

BEAD POTPOURRI TASSEL

DIANE FITZGERALD



My eyes were opened to the delight and universality of tassels when I read Nancy Welch's book *Tassels: The Fanciful Embellishment*, and I have been enamored of them ever since. Once you're on the lookout for tassels, you'll see them everywhere—on keys, knobs, books, doorways, lamps, towel racks, chairs, pictures, and almost anything else around the house that looks bare and needs a bit of liveliness. Wearable items—jewelry, scarves, belts, hats, shoes,

zippers—can also be brightened by a swinging tassel.

Tassel making is also known as *passementerie* from the French for ornamental braid, but tassels are prevalent around the world. And when you combine them with beads, watch out. You'll want several tassels for yourself and your friends.

Tassels generally have three parts: the hanging loop, a top, and several strands of fringe. For a beaded tassel, add beads to any or all of the three parts (Fig. 1).

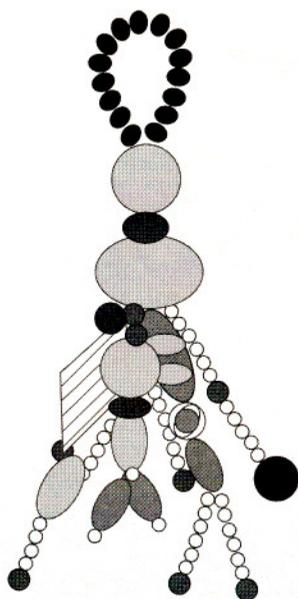


Figure 1

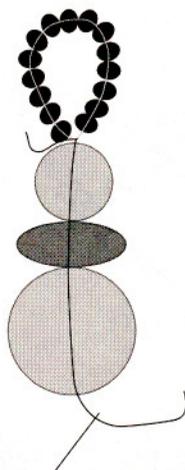


Figure 2

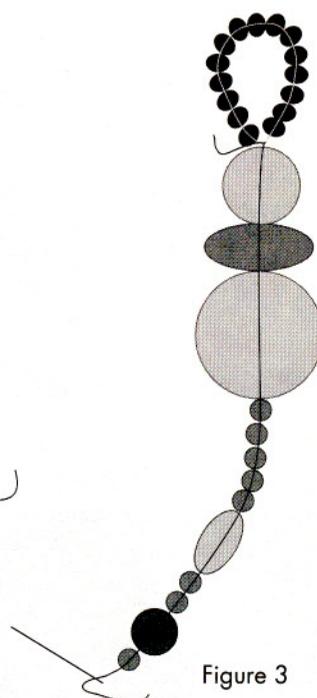


Figure 3

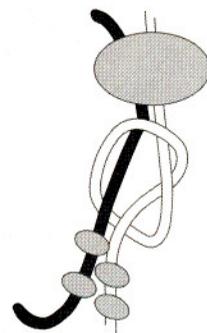


Figure 4

MATERIALS

Beads in a variety of sizes and shapes from 4mm to 20mm
 200+ size 8° to 11° seed beads
 1/2" to 3/4" ring (optional)
 Nymo "D" thread in matching color

NOTIONS

Size 12 beading needle
 Clear nail polish
 Scissors

GATHERING YOUR BEADS

The fun begins when you gather a little stash of beads that work together. Select them by color (neutrals or brights), by theme (fruit or flowers), or by shape (geometrics or organic). Maybe you'll just want to combine a selection of your personal favorites.

Look for beads in your favorite palette, combining two to four or more colors. Next, look for shapes beyond just round. Flattened disks, faceted beads, realistics such as fish, leaves, flowers or butterflies, tear drops, cubes, and ovals are just the beginning. Contrast textured, mottled, or striped beads with solid, transparent, or opaque colors.

For the top of the tassel, look for two or three large bold beads that make an interesting new

shape together. For example, combine a 10mm round bead with a 20mm fluted disk and a 14mm round bead as in the orange, yellow, and green tassel pictured.

For the strands choose one or two colors of size 10° or 11° seed beads. Use smaller beads from 2mm to 6mm for the top of the strands, medium beads for accents, and a few larger, heavier beads for the bottom of the strands. Select a few charms to peek out and surprise the close inspector. Now you're ready to put your beads together.

MAKING THE TASSEL

Make your tassel whatever size you wish. Mine are usually 4" to 6" in length. The top ring is 3/4" to 1". The length of the top group of beads is usually 1/3 the length of the total tassel. Strands vary from 2" to 3" in length. My tassels usually have 10-12 strands, but more or fewer may be used. Plan to spend an hour or two making each tassel, taking time to explore interesting combinations of beads and enjoy the play of color in your hands.

