

Embellishments for your Costuming:

Beadwork of any sort looks a good deal more complicated than it actually is when a few simple techniques are generally sufficient to create even the most complex design. There is a natural affinity between beads and textile techniques; some translating directly. Embroidery and beadwork make a pair!

Embellishments like these can be used for all manner of wear, sewn on in clusters, in rows, in tracteries that delineate the designs of patterned fabrics - or in any random manner the needle-crafter chooses. Except for rhinestones (& cabochons) which are best applied with a prong device, trimmings can be sewn in place with a regular or beading needle and beading thread or regular thread that is reinforced with thread conditioner. (like - Thread Heaven) I don't use beeswax - it usually attracts dirt, even if historic.

Any kind of trimming, however, must be chosen to suit the fabric: depending on their size, beads can be sewn on everything from chiffon to heavy wools. Take the time to plan and you will love the end result.

Beading on Fabric:

The first of several factors to consider when designing and executing a beaded project on fabric is weight. Beading fabric affects the drape of the fabric and can exaggerate any stretch the fabric might have. The weight of beads may even distort the weave of the fabric or tear the fabric if too great. On woven fabrics, areas that hang on the bias will stretch much more than adjacent areas on the straight grain. You may need to limit a bead design to areas of a piece that are on the straight grain only, or at least reduce the number of beads in bias areas. Knits do not have a bias but stretch much more in the horizontal direction than in the vertical direction and this can cause similar draping problems. - **Bead Weight Matters !!!!**

Second, consider how your project will be used when placing your design. For beaded clothing, you don't want to sit on bulky beads. Even beads on the back of a garment can poke when sitting in a chair. Comfort is still important.

Third, take shrinkage into account. Fabric shrinks from two sources in beading, natural shrinkage of fabric when being cleaned and shrinkage from tension on the beading thread. Please preshrink fabric if you ever intend to clean it after, even if you plan on dry-cleaning. Chemicals can change beads.

Use an embroidery frame to minimize fabric shrinkage caused by beading. Be certain to leave wide margins around large or heavily beaded pieces so the pattern for the fabric piece can be re-marked after beading is completed.

Overall designs should be beaded before the pieces are cut from the fabric. Small areas of beading, such as fringes and trims, can be applied after the garment is completed.

Appliqués are stitched separately from a project. This way, fabric shrinkage due to tension on the beading thread is limited to the appliqué backing. If the garment is later damaged the appliqués can be removed.

Fourth, beadwork needs a lot of support. Underline the beading fabric with a second layer of firmly woven fabric if necessary. Line your beadwork to save snagging the underlying threads. Remember to shrink that fabric too.

If beads on a garment make one section heavier than another, the garment may rotate on the body. You may need to add dress-makers weights (invisibly) to balance the weight. They can be added in the hem like drapes.

Use woven interfacings. Fusible interfacings don't work as well with beads.

On napped fabrics, use small pieces (or bead size pieces) under beaded motifs or the beads themselves, to keep small beads from sinking into the fabric. Light padding of a beaded appliqué makes a great difference.

For sheer fabrics that need support for beads, use 2 or even 3 layers of the sheer material. This maintains the sheer look while adding the necessary support for the beads, or a flat anchoring bead on the "wrong" side.

Stitching with Beads:

Handling Beads: It may seem like a huge task to get all of those little beads where you want them. However, with a little practice and a few tips, you can handle beads quickly and efficiently. They scatter easily.

Pour a few beads into a lightweight shallow container. You need to get each bead onto your needle and it's easiest to dig a bead out of a shallow container. Use a plastic lid from a food container, a tray with multiple divisions, or a plastic paint palette tray. Containers with white bottoms work best for dark beads, and vice versa. Find what really works for you.

If you just turn a bag or tube of beads upside and dump or just cut a string in a hank of beads, beads bounce all over. You need to control the beads. For plastic bags, form a "v" in one side of the bag and pinch the rest of the opening closed. Touch the v to the bottom of the container and allow only a small stream of beads to flow out. If static electricity causes the beads to stick to the bag, blow into the bag. The moisture from your breath will remove the static.

