

Spiral Tube Chain



Rotating bugles and seed beads

Second in a series on seed bead chains. Easy to learn and a great take-along project.

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by *Diane Fitzgerald*

I found a wonderful necklace at an antique show. It was made with clear, silver-lined seed beads and satin and clear silver-lined bugles. I wanted to know how it was done but didn't want to take the necklace apart. Fortunately, the very next day, I began a bead-working class at the University of Minnesota's Split Rock Arts Program. One of the students immediately recognized the chain and told me just how to do it. Since then, I've found different ways to produce this spiral chain, but I think the method described here is the easiest and fastest.

Because it is a tube, the spiral chain has many uses besides bracelets, earrings, and necklaces. I've made candy cane Christmas ornaments, using white satin bugles and red silver-lined seed beads. (Put a pipe cleaner in the chain to make it curve.) Mary McEachern of Rockville, MD, suggested

a double-duty gift, a bracelet and tree ornament made with red and green silver-lined bugles and gold silver-lined seed beads. With the bracelet closed, tie a red or gold bow over the clasp to look like a wreath.

Starting a chain requires a little patience. The trick is to keep your thread tensioned tightly as you work. I hold the chain between my thumb and forefinger and wrap the thread over my forefinger, holding it in place with my middle finger, as shown in photo 5 on page 7. Wrapping the tail of thread around your little finger helps too. When you've mastered this chain with three sides, as shown here, try it with four or more sides; it's a very versatile pattern.

Making a spiral tube chain is very easy once you've built enough of it to hold onto. You pile three bugles and three seed beads row upon row, round and round. In each round, the seed beads are offset one bead's width past the ones below them, so the chain spirals gracefully.

Step by step directions

Thread the needle with 1 yd. of single, unknotted thread.

Photo 1. String 1 seed bead and 1 bugle three times — 6 beads.

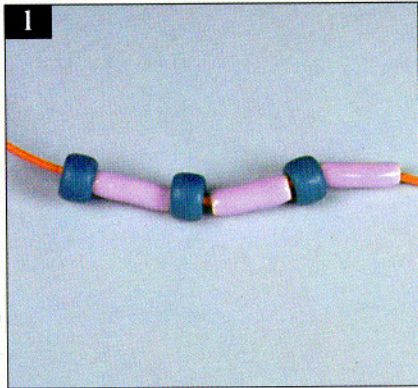


Photo 2. Tie the beads into a triangular loop with a square knot. Leave a 10-in. tail for finishing and to hold while starting.

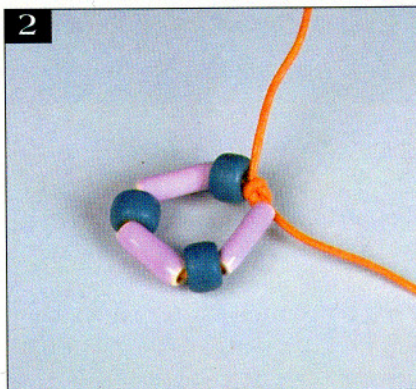


Photo 3. Go through the first seed bead next to the knot from right to left (lefties, reverse directions).

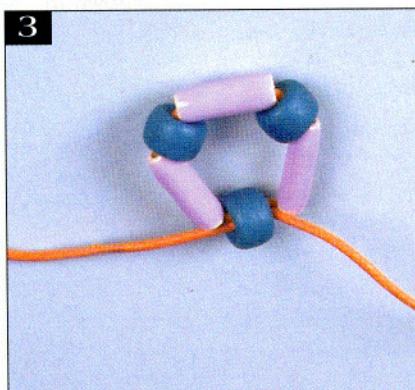


Photo 4. String 1 seed bead and 1 bugle and go through the next seed bead in the base loop (the second strung).

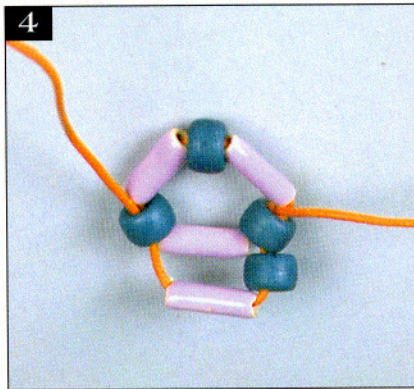


Photo 5. Continue in this manner until the chain is as long as desired.

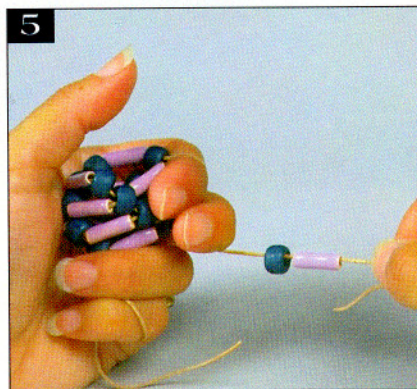


Photo 6. To finish the chain, you build a three-sided pyramid of seed beads. Begin by stringing 11 seed beads and passing the needle left to right through the next seed and bugle bead.

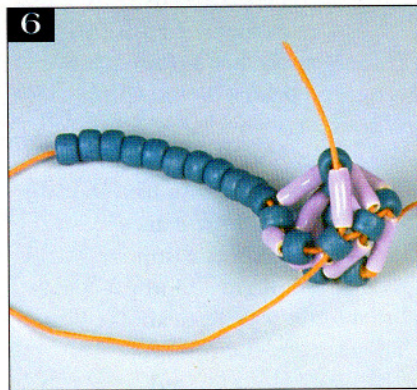


Photo 7. String 5 seed beads and pass the needle through the middle seed bead on the 11-bead loop.

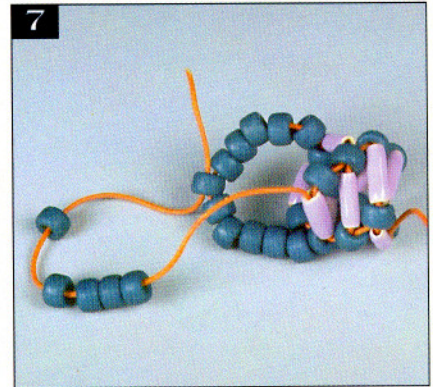


Photo 8. String an odd number of beads, 7 or 9, to make a loop for clasping or hanging, reinforce the loop by sewing back through it, and end the thread securely. For a bracelet or necklace, repeat steps 6 and 7 on the other end and sew on a hook or a fancy button with the remaining thread.



To add a new thread (photos on page 8), leave the old thread on the needle, and string a new needle and thread with a knot at the end (seal the knot and trim the thread). Bring the new needle through the last bugle added and the next seed bead. Both threads are coming out of the same seed bead (photo 9). Tie the old and new threads together with a square knot (photo 10) and seal the knot with nail polish. Bury the old thread tail in the next bugle (photo 11) and clip the excess. Continue working with the new thread.