

Jewelry Making & Beading at a Glance

In This Book

- ▶ Discovering the world of beads
- ▶ Making a stretch bracelet
- ▶ Working with findings
- ▶ Gluing it all together

Jewelry isn't just for special occasions. Whatever your style and interest, you can make pieces that you can wear or use everyday. The tough part is deciding which projects to make first.

In this book, I get you acquainted right away with all types of beads and then immediately walk you through making a stretch beaded bracelet. I then guide you through a maze of *findings* (rings, crimps, wires, and so on) and tell you how to glue your items together for a lasting piece of jewelry.

Getting Familiar with Bead Shapes and Sizes

Many beads are cut into shapes. The shape of the beads you choose adds as much to the beauty of your work as the color or type of material you select. While

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you can find most of these bead shapes for most semi-precious stones, crystals, glass, and other mediums, most *faceted styles*, or styles with flat polished cuts added to them, were traditionally reserved for glass and crystal beads. Facets are added to stones to increase shine and sparkle. But facets can be added to any stone. In fact, even pearls are available today as faceted beads.

Beads come in many different sizes, most often measured in millimeters (the abbreviation for millimeters is *mm*). One inch is equivalent to about 25 millimeters. Check out Table 1-1 to find out how many beads you need to create your designs.



All the numbers in Table 1-1 are approximate. If your beads aren't all the same size, the number you need varies.

Table 1-1 Approximate Number of Beads Needed for Specific Lengths of Beaded Strands

<i>Bead Size</i>	<i>Length of Beaded Strand</i>					
	6"	8"	10"	16"	24"	32"
3mm	51	68	85	136	204	271
4mm	39	51	64	102	153	204
6mm	26	34	43	68	102	136
8mm	20	26	32	51	77	102
10mm	16	21	26	41	61	82
12mm	13	17	22	34	51	68
14mm	11	15	19	29	44	59

<i>Bead Size</i>	<i>Length of Beaded Strand</i>					
16mm	10	13	16	26	39	51
18mm	9	12	15	23	34	46



When you're working with larger beads, allow more room on your thread or wire for the finished piece if you will wear the piece close to the skin, such as a choker or some bracelet designs. A bead's hole is often drilled in the middle of the bead, which means that a large bead offers more space between the thread going through the hole and your skin. For smaller beads, give yourself a little extra space. Measure the interior diameter of the necklace, rather than the length of the necklace to make sure your piece will fit you.

Stringing a Stretchy Beaded Bracelet

Bracelets created without a clasp on a continuous elastic band are extremely popular right now. So, I decided not to dilly-dally but rather to start you off immediately by jumping in and making a fun and fashionable bracelet.

In fact, this project is a great one to start with because you get to experience stringing in its purest form. You won't have to worry about a clasp at all, just a simple repetitive bead pattern that gives a simple and classic appearance. Take a look at the lovely hematite stretch bracelet in Figure 1-1.

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Figure 1-1: Hematite stretch bracelet.

My 12-year-old cousin, Anthony, designed this bracelet. I spent a weekend with him early in this project and turned him into a bead freak. He especially likes the magnetic hematite beads, so be sure to keep an eye out for them.



The knotting and gluing technique used in stretch bracelets provides a completely seamless look. Although you won't string 12 inches of beads, I recommend that you use 12 inches of cord because it makes knotting your bracelet much, much easier. Start out by using this much cord and if you don't have problems tying knots with shorter ends, you can shorten the cord for your next project.

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The first thing you want to do is to get all your tools and materials organized and within easy reach. When you're done with that, you're ready to get started.

Tools and Materials***Scissors***

Binder clip (the ones from office supply stores)

12 inches of 0.05 elastic beading cord, clear

10 8mm hematite hexagonal tube beads

10 5mm hematite round beads

20 3mm round beads, gold

Hypo-cement or glue of your choice

- 1. Clip your binder clip to one end of your elastic.**
- 2. String your beads in the following order: tube, gold, round, gold.** Continue this pattern until you've used all your beads.
- 3. Remove your binder clip.** Holding both strands together, tie an overhand knot. Tie a second knot onto the first. Dab glue on your knot. Trim away the excess elastic.
Note: Don't trim too close to the knot, or it will unravel.
- 4. Tuck your newly glued knot inside your first tube bead.** I recommend using the tube bead to hide the knot because it's bigger than the round gold bead. Allow the glue to dry for 24 hours before you wear the bracelet.

