



BEADING

OVERVIEW

The history of beads dates back as far as 40,000 years and have been produced by every culture since then. Beading is practiced widely in indigenous communities around the world, and have their own styles, patterns and techniques. North American Aboriginal peoples' early beads included porcupine quills, shells, bones, seeds and stones that were made into jewelry or sewn onto clothing to create works of art.

There are countless techniques. A few select methods will be covered.

MATERIALS

Beads: Glass seed beads. Come in many different sizes, the higher the size #, the smaller the bead. Beads can be bought on a hank (a group of beads pre-strung) or loose in containers.

Base material: Leather, suede, ultra-suede, cotton twill canvas, velvet, hand tanned hide, industrial tanned leather or cloth.

Backing material: Interfacing (iron on), paper (acid free) or canvas/denim.

Beading needle: to correspond to bead size. Size #11 or 10 works for most projects. For porcupine quills or dentalium a longer needle works best.

Beading thread: natural, synthetic (nylon, polyester) or linen. Cotton or silk can be too weak for beading.

Wax: Beading wax, beeswax, paraffin wax or a candle.

Glue: craft glue or Speed sew



DESIGN

When considering your project, you can choose almost any design or pattern, but you must realize your final outcome will succumb to the structure of the bead. Designing for beading is like designing with dots. If your design is big enough you can get the beads to look however you want, because the beads are small enough to fit the design. When you are getting into fine details or tight corners, you will have difficulties making fine detail if you do not allow space for the beads. When designing, the artist can create a design on graph paper to visualize how to make room for the bead sizes.

Transferring your design: You can draw your design on the surface of your work freehand. If you are not confident with your freehand skills you can put a paper with an image or sketch of your design over your surface and poke dots through the paper with a pen or pencil, then connect those dots after. You can also bead through the paper and pick the paper out after the design is complete. For beading designs that are repeating patterns, try cutting out a template that you can trace multiple times. Use fabric pencils or a similar coloured pen as that design surface. If drawing freehand, use a pencil, chalk pen or washable fabric pen. It is recommended that you try these on a sample before using on your project in case there are problems with the ink, pencil or chalk coming off or is not suitable for your material.

For items that are done in pairs, such as gloves or moccasins, bead one of the pair and then press the design onto the side without the beading (yet). The beads will make an impression. This is the easiest way to make a copy of your design onto so materials like leather or Melton wool (heavy felt specially used for button blankets).

Material preparation

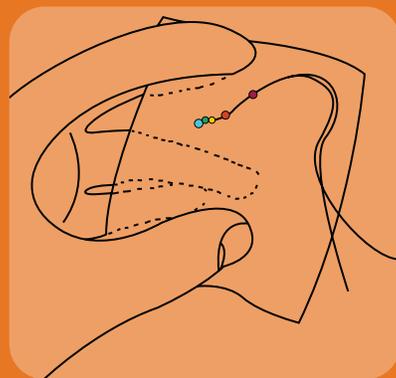
Start by drawing or transferring your design onto your canvas and ironing or sewing the interface to the back of your project. Some people use canvas or denim in place of commercial interface. Interface gives your project added structure and keeps the base material from puckering under the pressure of the beads and tightening of thread.

Beads come loose or on a hank. If using loose beads try spreading them out on a paper plate: this is a larger and easier surface to pick up the beads and can be used as a funnel after to pour the beads back into your container. If beading from a hank, loosen one of the strings, thread your needle through the beads and take them off the string when you have enough, or your needle is full.

Take a manageable length of thread: start with 12 inches. A shorter piece is more manageable for beginners since it won't tangle as easily. Thread the needle on one end and knot the other. The best tip is to cut your thread at an angle to make it sharp and wet it slightly to make it go through the eye.

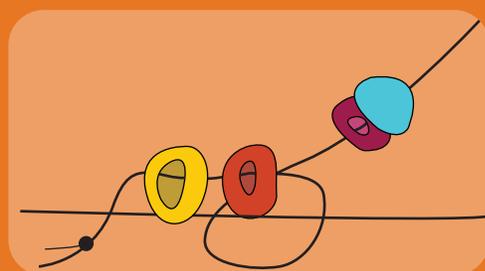
After threading, run your thread through wax and tame it with your fingers. This will straighten the thread's curl formed while on the spool, will help it not to tangle and will make it flow through the material with ease. Waxing your thread is optional, but highly recommended.

Start your project in the middle of your design since it is easier to bead around other beads rather than trying to squeeze them into a beaded outline.



METHOD 1: TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

Using one thread, knot one end and bring the other end up through your project where you intend to make your line of beads. Take four beads* and sew them down.



Bring your needle back up through your base, two* beads back and go through the last two beads again.

