



Smithsonian Associates

INTRODUCTION TO BEADING

with Mia Vollkommer

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I'm so looking forward to meeting you in the Introduction to Beading class. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions regarding this list. It looks long, but only because I've explained everything in detail to make your shopping experience easier.

Here's the schedule for the time we'll be together:

Day 1—Q&A: Tools and Supplies, Project: Stringing (it is possible that 1-3 necklaces and/or bracelets could be completed in this time, depending on the student)

Day 2—Demo: Working with Wire, Project: Earrings. We'll be learning a variety of techniques that can be applied to earrings, making clasps, and making linked necklaces or bracelets. Due to time, 2 pairs of earrings will be the main projects we'll aim to complete.

Day 3—Demo: Knotting, Project: Knotted necklace. Knotting will be shown and discussed as both a functional application and a design element. Most students can complete 1 knotted necklace during this class time.

Tools and Supplies needed for the class:

The tools shown in the links below are on the Rio Grande website. I am not affiliated with them in any way other than as a satisfied customer of many years.

Tools:

- [chain nose pliers](#) - look like needle nose pliers, but the inside of the jaws is smooth, as opposed to serrated.
- [flush cutters](#) - fine wire snips designed for getting into small places and making precision cuts.
- [round nose pliers](#) - pliers with smooth, round tapered jaws, for bending wire and creating loops (please do not get the kind with the silicone coated tips)
- [crimping pliers](#) - a specialty tool designed for finishing crimps. These come in different sizes so be careful. DO NOT get a tool for "micro" crimps. Check with your bead store employee (if possible) to make sure your tool is good with 2x2mm crimps, which is what I recommend to begin with.
- [knotting tweezers](#) - precision tweezers used for pearl knotting. Cosmetic tweezers cannot be used as a substitute.
- Scissors
- A ruler
- A fine sharpie marker
- Optional – [bead stoppers](#) or painter's tape

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Findings:

Findings are the supplies that hold your beads together. A kit containing all the findings (except clasps) you'll need for class will be available for purchase for \$27 (plus shipping) on my [website](#) one month prior to the first-class meeting. All the findings in the kit are sterling silver. Kit purchases are final and non-refundable.

Included in the kit:

- Soft-touch or Soft-flex beading wire—2 yards of fine gauge (.014). 2 yards
- 4 clamshell bead tips (used for pearl knotting)
- 3 pairs French hook style ear wires
- 20 headpins-2inch, 20 gauge
- 24 2mm x 2mm crimps
- 2ft 20-gauge copper wire to practice wire working
- 2ft 20-gauge sterling silver wire

Additional Findings Needed:

- 2-3 clasps - i.e., lobster claw, hook and eye, s-hook, toggle, or magnetic. The silver crimps we'll be using on the necklaces are very small and won't look strange with gold clasps if gold is your preference.
- A bead board (optional) is a useful tool as it allows you to organize and design your strung pieces before you begin stringing.

Beads:

I would recommend having at least the following, in coordinating colors to optimize your design possibilities. If you buy what you love, it's a guarantee you'll make something beautiful!

For Stringing:

- Seed Beads: 1 bottle/color size 8° Czech and/or 1 bottle/color size 11° Czech (mixed color bottles are a good choice since you get many options from one purchase.) These are mainly used as “spacers” between larger beads.
- Strands of various glass, cut glass, freshwater pearls, or gemstones. Total length of strands should equal 48-54 inches. Bead sizes should not exceed 8mm - this is due to the amount of weight that the .014 Soft-flex can support.
- 4-5 kinds of accent beads These may come in smaller packages, shorter strands, or loose/bought “by the bead” (at a local bead store) They may include larger beads, metal charms, Swarovski crystals, etc. These beads will act as accents to your primary beads above. The number and variety you purchase can be determined by your own budget.
- Restringing broken or inherited pieces is great too!

For Wire Work:

- You can save beads from your above strands to make matching earrings, or you can purchase some additional “earrings only” beads. Think in terms of how many pairs you might make (2-3) and then how many beads per pair (2 beads per pair for a short earring, 6 or more for a long pair.)

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For Pearl Knotting:

- 1-2 16” strands 4-6mm freshwater pearls or gemstones. One 16” strand, if all the beads are used, will usually equal 18” overall length with the knots and clasp. If you want a necklace longer than 18” purchase additional strands of pearls/stones accordingly.
- 1-2 cards knotting silk or nylon—1 card for each strand you purchase, usually found under the Griffin brand name. Please purchase the silk with a needle already attached to the end, and please ask your helpful bead-store employee to assist you with deciding what size silk to purchase. Thicker silks are made for beads with bigger holes, and smaller silks for smaller holes. The silk must be matched to the bead hole to make the project fun and frustration free. You can also email me with a photo of your beads, and I’ll do my best to help.

Resources:

Local bead shops in the greater DC area are easy to find via Google. I would highly recommend” shopping local” so you can see what you are purchasing and get design help from store staff.

Or, I recommend the following online resources:

- Rio Grande: - Rio is my go-to for tools and findings. www.riogrande.com
- www.firemountaingems.com is another option. They are more like a “big box” store for beads.
- <https://www.beadshop.com/> Order early as this lovely shop is in California. Their site is easy to navigate and their inventory is lovely.