

Learn French Beading

- BEGINNER COURSE -
TECHNIQUE REFERENCE

Bead & Blossom

BY LAUREN HARPSTER

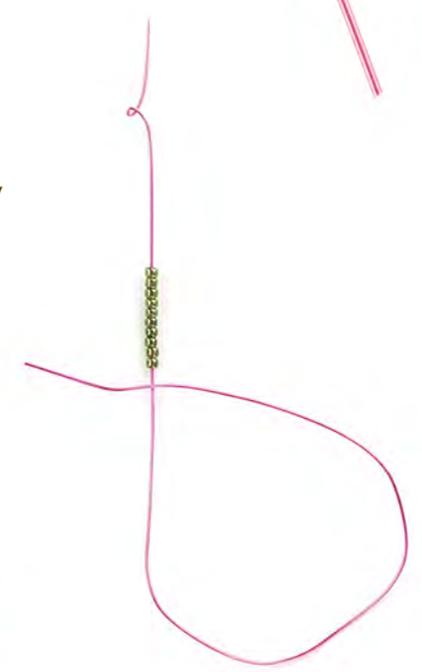
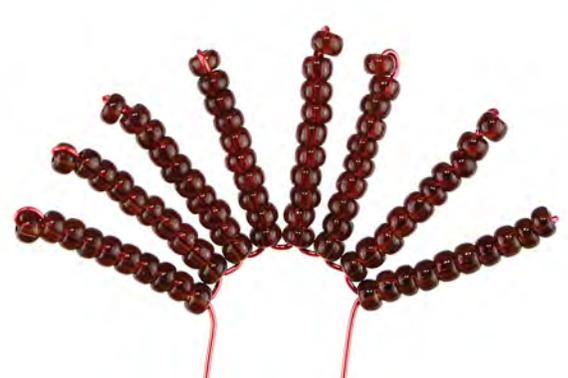
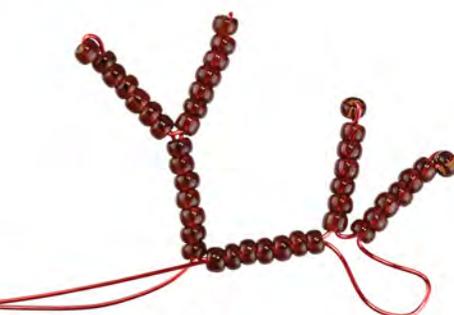
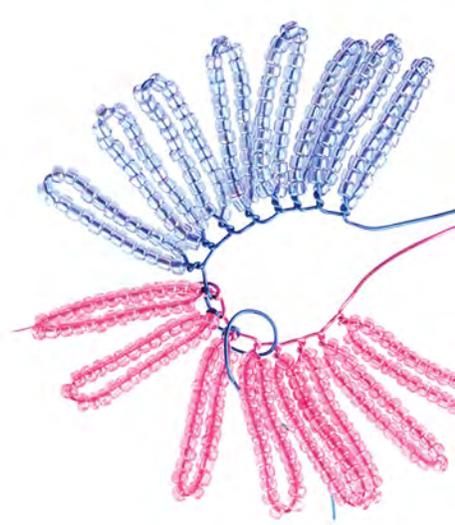


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This tutorial packet is a shortened freebie that is part of my Learn French Beading: Beginner Course, which covers just the techniques included in the course. To access the full course with practice flower patterns and instructions for making an arrangement and a bouquet, you will need to purchase either the PDF or Print book version. See my website for details - [BeadandBlossom.com](http://www.BeadandBlossom.com)

Videos for the course will be published on my YouTube Channel one at a time over the course of several months. - <http://www.youtube.com/c/BeadBlossom>

Introduction

WHAT ARE FRENCH BEADED FLOWERS?

The term *French Beading* refers to a specific set of techniques used primarily to make flowers. Essentially, French Beading combines beading, wire wrapping, and sculpture into one sparkly package. But not all bead-and-wire flowers are considered “French” beaded. The Victorian Method (also called Continental Method) is often confused with French Beading. How do you tell them apart? The Victorian technique is worked by crossing two wires through a single row of beads and creates parallel rows stacked top to bottom—just like ladder stitch in bead weaving. In French Beading the wire will *usually* pass through beads just once. Rows are worked from the center outward around a central row or loop.

A BRIEF HISTORY

When you take up French Beading, you are partaking in an art that is many centuries old. There aren't many historical accounts about it, so very little is known for certain. The best history I've read on the subject, is found in the book “Forever Flower” authored by Swedish beaded flower collector Georg Ragnar Levi. The art probably began during the Renaissance in the 1500's in Italy or France, who were the biggest bead producers at the time. One popular origin story says that peasants gathered beads leftover from embellishing gowns and strung them onto wire, then wrapped to form flowers and leaves. However, it is believed to be more likely that the first beaded flowers were associated with the church and worship. Nuns made and used beaded flowers to make reliquaries and other religious artifacts. In old English “bede” means “prayer”. Bede men and women in almshouses were paid to say prayers, using beads strung on wire like a rosary. After a set of prayers were finished, the associated beads were twisted into loops, resulting in something that looked like flowers.



*Antique French beaded immortal
restored and photographed by Cynthia
Peterson.*

The art reached its peak in the late 1800's and early 1900's, when these flowers were used to make lavish funeral wreaths, called *immortelles*. They were produced by workers in workhouses, then purchased from shops to display on loved one's graves. Some of these wreaths—and the flowers used to make them—can still be found in antique markets today. Once the *immortelles* became less popular, so did the art.

In the early to mid 1900's a shop called Bonwit and Teller in New York imported flowers made in Italy and France to sell to American customers. But the art of making flowers didn't become popular in the US until the mid 1900's after a woman named Virginia Nathanson bought one of the arrangements and took it apart to discover how they were made. She then wrote a book teaching others how to make them. Other designers and companies followed suit and more books were published. During this time period, beaded flowers were mostly used for home decorations - like arrangements, lampshades, and other ornaments.

We are currently experiencing another upward trend in the popularity of the art. The new era began in the late 1990's and early 2000's. This resurgence began as a new crop of designers—Donna Dick, Zoe L. Schneider, Dalene Kelly, Carol Benner, among others—published more books that brought the art to another generation.

In short, French Beading has gone through many revivals, with each new generation of artists making exciting breakthroughs that push the art forward! Today there are more artists than ever before developing new techniques and finding creative ways to use old techniques! It's going to be exciting to see how much farther this art form will develop and spread with the advances in technology that makes learning resources easier to produce and distribute than it was for previous generations.

USING THIS COURSE GUIDE

Through my years designing French Beaded Flowers and helping others learn how to make them, I've developed a way of looking at techniques that's a little bit different than other designers and teachers. I've divided the techniques into two categories: *base* and *add-on*. Base techniques can be used alone, or altered by building on top of them with add-on techniques. In contrast, add-on techniques cannot be used alone, but must be used in conjunction with any base. It is my hope that this mix-and-match approach will allow for a greater understanding of French Beading methods and inspire more creative technique combinations. I've divided the techniques into courses based on the skill level and knowledge required to use and understand them.

My *Beginner Course* is all about building the first foundations in the art of French Beading as you will be learning the beginner level base techniques. It is very important to gain a clear understanding of these techniques early on as they are literal foundation blocks. In later courses we will learn more advanced versions of these techniques and the add-on techniques that build on top of them.

- **Part 1** is the “Getting Started” guide. Before making French Beaded Flowers it is very important to understand the materials needed to make them. This section explores tools, beads, wire, and other supplies in great detail, though not all of them will be necessary for this course.
- **Part 2** is the “Technique Guide”, which contains six lessons that teach the techniques included in this course. These lessons are important for learning French Beading terms and abbreviations, and how to read French Beading patterns. I like to teach techniques separately from flower patterns because there is so much more I can teach you about an individual technique than what I can cover in a single flower pattern. There are also some variations of the techniques that are not used in the practice patterns, but are included for education and reference. This section is also intended to be a one-stop technique reference so you can quickly look up specific techniques while working with other flower patterns. Each lesson has a video demonstration so you can see the techniques in action, but they also contain picture and written instructions for the techniques.

- *Happy Beading!*



--- Part 1 ---
GETTING STARTED

Obviously you can't make beaded flowers without beads. Beads come in a vast variety of shapes, sizes, colors and finishes. The type we use for French Beaded Flowers are round seed beads—also called rocailles. Seed beads are made from glass and have numerical sizes - the larger the number the smaller the bead. In French Beading the most commonly used seed bead size is 11/0. However, I occasionally use larger size 8/0 beads as well as smaller 13/0 and 15/0 seed beads.

There are some colors that are best to buy in bulk, if you are able - green, red, and yellow. These are the colors that I go through the most and it may be cheaper in the long run if you buy them in bulk as some online stores have discounts for large quantities.

Seed Bead Brands

In the world of seed beads there are many different manufacturers, and there are pros and cons to each one. Unlike many of the popular bead weaving techniques, in French beading you can mix different brands in a single piece without negative consequences. Every artist has their own preference for which brands they like to use. You do not have to use the fanciest beads to make beautiful flowers, but do choose the best materials that you can afford. If possible, pick beads that are at least somewhat uniform in shape and size as these will yield the best results.

These are some of the more popular brands:



Photo 1 - Left: leaf made with Miyuki Delicas. Right: a leaf made in 11/0 round seed beads.



Photo 2 - Matsuno "Dynamites" (top) compared in shape to Czech Preciosa Ornela (bottom).