For tubes, put your thumb over the opening and turn the tube upside down. Touch the tube to the bottom of a container and move your thumb slightly to allow a few beads to flow out.

For hanks, remove one strand of beads by gently pulling on both ends at the same time. Do not untie the knot holding the strands together. If the strand will not come free, clip the thread close to the knot. Lay the strand in a container. Pick up one end of the thread so the end is about 1" out of the container. Place two fingers of the other hand on the top bead. Without moving the fingers on the top bead, gently pull up on the thread to remove it.

Needles:

If you are just starting with beadwork, note that many bead stitching techniques require multiple passes through the same bead, which will encourage the use of the thinnest beading needle possible. If you are

couching the beads to fabric, the beads will be strung on one line (with any size needle that fits through the bead) then stitched down with a second needle and thread (which may, or may not require additional passes through the beads). Couching techniques open a much larger world of fiber sizes and types of needles for beading.

Smaller seed beads will require the slender, narrow eyed *Beading Needle* (sizes 10 to 15). Note that the same beads may fit a number 10 or 11 Between or a number 12 Tapestry and many versions of Sharps will fit seed beads and work quite well for embroidery techniques.

BEADING NEEDLES

Beading Needles are lean with narrow eyes and range in size from 10 (thicker) through 15 (thinnest). If you are fortunate in finding the elusive size 16 (quite thin) beading needle hold on to it carefully. Size 10, 12, and 13 fit the popular 11/0 seed bead (and more). Size 15 will fit the smaller 15/0 seed beads and some of the antique tiny beads (18/0 to 22/0); and the size 16 will fit most of the beads of 22/0 through 24/0.

Threading Your Needle: The eyes on beading needles are often very small so you will need to learn to thread needles by hand. Needle threaders are available now that work for beading needles - but nothing replaces you.

1. Cut the end of the thread cleanly with sharp embroidery scissors. Wet the end of the thread in your mouth (or in water) and flatten the end between your front teeth or use your fingernails.
2. Pinch the flattened end between your thumb and index finger. Let about 1/16" thread peek out between your fingers. Align thread with the elongated hole in the eye. Push the eye of the needle onto the end of the thread. At the same time, slowly spread the tips of your thumb and index finger, forcing the thread through the eye. Pinch end and pull thread through needle. The eye is wider in the middle than at the ends, so position the thread in the centre as you are pulling it through. Remember: Needles are now laser cut and one side of the eye is more

jagged than the other (not easily visible to the eye). If you are having difficulty threading your needle - turn it around and try threading it from the other side.

Stringing Beads: Pick up a bead from a container by pressing the needle tip on to the bead hole. The bead will pop onto the needle. Use your finger to hold the bead on the shaft of the needle.

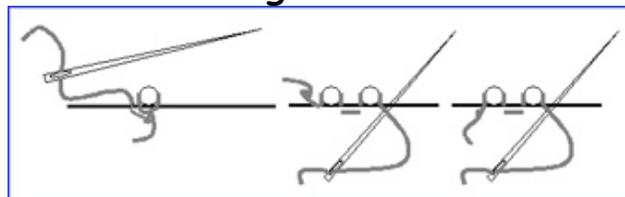
If stringing beads onto a thread, as for a fringe, pop the beads onto the needle one at a time, holding the last bead on the needle with your finger.

If you need a number of beads on a thread, start with a pile of beads and push the needle through the middle of the pile. With each pass, a few beads will be threaded onto the needle.

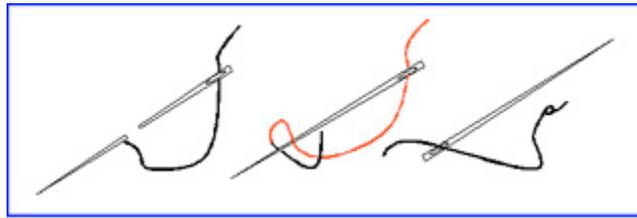
If stringing a lot of beads, a bead spinner speeds up the process. With a bead spinner, hold the needle stationary in a spinning bowl of beads and the beads seem to quite mysteriously jump onto the needle.