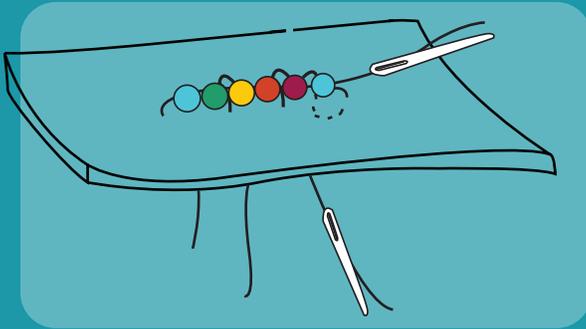
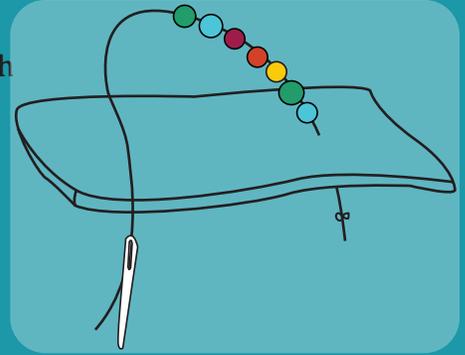
Put four more beads on the thread and repeat.

*You can do this method using two beads instead of four and going back through one bead. Some beaders think that two-bead beading is more secure, but the four-bead method is faster.

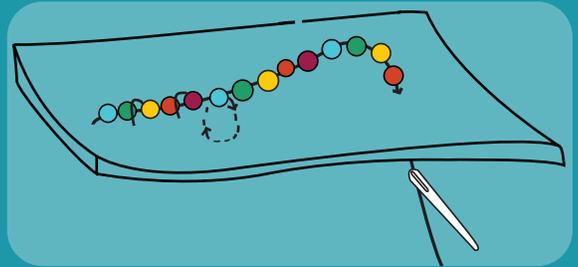
Method 2: Two threads, 7 beads

Using one thread, knot one end and bring the other end up through your project where you intend to make your line of beads.

Take seven beads and sew them down.



With a second thread, come up through your base two beads from the start of the beginning of your line of beads and sew across the original thread to secure your line of beads to your base. Using the same second thread, repeat this step another two beads in.

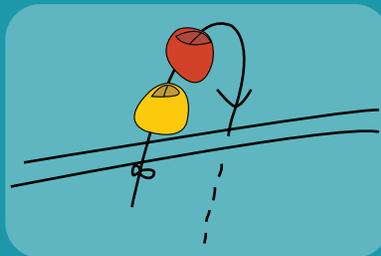


With your first thread, come back one bead from the end and sew into the last bead and repeat step 2 - 4.

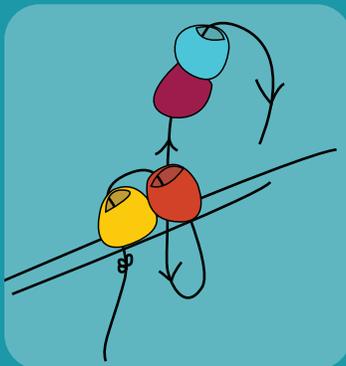


Picot Edge

The following is one way to finish the edge of your project.

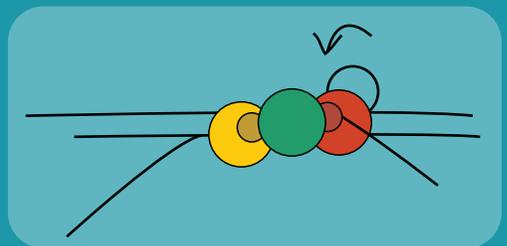


Start with two beads and sew them onto the edge of your project.

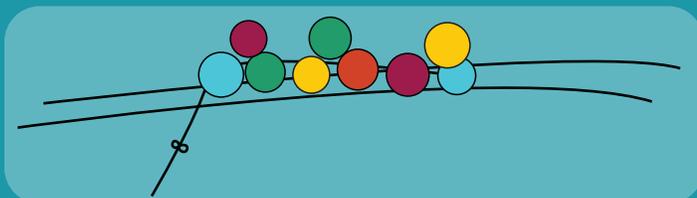


Come back up through your last bead, take two more beads and sew them onto the edge. If you came up on one side of your edge, sew the beads down on the other side.

You can use the picot edge to sew two pieces of material together whilst finishing the work at the same time.



Repeat step two until your edge is complete.



BEADING INSTRUCTIONS FOR FLOWERS

Take a square piece of ultra-suede (or leather, etc.) and back it with a piece of interfacing for extra stability.

Find the center of the square. Thread the beading needle and knot the end of it. Sew through the center of the back of the interfacing and have the needle come out on the ultra-suede side.



