Wirework - Flowers & Leaves
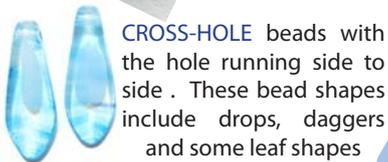
Making Big Flower Shapes from Smaller Beads

This worksheet will show you how to make simple flower shapes from pressed glass beads and seed beads.

1 Bringing plain bead shapes together (eg hearts, leaves and daggers) to make compound flower shapes.
2 Using wire-strung seed beads to make stylised looped petals and leaf shapes.

Pressed glass beads come in a variety of shapes and sizes.
The holes can pass through the top of the shape CROSS-HOLE (side to side) or TOP-HOLE (front to back) or through the length of the bead THROUGH-HOLE.

CROSS-HOLE beads with the hole running side to side . These bead shapes include drops, daggers and some leaf shapes

You will need five, six or seven identical beads to make a successful flower shape

TOP-HOLE beads with the hole running front to back. These bead shapes can include leaves and hearts.

THROUGH-HOLE beads with the hole running top to bottom of the shape. Most beads are of this type but can include leaves, hearts and drops
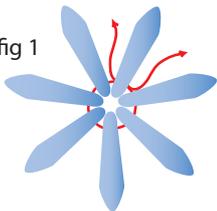
Cross-Hole Beads

To make a flower shape from these beads you need to bring them together into a tight circle. Use seven dagger beads or six or seven drops to enable you to get a tight fit at the centre of the circle.

Cut 50cm of 0.4mm soft wire.
Thread your beads onto the centre of the wire (if you are using beads with an AB finish make sure they are all facing the same way).
Pass the end of the wire through the first bead threaded a second time to bring the beads into a tight circle (fig 1). The beads will be quite floppy at this stage.

fig 1

Take one end of the wire and start the wrap around the base of the bead shapes - cross the wire across the base of the first bead and pass through the hole in the middle of the circle.

Pull the wire up through the next gap and repeat (fig 2). Work all the way around the shape. Flip the flower over and repeat on the other side with the other end of the wire.
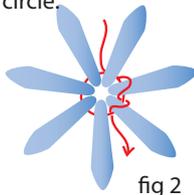
fig 2

This flower has stamens added in-between the petals and a diamante chaton glued into the centre

Bead Filigree Cups
FN090 - FN092

To finish off the flower take a bead filigree cup and gently flatten it with your chain nosed pliers. Wire this to the centre back of the shape. Now take an unflattened cup and wire it into the centre of the flower at the front - you can add a bead or a diamante chaton to the cup to finish off the design

Top-Hole Beads

This method works best with flat bead shapes (like hearts and leaves - drops which are fatter at the end tend to be too 'bottom-heavy' to hold on the wire twist properly. You will need five or six beads and some 0.5mm soft wire.

Cut 30cm of 0.5mm soft wire.
Thread the first bead onto the centre of the wire. PInch the two sides of the wire together 3mm from the top of the bead. Twist the bead over twice (fig 3).

Thread on the second bead. Position the bead 8mm from the first bead and pinch the two sides of the wire together 3mm above the new bead.
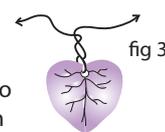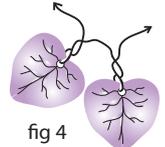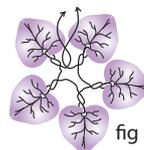
fig 3

fig 4

Twist the bead over twice as before (fig 2). Repeat until you have added all of the beads for the flower. Twist the two sides of the wire together, just twice, to secure the beads into a circle (fig 5).

fig 5

Thread a centre bead, such as a fire polished facet onto one end of the wire and stretch it across the flower centre to position it correctly.

Cross-holed drops made into a flower brooch (see the Projects tab for full instructions)

the Chelsea Simples Kit made with top-hole bead flowers

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Through-Hole Beads

To make these flowers the wire will have to pass along the length of the bead on the outside of the shape so it is a good idea to choose a coloured wire or a wire colour that will compliment the bead colour.