Tying Knots: After threading the needle, double the thread and make a rolled knot in the end. Beading is the one embroidery technique that allows and even encourages knotting the thread when working. If a knot will leave a bump that will show on the front of the fabric, take two or three stitches through the fabric on top of one another with a slipknot in a place that will be covered with some beads.

Starting *with* a Knot

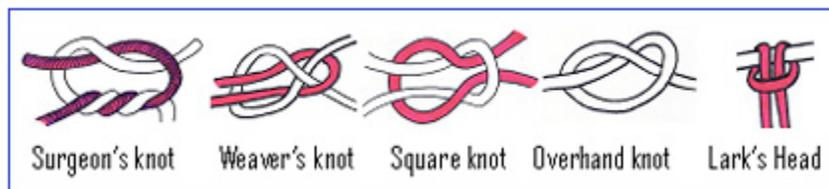


Simple knots can begin above or below the fabric. My opinion is to secure any knot with an additional backstitch before adding beads. When beginning on a knit fabric (particularly a sweater knit) I like to back stitch first then bring the two ends together to tie a knot. Why? Because my threads are knotted *around* the fibers, rather than depending on the density of the knit to hold the knot.



While stitching, you may wish to anchor with a knot and this need not be complex. A backstitch, a simple overhand knot (and perhaps another backstitch) will send you on your way.

Because of the superb diversity and marvelous opportunities to mix stitches, weaves, materials and beads, I've included some other favorite knots.

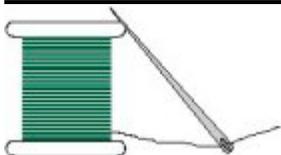


Yes, these knots go beyond a simple stitch, but bead embroidery can have beads added in many ways. We knot bead embroidery to hold fast, and may need to *splice* (marry two threads together). We use *binding* knots that hold tension (around a bead, bundled fabric or object,) or a use a knotting *bend* that temporarily fastens.

Some slippery threads will not hold a knot. Seal both the beginnings and ending knots in these threads with a small drop of watch glass glue (good jewelry glue). Tie extra knots before and after large individual beads and periodically in running and couching stitches.

In anchoring beads securely for clothing wear I recommend knotting on the back of the fabric after every second bead. If the wear and tear is going to be particularly stressful then I knot behind each individual bead.

Beadwork Stitches:



Some would say this is the most important section of the article. "How to actually attach" those wonderful beads to the garment or item of choice. I dislike reinventing the wheel. Rissa Peace Root has an excellent web page where she has an extensive stitch dictionary with the explanations and pictures for attaching beads. I recommend that you visit her page for the instructions needed to sew your beadwork. I use the stitches Rissa uses and have always been most satisfied with the results. Her web page can be found at www.prettyimpressivestuff.com and access "Stitch Dictionary".

My instructions follow but without pictures -

Unlike regular thread or wool embroidery, there are actually very few stitches used for bead embroidery. Usually the beads themselves tell you the way to stitch them to the fabric or item. Keep in mind that you can usually embroider with any thread stitch and add beads as you go along - beads adapt well to being included in most forms of embroidery.

Single Bead Attachment: This is adding one bead at a time to the fabric with an individual knot at the back to anchor securely. This can be used for tiny seed beads themselves or with larger beads anchored with a seed bead to hold them in place. Bring your thread from the back of the fabric through the hole of the larger single bead and then through the seed bead, go back through the larger bead and continue back through the fabric. The tiny seed bead will sit on top of the larger bead and usually adds to the embellishment of the fabric surface.

Couching: Bring your needle through the fabric from the back. Add beads to the thread (3 to 5 seed beads at a time work best for this), then lay the beads down and stitch back through the fabric, making a fairly loose row of beads. Bring your needle back up through the fabric alongside the beads and sew the row of beads down to the fabric by stitching from front to back over the thread between the beads. This holds your beads in place and is the most common stitch used for beading outlines or filling in spaces.

