

shampoo is to hair: a means to prevent tangling. It doesn't alter the body of the thread in the way that waxes do. It affects static charge so that the two ends of the thread repel each other. It produces a slippery surface on the thread so the beads slide easily.

Stringing Materials

Beading wire has come a long way in the past four decades. Back in olden times, necklaces were often strung on plastic-coated wire so stiff that the beads were held in a ring around the wearer's neck, rather than draping. They were frequently closed with a barrel clasp, which would unwind during wear even when firmly screwed together. This millennium ushered in a new generation of beading wire, incredibly thin metal wire cabled in bunches of seven and coated in nylon in a range of colors. The cables are in turn cabled together, providing a range from seven strands to forty-nine. The finest-quality wire, composed of seven cables of seven strands each, boasts a drape and hand similar to that of thread. It comes in many finishes and diameters. Some brands can even be knotted, though you will likely want to use crimp beads to secure your beading wire.

Bead cord has been used for years in jewelry-making. Silk bead cord is the traditional choice for knotting pearls, favored for its fluid drape under the nearly weightless pearls. A synthetic version made of polyamide is popular for its longevity. Both are offered in many colors and sizes. Griffin sells a two-meter length with a needle attached to one end wound on a card.

To use a carded bead cord like Griffin's, first unwind the entire two meters from the card. Pull and stretch it before use so it won't stretch and slacken when the piece is completed.



Figure 1

Soldering

The more proficient you become at beadwork, the more apt you'll be to create your own findings and closures from beads. That said, for those instances when you use jump rings, I can almost guarantee that you'll lose the piece unless the jump rings are soldered closed. Avoid the temptation to use a split ring as an alternative.

You could get a torch. You could get a high tech jump ring soldering machine for under \$600. Instead, I use this accessible and doable approach to soldering. It works. It ain't pretty. It might not even be orthodox. But it works for me. In a well-ventilated studio, I plug in a hardware store soldering iron. I touch the jump ring with Stay-Clean Flux. I touch the iron to Stay-Brite Solder and then the jump ring. The flow temperature is a low 430° F (221° C) and works just fine for this purpose. Warning: soldering jump rings that are attached to beadwork will melt the beading thread. Solder and cool several jump rings to have on hand. Rather than open these you will weave, sew, or crimp them into place.

Next, place a knot at the opposite end from the needle. String a bead tip from the inside out so that the knot settles within the tip and the loop extends outward (Figure 1).

String your beads (with or without knots between) and finish by adding another bead tip, strung from the bottom this time. Now face the challenge of placing a knot as close as possible to the bead tip.

Elastic and invisible lines are too short-lived for use in fine jewelry.

Wire mesh, rattail (satin cord), leather, synthetic leather, ribbons, and rubber cords are versatile stringing materials.