Cut 50cm of 0.4mm or 0.5mm soft wire.
If you are using a shaped bead (like a drop or a heart) decide which end of the shape is going to be closest to the centre of the flower - call this end of the beads C.
Thread on the first bead.
Bring the two sides of the wire together at the C end of the bead holding the wire tight to the back of the bead shape (see fig 5). Twist the bead over twice (fig 5).
Pass one end of the wire through the next bead (through the hole at the C end of the bead first). Position the new bead a few millimeters from the base of the first bead. Wrap this wire behind the new bead tightly to bring it down to the C end of the bead and twist.
Repeat until you have a row of five, six or seven beads.
Bring the beads around into a circle and twist to secure. Add a central bead with a pass of the wire across the middle of the flower shape (fig 6).
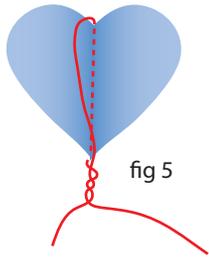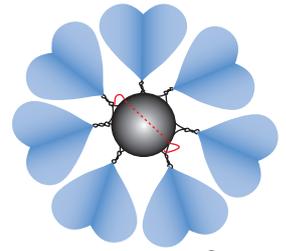
fig 5

fig 6

Kensington Simples Kit made with through-hole bead flowers

Using Seed Beads

To make smaller flowers, delicate flower sprays and leaf shapes you will need to use seed beads. Choose the size of seed bead to match the effect that you want from the motif and them match the wire diameter to the seed beads

size 10/0 - 11/0 for tiny flowers - match with 0.2mm or 0.4mm wire

size 8/0 for medium flowers - match with 0.4 or 0.5mm wire

size 6/0 for large flowers - match with 0.5mm wire

Simple Flowers

Cut 10cm of wire.
Thread on five, seven or nine beads (odd numbers work best).
Bring the beads to the centre of the wire and thread the one end of the wire through the bead at the far end of the line in the same direction as before to bring the beads into a circle (fig 7).
Twist the two sides of the wire together to make a stem (fig 8).

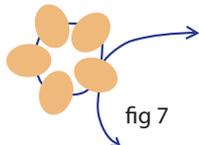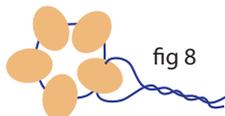simple flowers with chatons glued into the centre

fig 7

fig 8

a lily flower made from five leaf shapes

Beaded Petals

Cut 30cm of wire.
Thread on nine or eleven beads (odd numbers work best). Push the beads to the centre of the wire.

Bring the two sides of the wire together at the base of the beads and twist twice (fig 9). Thread the same number of beads onto one end of the wire. Make these beads into a loop 3mm from the base of the first petal. Twist the wire to secure (fig 10).
Repeat until you have made five petals swapping from one side of the wire to the other.
Twist the two ends of the wire together to secure the flower shape (fig 11). Add a larger bead across the centre with one end of the wire to finish.
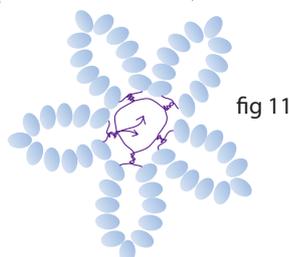
fig 9

fig 10

fig 11

Simple Leaves

Cut 15cm of wire.
Thread one bead into the centre of the wire.
Bring the two ends of the wire together and pass through one bead (fig 12).
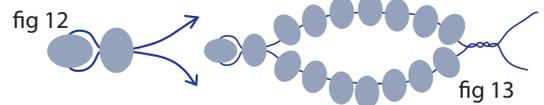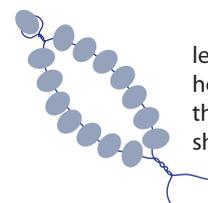
fig 12

fig 13

Separate the wire ends and thread a number of beads onto one end (depending on the size of the leaf required).
Thread an identical number of beads onto the other end.
Bring the two sides of the wire together just below the beads and twist the wire to secure (fig13).

left - If the beads have tiny holes use a twist to secure the bead at the tip of the shape