Back Stitch: This is my favourite bead stitch. It's quite secure and moves quickly when you get used to it. Start as if you were couching the beads - add 3 (to 5) beads to your thread. Stitch these beads to the surface of the fabric, loosely, and then bring the needle back up through the fabric near the second bead. Run the needle back through the second and third bead, pulling them snug. After coming out of the third bead add another three beads and stitch them down to the fabric, repeat by bringing the needle back up near the second bead of the second set of beads. Continue to bead for the length you want. This will make a very strong stitch as you have gone back through the beads and usually holds up well over time and laundry. When the beading is for wearable clothing I usually slip knot on the back of the fabric each time I return through the second and third beads. Should a

bead catch and the thread break, then the regular knots will stop the whole piece from coming apart and losing a whole section of beadwork.

These are the 3 main bead embroidery stitches I use all the time. They are all quick and efficient and like most things, practice makes perfect! If you wish to experiment on beading with any other type of embroidery stitch - explore and enjoy. Beads joyfully adapt to cross stitch, satin stitch, needlepoint, lazy daisy stitch, etc, etc. You are limited to your imagination. Happy Beading!

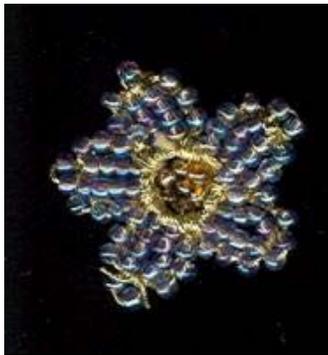
Beadwork Embellishing Examples:

Wooden Beads:

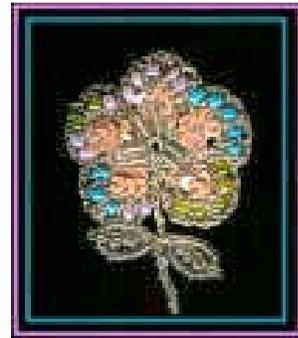


You can use anything that has a hole through it and will sit on whatever you want to place it on. Shells are another common beading embellishment, as are uncut semiprecious stones. Spangles (sequins) add fun and glitter & enhance.

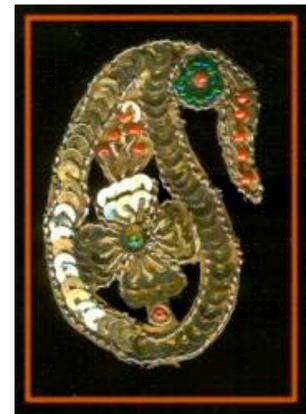
Glass Beads:



Wired Glass Beads



Beaded Appliqué



Indian appliqué and trim with beads, frise, spangles and embroidery

Velvet Elegance



Japanese Bead Embroidery on Velvet - purse.

Seed beads and crystals



Trim made with bugles, seed beads, bezants, spangles and goldwork



This is an Italian Renaissance Bodice I am beading on a piece of tapestry cloth.



My Scottish Thistle 2003 on 100% Linen ground.



My Beaded Star Pendant for Principality of Tir Righ - Linen, Wool, Leather and of course seed beads. For the actual Tir Righ Badge the blue and white beads would be reversed so the star is "voided".



One of my favourite little treasures - I call them "jewels"beaded on a wicker box. Trapunto on velvet with beads on the lid then bead fringing on trim around the side of the lid to hang over the base. Lid lifts off to a workable silk lined box.



Raised beadwork on linen in Norse design
I used linen padding under the beads.



I like beaded boxes. Seed beads on Satin



This is only part of the embellished set of pieces for a Byzantine Costume I am creating. Headpiece, segmentaes, purse and shoes, covered and banded with seed beads & pearls.



Beads, frize, goldwork on organza, padded as ornaments or to use as appliqués.

And finally.....For Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, who supports and inspires the Arts and the art of beadwork in this - the Twenty First Century.



A detail of the embroidery on the sleeve of a short-sleeved yellow shift with long flared skirt, panels of foliate pearls and bead embroidery.

The Royal Collection © 2007, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Bibliography:

With many thanks to all who inspired and encouraged, particularly Mistress Shirin al Hasana of AnTir in the S.C.A. (Leanne Foulger) who kept me moving on and those listed here:

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England for the gift of their teaching skills.