- **Miyuki®** - Miyuki is a Japanese brand known and loved by bead weavers all over the world. They are best known for the Delica seed beads which are cylinder-shaped beads that are almost exactly the same shape and size. While they can certainly be used, these are not the beads that are used for most patterns, so you'll have to design your own or adjust patterns to fit the different bead size. However, Miyuki also makes round seed beads that I use frequently. These don't have the exact uniformity of Delicas, but that's not necessary for French Beading. What I love most about Japanese beads is that they come in more colors and finishes than Czech or Chinese beads.
- **Toho Beads®**- This is another Japanese company that makes high quality seed beads. Their beads are very uniform in shape and size, though not perfect. They are a little less costly than Miyuki rounds, but still one of the more expensive options. They also have more finishes and colors that aren't available in Czech or Chinese beads.
- **Matsuno®** - Matsuno is yet another Japanese seed bead manufacturer. They produce a line of seed beads called "Dyna-Mites™" for the beading supply store Fire Mountain Gems. They are uniform enough for French Beading, and they are wonderful beads to work with. I do find that they are often more square-shaped than other types of seed beads, but not to the point of it being problematic.

- **Preciosa** - These beads are manufactured in the Czech Republic. This company also owns **Jablonex**, so if you purchase a hank with a Jablonex tag, it's the same. The beads are a little less uniform than Japanese brands, but in French Beading that is no problem. While they do have fewer options for colors than Miyuki and Toho, I can find most of what I need. Czech beads are often sold strung on bundles of strings called "hanks". Each hank of 11/0 seed beads will have 12 strands with approximately 20 inches of beads per strand. Because hanks are strung by length, not weight, the number of grams per hank varies from 30-40 grams, depending on what finish you purchase as some finishes add or remove weight from the beads. However each full hank will cover the same surface area because the strung length and number of strands will be the same.



Photo 3 - a hank of Czech seed beads.



Photo 4 - a leaf made with Chinese beads.

- **Chinese Beads** - These are the cheapest option, but they are cheap for a reason. They tend to be very irregular in size and shape, which can cause problems if you are following patterns with bead counts. Leaves and petals made from the same pattern may not end up the same size. They create a lot of extra surface texture due to the irregular bead shapes. In addition, the finishes aren't the same quality as Czech and Japanese beads—meaning they aren't as stable and may wear off or fade more quickly. Take care when cleaning these beads!

Seed Bead Finishes

Seed beads come with many different types of finishes. Each type of finish creates a different effect on the bead, and in turn can have a great impact on the style and aesthetics of your flower. Using certain finishes can help mimic leaf or petal textures, or help bring attention to a certain part of the design. Here are just a few tips to get you started:

- If you want to recreate the look of a waxy leaf or petal you might try using opal or opaque luster beads.
- Transparent matte and opaque matte beads have a velvety appearance.
- Using an opaque bead for markings on a leaf or petal made with a different bead finish will make the markings pop.
- When you make a flower with multiple layers of petals, or a large arrangement of flowers using one bead color, the beads tend to blend together, making it look like a mass of beads. To help the eyes distinguish between individual petals, try using a different bead finish of the same color, or a lighter or darker shade of the same color for just the outer rows.



Photo 5 - Some examples of bead finishes. Left to Right: Transparent, Transparent Luster, Transparent Rainbow (AB), Transparent Matte, Opaque, Opaque Luster, Opaque Rainbow (AB)

Every artist has their own preferences for which bead finishes to use. Everyone observes and recreates details in their own way. Sometimes the color you need for a specific flower is only available in certain finishes. Whatever your preference and circumstance, I recommend playing around with different seed bead finishes, and combinations of finishes, to see what effects you can make. There is no right or wrong here, only personal preference.

Generally, higher quality beads will have nicer and longer lasting finishes, but there are some types that are less stable than others. Some colors can only be applied to glass using dye on the surface of the bead. These dyed beads are prone to fading, either over time or from exposure to sunlight or chemicals. However, most of the brighter purple and pink beads are dyed, so they can be hard to avoid. The silver inside silver-lined beads will tarnish over time and turn black. How long that takes will depend on your environment and how you store them. To keep them bright longer, keep them sealed in a dry, air-tight container. The metallic finish on galvanized beads is also prone to rubbing off and fading, though some brands have produced a more durable galvanized finish that lasts longer. All these finishes also have issues with skin contact causing them to rub off or fade. Since most French Beaded Flowers aren't worn, this is only a problem while making them, or if you use your flowers to make jewelry. However, just because the finishes are unstable doesn't mean you should never use them. Just treat them kindly, and do whatever you can to prolong their life. Keep them out of the sunlight and moist environments. Consider displaying them in glass domes, and only clean them with a damp cloth.

About Bead Counts

One thing that sets French Beading apart from other types of beading is that we don't count beads per row most of the time. This is because French Beading patterns are made to work with a variety of seed bead brands. However, beads made by different manufacturers may not all be the same size. Even if they are all an 11/0, they may not be the same stringing length. Czech and Japanese beads, which are the most popular type of seed beads used in French Beading, are not always the same stringing length from one bead lot to the next. So if you are using a different brand of beads than the designer you may use more or less beads. There is also going to be some variation based on the technique of the individual artist.

Some patterns may use bead counts for the first row or loop, while others use a measurement. Measurements are usually more accurate when switching from one brand to another, but it's not always possible to design with nice, even measurements. Some techniques just work best when you have either an odd or even number for the starting rows, so you will see bead counts from time to time. In my patterns, I only use counts if the number is less than 20. After that length, a bead or two added to the starting rows won't make a great deal of difference, so you can round up to the nearest "clean" measurement.

Patterns will give you an approximate amount of beads needed to complete the project. Always purchase more!

Some patterns will give the amount of beads as a number of hanks while others will tell you an amount in grams. The amount of beads per gram or per hank will vary depending on the cut and finish. Sometimes a pattern will give the amount in hanks while you are purchasing in grams, or vice versa, so you will need to convert. The conversions below are for size 11/0 round seed beads.

- *Hanks to Grams* - calculate the grams needed by assuming a hank has 40 grams of beads. So 2 hanks = 80 grams.
- *Grams to Hanks* - calculate the number of hanks needed as though a hank has 30 grams of beads. In this case, 80 grams = 2.7 hanks.

This will help cover all bases to ensure you have enough beads to complete the project. You might end up with extra beads, but that's better than not having enough!

Working With Multiple Bead Colors

With most techniques, if you are only working with one color of beads you can pre-string all of the beads onto the wire and work from the spool without having to cut any wire. This helps reduce wire waste and prevents any accidental wire shortages.

Some flower patterns will require you to work with multiple colors of beads on one leaf or petal. Because the number of beads per row varies from one person to the next, the exact bead counts for each color will also vary. Generally, it is not wise to pre-string beads when working with multiple colors unless you want them to fall randomly within the petal. Instead, once you reach the point where you switch colors, you will cut enough bare working wire to finish the piece and add colors to the wire as needed. Because of the fluctuation in bead counts by bead brand and individual beaders, it is difficult to write patterns with complex shading designs. If you are working with a pattern that uses bead counts you may need to adjust them a little. That said, some easy shading patterns may work with bead counts, especially if the markings are at the beginning or end of a row.

..... WIRE

Wire makes up the skeletal support system for French Beaded Flowers. There are two basic types of wire that we use to make flowers: the actual leaf and petal component wires, and the stem wires on which the flowers are mounted.

Component Wires

The type of wire we use to make flower parts is called copper-core wire. As the name suggests, this wire has a core made of copper that is either coated with a coloring, or plated with another metal. This type of wire can withstand a lot of bending, can be easily molded into shape, holds shape well, and is still strong enough to support flower pieces.

In some countries you can find copper core wire that has colored enamel coatings. If you can find it in colors, and can afford purchasing many colors, I do recommend using it. Using matching colored wire not only enhances the color of the beads (if using transparent or semi-transparent beads), but it also helps conceal any exposed wires. However, if you can't find wires with colored coatings, don't worry too much. Many artists use only silver colored wire.



Photo 6 - spools of copper wire

Stem Wires

For the flower stems and leaf branches you will primarily be using florist stem wires, which are made from steel. These types of wire can be found easily in the floral department of just about any craft store. But they are usually limited to 18 inches long, and the sizes only go up to 16 gauge. The most common gauge you will use for flower stems is 16 gauge. If you need a thicker wire for a heavier flower, you can bundle multiple of these stem wires together.

You can also purchase coils of galvanized steel wire from the hardware store. Not only is this wire perfect for heavier flowers since it comes in thicker gauges, it is especially helpful for very tall flowers since it comes in one long length that you can cut to size.



Photo 8 - coil of galvanized steel wire



Photo 7 - Florist stem wire

About Wire Gauges

In the US (and a few other countries) we use gauges to describe wire sizes. The larger the number, the thinner the wire. The gauges I use the most are 24 and 30. A small spool of 30 gauge wire will go far, but I buy many of colors of 24 gauge in bulk - green, red, gold, and white. The other sizes and colors I buy as needed for specific projects.

Below is a list of the wire gauges you will use in French Beading, the comparable metric sizes, and what they are used for. Some companies round the metric numbers a little differently, but they should be similar to these measurements.