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You want a snug fit, but you don't want the elastic to show. This bracelet measures approximately $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. If this length isn't snug enough for you, feel free to make this bracelet shorter. Each set of beads (one tube bead, one round, and two gold rounds) is about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. Remove a set of beads to make it shorter. Alternately, using smaller beads (7mm tubes and 4mm hematite rounds) would still keep the same design elements, but would shorten the bracelet about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch.

Now that you've made a stretch bracelet, which consists basically of beads and cord, you're ready to find out about the components of more intricate jewelry making.

Putting Jewelry Together: Choosing and Using Findings

From headpins and eyepins, to crimps and clasps, to jump rings and split rings, to earwires to posts, to links and charms, to bead caps and end caps, *findings* are the jewelry components that finish *most* of your jewelry designs (read: except for stretch bracelets), keep them together, and make them unique. You can buy findings or make them yourself. In the following sections, I give you the details on what all of this stuff is.

Connectors

Connectors are the components that help you connect the various parts of your jewelry pieces. Connectors

can hold beads in place, help you attach dangles, and connect earrings to your ears.

Crimps

Ah crimps! Those soft-barrel hollow beads used to start and finish the ends of all beading wire, cord, leather, and thread — practice with crimp pliers and a few cheap plated crimps first and see what happens. Available mostly in sterling and plated silver or 14kt gold or gold-filled, some crimps come with an attached loop, some are smooth, and others are corrugated.



Make sure to buy the right crimp size for your thread or cord. Buy crimp *beads* for a less strong hold, or a more delicate look; use crimp *tubes* for a stronger hold or a thicker strand. I like the 2x2mm and the 3x3mm crimp tubes, especially for multiple bead strands, but experiment to see which you prefer. You can even get micro-crimp pliers that work for smaller beads (1x1mm) and lighter weight wire (0.010).

Earwires, posts, and clips

Available in a variety of metals from silver to gold, from niobium to titanium, earwires are the standard for inserting a dangling earring into your ear. Posts are excellent for mounting half-drilled beads. Check out Figure 1-2 to view a smattering of earring findings options. The range of styles, weights, and shapes is mind boggling, including seashell and flower shapes, hoops, fishhooks, and more. How ever do you choose?

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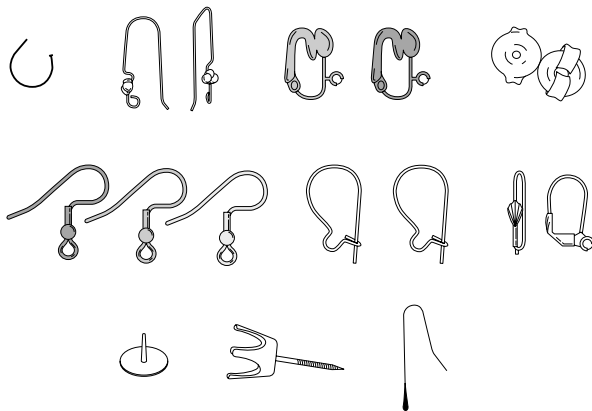


Figure 1-2: An assortment of earring findings.

Here are the key factors I consider when choosing which earwires are best for my projects:

- ✓ **Metal sensitivity:** If you are allergic to plated silver, switch to niobium or gold. Many people (like my mom) can only tolerate hypoallergenic earwires. Avoid buying the cheapest thing, because chances are you'll return it or never use it!
- ✓ **Price:** Earwires, posts, and clips vary from dirt cheap (5¢ per pair) to very pricey (\$30 per pair).

✓ **Sturdiness:** Some earring findings are made from thicker gauge wire that makes them sturdy but not as easy to work with, so consider the design and what shape and size you desire. Some shapes stay on the ear better; some get easily stuck in the wearer's hair or turtleneck sweater. You just have to check them out for yourself.



I prefer the sterling or 14kt gold-filled lever-back earwires because they're comfortable, rarely get snagged or tangled in hair or clothing, and stay in the ear, even with a night of salsa dancing. Try a few to see what works best for you.

Headpins and eyepins

Headpins and *eyepins* are ever-present jewelry components that you use to assemble earrings and dangles. Headpins come with either a flat, paddle-shaped, round base, or a jeweled base. Headpins come in 14kt solid gold, gold-filled, sterling silver, silver-plated, copper, and niobium. Eyepins are very similar, except instead of the base, or *head*, they come with a small pre-made loop at one end, called an *eye*. Get a package of 10 each to start, in plated, sterling, or gold-filled. Figure 1-3a and b shows you the difference between a headpin and an eyepin.



