

What You Need To Know: Beadwork Glossary

On your way to mastering beadwork you will encounter these commonly used terms. Read through these words now. Later, when you see them used in context, they will be familiar.

Beadwork Lingo

High bead: The highest-profile bead of the previous row, the bead that sits above the adjacent beads just waiting for your needle. In peyote stitch, it is the bead added in the previous row. In netting, it is the center bead of each set of beads.

Pass back through: Make a U-turn and re-enter the end of the bead that the threaded needle exited.

Pass through: Enter the same end of the bead (in the same direction) as when it was picked up. (You may also see this written as “pass through again,” which means the same thing.) The distinction between “pass through again” and “pass back through” is meant to clarify which end of the bead is to be entered. Sadly, sometimes it is misunderstood because of the dual meaning of back as both turning around and repeating. It is common when told to “pass through” a bead for a student to reply to me, “back through this bead?” I reiterate to “pass through this bead again, in the same direction as before” (Figure 1). The student used “back” to mean

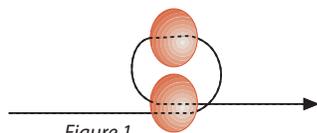


Figure 1
Pass through again

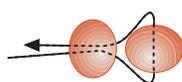


Figure 2
Pass back through

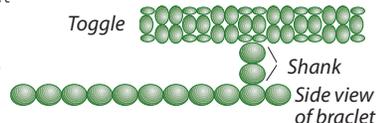
“once again,” but I reserve the word back to indicate reversing the direction of the thread and needle path (Figure 2).

Pick up: Put a bead on your threaded needle. Because beadweaving is gen-

erally accomplished with one, two, or three beads at a time, I prefer the term pick up to string.

Shank: The stem or stalk on the underside of a button by which it

is attached. A shank permits the loop of a button-and-



loop jewelry closure to slip not just over, but also beneath the bead or button. A bead or two serve as a shank for making most any bead or button a suitable closure.

Step-up: Pass through the first bead of this round to bring you up to the level of the new round.

Tail: The far end of the thread where the beads stop. (To learn about making a masking-tape bead stop, see page 10.)

Turning bead: A bead added before passing back through a bead or beads just added, to prevent the bead(s) just added from falling off. For example, when making fringe, the instructions might say, “Pick up beads W, X, Y, Z, and a turning bead. Pass back through beads Z, Y, X, W.” If no turning bead were present, beads Z, Y, X, and W would fall from the thread.

Wingspan of thread: This is the distance between your outstretched arms when your hands are held as far from each other as possible. Fold it nearly in half, allowing one half to be a tail’s length longer than the other. Doubled thread complicates things,