

### TERMS TO REMEMBER

- Continuous Loops
- CL
- Continuous
- Tail Wire
- Working Wire
- Spacer Beads
- Unit Stem Wire
- Reinforce

**Continuous Loops** (sometimes abbreviated as **CL**) are the simplest technique used in French Beading. Simply put, they are a series of beaded loops. Whenever you see the word **Continuous** in a technique name, it means that you will be making multiple petals, sepals, leaves, etc. on the same length of wire. There are several continuous techniques that you will learn in this course.

The way patterns are written or formatted may differ from one designer to the next, but they will all have the same bits of information. Every pattern should tell how many units to make, how many loops are in each unit, and how many beads are in each loop. Some patterns may use a measurement rather than a numerical bead count. A pattern using Continuous Loops will look something like this:

**Make 1: 5x CL using 1 ¼ inches (3.2 cm) beads each**



Photo 1

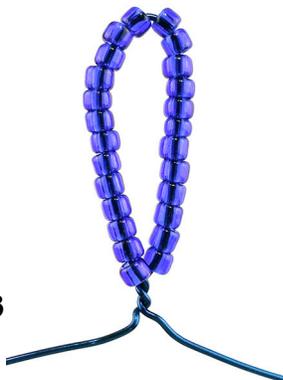
**For this exercise, use 26 or 24 gauge wire with approximately 1 gram of size 11/0 seed beads. Follow the sample pattern above.**

Photo 2



1. String all the beads onto the wire, leaving the wire attached to the spool.
2. At the beginning of the wire, leave a small section of the wire bare before making any loops - usually 2-3 inches (5 - 7.6 cm) unless the pattern states a specific length. This **tail wire** will become part of the **unit stem wire**, which will be used to attach the loops to the flower's stem wire during assembly. The other end of the wire, which is strung with beads and feeds directly to the spool is referred to as the **working wire**. This is the wire you'll use to make the loops.
3. Measure 1 ¼ inch (3.2 cm) of beads from the spool (**Photo 1**).
4. Fold the beads into a loop, keeping tension on the beads with your thumb and forefinger so gaps don't appear between the beads (**Photo 2**).
5. Keep your fingers in place holding onto both wire ends below the loop of beads. Then twist the loop one to two full rotations (2-4 twists - I usually do 3 twists.) with the other hand to twist the wires together below the loop (**Photo 3**). You should not twist the wires down any further unless specifically instructed to do so in a pattern.

Photo 3



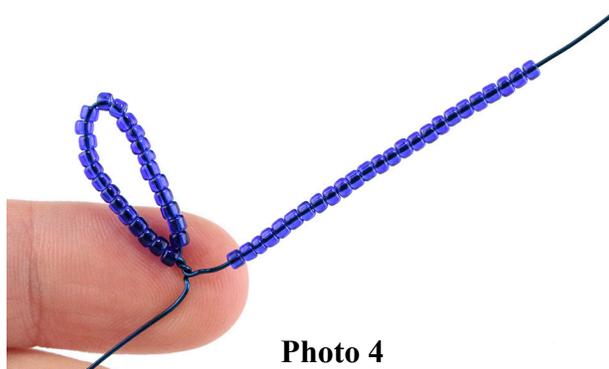


Photo 4

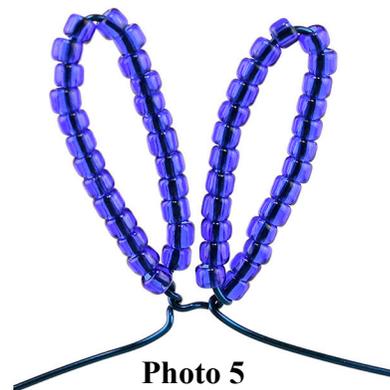


Photo 5

6. Measure out another 1 ¼ inch (3.2 cm) beads on the working wire for the next loop. (**Photo 4**)
7. Leave a small gap in the wire between loops - around ⅜ of an inch (4.8 mm). Form the beads into a loop by twisting the wires beneath two full rotations (**Photo 5**).

*NOTE: Making loops too close together makes them bunch up on top of each other (which you usually don't want). In contrast, leaving too much space will make the unit too wide and the petals too far apart. Leaving too much space will make the central hole in the middle of the unit too large for the flower center.*

8. Continue making loops until there are five total (**Photo 6**). The petals should be in a somewhat straight line.
9. Most of the time, you'll close this line of loops into a circle. To close it, cross the working wire over the first loop (**Photo 7**). Wrap around the twisted wires below this loop once, then bring the working wire to the underside of the unit. After closing the unit, measure the working wire to 2 or 3 inches (5 - 7.6 cm) and cut from the spool.