Gauge	Metric	Used for
30-32 gauge copper core	0.25 - 0.2 mm	lacing flower pieces, flower assembly, tiny flower parts
28 gauge copper core	0.32 mm	flower assembly, small flower parts (like stamen)
26 gauge copper core	0.4 mm	very small flower petals, leaves, and stamen. Assembling heavy flowers, trees, or wreaths.
24 gauge copper core	0.5 mm	most petals and leaves, extra unit support wires
22 gauge copper core	0.64 mm	extra large flower petals and leaves, extra support wires
20 gauge florist stem wire	0.8 mm	Unit support wires
18 gauge florist stem wire	1.02 mm	Unit support wires, stems for very small flowers and leaves
16 gauge florist stem wire/ galvanized steel	1.3 mm	Unit support wires, stem wires for standard sized flowers and leaves.
14 gauge galvanized steel	1.6 mm	Stem wire for heavy flowers, wreath frames, armatures
12 gauge galvanized steel	2.06 mm	Stem wire for extra heavy flowers, wreath frames, armatures

NOTE: The "Unit Support Wires" that are mentioned in the chart on the previous page are extra wires added in to a petal or leaf to add extra support. This is not taught in this course, since they are used mostly for very large or heavy components, which we aren't doing in the Beginner Course. However, if you'd like to learn about them, you can find a tutorial on my website.

About Wire Measurements

You will sometimes work with a pattern that tells you to measure and cut a specific amount of wire. Cut more wire! The exact amount used will vary from one artist to the next, so cut a little extra at least the first few times you make a component.

Some patterns will tell you how much wire you need to purchase, but not all do. If there is an amount listed, always buy more.

Wire Brands

Just like beads, choosing which wire brand to use is a personal decision, but I'd like to at least share my experiences and preferences to help guide you in picking which ones you would like to work with. Whatever type you choose, I highly recommend to buy the best wire that you can afford. The quality of the wire you use will determine how long and how well the flowers will hold up to time and being handled.

• Paddle Wire

Paddle wire, or florist wire, is the cheapest type of wire on the market that can be used in French Beaded Flowers. It only comes in four colors - green, silver, white, and sometimes black - so your options are limited. You can find this in the floral department of your local craft or hobby store.

This is not my favorite wire to work with. I have broken it almost every time I've tried it, and the color coating often flakes or peels off. It is not copper wire, but actually made of steel, which becomes brittle more readily than copper when it's bent and wrapped. It is also a little stiffer than other types of wire in the same sizes. However, this is just my experience with the wire. There are artists who use it exclusively, and it won't cost much to give it a try.



Photo 9 - Paddle wire

• Zebra Wire™

Zebra wire is fairly inexpensive and decent quality. If you have a tight budget, this wire may be a good option for you. They have a small variety of colors and gauges.

I used this wire a lot in the past, and I was happy with it. I've never had their 24 gauge break on me and the color coating holds up well to wrapping, bending, and coiling, though it can rub off on your fingers a little. However, I don't recommend the silver colored wire. Everything I've ever made with it has tarnished after just a couple years. Their "Gold" is actually made from brass, not copper, and is not suitable for French Beading.

The 24 gauge wire in this brand is a little stiffer than other brands' 24 gauge wire. But their 26, 28, and 30 gauge wires are softer and more prone to breaking than the higher end brands.



Photo 10 - Zebra wire



Photo 11 - Parawire

- **Parawire™**

Parawire's round copper core craft wire is a much loved favorite among French Beaders, myself included. It is a little more expensive than the previous options, but this is excellent wire, and well worth the cost. They have a large variety of colors to choose from. They even have pure white, though it is softer than other colors of 24 gauge wire. Their wire is tarnish and chip resistant. It is one of my favorites and I use it almost exclusively. You can email Parawire to order bulk spools of wire. I do this especially for colors that I go through quickly, like gold, red, green, and white.

- **Artistic Wire®**

Artistic Wire is another high quality wire option for copper-core wire, and another favorite for French Beaders. It is the most expensive option, but you get what you pay for. It is tarnish and chip resistant, and their finishes hold up very well. While I don't believe it's "better" than Parawire, they do have colors that Parawire does not currently offer. They even have a "Pearl Silver" and "White", which are both actually off-white, creamy colors, though they still work well with white beads. The only downside to Artistic Wire is the cost. We French Beaders go through a lot of wire, so it can add up very quickly.



Photo 12 - Artistic Wire

- **Scientific Wire**

Scientific Wire is a company in the UK that produces colored copper wires. I imported some into the USA just so I could test it. The wire itself is comparable to Parawire in quality and feel, however, the clear coating over the colors peeled off while I was twisting and wrapping, so I can't rate it quite as high. The prices are very reasonable and they do have lots of colors to choose from. From my experience and the experiences of others, I consider this to be a great source of wire for those in or around the UK.



Photo 13 - Scientific Wire

..... TOOLS

Wire Cutters

You will want some regular side-cutting or flush wire cutters. These can be found at just about any jewelry supply store. Finger nail clippers work well for cutting the copper wires used for making petals, and they are cheap to replace.

You will also want heavier duty cutters for cutting the steel florist stem wires. There are usually stem wire cutters in the floral department of your local craft store, near the packages of stem wires. Using regular wire cutters on the thicker steel stem wires will make them wear out more quickly, or break altogether. They will all wear out over time, but nicer more expensive ones will last longer, especially if you take good care of them.

As you dive deeper into French Beading and start making heavier flowers, you will want some extra heavy duty wire cutters that can cut at up to 12 gauge steel for cutting the thicker galvanized steel wire that comes in coils. These cutters can be found at a hardware store.

Pliers

Flat nosed pliers are nice to have to help bend wires or grab them to pull through, though you will usually do the wrapping with just your fingers. Flat nylon jaw pliers will help smooth out your wires if you get any kinks. If you are using your flowers to make jewelry, some needle nosed or round nosed pliers will come in handy.



Photo 14 - Wire cutters (top left), stem cutters (middle left), pliers (bottom left), extra heavy duty galvanized steel cutters (right).



Photo 15 - Small and large bead spinners

Bead Spinners

If you plan to make French Beading one of your long-time hobbies, you might want to invest in a bead spinner to help load beads onto the wire. I prefer the wooden hand spun ones over the electric ones as you can control the speed, they aren't noisy, and you won't have to keep buying batteries. However, the electric type are very helpful for beaders with arthritis or other conditions that affect the hands. Bead spinners work best when they are half-way to two-thirds full, so I recommend starting with a smaller sized bead spinner. You can always add more beads to it when the bowl gets low.

Other Tools

- Scissors
- A measuring tape or ruler
- Some plastic bags to store and organize your wire spools, beads, or works in progress
- A small funnel to help you move beads from the spinner back into their containers
- A carrying case (optional - if you plan on taking your supplies anywhere)
- A beading mat or tray to put under the bead spinner or work area - this helps catch any beads that fly out and makes clean up for accidental spills much easier.

..... OTHER SUPPLIES

Along with beads, wire, and tools, there are also a variety of other supplies that will be used frequently in French Beading.

Stem Finishing Supplies

- **Floral Tape** - normally comes in green, white, and brown in your local craft store's floral department, but can be found in many other colors online.
- **Embroidery floss** - Traditionally, French beaded flower stems are wrapped in floss, though it is not a requirement. You can use just about any type of embroidery floss that you like, but the most commonly used types are the regular cotton/poly floss you find at craft stores, and *untwisted flat* silk floss. Experiment with different types to see what you prefer.
- **Glue** - If you plan on using embroidery floss to wrap your stems you may sometimes need some glue to secure the ends of the floss. I like Fabri-Tac™, though I'm sure there are many glues that would work well for this application. *But the only time I use any type of glue to actually assemble flowers is for accessories!* For accessories that require gluing, I use E6000® or a jewelry-grade epoxy. Super glues may react negatively with some bead finishes, so it's best to steer clear.



Photo 16 - Embroidery floss and floral tape

Planting and Arranging Supplies

- Floral Clay, or *non-hardening* modeling clay
- Floral Foam
- Plaster, synthetic water, or resin (for potting)
- Decorative moss, grass, pebbles, and other types of camouflage to cover the clay/plaster/foam
- Marbles or pebbles to weigh down the bottom of a vase or conceal clay/plaster/foam
- Pots and vases (Check your local thrift store! I find some interesting and inexpensive vessels there.)



Photo 17 - Non-hardening clay, plaster, vase filler marbles, floral foam

..... STRINGING SEED BEADS ONTO WIRE

Stringing beads onto wire is something you'll be doing a lot of with French Beading, and I promise you don't want to do it one-by-one if you can avoid it. There are two basic methods for transferring them to wire: directly from the hank, or with a bead spinner.

From the Hank

If you purchase beads that come strung on hanks, there's a very simple and easy way to string beads. This method doesn't require any special tools, so it's a great option for those just starting out who don't want to invest a lot in tools and supplies just yet. To string, remove one of the threads from the top knot, insert the end of your wire into the beads and remove them from the thread while sliding them onto the wire (**Photo 18**). This works best when you keep the thread and line of beads as straight as possible so you can pass through more beads at once. You can, alternatively, remove both ends of one strand from the top knot, and tie a knot around the last bead at one end so it can act as a stopper bead. Then insert the wire into the beads on the other end of the thread and slide it through. This is especially helpful since hanks tend to start falling apart as you remove more threads.



Photo 18 - stringing beads from a hank

There are a few downsides to this method. Sometimes Czech beads have smaller holes or are strung on thicker threads, so the standard 24 gauge (.5 mm) wire doesn't always fit through while they're still on the thread. Also, when working with multiple colors of beads or with certain techniques, you sometimes have to string beads and then remove beads as needed to fit. You can't put the beads back on the threads easily, so when it comes time to add more of that color to the wire, you'll have to re-string the loose beads by hand. Finally, some beads just don't come on hanks, and hanks aren't sold in every country, so it's not always an option.

Using a Bead Spinner

This method will require a little bit of practice, but once you get it, it's a fast way to string beads that come loose or when stringing from the hank doesn't work. This is my preferred method to string beads, and I usually do cut hanks apart and put the beads in a spinner.

