

Supplies; - Beading Materials

Flexible Beading Wire (Tigertail)

This wire is used for stringing necklaces and bracelets. The name Tigertail is often used as a generic term for any flexible bead stringing wire made up of a core of stainless steel wires with a nylon coating.

It is usually available with a core of 7, 19 or 49 strands of wire. A 7 strand core makes the least flexible wire, fine for most general use. A 49 strand wire has a much better drape and can be used for very small or lightweight beads, floating necklaces and intricate work. The strand number does not affect the diameter; each strand count is available in a range of diameters.

These wires kink easily, so care should be taken when working with and storing them. Use crimps to secure the ends - these wires do not easily knot. A standard size for everyday stringing would be a 7 or 19 strand wire in 0.4mm diameter, which would work with 1.8 or 2mm sized crimps.

An alternative would be 'Fishing line' - a solid nylon cable / Monofilament - available in a similar range of diameters.



Elastic

Beading elastics are sold in various colours and diameters to suit different sizes of beads, and are great for bracelets where you don't want to include a catch, making bracelets that are easy to wear and quick to make.

Elastic should be secured with knotting, do not use crimps and metal findings as these may cut into and weaken the elastic. The elastic must be knotted securely, as the movement when the cords stretch can loosen knots. Knots can be further secured with a neat dot of glue or clear nail polish if needed.

The nature of elastic means that it will perish over time and eventually sag and break, needing periodical re-stringing. A thick elastic is usually stronger and more secure than a thinner one. Stranded or coated haberdashery elastics aren't as strong or easy to use as specialist beading elastics. I use 1mm diameter elastic as standard, unless my beads have particularly small holes.



Wire

This is hard metal wire - used widely for making hooks, solid links and other components. It can be shaped and bent with pliers to create useful and decorative elements in your beading. This wire is usually copper with a silver or gold plating, or a coloured enamel coating. These plated wires are most affordable and great for practicing, but the same techniques can be used with sterling silver or gold wires if you are making higher end jewellery.



Wires come in a variety of different diameters; thicknesses between 0.2mm and 1.5mm are the most commonly found. The thinner the wire is, the easier it will be to work and shape, but it will

also be weaker. If you are comparing wires, be aware that some manufacturers measure the wire diameter before adding the plating or coating, some after, so brands may differ slightly in thickness. Wire usually has a plain round cross section, although square and other fancy shaped wires can also be bought for more complex wire working projects. I use 0.8mm or 1mm diameter as standard for making hooks and links.

Findings

This is a general term most often used to describe all the component pieces that jewellers use to put their work together such as clasps, earring hooks and links. These elements are often available from bead shops, or they could be custom made by hand.

Clasps

There are many types of catch - most come in two parts with a hook and an eye or a toggle of some sort. There are many designs including some with several loops to use with multi row necklaces. Magnetic clasps are also available, and are easier to use / wear than many other clasps, but not as secure - the strength of the magnet needs to be able to easily hold the weight of your necklace.



Jump Rings

These are little rings of wire which are very commonly used to link elements of a piece together, to attach charms to a chain or ear hooks for example, as well as to make chain mail. Available in various sizes of round and oval shapes, and are usually sold cut open, but are also available welded shut (closed). Closed jump rings can be used for necklace ends as the 'eye' part of a hook and eye clasp as well as for link elements. Think through whether you need closed or open rings for your design.



Headpins

These come in a variety of lengths, and are a piece of wire with a plain or decorative stopper at one end. They are used to thread beads onto to create decorative drops for earrings, bracelets or necklaces. The free end at the top is formed into a loop with your pliers so that it can be attached to other elements.



Crimps

These small metal beads or tubes are used with flexible beading wire or nylon monofilament to secure the ends, or to hold beads in position - once the crimp is in position, it is squashed with pliers and grips onto the wire to hold in place. A crimp cover can be used to fit around the squashed crimp bead and disguise it.



Ear Fittings

Available in many different styles, the most common are shown here. Whether they are hooks, studs or clip ons; they all need a small loop where you can then attach your beads, chains and other elements. Alternatives to a loop would be a flat pad, or a post to which decorations can be glued in place.

