the crimp bead attaching the clasp.



Storage Tips

- Store all of your beads in colour groups – this will make designing so much easier. Choose clear poly bags to store same colour range beads and keep them all in a larger clear poly bag – you can pick up the larger bag and see at a glance what you're looking for and have the colours you need all together.

Design Tips

- Use a bead mat – this will stop the 'bouncing bead' syndrome most of us have experienced before we discovered how useful this item is for keeping all your beads in one place.
- Rather than using beading needles try using Superglue – trust us, it works! Treat the end of the cotton or cord you are using with superglue. Fold a plastic bag in half, put a couple of drops of glue in the centerfold, lay the thread along the fold and gently pull the thread through the glue. Allow it to dry and you will have a hardened end to your thread. Simple!
- Use the right tools for the job in hand – invest in the best tools you can afford. Remember, you can only make a perfect loop using a pair of round nose pliers. Each tool has its own area of use. The essential set for any jewelry design is comprised of cutting pliers, round nose pliers and general pliers.
- Master the art of 'finishing off' – designing is the easy bit; knowing exactly when to use findings such as clam callottes, box callottes or crimps can be daunting. You will find details on using these on our New to Jewelry Making?
- Jewelry design length – Pay particular attention to the finished size of the bracelet or necklace being designed, especially if you intend a 'make to sell' piece; your customers' neck and wrist sizes will vary. Before fixing your final crimp or knot in place, curve your design into its wearable shape – this way you will not have a tightly strung design, it will be more fluid and lie or sit correctly as it is worn.
- Thread working length – Give yourself enough length of thread to work with – there is nothing worse than struggling to finish off a piece of jewelry without enough thread to do so. Try designing your jewelry on a bead board or bead mat first, then string your design (from one 'end' of the design first) onto the thread whilst it is still on the reel/card. This way you get to finish off at the cut end, keeping your beads in place, and you can cut the thread to the correct length without wastage.



Finishing Tips

You can finish cord ends in one of two ways. For both methods, you first feed the cord up into the coil end with loop. The first is fast and easy. After feeding the cord into the coil, crimp the end of the loop flat over the cord with flat-faced pliers (as shown in photo 1) and then simply attach a clasp to the ring.

The second method takes a little time, but offers a more professional appearance. After feeding the cord into the coil, gently bend the last coil in the loop at regular intervals with pliers until the loop tightens securely around the cord (as shown in photo 2). Then attach a clasp to the loop to complete.

Whichever method you use is going to ensure that your Greek Spring is securely attached, and allow you to finish your project.

Crimping

Crimping right next to the clasp can seriously weaken your beading project. One alternative is to place a crimp between the final bead on your piece and the clasp. The bead will act as a buffer between the clasp, which is always the most heavily handled part of the piece and the metal crimp, which secures your valuable project. Another alternative it is to place a crimp next to the soldered jump ring then wire the clasp to the ring. This has the effect of providing a movable joint at the point of greatest stress, instead of having a sharp metal crimp edge that will wear away your beading wire over time.

Using a Head Pin or an Eye Pin

Thread a bead or two onto the pin and cut approximately one centimetre above the bead(s). With your chain nose pliers, bend the pin to a 90-degree angle to bead. Use your round nose pliers to hold and roll the pin towards the bead until the loop closes. It just takes a little practise before you will be making loops with the best of them.

Using Crimping Pliers

Thread your stringing wire through a crimp bead, through the clasp and then back through the crimp bead. Take the crimping pliers and place the crimp in the back section. Gently squeeze. Move your crimp up to the front of the pliers and squeeze again and you will have a round crimp in place.

Beading Wire

When I first started I was totally lost when it came to the wires gauges. Here are a few hints to help you out:

- 14 and 16 gauge wires – This is the thickest. Use for free-form shapes, napkin rings and similar projects.
- 18 gauge wires – This is still thick, but would be great if you wanted to wind it around candles or napkin rings (I will have a pattern for you in the projects section soon!).
- 20 gauge wire – This is the size most ear wires, head pins and eye pins are made out of.
- 22 gauge wire – Good for stringing crystals and some semi-transparent beads.
- 24 – 30 gauge wire – Use this wire for wrapping beads, or for knitting and crocheting with beads. I will have more information on this wire gauge a little later.

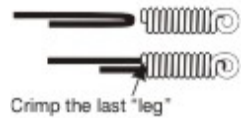
Use a Bead Stopper

A Bead Stopper looks like a little spring. It has loops at both ends. To use a Bead Stopper, carefully press the loops towards each other. This opens up the curls of the spring. Slip the end of your beading wire, tiger tail, or thread into the stopper and let the loops go. Your stringing thread will be held tightly so you can now thread your beads without the worry they may come off the other end.