First, fill the bowl of the bead spinner so it is $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ full. If the bowl is more than $\frac{2}{3}$ full, you will get more beads flying out of the bowl and into the void. Make sure you have a nice flush cut on the end of the wire, then bend it into a hook shape. Insert the wire so it's at a slight angle from the beads, but with no wire touching any part of the bowl. The tip of the wire should be pointing toward the outer edge of the bowl (**Photo 19**). Hold the wire with one hand so the tip is just skimming the surface of the beads, then with your other hand, use the spindle in the center to spin the bowl (**Photo 20**). If you are right-handed, it's easiest to have the wire in the right side of the bowl, and spin the bowl counter-clockwise.

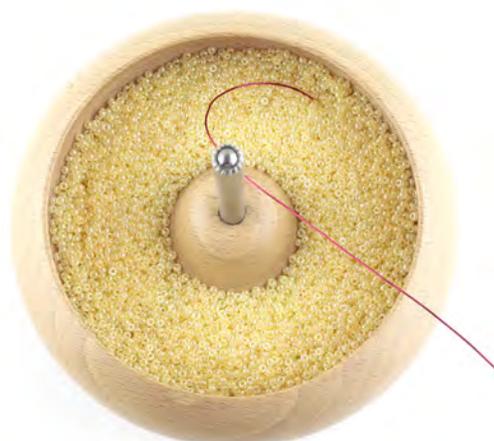


Photo 19



Photo 20

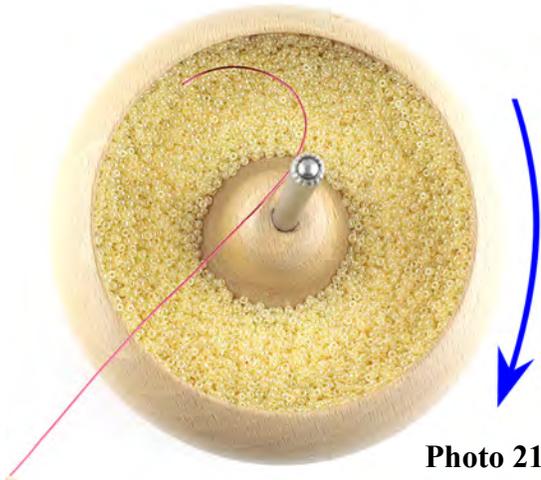


Photo 21

If you are left-handed, try putting the wire in the left side of the bowl, and spinning clockwise (**Photo 21**).

If you're having trouble getting beads onto the wire, play around with the angle and position of the wire and shape of the hook until beads fly on easily.

There is a downside to this method other than requiring a little bit of practice to learn. As the fill line gets lower, the beads will string more slowly, so you may need to fill the bowl with *more* beads than required for the pattern if you want to string quickly.

..... MATERIALS FOR PART 2

I do recommend working through the technique lessons in Part 2 to practice the techniques before making flowers that you'll want to keep. Generally, it just doesn't go well or look nice the first few times you try a new technique. To work through the technique lessons instead of just using them for reference, you will need these supplies:

WIRE: Get one spool of each size in any color.

- 24 gauge (.5 mm) copper core wire
- 28 gauge (.315 mm) copper core wire
- 30 gauge (.25 mm) copper core wire

BEADS:

- 11/0 round seed beads - Get at least a couple hanks (or somewhere around 80 grams) so you'll have plenty to practice with. The color does not matter.

TOOLS:

- Wire cutters
- Stem cutters
- ruler/tape measure
- bead spinner (optional)
- Scissors



--- *Part 2* ---
TECHNIQUE GUIDE

LESSON ONE: CONTINUOUS LOOPS

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.

Photo 3



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.

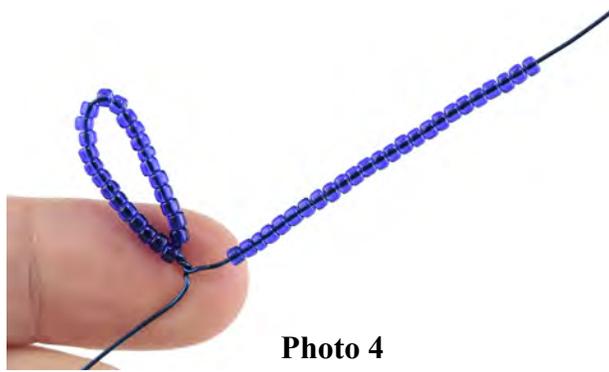


Photo 4

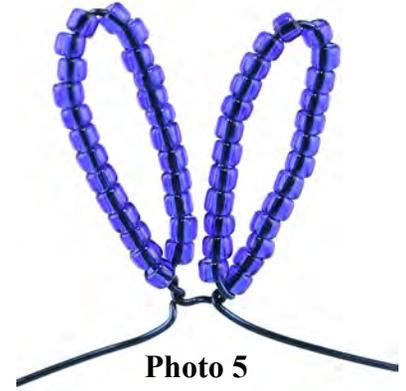


Photo 5

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.

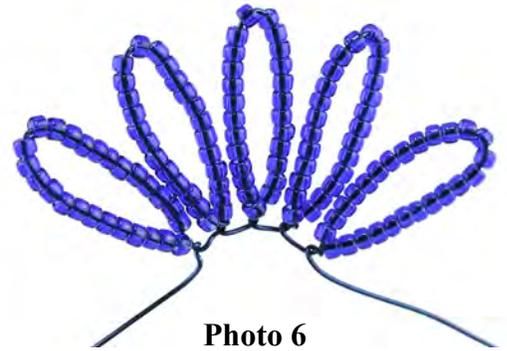


Photo 6

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**.

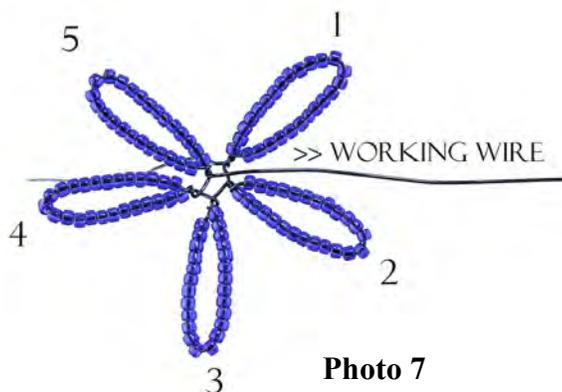


Photo 7



Photo 8

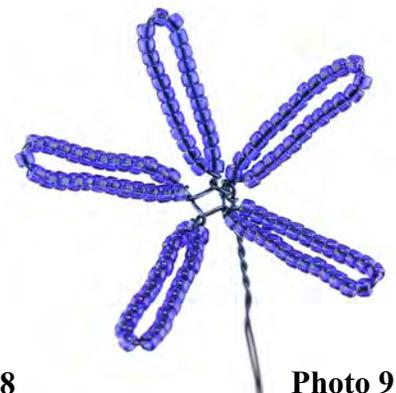


Photo 9

*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.

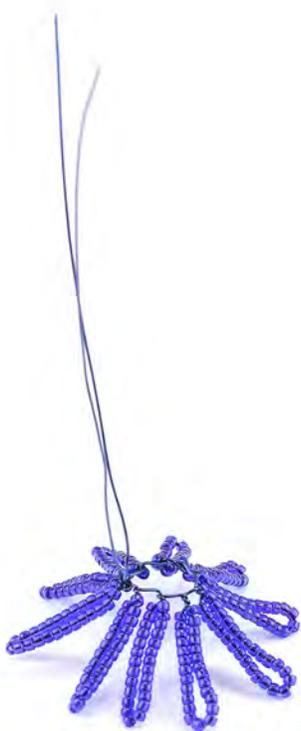


Photo 10

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**).

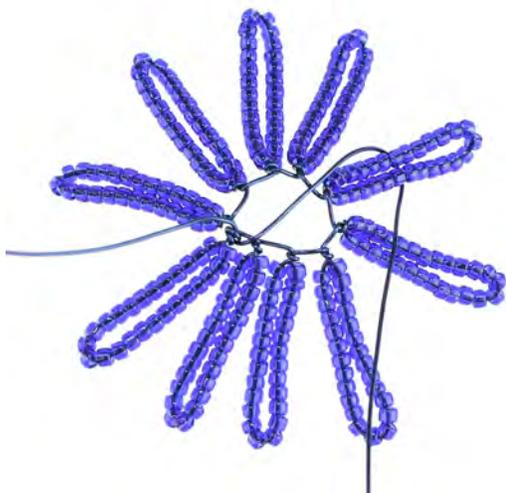


Photo 11



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

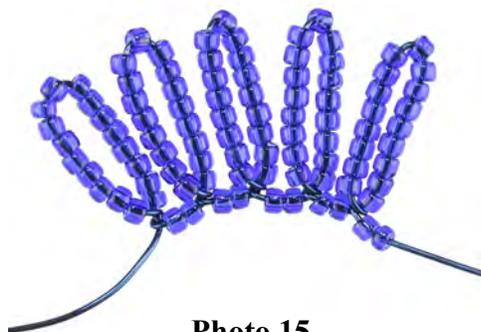


Photo 15

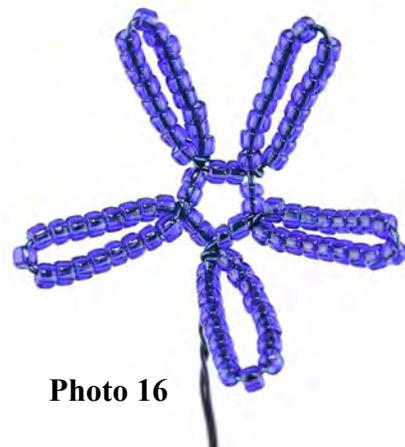


Photo 16

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.