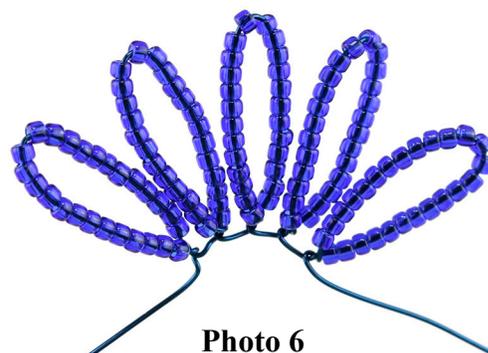


Photo 6

10. Twist the beginning tail wire and working wire together on the underside of the unit (**Photo 8**). You don't need to twist all the way down, just an inch or so (2.5 cm) will do. Try to keep the twists nice and smooth. Any lumps in this wire will show on the flower stem.

The "face" of the finished CL unit is shown in **Photo 9**.

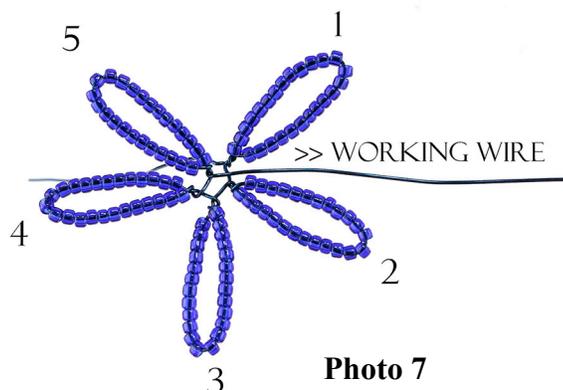


Photo 7



Photo 8

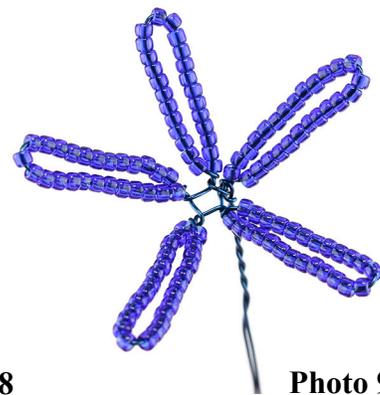


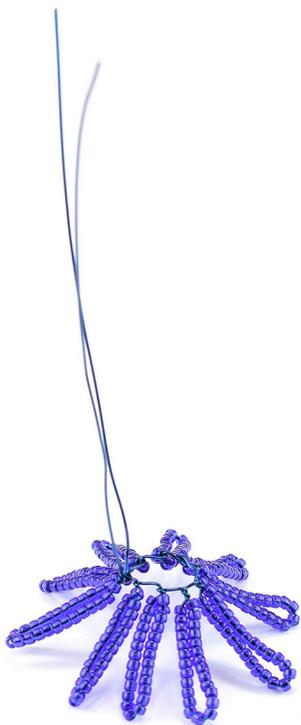
Photo 9

*The twisted wire beneath the petal unit is called the **Unit Stem Wire**. Do not cut it off! You'll need it to attach the petals to the flower stem. But do trim the two wires to different lengths. This will ensure that the wires will end at different points on the flower stem, which helps the stem taper down in width slowly rather than at all once.*

## Centering the Stem Wires

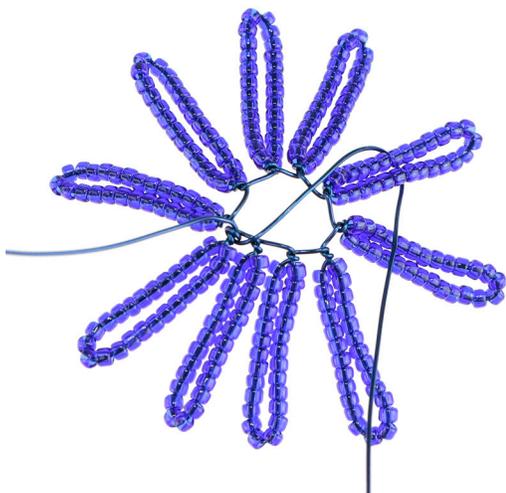
You will often be making units with a larger number of loops, which may need to be closed differently. As you can see in **Photo 10**, after wrapping the working wire around the first petal to close the unit it leaves both the tail and working wires off to the side. With fewer petals this isn't a problem since the wires are still near the center of the unit. With a larger number of loops it pulls the stem wires further away from the center, which makes it harder to center the unit on the flower stem. It also means the far side across from the wires doesn't have as much support and may be more inclined to droop. To fix this, we need to re-position the wires so they are closer to the center. You won't *always* need to do this. When in doubt, wait until assembly. Then when it's time to add that unit, test it on the stem to see if the wire position allows for the unit to be centered on the flower stem. If not, remove it and center the wires.