Using about 1 1/2 yards of single-stranded thread, string on 2" of seed beads. Tie these with a square knot so they form a loop. Dab the knot with clear nail polish. Leave a 4" tail which will be buried later. If you wish to use a ring instead of the large loop of beads, connect your tassel to the ring by making a small loop of beads to cover your thread and tie the ring within this loop.

BEADED ROPE

String on 1 to 3 large beads to serve as the top of your tassel (Fig. 2), then string the first strand of the bottom fringe (Fig. 3). Add a seed bead or a charm, and go back up through all beads to the loop. Go through the loop again to reinforce it, then back down through the large top beads and begin another strand of fringe. When the top loop is full of thread, make a second loop the same size.

It's easy to add more strands, even if the top beads or the loop beads are nearly full of thread. Bring your thread to the top of the strand. Tie a half-hitch knot around all the strands between the top beads and the strands (Fig. 4). You're now in position to add another strand.

ADDING MORE THREAD

First, tie off the existing thread by knotting around all the threads between the top beads and the strands. Bury the tail in a strand of beads and dab the knot with clear nail polish. Take a new thread, put an overhand knot in the end, clip the excess, and coat the knot with clear nail polish. Bring the new thread up through 1" of beads of any strand and knot around all the strands between the top beads and the strands.

FINISHING

When the desired number of strands of fringe have been added, bring your working thread to the top of the top beads and tie it to the tail of the beginning loop. Bury the beginning and ending tails in the large beads. Coat all knots with clear nail polish. ❁

FURTHER READING

- Crutchley, Anna. *The Tassels Book*. New York, New York: Lorenze Books, 1996.
- deMarchi Micheli, Vima. *Tassels Italian Style*. Sacramento, California: Ricamo Press, 1987.
- Dickens, Susan. *The Art of Making Tassels*. St. Leonards, Australia: Rathdown Books, 1994.
- Mitrofanis, Effie. *Decorative Tassels and Cords*. Kenthurst, Australia: Kangaroo Press, 1995.
- Welch, Nancy. *Tassels: The Fanciful Embellishment*. Asheville, North Carolina: Lark Books, 1992.

Diane Fitzgerald is a nationally-known teacher and artist who lives in Minneapolis where she runs her store Beautiful Beads. She has written several beadworking books, including Counted and Charted Patterns for Flat Peyote Stitch, Sea Anemone Beadwork, and Zulu Beaded Chain Techniques. She also co-authored with Helen Banes Beads and Threads: A New Technique for Fiber Jewelry.

Here's a flexible beaded rope to make for your tassel. Use two colors for this chain: one for the "inside" beads and the other for the "outside" beads that stair-step up the rope.

String on four inside beads and three outside beads. Tie into a loop, leaving a 4" tail for the knot at the bottom.

Go up through the four inside beads (Fig. 1).

Add one inside bead and three outside beads. Slide these into place against the previous beads. Go forward through the last or top three inside beads and the new inside bead (Fig. 2).

Move these new beads so they lie next to the first set of outside beads and begin to stair-step around the core (Fig. 3).

Repeat Step 4 until the rope is as long as you wish. Add a clasp or make the rope long enough to fit over your head, then tie the ends and bury the tails. Secure all knots with clear nail polish.

This chain lends itself well to a variety of beads other than round seed beads. Try magatama (tiny teardrop) beads for the outside beads with size 8° seed beads on the inside.

MATERIALS

1 oz. size 11° seed beads in each of two colors
Nymo "D" thread in matching color
Clasp (optional)

NOTIONS

Size 12 beading needle
Scissors

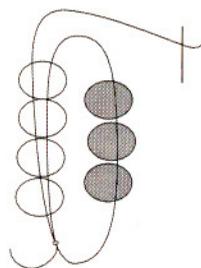


Figure 1

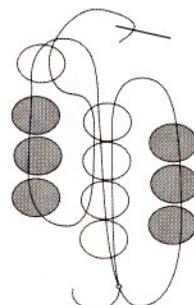


Figure 2

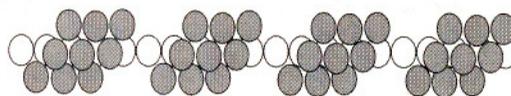


Figure 3