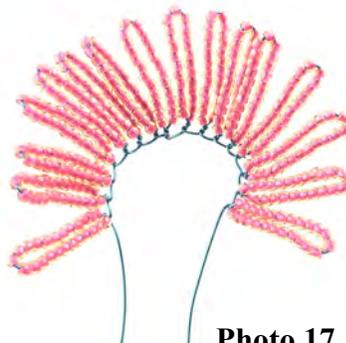


Photo 17

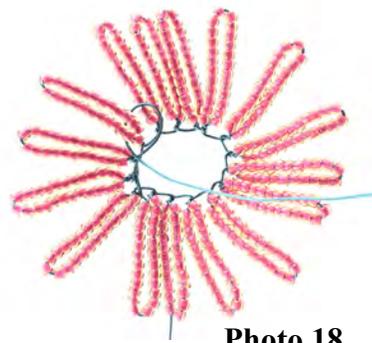


Photo 18

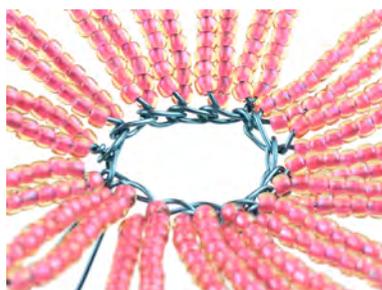


Photo 19

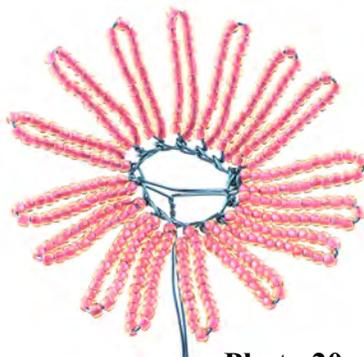


Photo 20

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.

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.

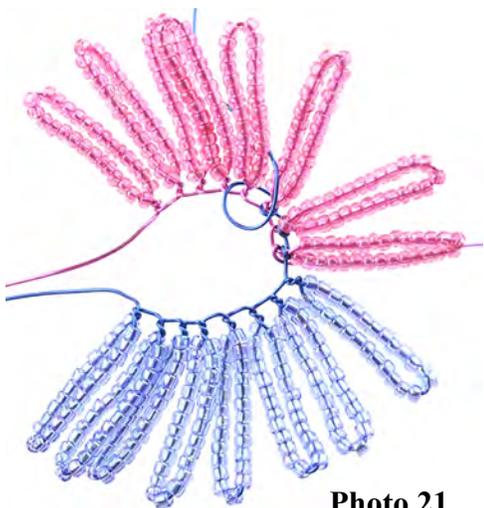


Photo 21

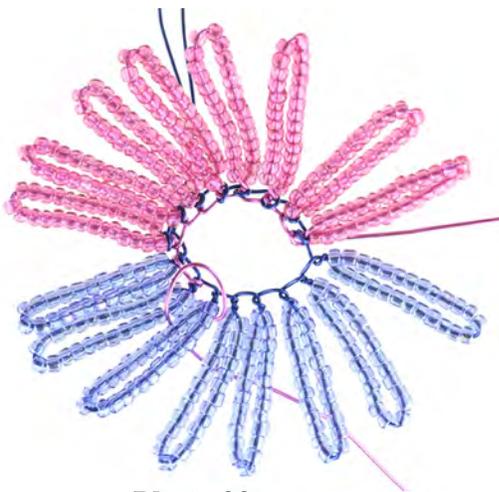


Photo 22



Photo 23

LESSON TWO: CONTINUOUS CROSSOVER LOOPS

TERMS TO REMEMBER

- Crossover Loops
- CCL
- Starting Loop

Continuous Crossover Loops (sometimes abbreviated as **CCL**) is usually continuous, but the loops can be used individually for buds or stamens.

The standard form of Crossover has 4 rows—or two loops—of beads. The first loop is the **starting loop**, and the second loop of beads crosses over the front and down the back of the starting loop. A pattern that uses Continuous Crossover Loops will look something like this:

Make 1: 7x CCL, 1 ¼ inches (3.2 cm) of beads for the starting loop.

For this exercise, use 26 or 24 gauge wire and approximately 4 grams of beads. Follow the sample pattern above. I am using a non-matching wire to make the wire paths more visible.

1. String all the seed beads onto the wire.
2. Leave a small tail wire, then form a Loop using 1 ¼ inches (3.2 cm) of beads. Twist the wires only one or two full rotations below the loop. *More twists here will leave extra wire bulk that is harder to conceal in Crossover Loops.* Mold the starting loop so it is long and thin, with only a little empty space in the middle (**Photo 1**).
3. Feed more beads from the spool and bring the wire over the front of the starting loop. Measure out the beads needed to reach the top center of the starting loop. The bottom of this row of beads should be even with, or slightly above the bottom of the starting loop. If the beads extend below the starting loop, it will be harder to shape the finished petals, and it will be less attractive. Likewise, the top of this row of beads should be even with, or slightly below the top center of the starting loop. If they extend above the loop the wire will not be held securely between beads. (**Photo 2**)
4. Fold a bare section of wire over the top of the starting loop, making sure the wire fits snugly between two beads in the center of the loop (**Photo 3**).
5. Keep tension on the wire so it doesn't slip out of place or loosen, and so gaps don't form between the beads. Fold the wire over the back of the starting loop (**Photo 4**).



Photo 1

Photo 2



Photo 3

Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8

6. Feed more beads from the spool and push them all the way against the top center on the back of the starting loop. Measure out the beads needed to reach the bottom wire. They should not extend below the starting loop (**Photo 5**).
7. Tie off the working wire by wrapping it twice around the bottom wire just below the starting loop. Keep the wraps tight and close together. (**Photo 6**) *Alternatively, you could twist the two wires below two or three times.*
8. Leave a small space in the wire, then form the starting loop for the second petal using 1 ¼ inches of beads (**Photo 7**).
9. Repeat steps 3-8 until you have seven petals total (**Photo 8**).
10. The petals will look a little more cylindrical at first. Gently flatten the rows of beads in the petals so they lay side-by-side by pressing them between your thumb and forefinger.
11. Close the unit by wrapping the Working Wire around the first petal and bringing it to the underside of the petal.

*NOTE: Notice that just like with the larger CL unit from Lesson One, the two wires are off to the side of the unit (**Photo 9**), which will make it harder to center the unit on a flower stem wire.*



Photo 9

12. To center the wires, cross the working wire over the bottom of the unit and loop it around one of the petals on the opposite side. (**Photo 10**).
13. Bring the tail and working wires together in the center beneath the unit and twist them together to make the unit stem wire. (**Photo 11**)

Photo 12 shows the finished CCL unit.



Photo 10



Photo 11



Photo 12

LESSON THREE: CONTINUOUS WRAPAROUND LOOPS

TERMS TO REMEMBER

- Wraparound Loops
- CWL
- Bottom Wire
- Pointed Bottom (PB)
- Round Bottom (RB)

Continuous Wraparound Loops are often abbreviated in French Beading patterns as **CWL**. Like Crossover Loops, Wraparound Loops begin with a starting loop, with more loops of beads wrapped around the outside edges.

With Continuous Wraparound Loops, we start to see how to change the petal shape by wrapping at different angles. Wrapping at the **Bottom Wire** - or the wire below the loop - at a 45 degree angle will produce a **Pointed Bottom (PB)**. Wrapping at the Bottom Wire at a 90 degree angle will produce a **Round Bottom (RB)**.

Sample Pattern:

Make 1: 5x 3 row (or triple) CWL using 11 beads for the starting loop, PB.



Photo 1



Photo 2

TIP: I like to rotate my petal with one hand while I wrap the row around it with the other hand, which helps fit the next row exactly around the previous one.



Photo 3



Photo 4

For this exercise use 26 or 24 gauge (0.4 - 0.5 mm) copper core wire and approximately 5 grams of size 11/0 beads.

1. String all the beads onto the wire.
2. Leave a 2 inch (5 cm) tail wire before making an 11 bead loop (**Photo 1**). Only twist below the loop one full rotation (two twists). Twisting more in CWL will leave more exposed wires between rows.
3. Feed more beads down the working wire and wrap them around the outer edge of the starting loop. Keep this row of beads directly beside the starting loop. If they are too far apart the petals will have visible gaps between rows. If they are too close, the rows of beads will bunch up on top of each other. Measure the beads needed to reach the Bottom Wire. Cross the working wire over the front of the Bottom Wire, creating a 45 degree angle (**Photo 2**).
4. Wrap the working wire around the bottom wire once. As you cross back over the front of the bottom wire, angle the working wire upward to complete the point and start the point of the next row (**Photo 3**).
5. Feed more beads down the Working Wire from the spool. Wrap another row of beads around the outer edge of the previous row. At the Bottom Wire, wrap at a 45 degree angle to make a Pointed Bottom. The petal now has all three rows of beads. To secure the working wire, wrap it tightly around the bottom wire below the petal twice, keeping the wraps close together. (**Photo 4**).

TIP: Notice in Photo 5 that I've turned the second petal at a 90 degree angle from the first petal. This keeps the bottom wire for the second petal straight while wrapping on rows of beads, which makes it easier to measure out the correct amount of beads for each row and prevents a lopsided petal.