*NOTE: A pattern may or may not tell you to center the unit stem wires as I'm not sure other designer use this concept, so it will largely be up to your own personal judgment.*



**Photo 10**

1. Cross the working wire over the first petal and wrap around it once, just like you would with a smaller unit.
2. Then cross the working wire over the bottom (or top, it doesn't matter which) of the unit and wrap it around a petal on the opposite side (**Photo 11**).
3. Bring the working wire back to the underside of the unit and the tail and working wires should be on opposite sides, as shown in **Photo 12**.
4. To finish, bring both wires together in the center and twist them together to make a centered unit stem wire (**Photo 13**).



**Photo 11**



**Photo 12**

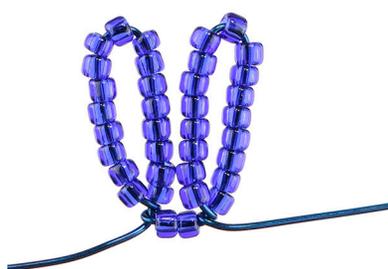


**Photo 13**

## Spacer Beads

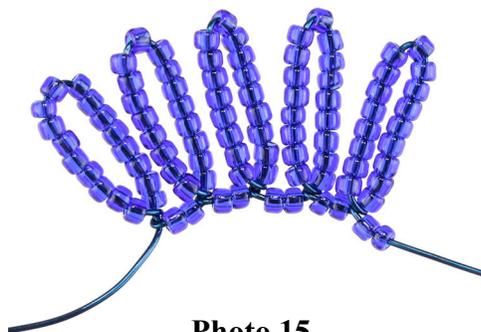
You may come across a pattern that calls for the use of **Spacer Beads**. These are beads that are left on the wire between loops. Their primary purpose is to conceal wire that might otherwise be visible on the face of a flower. Spacer beads can be used with any continuous technique.

Simply count out the number of Spacer Beads required onto the working wire and position them directly after the first loop, then measure the beads for the second loop. Because one purpose of a spacer bead is to conceal the wire, leave just enough wire space to make the twists. This way, the next loop will sit directly beside the spacer beads. **Photos 14-16** show a continuous loop unit that uses two Spacer Beads between loops and after the last loop.

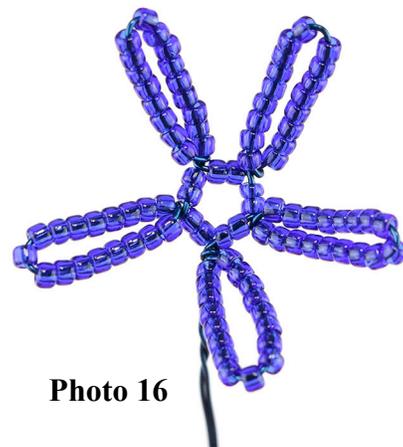


2 SPACER BEADS

**Photo 14**



**Photo 15**

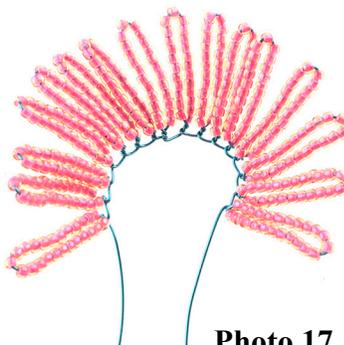


**Photo 16**

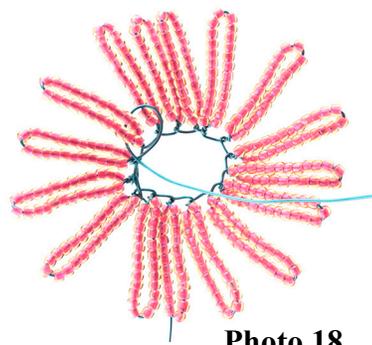
## Reinforcing Continuous Units

Sometimes larger continuous units will need extra support so the petals don't become floppy. To reinforce them, close the unit into a circle by wrapping around the first loop. Then continue wrapping or weaving the working wire around the twisted wires below each of the individual petals until you reach the starting point again. This will not only add extra support to individual petals, but also makes the whole unit more sturdy. If necessary, you can weave the wire around again, which will start to form a wire mesh underneath the flower. See **Photos 17 - 20**. You can reinforce any continuous technique.

