

Beadwork Basics

This is a simple guide to the basic techniques you will need when weaving or stringing seed beads, bugles and Delicas. You may find it helpful to refer to the [Techniques](#) downloads 'Working With Beading Threads' & 'Seed Beads' for more information about the materials you may want to use.

There are four basic skills you need to make your work flow smoothly, look professional and last a long time -

Starting off Your Work
Following a Pattern or Instruction Sheet
Joining In a New Thread Invisibly
Finishing Off Your Work Neatly

Starting Off Your Work

Woven beadwork patterns do not normally start at the clasp - you start at the centre of a pattern motif or at the end of a pattern sequence. You will need to leave a length of plain thread at the beginning of the work to finish off invisibly later.

There are several ways to secure this loose end temporarily so the start of the work is secure -

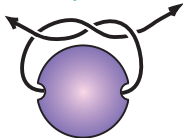
- A slip knot or half-hitch knot
- A keeper bead
- A manufactured thread gripper like the Bead Stopper

A Slip Knot or Half Hitch



A simple looped knot that we all know how to make and it pulls out easily when no longer required. It only really works well though if the first bead of the pattern has a smaller hole than the size of the knot.

A Keeper Bead



This is a spare bead of contrasting colour to those you are using in the work. Thread it on and make a SINGLE simple overhand knot (as above) to keep it in place. This is a better anchor when you are working with larger holed beads or you need to tension the thread against the stopper. Just undo the knot to remove it when necessary.

Bead Stopper



A nifty little gadget - a simple spring that you flex apart, pop in the thread and then relax the spring. The spring grips the thread securely. Many people love them but they can sometimes snag the working thread when you are making the first few stitches of the work.

Spellbound order code TL026

Following A Pattern or Instruction Sheet

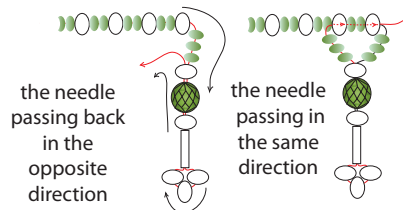
First of all be prepared - have all of your materials to hand, work in good light and on a flat surface. A beading mat or folded tea-towel will stop the beads from rolling around. Think about working on a tray so the work can be put aside without disrupting your progress.

Read the instructions through briefly - you need to know the order of work and to spot where any size adjustments might need to be made - you don't need to understand the whole pattern at this stage.

If necessary sort and mark your beads with the letter or number codes used in the pattern.

Go back to the beginning and start afresh with the instructions. Re-read any preliminary notes. If the instructions are divided into blocks or numbered sections read the whole section before you start to bead that particular bit.

Read the instructions and study the diagrams. Most importantly note the direction the needle takes through the beads - does it turn and go back in the opposite direction through the beads just added (normally making a spike or tassel strand) or does it pass through the beads just added in the same direction as before (normally forming loops or tight circles).



If you are following a chart use a straight edge or rule to underscore the row you are working across - a transparent rule is best as you can see what you have already beaded and it's relationship to the new row. If you are working a lot of plain rows use a tally system to keep track of the row numbers rather than a rule.

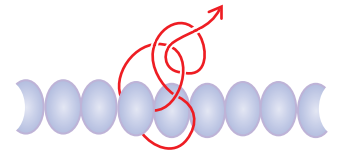
If you have to join in new threads be careful where you tie the knots so you don't block the holes in any beads that you may need to weave through again.

If you make a mistake remove the needle and pull the thread back - DO NOT pass the needle point first back through the work - you will split the thread inside the beads and make a knot that is impossible to undo.

To Add a New Thread Length

Leave about 10cm of the old thread hanging and prepare the needle with a new length. Pass the needle through the work to emerge five beads before the old thread end.

At that position pick up the thread between the beads with the point of the needle. Pull the needle through to leave a loop of thread 2cm in diameter. Pass the needle through the loop twice and gently pull down to form a double knot between the beads.



Pass through three more beads and repeat the knot. Pass through to the old thread and continue beading.

When you have worked a little way return to the old thread. You will need to finish off this end securely. Re-attach the needle to the old thread end and follow the instructions below.

Finishing Off a Thread End

Pass the needle through a few beads of the pattern. At that position pick up the thread between the beads with the point of the needle. Pull the needle through to leave a loop of thread 2cm in diameter. Pass the needle through the loop twice and gently pull down to form a double knot between the beads (as above).

Pass the needle through five or six beads of the pattern and repeat the double knot. Pass the needle through five or six more beads before trimming the thread end as closely as possible to the work.

When the design is complete untie any remaining slip knots or keeper beads and repeat to secure these loose ends as well.

If you wish you can seal the knots with a tiny dab of nail polish or clear glue for extra security.