Photo 5



Photo 6

6. To begin the second petal you will need to leave a length of bare wire below the starting loop. This will be the second petal's bottom wire. The length should be the same length as the bottom wire in the first petal, plus a tiny bit extra. (**Photo 5**).
7. Repeat steps 3-6 to until you have five petals total. (**Photo 6**)
8. Close the unit the same way you would a Continuous Loop unit. Cross the working wire over the top of the first petal and wrap around it once. Then twist the wires together beneath the unit.

Photo 7 shows the finished petal unit.



Photo 7

Round Bottom

To make a **round bottom (RB)**, there is one simple change to the angle of the wraps. Instead of crossing over the bottom wire at a 45 degree angle, cross over at a 90 degree angle as shown in **Photo 8**.

I *personally* find that with small petals, it doesn't make a great deal of difference, so I always make mine with a pointed bottom. If you compare **Photo 9** below with the pointed petals above in **Photo 7** you'll notice that they look almost the same. But the difference does become more noticeable when making petals larger than three rows. See **Photo 10** for a shape comparison of larger CWL with a round bottom and pointed bottom.

However, since I developed the Continuous Basic Frame technique several years back, which is taught in the Intermediate Course on my website, I rarely use Continuous Wraparound Loops for anything larger than a few rows. If you do make 4+ rows, I recommend lacing them as the rows tend to separate. You can learn all about lacing in Lesson Six.



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10

LESSON FOUR: FRINGE

TERMS TO REMEMBER

- Twisted Fringe
- Wire-Back
- Fringe Loops
- Loop Fringe
- Branching Fringe

There are two basic types of Fringes - Twisted Fringes and Wire-Back Fringes. I should note that most designers do not call them by these names. They are both generally just called Fringe, or nothing at all. These techniques are very commonly used to make flower stamen and other small pieces.

Twisted Fringe

The **Twisted Fringe** variety is very simply a bead or a loop of beads on a long twisted stem of wire. These can be continuous or single.

Sample Pattern

Make 1: 6x ½ inch (1.3 cm) Twisted Fringes with 3 beads at the tip.

For this exercise, we will use 28 gauge (0.315 mm) wire because it's easier to twist. The beads are size 11/0. You will also need a ruler!

1. String 18 beads onto the 28 gauge wire. You can leave the wire attached to the spool.
2. Leave a 2 inch (5 cm) tail wire, which will be the unit stem wire after the piece is complete.
3. Measure out another 1 inch (2.5 cm) of wire. Use your fingernail to make a little notch at the beginning and end of the 1 inch section of wire. This will help match up the two sides later. Slide 3 of the beads from the spool onto this section of wire. (**Photo 1**)

NOTE: Notice that the wire we measure out is 1 inch long. When we fold it in half to twist it, the result is a ½ inch fringe. Some patterns will tell you how much wire to measure out, and others will tell you the finished length of the fringe.

4. Fold the wire exactly in half, matching up the notches in the wire. Make sure the 3 beads are caught in the middle. Twist the two wires below, starting at the notches and moving up to the beads (**Photos 2 & 3**). This completes the first fringe.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

NOTE: Some find it easier to first cross the wires directly below the beads, then twist down to the bottom of the fringe instead of starting at the bottom. Try both to see which method suits you better.



Photo 4



Photo 5

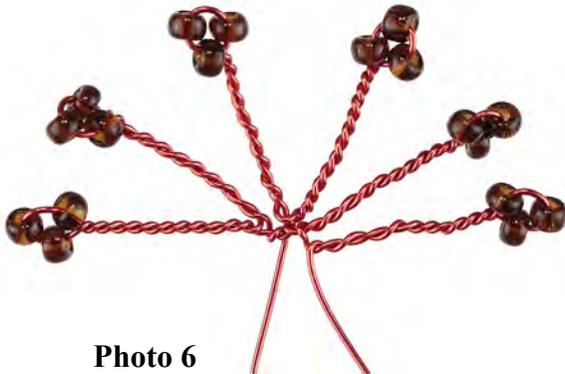


Photo 6

5. Measure another 1 inch (2.5 cm) of wire and make a notch on the working end at the 1 inch mark. Slide 3 more beads down from the spool. **(Photo 4)**
6. Match the notch in the wire with the base of the first fringe and make sure the 3 beads are positioned in the center. Twist the two wires below the beads together tightly against the base of the first fringe. **(Photo 5)**
7. Repeat until you have 6 total twisted fringes. **(Photo 6)**

8. Close the unit into a circle by wrapping the working wire around the first fringe once **(Photo 7)**. Measure out 2 inches (5 cm) of working wire and clip from the spool.
9. Twist the tail wire and working wire together below the unit. You do not need to twist all the way down, just an inch or so. Leave the rest untwisted.

The finished unit is shown in **Photos 8 & 9**.

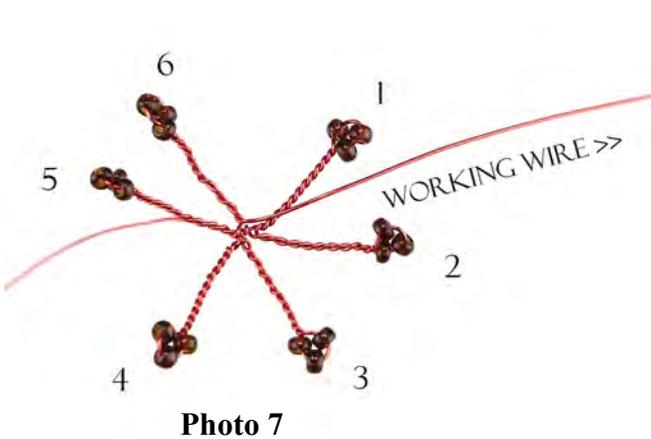


Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9

NOTE: Just like with other continuous techniques, if the unit has a larger number of fringes, simply twisting the two wires together on the side of the unit will make it harder to center it on the flower stem wire. Center the unit stem wire by looping the working wire around one fringe on the opposite side of the unit. Then bring both wires together in the center and twist.

Wire-Back Fringe

There is an old rule in French Beading that says the wire can only pass through the beads once to qualify as the French method. The **Wire-Back Fringe** breaks that rule, since the wire will have to pass through the beads twice. It allows you to make fringes that are made entirely of beads, instead of exposed twists of wire.

Because the wire passes through the beads twice, you will need to make sure the wire you are using will fit through the beads twice. For size 11/0 seed beads it's *usually* a 28 gauge (0.315 mm) wire.

Sample Pattern:

Make 1: 8x 10-bead Fringes

For this exercise, use 28 gauge wire and < 1 gram size 11/0 seed beads.

1. Do not string any the beads on the spool of wire. Cut a 14 inch (35.6 cm) length of wire from the spool.
2. String 10 beads onto the wire and slide them down approximately 2 inches (5 cm) from one end.
3. Skipping the 10th bead, insert the working end of the wire back down through the bottom 9 beads (**Photo 10**). You should be going back down the way the wire came out. The first bead will act as a stopper at the tip of the fringe so the wire doesn't slide all the way out.
4. Hold the 9 beads in place so they don't move around on the wire. Pull the working wire all the way through to tighten the fringe. (**Photo 11**)
5. Add 10 more beads to the working wire for the second fringe. Turn them at a 90 degree angle from the first fringe. *This shortens the wire that is between the fringes to keep them close together.* Skip the top bead and insert the working wire into the 9 beads below (**Photo 12**).
6. Pinch both the first and second fringe between your thumb and forefinger on one hand to hold them in place. Then pull the working wire through to tighten the second fringe (**Photo 13**).
7. Continue making 10 bead fringes until there are 8 total on the wire (**Photo 14**).
8. Close the unit by wrapping the working wire once around the first fringe, then center the wire below following the instructions for centering stem wires in the Continuous Loop lesson.

The finished unit is shown in **Photo 15**.