For practice, you can buy the cheaper version of headpins and eyepins. If the package doesn't say "sterling," "gold-filled," or "plated," you're probably getting base metal.

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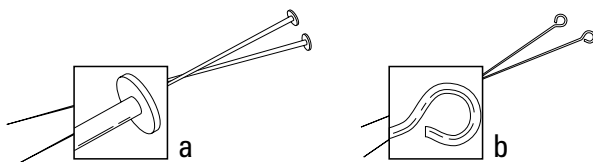


Figure 1-3: Headpin and eyepin.

Jump ring and split rings

Used by jewelry makers to connect clasps and pieces of jewelry together, *jump rings* and *split rings* are an important component in design. With jump rings, you have to use pliers to close up the rings. Doing so properly takes practice so that you don't over squeeze and break the jump ring. Split rings are fully closed and twist into place to connect two pieces together. Take a look at Figure 1-4a and b to see what a jump ring and a split ring look like.

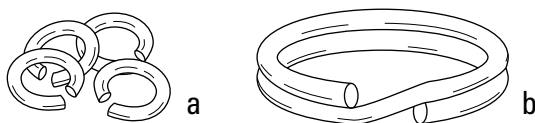


Figure 1-4: Jump ring and split ring.



Never pull a jump ring open, which will distort the round shape. Just bend the ring sideways to open it.

Clasps

A *clasp* is a special kind of jewelry finding that you use when putting on and taking off your piece of jewelry. You can find hundreds, if not thousands, of clasps to choose from, in all kinds of metals and in all price ranges. Depending on your budget and design, here are a few of my favorites and some tips on buying.

Barrel and torpedo clasps

Available with pre-attached loops, barrel and torpedo clasps require twisting to open and close, and the torpedo is simply a skinnier version of the barrel shape. Either tie these clasps onto your thread or use a crimp bead to attach them. See Figure 1-5a (barrel) and b (torpedo).

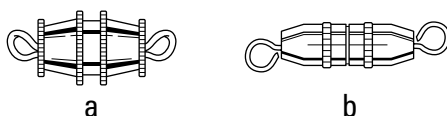


Figure 1-5: Barrel and torpedo clasps.

Hook and eye and S clasps

Although the hook and eye and S clasps don't have the pinch and hook safety feature, they are better for older wearers who may not be able to use their fingertips as easily. The clasps are definitely strong, but they open more easily, so be careful, especially when bungee jumping or skydiving! Figure 1-6a and b shows you the basic structure.

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Figure 1-6: Hook and eye and S clasps.

Lobster claw clasps

Self-closing and streamlined, lobster claws are great for beaded jewelry and are easier to handle than the typical springring design. Pair lobster claw clasps with a jump ring, and you have a secure clasp. Take a look at Figure 1-7 for a close up.



Figure 1-7: Lobster claw clasp.

Magnetic clasps

Magnetic clasps consist of two magnets attached to loops, a stroke of genius if you hate dealing with all the twisting, screwing, pinching, and squeezing of the other clasp options. While the magnetic clasps are rather strong, wear them with care because they can pull apart under stress. See Figure 1-8.

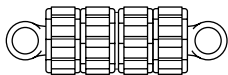


Figure 1-8: Magnetic clasps.

Springring clasps

Springring clasps are the round clasps you've probably seen on many traditional designs. They are used with a jump ring or a chain tab to complete the clasp and require pinching a release trigger that springs open and closed. These clasps are small and can be a bit tricky to see well. Take a look at Figure 1-9a and b to see the springring clasp and the chain tab.



Figure 1-9: Springring clasp and chain tab.

Toggle clasps

Extremely easy to open and close and ideal for necklaces and bracelets, toggle clasps are very popular and come in many styles and widths. Simply slip the pin or *toggle* through the center or *eye*. Cool designs are cropping up all the time, like a heart-shaped lock(eye) and key(pin). Figure 1-10 shows you a couple of toggle clasp examples.

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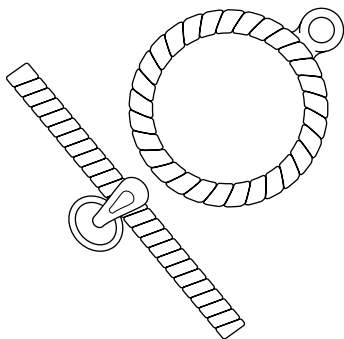


Figure 1-10: Toggle clasps.