Sew on one single bead (my center bead is usually slightly larger than the beads used for the rest of the project). I sew through the bead twice to anchor it securely.

Sew two complete circles around the center bead: To sew the beads onto the suede go through two beads, sew down through the suede and interfacing and come up at the start of where you originally attached the two beads. Then add another two beads onto your needle and repeat the process until you have two complete circles.

After you have a complete circle, come up before the last bead you added and bring your thread through the last bead and the first bead you added. So that the ends of the circle are joined.

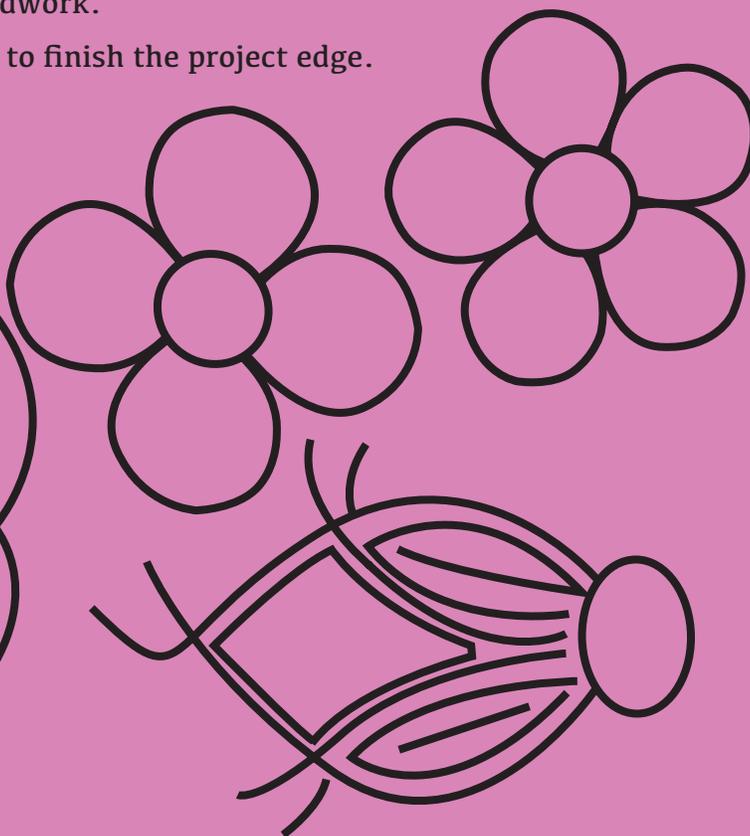
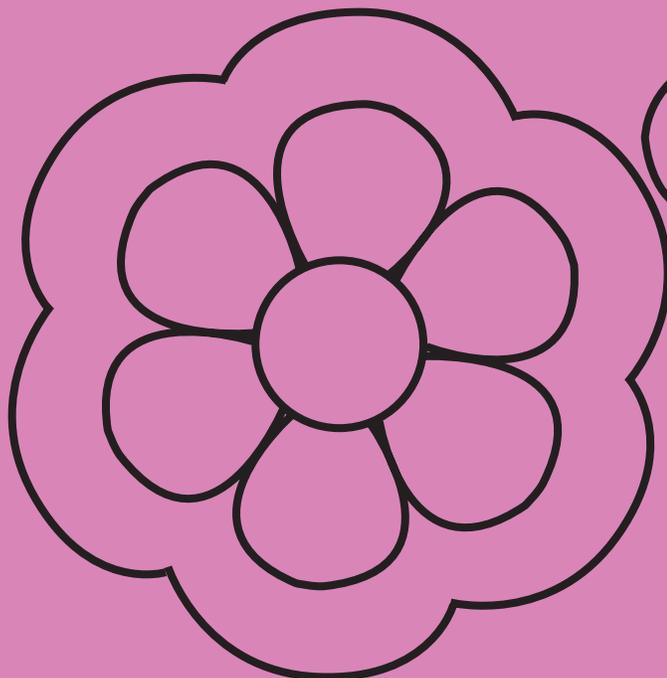
Decide on the shape and size of your flower “petals”. It is a good idea to cut out “templates” of the petals and trace the outline onto the suede.

Bead the outline edge of the traced petal. Once you have completed the outline “fill in” the petals with beadwork

When you have completed the beading put “Speedsew” on the interfacing and attach a thin piece of leather or suede. Once the glue or “Speedsew” has dried take a small pair of very sharp scissors and CAREFULLY cut around the beadwork.

A variety of beading techniques can be used to finish the project edge.