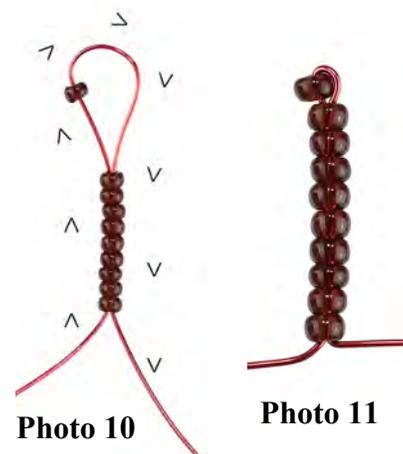


Photo 10

Photo 11

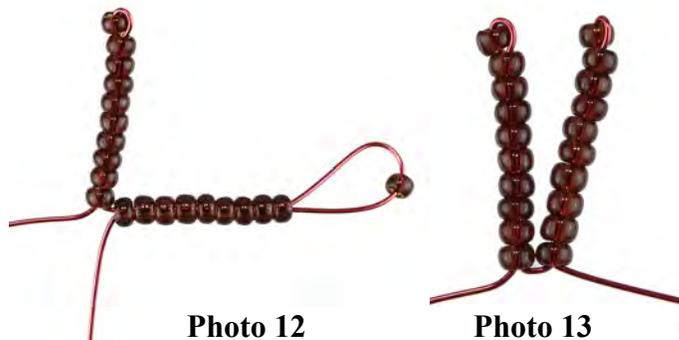


Photo 12

Photo 13

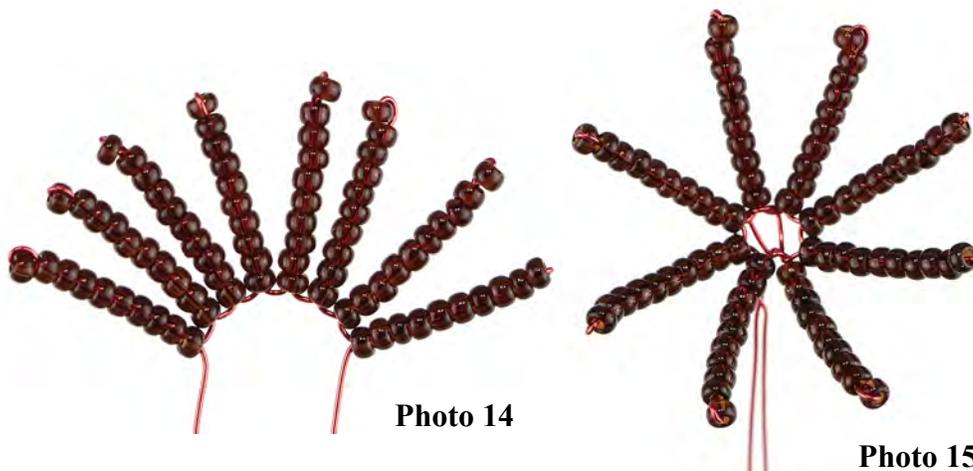


Photo 14

Photo 15

Working with Long Wire-Back Fringes

Whenever you're working with a pattern that uses Wire-Back Fringes that are really long, you may find that your working wire starts kinking more easily at the tips where you're trying to shove it through a long line of beads. In this case, I find it easier to move the beads onto the working wire, rather than trying to slide the wire through the beads. *I am demonstrating with short fringes just so all the parts will fit inside a decent sized photo.*

Before you begin, you will need to cut the wire a little longer to allow yourself a little more slack.

1. Make the first fringe by stringing all the beads for the fringe. Move the last bead out of the way, and position the working wire just above the beads in the wire-back portion of the fringe. Slide the beads up onto the working wire, and move them around until the fringe is positioned approximately 2 inches (5 cm) from one end of the wire. Pull the working wire through to tighten the fringe.
2. For all of the following fringes, add all the beads for the fringe at once. Pull the tip stopper bead out of the way and further down the working wire. Fold the working wire on itself and position the end of the wire above the beads in the wire-back portion of the fringe. (**Photo 16**)
3. Slide the beads up onto the doubled working wire. (**Photo 17**)

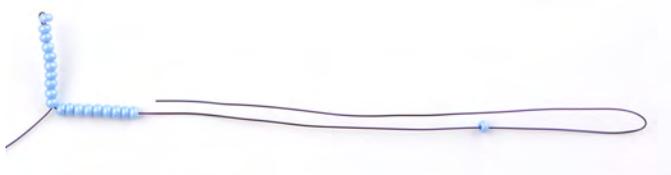


Photo 16

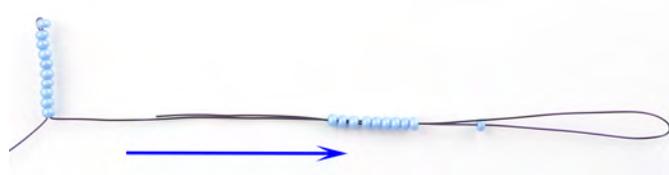


Photo 17

4. Once the beads are all the way up above the end of the working wire, pull the working wire down until it is past the first fringe. (**Photo 18**)
5. Move the beads back down into position at the bottom of the first fringe. (**Photo 19**)

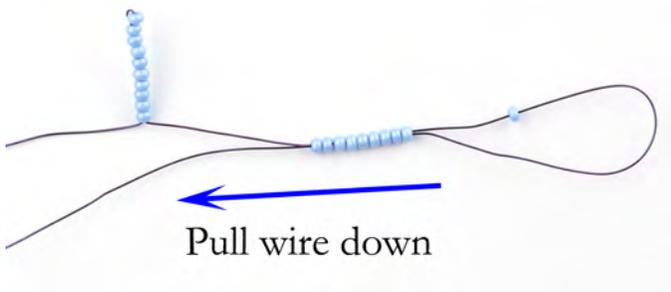


Photo 18

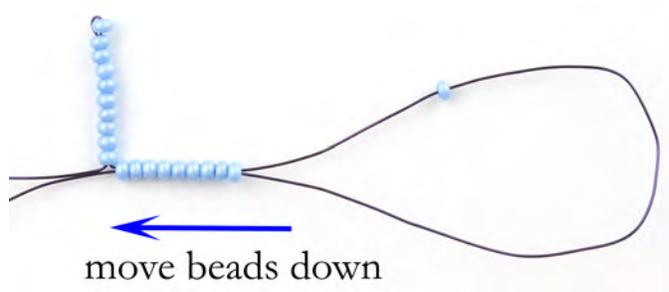


Photo 19

7. Pull the working wire all the way through to tighten the first bead that you skipped into position at the tip of the fringe. (**Photo 20**)
8. Repeat for all remaining fringes.



Photo 20

Next, let's take a look at some creative ways to use Wire-Back Fringes.

Loop Fringes

Loop Fringes are another great way to make a different style of stamen. You only need to make one simple alteration to a regular Wire-Back Fringe. Instead of skipping one bead at the tip of the fringe, skip as many as you want to include in the loop. I like odd numbers so a bead ends up in the middle of the loop instead of a bare spot of wire.

1. Add 22 beads to the wire.
2. Skip the last 7 beads, then wire back down through the bottom 15 beads. (**Photo 21**)
3. Repeat to make as many Loop Fringes as you'd like. (**Photo 22**)



Photo 21



Photo 22

Fringe Loops

This is a great way to make sepals for tiny flowers. Basically, it's the opposite of the Loop Fringes. There is fringe at the tip of a loop. The photos below show a 4 bead fringe in the middle of a 14 bead loop, which sits atop a 1-bead fringe.

1. Add 12 beads to the wire.
2. Skip the top bead and wire back through 3 beads (making a 4 bead fringe) (**Photo 23**). You will have 8 beads left on the tail wire.
3. Add 7 beads to the working end of the wire to make the second half of the loop.
4. Insert the end of the working wire into the bottom bead on the first half of the loop to make a 1-bead wire-back fringe at the bottom of the loop. (**Photo 24**)
5. Pull tight to finish the Fringe Loop. (**Photo 25**)

Alternatively, you can leave off the 1-bead wire-back at the bottom and just twist the two wires together below (**Photo 26**)



Photo 23



Photo 24



Photo 25



Photo 26

Branching Fringe

Yet another way to use wire-back fringes is to make one fringe inside of another fringe to make branching fringes.

1. Measure and cut about 10 inches (25.4 cm) of bare wire from the spool.
2. String 14 beads onto the wire. Skip the top bead and wire-back through 6 beads below (**Photo 27**). There will be 7 beads left on the tail wire. Leave them alone for now, but make a loop in the end of your tail wire so they don't fall off.
3. Add 7 more beads to the working wire and make a second fringe beside the first one (**Photo 28**).
4. Wire-back through the 7 beads that were leftover in step 2 (**Photo 29**). You will end up with a Y-shaped fringe.
5. Add 14 more beads to the working wire to start the second Y. Complete the first 7 bead fringe by skipping the first bead and wiring back through 6 beads. You will need to keep this second Y very close to the first Y to prevent gaps in the wire between them (**Photo 30**).



Photo 27



Photo 28



Photo 29



Photo 30



Photo 31

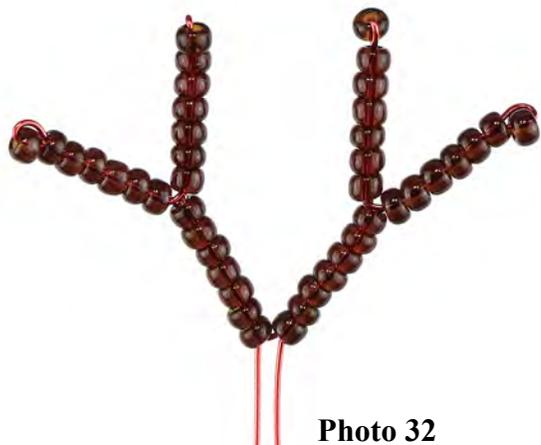


Photo 32

6. Add 7 beads to the working wire. Skip the first bead and wire back through 6 beads to make the second fringe in the second Y.
7. Wire back through the 7 beads below to complete the second Y (**Photos 31 & 32**).

LESSON FIVE: BASIC FRAME

TERMS TO REMEMBER

- Basic Frame (BF)
- Top Wire
- Bottom Wire
- Basic Row (BR)
- Bottom Loop
- Working Wire
- Round Bottom (RB)
- Pointed Bottom (PB)
- Round Top (RT)
- Pointed Top (PT)
- One Bottom Wire
- Two Bottom Wires
- Three Bottom Wires
- Reverse Wrap (RW)

Basic Frame (sometimes abbreviated as **BF**) is the most commonly used French Beading technique.

A Basic Frame petal begins with a **Basic Row** (or **BR**) in the center of the leaf or petal. When counting rows, the Basic Row is row number 1. All of the other rows are wrapped around the Basic Row along two axis wires: the Top Wire (also called the Basic Wire) - which is above the Basic Row - and the Bottom Wire - which is below the Basic Row. Each pass over either axis counts as another row.

Photo 1 shows the four basic shapes that can be created on a Basic Frame. These leaves were all made with a 9 row Basic Frame, 10 bead Basic Row, changing only the angle of the wraps to make different shapes. In patterns that are written in shorthand, these shapes will be designated by the letters “P” for pointed, or “R” for round. This letter will be paired with either a “B” for bottom, or “T” for top, which tells you which end to make in that shape.

