

# Sturdy Links Make an Elegant Bead Necklace

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My ideal vacation is a week of antique shows in London. This might not make everyone's eye's light up, but the opportunities to find unusual beads are far beyond what is available in the Midwestern United States. In particular, I'm more likely to find luscious foil beads and highly decorated old Venetian beads assembled on square gold-filled wire in the UK. Gold-filled wire links give a subtle elegance to the beads without overwhelming them and they make a very durable and wearable chain which is less likely to break than fibre stringing material. Some of the necklaces I've found recently and ones that I've made are shown here (Figs A-D).

To make a necklace with square wire links, I've found that 14/20 gold-filled, 22 gauge half-hard wire works well for S-links, elongated links and a hook and loop type of clasp. For beads with very small holes, you might want 23 or 24 gauge wire. One ounce of 22 gauge wire contains about 26 feet and sells in the US for about \$27-\$29, depending on the price of gold. I order it from Rio Grande ([www.riogrande.com](http://www.riogrande.com)) and if it is difficult to find in England, you can order from them. I usually estimate that I will need twice as much wire as the finished necklace. Thus for an 18" necklace I would need about 36" of wire and it would cost about \$3.50. This allows for a few practice links. I also find that one develops skill in making the links and this skill quickly evaporates and must be relearned each time another necklace is started if a few months have gone by. The tools needed are simple - just some round nose pliers, a good wire cutter and perhaps some flatnose pliers. You might also want some cheap wire to practice with.

One of the reference books that I found helpful is *How To Make Jewellery with Wire and Beads* by C. G. Oxley which was written in the 1930's and has been reprinted by Stefany Tomalin. It is an inexpensive little booklet available directly from Stefany for £2.75, and well worth the cost. Please send her your order with £2.75 and a 1st class SAE large enough to hold a 9" x 6" (23 x 15cm) booklet, or

for USA or overseas, you can send a cheque for £3.75 or check for US\$7 - with your name and address, to: S. Tomalin (booklet), 7, Douglas Court, Quex Road, London NW6 4PT. (Don't send Euro cheques.)

The information describing how to make a necklace in the booklet is provided overleaf (Fig E), including how to make a loop. You will see in "Fig. 1" (in Fig E) how to hold the round nose pliers in relation to the wire. However, the booklet has much more to offer!



Fig. A



Fig. B

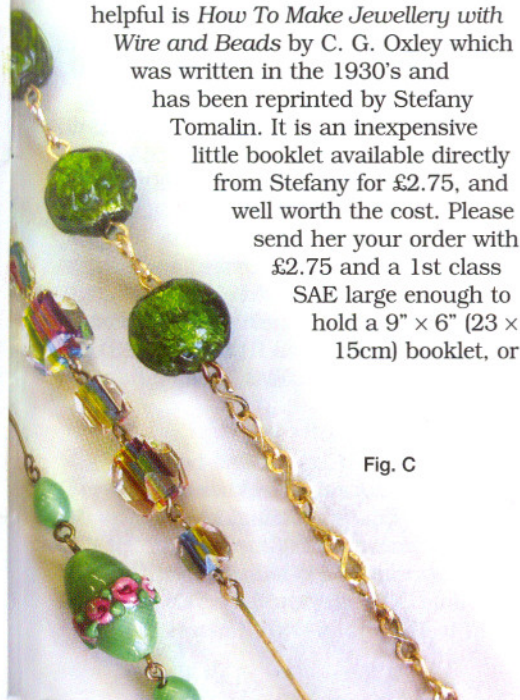


Fig. C

For more information about the Oxley company and how rolled gold wire used to be made in England, see Tomalin 2003.



### Bibliography

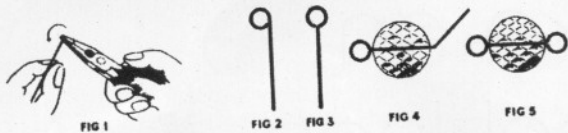
Tomalin, S. 2003 'C.G. Oxley & Rolled Gold Wire Jewellery' *Newsletter of the Bead Society of Gt Britain* 69, 11-13.



Fig. D



## HOW TO MAKE ROLLED GOLD WIRE JEWELLERY



**T**HERE is no necessity for a costly outlay on tools for the beginner, indeed one can mount beads, assemble and make Links, Hooks and Eyes with just two tools, *i.e.*, a pair of Round Nose Pliers and a pair of Snipe Nose Pliers with cutter combined (the latter are flat inside the jaws). It is certainly advisable however, to possess, in addition, a pair each of Round Nose and Snipe Nose Pliers (without cutter) and a pair of Cutting Nippers.