FLOWER TEMPLATE EXAMPLES



BEADING A LEAF OR PETAL

Design a pattern to bead. It can be almost any shape or pattern...use your artistic license. Trace the pattern onto a piece of paper to use as a template.

Choose your beading material (usually leather, suede or cloth) and back with paper or interfacing (this keeps the material from puckering). Decide on the size(s) of your beads and have corresponding needles on hand (they have the same numbering systems as beads). Use an appropriate strength and color of thread for the project (if the beads are not transparent, I recommend synthetic beading thread for strength). Running one end of the thread through beeswax and/or wetting the eye of the needle will facilitate easier threading of the needle.

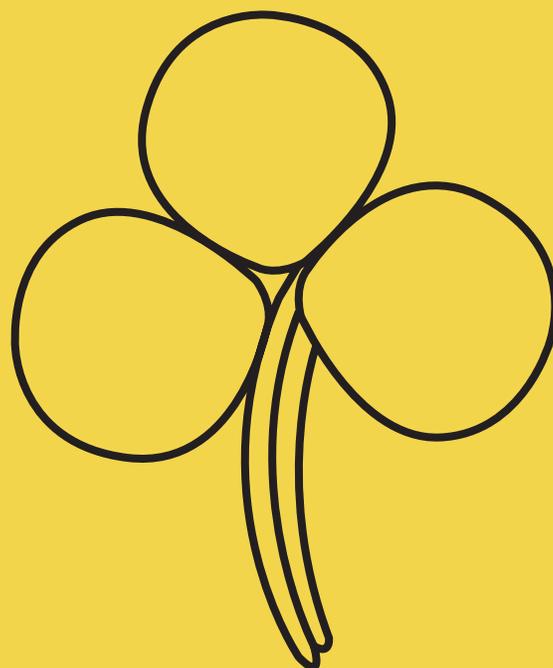


Trace/outline your design onto your material (i.e. leaf pattern). If it is a complex colored design you could design a colored template and attach the colored paper photocopy directly onto the beading surface for a detailed pattern. It is a personal preference whether you chose to outline the outside of the design first or begin your beadwork in a random order.

Consider line, shape, texture, pattern and color when selecting beads. Your completed project should aim for technical excellence, but more importantly, you should have a project that is appropriate for its intended use and artistic statement. Strive for balance and unity, and although there are individual interests and tastes with regards to color and design, there is a certain artistic intellect to creating a project that has an appealing presence.

Most exceptional pieces of beadwork combine technical skills with a design that achieves visual unity and variety (this usually involves creating with emotional/spiritual energy). It should visually communicate with the observer. The most common methods of achieving unity in a beadwork project are through repetition of color, pattern, shapes or lines. Study a beadwork project that really appeals to you and dissect the elements that created the visual impact and use that as a foundation to design your own project (using your head, heart and hands!)

TEMPLATE EXAMPLES

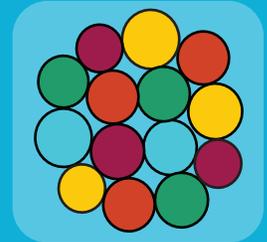


TIPS

Starting a new thread: Leave an inch (1”) to an inch and a half (1.5”) of thread before you run out to tie a knot in the back of your project. Sew up through your canvas, two beads back from where you want to start fresh. Sew through those last two beads and continue beading.

A sherman’s knot: sew part way into your project (preferably between the ber of your backing so your thread doesn’t show on the front side of your canvas). Go around the needle three times and finish by bringing the needle the rest of the way through your canvas and pulling the knot tight. Cut off the excess thread.

Alternate way of making a circle: Sew down four beads, then sew a line of thread in a circle around them. See drawing below. For larger circles, bead more layers of beads in circle around your circle base. To make a micro circle, start with one bead and make your second move the same as with a four-feed circle.



Use an awl or sewing punch to pre-punch your holes for factory tanned hide or thicker material. This is tedious, but if you are committed to the material it will save your hands and needles. Another trick is to use a thimble, a needle grip or a pair of small pliers to push the needle through.

Smash/ break the beads: If you bead in a wrong colour or decide to change your pattern slightly, you can smash/ break the bead with a small pair of pliers to remove it. After you can go up through the back and replace the bead or beads, starting from a few beads back and stringing the missing bead or beads back into your original line of beads. There is the risk of your thread gets cut in the process.

Once finished with a long line of beads you can run thread through the beads and pull to align. This will help to tighten your beadwork and make a smoother design.

If your beading looks loose in an area, try sewing the beading thread down using step 3 of method 2. This also works for correcting a line of beads that strays off course. You can sew them into place, or to an adjacent line of beads.

Try 3D beading: Cut out a piece of foam and sew beads on top of your foam form to make a 3D effect.

BEADING EXAMPLES