Q: How many Delica beads make up a single gram, and how many Delica beads are there per square inch?

A: There are approximately 175 to 200 beads in one gram of Delicas, depending on the colour of the bead. Nineteen rows of Delicas are equal to one inch. Fifteen beads side by side are equal to one inch; therefore, one square inch would be approximately 285 or about 1½ grams.

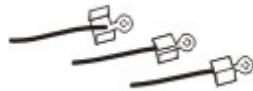


To Use:

1. Double the end of your cord. (Optional: add a dab of glue.)
2. Twist the cord slightly as you push it all the way into the coil end. Since cord width varies, so does the ease of this step.
3. Crimp down the last half coil, securing the coil end (using a pair of flat-nose jewelry pliers).

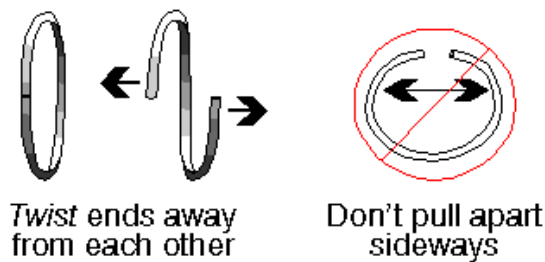
How to use...

Used for standard-size rattail or multiple strands of smaller cording.

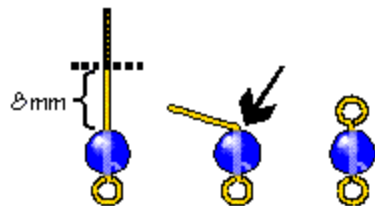


A drop of glue (super glue, household cement, epoxy or even fingernail polish) helps secure the cord in these fold-over crimps. Different sizes of prongs exist to help hold cord more securely. Push the cord down on the prong before you glue your cord.

Hint: Use heavy cutters to trim off the loop to use as a crimp for thicker cording. Smooth any rough edges with a jeweler's or nail file.



Hint: When you open and close jump rings, twist ends instead of “ovaling” them. This keeps their round shape better, which makes them easier to close neatly.

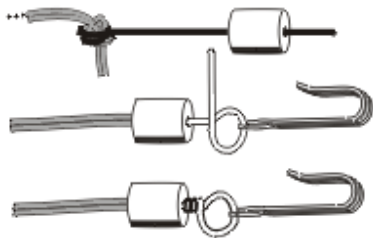


Make head and eye pins into nice round loops

The loop size will depend on how much wire you leave past the end of your beads, and around which part of your pliers you bend the loop. A good loop size is usually about one third of the way from the tip of your pliers, with about 8mm of wire.

1. Use round needle-nose pliers.
2. If using an eye pin, decide which way you want the loop to go – the same direction as the pre-made loop on the other end, or 90 degrees off. Keep this direction in mind as you bend the rest of the wire.
3. Cut off any excess wire (I suggest retaining 8mm above the top of your beads).
4. Grip the pin just above the top bead (at the arrow above), and bend the wire sharply toward you.
5. Grasp the tip of the wire with pliers, and bend smoothly away from you, around the pliers.

As with most stringing methods, secure the first end before stringing the rest of your necklace. For this method, you need a two to three inch head pin, or a piece of brass, sterling or other soft wire.



1. Tie a knot about 1/4" from the end of the cord(s). If you have more than one strand, knot all the strands together. Wrap the head of the pin (or end of the wire) around the knot a few times, then squeeze the wire/knot tight with a pair of pliers. As long as the knot is secure, it doesn't matter how messy it looks. The purpose of a bullet end is to hide this messy (but secure) method. If using tiger tail or Beadalon, a crimp bead replaces the knot.
2. Poke the long end of the wire through the bullet end, pull the entire knot up inside, and make a round loop with the wire outside the small end of the bullet end.
3. Attach a jump or split ring, and/or clasp. If using lightweight wire, wrap the wire a few times around itself for durability.
4. After you finish stringing your jewelry, do steps 1--3 for the other end, leaving enough cord for a knot, plus the length of the bullet end. Any excess cord can be cut off when done.

Use 0.5mm semi-translucent Gossamer Floss™ Cord

This shimmery, five-ply, square shaped cord on 100-metre spools is very strong, extra stretchy, and knots well. Double the cord for extra strength and add a drop of Hypo Cement to knots for extra hold. Use with Igolochkoy needle/threader (#65-054) or size 10 (or larger) English beading needles. Do not crimp. Great for stretchy bracelets and kids' projects.