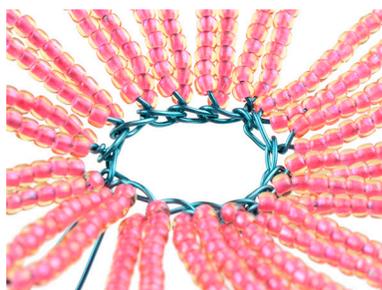
*NOTE: This is not a technique that I learned from books or other designer's tutorials and I am not sure if anyone else even uses it at all in their patterns. So, just like centering the unit stem wire, it will be up to your own judgment.*



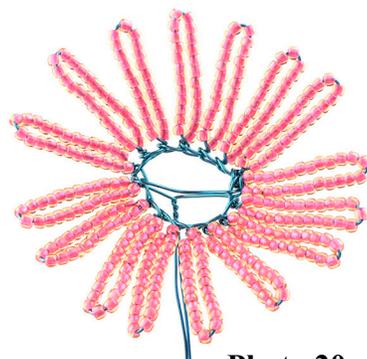
**Photo 17**



**Photo 18**



**Photo 19**



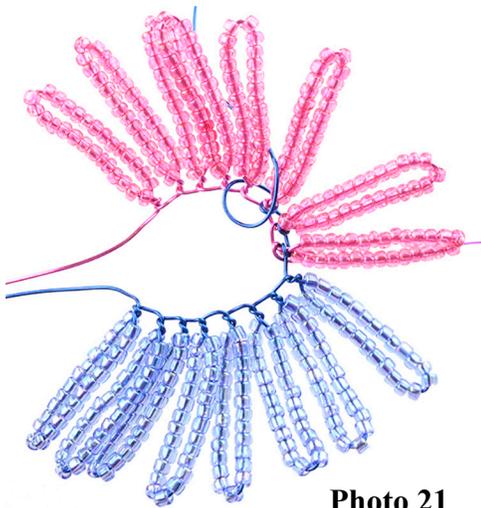
**Photo 20**

## Combining Continuous Units

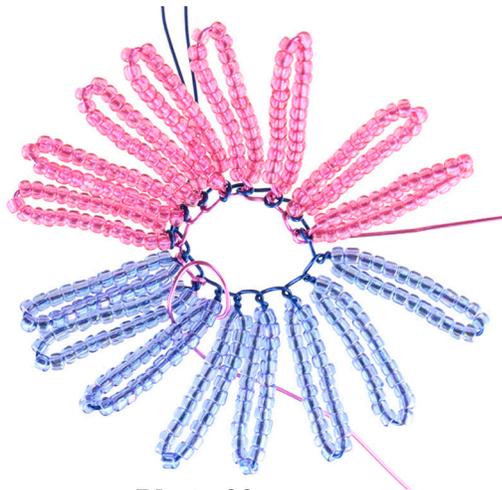
Sometimes two unit stem wires aren't enough to support petal units made with continuous techniques. In this case, it's possible to divide the unit into two separate pieces and then weave them together to both reinforce the wires between petals, and add a couple extra stem wires to support the whole unit. This process is very similar to Reinforcing Large Units, and will work with any continuous technique.

1. While making the units, leave the working end of the wires a little longer than normal. The exact length will depend on the size of the unit.
2. Weave the working wire on one unit around each of the petals in the second unit. **(Photo 21)**
3. Weave the working wire on the second unit around the petals in the first unit. **(Photo 22)** *You can weave around again with both wires if necessary.*
4. Twist the working wires of each unit together with it's own starting tail. **(Photo 23)**
5. Twist the four wires together near the center if necessary.

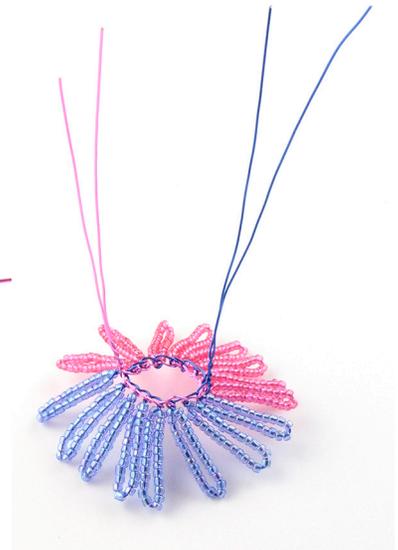
*NOTE: This is another one of those things that patterns may or may not tell you to do. If you ever feel it necessary, do it.*



**Photo 21**



**Photo 22**



**Photo 23**