Knotting or Crimping: The End Is Only the Beginning

Most of the time I use two basic ways (with lots of variations, of course) to begin and end a piece of *strand jewelry* (made by stringing objects together on a cord or chain): by knotting or by crimping, *by jove*. Many jewelry designers prefer one or the other technique. Others take a more moderate approach, using both options as the design and materials dictate. I am in the latter category. I knot, I crimp, as it suits me.



TIP A third option for beginning and ending strands exists. *Cord tips* are endings specifically made for wider cords. Some cord tips have a short tube on one end and an eye, hook, or other clasp on the other end. You

put a dab of glue on your cord, insert the cord into the tube of the cord tip, and then let the pieces dry. Other tips require pliers to fold them into shape around your cord, sort of like a rough crimp. Take a look at Figure 1-11 to see a few cord tip styles.

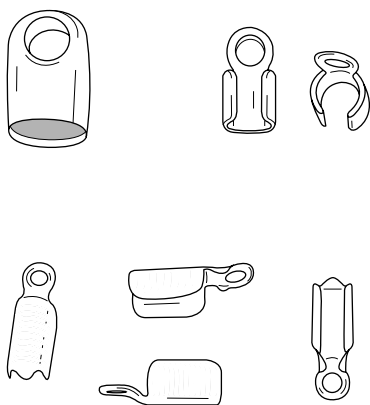


Figure 1-11: Cord tips are an easy way to end cord strands.

Using and attaching crimps

Before you attempt to attach a crimp, take a close-up look at the nose of your crimp pliers, as shown in Figure 1-12. You see two notches in the nose. The first notch is oval shaped, and the second is also oval but with a tiny arch in the middle of one side. Use each of these notches to create your crimp in two phases.

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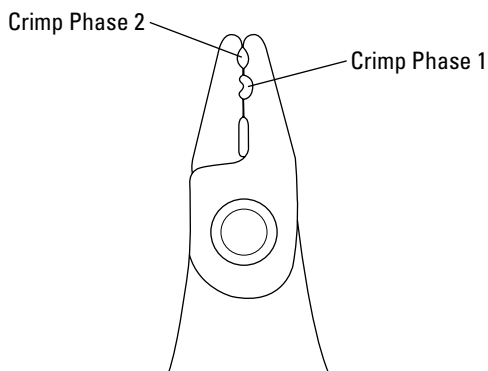


Figure 1-12: Crimp pliers have two notches for two-phase crimping.

Here's how:

- 1. Slip your crimp bead onto your beading wire.**
Take the end of the wire and loop it back through the crimp bead leaving a small amount of extra wire as a tail. Take a look at Figure 1-13.

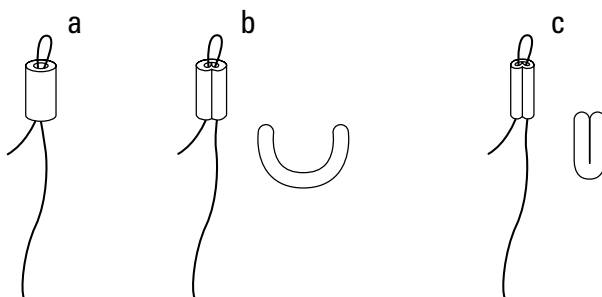


Figure 1-13: Crimping a bead.

2. **Position the crimp bead and thread in the second oval of the pliers (the one with the dip), and close the pliers firmly around the bead.** You'll see the bead indent in the center and curl up on the sides.
3. **Move the crimp to the other oval of the pliers. Set the crimp on its side and close the pliers firmly again.** This step reshapes the crimp into a tube.

This technique works for crimp pliers and micro-crimp pliers. *Micro-crimp pliers* are designed to work with 1x1mm crimp tubes and beads, and smaller (0.01-inch diameter) beading wire. Use standard crimp pliers for 2x2mm beads and tubes and with standard beading wire diameters.

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Definitely practice this technique for crimping a bead until you like your results. You'll no doubt make several attempts to get the technique right. And definitely practice crimping the bead onto the wire, rather than just crimping an empty bead. It's much easier to move from the first phase to the second phase by holding onto the wire. Use the wire to keep the crimp on its side to finish the crimp properly.



Although using crimping pliers is optional, I do recommend it. If you're looking to cut your tool budget down, you can use your flat-nosed pliers to flatten a crimp bead. The flattened crimp bead works the same way as a crimped crimp bead, but it doesn't look as pretty. The crimping pliers allow you to curl the bead tip while the flat-nosed pliers simply flatten it. For the most professional look, use crimping pliers and follow the preceding steps in this section.