The first operation to learn is the making of a Loop, which is not so very difficult. Before proceeding, though, to avoid the wastage of Rolled Gold Wire, the learner would be well advised to purchase from an ironmonger some copper, brass or galvanised wire of about the thickness and temper of R.G. Wire; the wire must not be very hard (such as spring wire) as this would be unsuitable and strain your pliers.

### To Make a Loop

You will see in Fig. 1 how to hold the Round Nose Pliers in relation to the wire. Try to make a loop as in Fig. 2 and as you are using inexpensive wire you can afford to have several goes until you just find the knack. Take a firm grip as near the end of the wire as possible, turn the pliers round with a movement of the wrist until the wire completely encircles one of the points or nose of the pliers. After you have mastered that loop you should find it fairly simple to copy Fig. 3; you will note that you have to make a kink at the centre of the loop and this is the shape as required in bead mounting and also for links.

### Bead Mounting

Place your coil of wire on your left arm, grasp a few inches from the end with your left hand and straighten with the finger and thumb of your right hand, slip on a bead, make a loop (Fig. 3), push bead up to the loop, bend other end as in Fig. 4 and cut off leaving about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an inch, turn this into a loop to match the other one and your bead is mounted (Fig. 5). Alternatively you can make the second loop direct from the coil of wire, cutting with the Nippers at the point where this loop is to end.

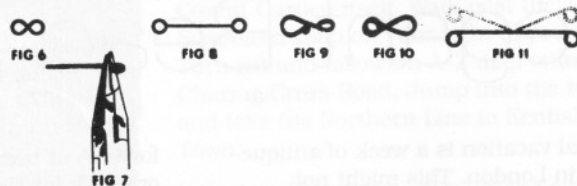
### How to Assemble Mounted Beads

To assemble a string of mounted beads, firstly with your snipe nose pliers (which are flat inside the jaws) close the loops on your first bead, then take your next one, open one end (sideways, not outwards), thread on one side of the first bead, close the loop and follow on with your other beads in a similar manner. With a little ingenuity one can fashion many charming designs in Necklets by the interspersing, here and there, of links and "S" links between the beads, the gold giving an added attraction.

### Hard or Soft Wire

For all bead work use hard drawn wire, in fact hard wire is usual for all work with the exception of ring making when soft wire is the correct temper. For most beads gauge 22 in either round or square

wire is most suitable and this applies also for links and "S" links, but for very small beads thinner wire is better suited in either 23 or 24 gauge.



### "S" Link

Having mastered loop making and bead mounting you will be ready to make links and hooks and eyes, and so to continue we will start off with the "S" link. Fig. 6 shows the finished link and Fig. 7 how to hold the wire after making the first loop. You can work straight from the coil of wire. Follow the illustration (Fig. 7) by bending the wire around one nose of the pliers to form the second loop and cut off surplus with nippers.

### Links

The illustration (Fig. 8) is self-explanatory, but ensure that you make the second loop in the opposite direction to the first one. For a 1-inch link you will require about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches of wire in either round or square in 22 gauge. A simple guide to ensure even lengths can be made by fastening with a drawing pin the bottom of a match box to a piece of board, leaving the desired distance from the front edge of board to the front side of match box bottom. All you need to do is to straighten a few inches of wire from the coil, push the end as far as the match box bottom and cut close up to the edge of the board. You will find that you must straighten a new length for every few links and it is advisable to polish as you straighten with a rouged chamois leather.

### Hooks and Eyes

Figs. 9 and 10. Having got so far we now require fasteners for necklets and for this purpose wire hooks and eyes prove very efficient. Those as per illustrations are made from 22 gauge square wire, but round wire can be used if so desired. The length of wire required for either is about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches. To make a hook, first form a loop (Fig. 3), then bring a thicker part of the round nosed pliers in operation and grip at about one-third from the opposite end and make a bend at right angles to the first loop. If you look at Fig. 9 you will see what is meant. Now form a tiny loop on the end to complete the hook.

For the eye, make a loop on about  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch length of wire, the loop to be as in Fig. 2. Form another on the other end in the same direction (Fig. 11). Grip the centre of the link with a thicker part of the round nose pliers and bend both ends of the link in the direction of the dotted lines on Fig. 11 until the two loops are exactly one upon the other. Fig. 10 should make this clear.

A simpler eye can be made by using an inch length of wire and turning one loop the usual size on one end and another larger loop on the other end.