

# Chain Basics - Choosing, Using & Designing with Chain

## Choosing & Buying Chain

Chain is supplied in one of two ways -

- finished lengths with a clasp (normally 16", 18", 20" etc)
- continuous chain measured from a spool.

Fine curb chain is often less expensive to buy as a finished length than as a continuous length, this is mainly due to technical problems encountered when spooling long lengths of fine chain through a plating bath.

You will be able to find plated copper, plated brass chain and plated iron chain. If you want to avoid nickel make sure you ask if it's nickel-free as this is often added to the base metal to make a stronger, cheaper chain. All of Spellbound's chains are nickel-free.



Jameela Necklace Kit

## Colours & Plating Options

Continuous chain is available in four main colours

- Silver Plated - a bright silver colour
- Gold Plated or gilt for a bright gold colour. Antique gold or burnished gold chains can also be found but match your gold colours carefully - some are much more yellow than others.
- Copper - either bright copper (which should be protected with a lacquer to maintain the shine) or antique copper for warm mellow tones
- Grey Black (or just Black) for a dark antique effect.

Try mixing and matching the chain colours - perhaps silver and gold for a pale honey palette or silver and black for a gunmetal project.



## Chain Patterns

There are two main patterns for fashion chains - curb chain and trace chain. It's good to know the difference as the right choice can make your design easier to make and more fabulous to wear.



**Trace Chain** (above) - Oval links which sit at 90° to one another (think about the type of chain used for ships' anchors) so you see alternate links face on. Thicker trace style chains are known as belcher pattern. An excellent pattern for linking onto and making more intricate linked meshes.



**Curb Chain** (above) - Twisted round links that sit flat against one another so you see all of the links face on. This type of chain always flexes beautifully, hangs in smooth curves or makes soft tassels.

## Other Chain Patterns -

**Rope Chain** - A double or triple linked chain made from oval rings which gives the impression of a twisted rope. Ideal for using as a blank length to support a pendant but not suitable for linking onto either at the end or anywhere along the length.

**Snake Chain** - Intricately linked series of very fine plates of shaped metal which produces a strong cylindrical rope - always supplied as a finished length as the ends need to be soldered onto the connector for the clasp. Fern chain is the flat version of snake chain. Neither chain will take a link along the length.

**Serpentine Chain** - A series of flattened S-shaped closed links usually supplied as a finished length only. Although the end of the chain shows a small hole which can be used for linking onto, the main length does not offer this opportunity.



A chain tassel made with black & silver chains in various lengths and styles



# Using Chain In Your Designs



## Findings - Jump Rings

To make neat links at the end of your chain you will need a good supply of jump rings.

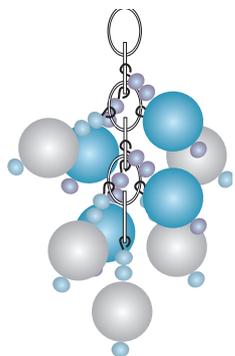
Use round jump rings for less snagging and bunching at the junctions.

In general you will get a more flexible result if you use a jump ring of a similar size to the links in the chain to make a simple single strand to single strand join.

The more chain ends you bring together the larger the jump ring needs to be, but check the ring will fit through the links - bigger jump rings are usually made from a thicker wire.

## Adding Pendants and Dangles

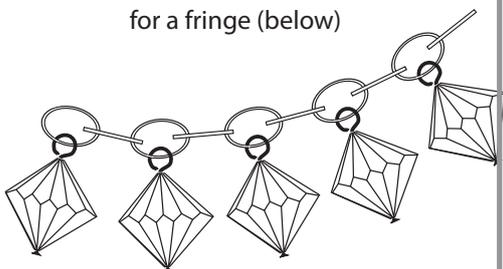
If you are dangling looped pins from a chain you can link the pin loop straight onto the chain, but as the chain moves and flexes, it puts a lot of stress on the pin loop. It's much better to use a jump ring to make the link and you can add several dangles at once to create bunches or tassels.



### With Trace Chain

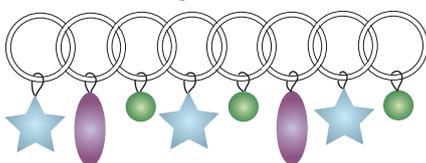
add beads to both sides of each link for a bunched effect - ideal for earrings and bag charms (see left)

Add beads to one side of alternate links for a fringe (below)



### With Curb Chain

add beads to one side of the links for a fringe (below)



## Preparing Chain for Use

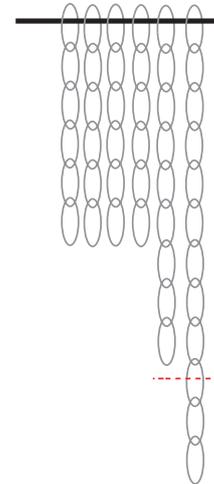
Cut the chain with wire cutters through the side of the link and make sure that you remove all of the cut link - it can easily get left behind only to fall off once you have linked onto it.

**Cutting multiple lengths** - if you need lots of lengths all the same, cut the first length against your measure.

Push a pin through the end link of the cut chain and hold up in front of you.

Slip the end link of the uncut length onto the pin.

With the chains hanging side by side you can then see exactly which link to cut to match up with the first length.



thread the top links onto a wire and hold up in the air so the chain falls properly

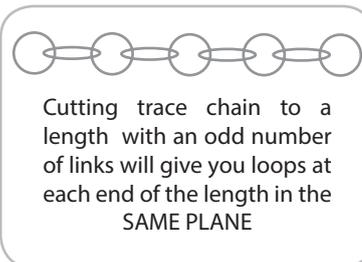
cut here to match this length to the previous length

## Making Multi-Chain and Swagged Chain Designs

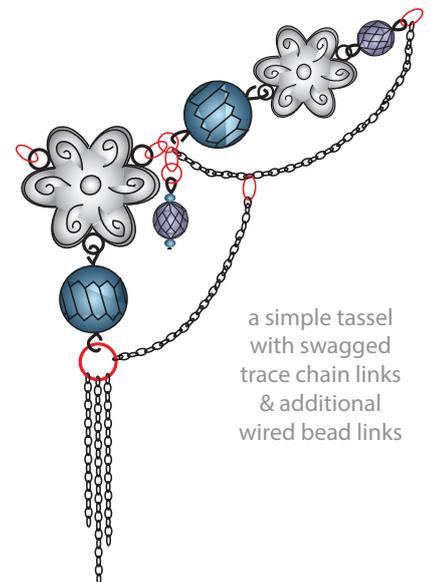
If you want to make an intricately linked design it is best to work with trace chain - this will link more successfully with jump rings and providing that you do not twist the chain through the link, your work will lie flat and hang softly.

Try to cut shorter the lengths (under 5cm) with an ODD number of links then the links at either end of the piece will be in the SAME PLANE - the links through the jump rings will then lie flat and will not twist.

This will always also give you a centre link on the length if you want to add a hanging bead to the middle of the swag



Cutting trace chain to a length with an odd number of links will give you loops at each end of the length in the SAME PLANE



a simple tassel with swagged trace chain links & additional wired bead links

Always use a bigger jump ring rather than a small one if the smaller jump ring is a little cramped with all you are trying to fit on it - the design will lie better if the rings are not over-full.

Swagged designs will need beads to weight the chain into place - the beads can dangle from the chain links or separate the chain into smaller unit lengths but keep the bead weights fairly equal across any one level along the design (see below).

