

No Loose Ends



Using beads like paint in a multi-strand necklace

A day's bead stringing.

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by Diane Fitzgerald

I often think about beadwork when I go to bed. When the idea for stringing a multi-strand necklace without numerous thread ends came to me as I was falling asleep, I had to get up and sketch it. Painters can mix pigments to get custom colors, and my approach allows beaders almost the same freedom. So I call this necklace my "Painter's Necklace" (see above).

Because you use mostly inexpensive seed beads, you'll be amazed at how affordable this necklace is. These directions produce a 28-in. necklace. Lengthen or shorten either the multi-strand portion or the single strand portions to get the length you want.

Mixing colors

Begin your necklace by selecting a garment in your favorite colors, the ones you really like to wear and feel good in. Look carefully

at colors in it and notice the gradations of color, the highlights, the background color, and the proportions of color.

Next assemble small quantities of seed beads that match the garment's colors. Don't forget the neutrals, if any — grays, beige, taupe, etc. For the necklace, you want to mix proportions of color similar to those in your garment. Don't hesitate to use all kinds and sizes of seed beads.

Now for the fun! Mix the seed beads in a bowl, sprinkling in small amounts of one color at a time (photo 1). In another bowl, gather about 200-250 assorted small beads (up to 1/4 in. diameter) and/or stone chips in related colors. Select the large, bold beads for the back of the necklace now or later.

Above: It's easy and quick to string a multi-strand necklace between two fixed loops. Opposite: The contrast between a lush cluster of small beads and bold supporting beads makes this a stunning necklace.

Step by step



1. Mix the two bowls of beads (photo 1).

2. Cut two pieces of nylon bead cord, each 36 in. long. Fold in half and place them on a table with 14 in. between the two folded ends. Tape them securely, leaving an open loop at each fold (see photo, page 18).

3. Thread a beading needle with 2-3 yd. of Nymo D. Bring the ends together and double knot them. Singe the knot with a lighter (for

Materials

Seed beads, sizes 9-13, as many types as possible, in a favorite garment's colors; about 1 teaspoon of each for a total of 2 oz.

200-250 small beads such as E beads or stone chips in related colors

2 sets of large beads (mostly solid color); each totals 6½ in. strung

A clasp and 2 string-through bead tips

2 yd. heavy nylon bead cord such as F/99

Nymo D bead thread

Size 12 beading needles

Masking tape, disposable lighter, clear nail polish, small box or dish with straight sides for scooping beads (a gift box lid about 4 x 4 in. works well)

more on this, see page 4). Hold the knot near, not in, the flame.

4. To secure the thread, string 4-6 seed beads, making sure the first one won't slip over the knot. Pass the needle through the loop on one bead cord then back through the beads just strung, last one first and heading toward the knot (photo 2). Test to be sure the knot holds.

5. Scooping is a fast way to string seed beads randomly. To scoop, hold the needle between your thumb and middle finger so that they form a point. Tip the box lid to pile the beads in one corner and poke the needle into the middle of the pile, bringing the tip upward as you complete the scoop (photo 3). Avoid running the needle along the box bottom because you'll catch fewer beads. After scooping each needleful, string a small bead or chip.

6. When the strand reaches the other cord loop, pass the needle through the loop and back through the last 4-6 beads strung (photo 4). Continue stringing back and forth this way until you've made as many strands as you want (I make 18-24).

7. Add new thread in the middle of a strand, not near an end. Leave the old needle on the thread and prepare a new thread as in step 3. Pass the new needle through the last 4-6 beads. Both needles exit the same bead in the same direction (photo 5). Tie the old and new threads together with a square knot and seal the knot. Continue stringing on the new thread. After going through the loop and starting back, bring the old thread through several beads to bury the tail. Clip off the excess.

8. To finish, tie off the last strand with three half hitches around the thread between beads. Untape the bead cords and string the large beads on each double-cord end. End each side with a bead tip. Secure the bead tips with a square knot (photo 6) sealed with nail polish and add a clasp.

