

Beading on Fabric, part 2

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Page 1



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Attaching beads securely is important for long-term wear and durability on any project. Simple hand stitches anchor the gems in place.

Bead Selection

For the most harmonious combination, choose bead colors all having the same type of finish. For a more dynamic effect combine beads of different finish types, placing the shiniest beads in areas of emphasis.

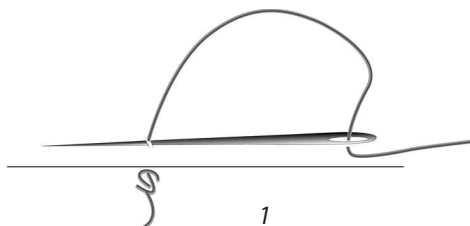
Getting Started

Loose beads on a table top are guaranteed to stray. Corral them on a soft towel or in a saucer. Better yet, place a layer of wide-wale corduroy in a tray. The wales allow for easy sorting and the tray makes the work space portable.

Controlling the cloth in your hand or in a hoop is a matter of personal preference. Hooping soft or thin fabrics may help prevent puckering.

Match the thread to the fabric color or choose one that blends with the bead colors. It's a good idea to stitch only one bead color at a time. That way, it's easier to make corrections or change your mind because you won't have to worry about loosening the wrong beads.

Thread the needle with a single strand of thread and tie an overhand knot at one end. Begin by bringing the needle out on the right side of the fabric. Make a safety stitch by taking a tiny stitch through the cloth right next to the place where the thread emerged (1). This prevents the knot from emerging on the front; and



Prints Charming

A great way to practice the art of hand beading is to embellish a firmly woven fabric printed with a large motif such as a paisley or floral. Let the dominant lines of the image suggest placement and stitch selection.



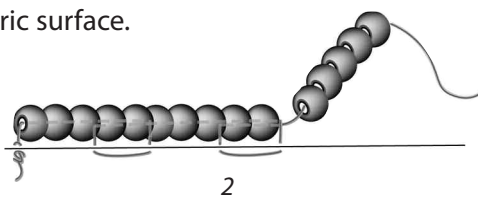
strengthens the attachment. When the wrong side of a project isn't accessible (when beading a purchased handbag, for instance) insert the needle from the right side of the fabric about 1" away and bring it out at the desired start point. Tug on the thread until the knot pops under the surface.

To end stitching, make a safety stitch and then make an overhand knot about 1/8" from the fabric surface. Stab the needle to the back of the work and tug on the thread until the knot pops out of sight.

When stitching individual beads, make a safety stitch whenever stranding the thread on the wrong side for more than 1/2" between each bead placement. When stitching beads in a line, make safety stitches at frequent intervals. That way, should thread breakage occur during wear, the loss of beads will be minimal.

Backstitching

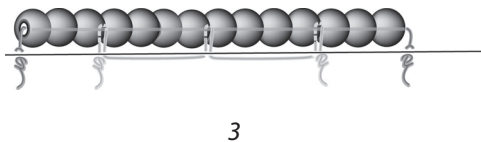
This method ensures the most secure and most easily controlled stitching of a bead line (2). With the tip of the needle, pick up five beads and slide them down to the fabric surface.



Arrange the beads in place and use the tip of the needle to snug the beads into a compact row. Stab the needle straight down just in front of the fifth bead. (If the stitch length is too short, it causes the beads to arch away from surface of the fabric. If too long, it allows the beads to separate.) Stab the needle back up to the front, emerging two beads back. Pass the needle again through the two beads, and then pick up the five more beads. Repeat the leap-frog motion of backing up and re-entering partway back in the previous row until the design line is covered. To negotiate a curve, reduce the number of beads in each row to two or three depending on the degree of arc. For dense, pictorial beading begin by backstitching the outline for each color, and then fill in the space as desired.

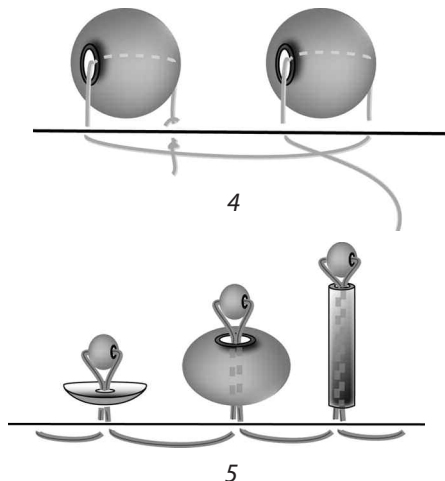
Couching

Another method for stitching a line of beads is to first string the beads and then couch them to the surface with a separate thread (3). It takes a bit of practice to pair the right amount of slack in the string with the right amount of tension in each couching stitch.



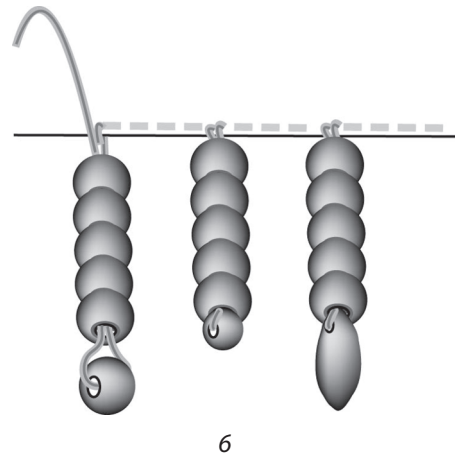
Single Beads

Attach single beads with backstitching. It's easier on the hands and more secure than a running stitch (4). To stack beads, first run the needle through the base bead or sequin, and then pick up a smaller single bead with the tip of the needle. Run the needle back through the hole in the base bead and into the cloth (5).



Fringe

To add beaded fringe to a fabric edge, mark off the spacing in even increments. Bring the needle out at the first location and pick up the desired number of beads with the tip of the needle. Skip one or more beads and then run the needle back up the strand. In order to maintain drape and flexibility, pull up the thread just tight enough to eliminate a gap between the beads and the cloth. Make a safety stitch at the beginning and end of each fringe strand to strengthen the attachment and prevent puckering between strands (6).



Location, Location, Location

For the sake of personal comfort and the protection of your artwork, avoid beading a garment in places where the beads could be pressed into your body. If you favor a shoulder bag for instance, embellish a jacket on the opposite shoulder so as not to damage the beadwork. To avoid sitting on beads, embellish the hem of a long skirt, but not a short one. Beads with sharp edges may not be practical for garments, but there's no reason not to use them on wall art. 🖼️