Knot just the end, but the beginning, too

I use knots to finish and start strands when I'm working with elastic (sometimes), silk, or nylon bead cord, and smaller diameters (<1.0 mm) of leather. Larger diameter cord (>2.0mm) usually calls for cord tips.



Some people use knotting and/or gluing only with elastic cord because they feel like the crimps can cut the elastic. Although this *can* happen, I personally haven't had trouble with this. I carefully crimp elastic when I use it to make *illusion-style necklaces* (sparsely beaded

necklaces strung on invisible thread), but I knot and glue stretch bracelets (refer to Figure 1-1). Other people glue the beads on their illusion necklaces into place (instead of using crimps on either side of the beads). Try doing it both ways to see which you prefer.

You can find entire books on the subject of tying knots. Knots for fishing, knots for boating, knots for tying up prisoners, perhaps I've said too much. . . .

Anyway, for jewelry making, here's the list of knots I use most often and how I use them:

- ✔ **Overhand knot:** This knot is a super basic knot. Use it to tie knots inside bead tips. Take a look at it in Figure 1-14a. A double overhand knot is similar to an overhand knot, but you add another loop before you pull it tight as shown in Figure 14b. The resulting knot is bulkier, which is exactly why you may want to consider using it.

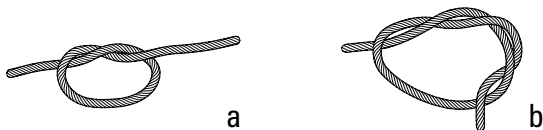


Figure 1-14: Tying overhand knots.

- ✔ **Slipknot:** A slipknot comes in handy when you want to knot the end of something while you're stringing it, but want to take it out easily later. Take a look at the slip shown in Figure 1-15 and use the following steps to make one.

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1. Start by tying an overhand knot like the one in Figure 1-14a.
2. Before pulling the knot tight, thread the end back through the knot loop, as shown in Figure 1-15.
3. Pull the knot tight to finish.



Figure 1-15: A slipknot.

Tie a variation of the slipknot twice on a cord to make an adjustable length cord. Here's how:

1. Lay both ends of your cord next to each other, pointed in opposite directions. See Figure 1-16a.

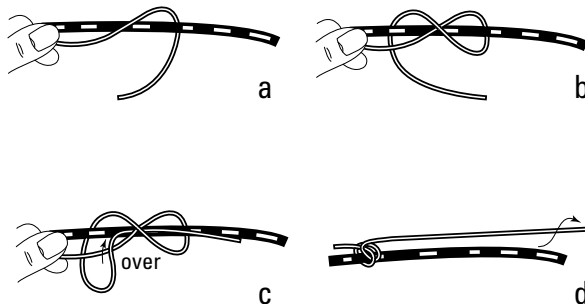


Figure 1-16: Tying adjustable slipknots.

2. Holding one strand stationary, tie a figure-eight around the strand with the other strand, as shown in Figure 1-16b.
3. Slip the end of the strand used to make the figure-eight between the stationary strand and the figure-eight, as shown in Figure 1-16c.
4. Pull the knot tight as shown in Figure 1-16d. Trim the excess cord from the loose end of the knot.
5. Repeat Steps 2–4 to complete the second knot on the other end.
6. Pull the knots closer together to make your necklace longer, or pull them apart to make it shorter.

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✓ **Square knot:** The square knot gets its name from the square shape the strands make before you tighten them down. Many people use this knot to finish stretch-jewelry designs. I prefer to make an overhand knot with both ends of the cord together, because it holds much better. A square knot is a good choice for changing thread in the middle of a bead-weaving project.

1. **Cross both strands and twist them once, as shown in Figure 1-17a. Pull the ends apart.**
2. **Turn the ends back toward the middle. Cross the threads again and twist them again, to make a square like the one in Figure 1-17b. Pull them tight to complete the knot.**

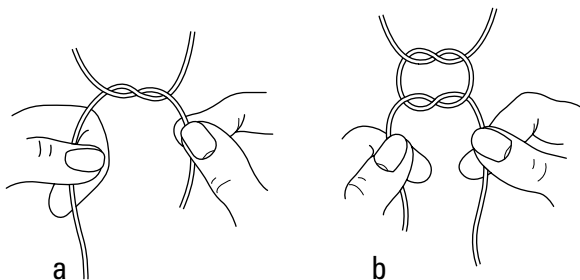


Figure 1-17: Tying a square knot.

To Glue or Not to Glue

Glue knots when it's likely that they could come undone, especially at the end of a strand. Don't glue

when you're knotting in the middle of a piece, like when knotting between beads in a strand.

The pros of gluing

Gluing keeps everything in place. But you better make sure that everything is where you want it because if you're using glue suited for jewelry making, the glue dries fast and moving anything later on will be nearly impossible to do.

The cons of gluing

This may be a good place to discuss the hazards of glues, needing to work in well-ventilated areas, and so on. Goop E600, for example, is a great glue, used for large items like gluing cabochons onto leather and such, but it's pretty toxic. Of course, most glues have warnings on them, but people need to read the labels on stuff like this. Also, some companies send information along with hazardous materials, such as glue, that they ship to you.



When doing seed beading, glue can fill the hole in your beads, which you don't want. An alternative to glue for small knots that you just want to keep in place is clear finger nail polish.

Which glue for what?

People use many words to describe glues. You may hear the terms adhesive, sealant, cement, or even tackifier. For simplicity's sake, I'm calling them *glues* in this book. That moniker may not be completely accurate from a chemical formula standpoint, but for our use, it works.

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You can find entire databases, books, and Web sites dedicated to glues and all their subtle differences. I've only included glues in my list that are clear-drying and used by the average jewelry maker.

- ✔ **Clear fingernail polish:** A good choice for small, delicate jobs. It won't hold well in high stress applications and can flake off. Nail polish is extremely easy to use, and you probably already have it in your home.
- ✔ **Craft glue:** Look for brand names like Aleene's Tacky Glue or Sobo Craft & Fabric Glue. These craft glues dry to a clear, flexible finish. I use Aleene's Tacky Glue for gluing beads and rhinestones to things like a wooden picture frame. Most craft glues are non-toxic, but they usually take some time to dry.
- ✔ **Goop E600:** This adhesive agent is terrific for gluing just about anything, like gluing cabochons onto backing material, like leather, before adding beadwork. The tube is pretty large, though, so it's not a good choice for delicate work. Look for nozzles that screw on to give a little more accuracy.
- ✔ **Goop Crafter's adhesive:** This glue is a good choice for many crafting applications. For example, I use it to add beaded fringe to lamp shades. It's good to use in places where you won't see the glue because, although it dries clear, the texture of the dried glue can be a little rubbery.

- ✔ **Hypo cement:** This product is a good choice for gluing small knots, half-drilled beads, and beads on illusion necklaces. The top has a long pin in it, designed to keep the glue free flowing, but getting the cement back down the tube can be tough and takes some practice — but it's a great product. It dries in about 10 minutes, but I let my pieces cure overnight. I use this glue for my stretch bracelets.
- ✔ **Instant bond glue:** You can find instant bond glue by several brand names including Super Glue, Krazy Glue, and QuickTite. Instant bond glue holds well and bonds instantly, but it doesn't give you very good control and tends to go everywhere, including on your hands and workspace. This glue is probably a good choice for larger jewelry items, but not great for knots.
- ✔ **Instant gel adhesives:** These glues are very similar to instant bond glue, but they have a gel consistency, making them easier to get into and hold uneven surfaces together. Choose these adhesives for gluing odd-shaped beads to flat surfaces or for gluing broken pendants and cabochons when all edges may not match perfectly. Most instant bond glues offer a gel product, too.
- ✔ **Special T illusion:** This glue is a great instant glue for jewelry making. The applicator has a narrow tip giving you control to put your glue where you want it. The glue dries flexible, so it's a great choice for stretchy jewelry. Even though this is an *instant glue*, I still let the glue cure overnight before wearing or selling a piece.

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No matter which glue you choose for which project, always read the instructions before you use it. (The time to know what to do if you glue your fingers together is *before* you glue your fingers together.) You need to know how to use a glue properly and get safety precaution information. Look for information on what to do if your skin or eyes come into contact with the product. Get the details on ventilation requirements because most adhesive products are toxic to some degree.

Using memory wire

Memory wire is rigid, precoiled wire that holds its shape, strings very easily, and comes in a variety of sizes. Memory wire is a great way to get started working with beads and wire together in a design.



Because memory wire is rigid and retains its shape even while you wear it, you don't need to add a clasp.



If you're going to use memory wire very often, use memory wire shears instead of regular wire cutters. Cutting memory wire with regular cutters will damage your cutters over time.