- To make a **Pointed Top (PT)**, wrap at the Top Wire at a 45 degree angle.
- To make a **Round Top (RT)**, wrap at the Top Wire at a 90 degree angle.
- To make a **Pointed Bottom (PB)**, wrap at the Bottom Wire at a 45 degree angle.
- To make a **Round Bottom (RB)**, wrap at the Bottom Wire at a 90 degree angle.

Sample Pattern:

Make 1: 9 row BF, 10 bead BR, PT RB.

- Reduce to two bottom wires.

For this exercise, use 24 gauge (0.5 mm) copper core wire and a few grams of size 11/0 seed beads. Follow the sample pattern above.

1. String all of the beads onto the spool of wire, then make a small loop in the end of the wire. This acts as a stopper to prevent the beads from sliding off.
2. Count out 10 beads for the Basic Row from the spool and slide them toward the end of the wire. Leave a small length of wire above. This will be the Top Wire (also called the Basic Wire).
3. Make a loop in the wire below the Basic Row by crossing the wire over itself directly below the Basic Row (**Photo 2**).

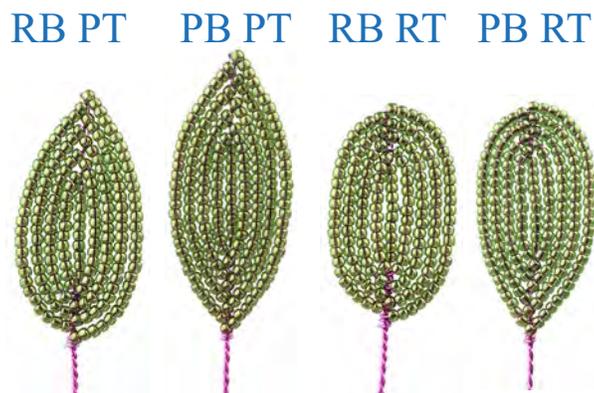


Photo 1

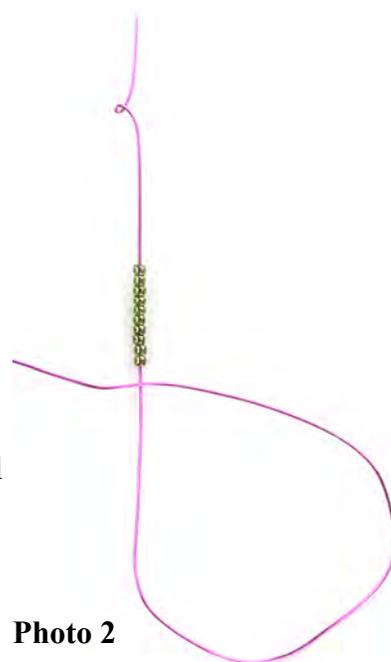


Photo 2

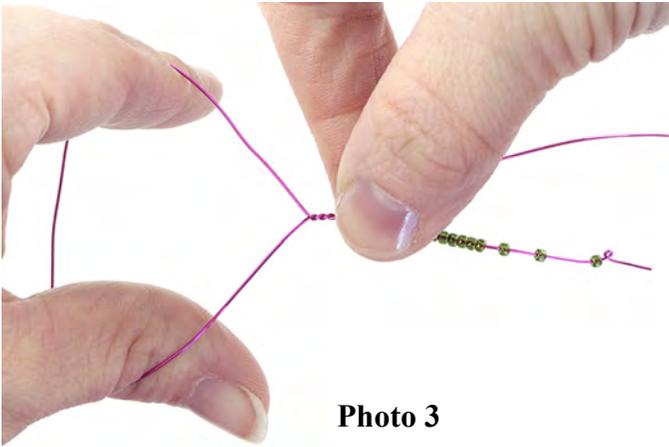


Photo 3

- To complete the frame, pinch and hold right where the two wires cross with one hand, then twist the loop below with the other hand. (**Photo 3**)

TIP: Keep the twists in these wires nice and smooth. To do this, use your forefinger and thumb to open up the bottom loop in a v-shape. Make sure the two wires that make up the loop are at the same angle from where the twisted wire forms. Pull down on these wires with equal pressure while you twist.

Photo 4 shows the finished Basic Frame. Take note of the "anatomy".

- In the center is a row of 10 beads. This is the Basic Row, or row number 1.
- Above the Basic Row is the Top Wire.
- Right below the Basic Row is the Working Wire. This should still be attached to the spool and strung with beads.
- Below the Working Wire is a twisted double wire which is the Bottom Wire. This will become the leaf's stem wire which will attach it to the flower stem.
- Below the Bottom Wire is the Loop, which will also be part of the leaf's unit stem wire.

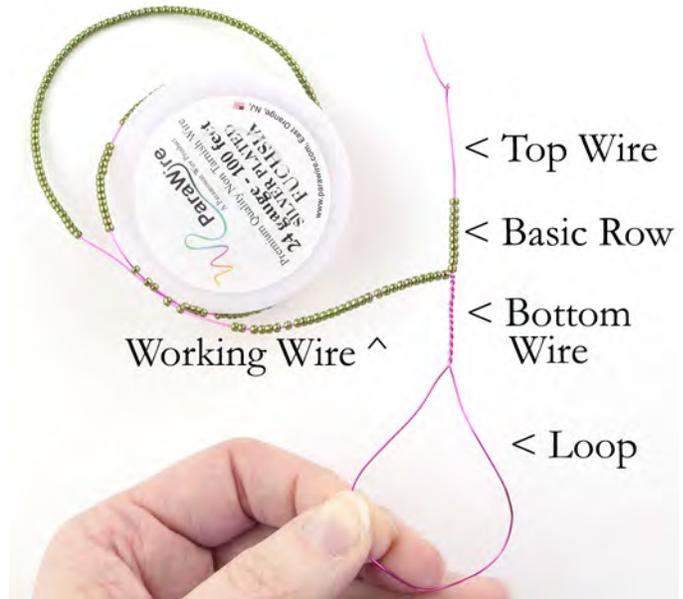


Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6

- Feed more beads down the Working Wire until they are flush against the frame. Fold the beads up *directly* beside the Basic Row toward the Top Wire.
- Measure the beads needed to reach the Top Wire. The pattern tells us to make a Pointed Top. Cross the Working Wire *over the front* of the Top Wire, making a 45 degree angle with the Top Wire (**Photo 5**).
- Wrap around the Top Wire. As you bring the Working Wire back to the front of the leaf, angle it down, making another 45 degree angle with the Basic Row (**Photo 6**). This completes row 2.
- Feed more beads down the Working Wire and lay them flat against the other side of the Basic Row, pointing toward the Bottom Wire.

TIP: I rotate my piece while I'm wrapping rows so I am always working at the top, which is why Photos 7 and 8 are up-side down. I find it is much easier to wrap this way.

- Measure the beads needed to reach the Bottom Wire. The pattern tells us to make a Round Bottom. Cross the Working Wire over the front of the Bottom Wire, making a 90 degree angle (**Photo 7**).
- Wrap around the Bottom Wire, maintaining a 90 degree angle as the Working Wire crosses back over the front (**Photo 8**). The leaf now has 3 rows of beads.



Photo 9

- Continue wrapping rows until you have 9 total, or 4 rows on each side of the Basic Row (**Photo 9**). Remember to wrap at a 45 degree angle at the Top Wire, and a 90 degree at the Bottom Wire. Make certain to keep track of which side of the petal is the front, and which is the back. The wire wraps and the top and bottom wires should only show on the back side.

NOTE: It is important to keep the Top and Bottom Wires of the frame straight while you wrap rows. If you allow the wires to bend, the leaf will end up lop-sided. If they do bend out of place, gently pull the Top and Bottom Wires in opposite directions at the same time to straighten them.

- After completing the required number of rows, "tie off" the Working Wire by wrapping it twice below the last row on the Bottom Wire. These wraps should be tight and close together. (**Photo 10**)

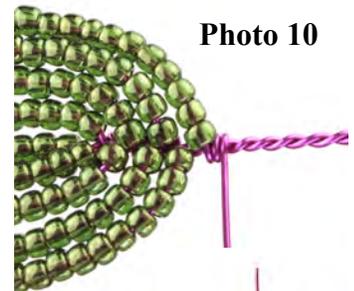


Photo 10

- The pattern says to "reduce to two Bottom Wires". To do this, simply use some wire cutters to carefully remove the Working Wire. Clip it very close to the Bottom Wire (**Photo 11**).

- Twist the two remaining Bottom Wires together approximately 1 inch (2.5 cm) below the leaf. Leave the rest untwisted. Cut the bottom loop open and trim the wires to different lengths - *this will help keep the flower stem tidy during assembly*. Cut the Top Wire short, approximately 1/4 inch (6 mm) (**Photo 12**). Then fold it down against the back of the leaf.

Note: As you twist the bottom wires down, try to keep the twists smooth, just like when you constructed the frame. Any lumps in the petal or leaf stem wires will make lumps on the finished flower stem.



Photo 11



Photo 12



Photo 13



Photo 14

The front of the finished leaf is shown in **Photo 13**. The back of the leaf is shown in **Photo 14**. Notice that the top and bottom wires, along with all the wire wraps, are only visible on the back of the leaf.

Different sizes of petals and leaves require a different amount of support to prevent them from drooping. Reducing the number of stem wires when you can helps keep the flower stem thin.

- **Reduce to 1 Bottom Wire**- Only do this for very small parts that don't need a great deal of support. To do this, remove the working wire, then separate the wires in the loop and carefully cut one of them just below the wraps in the working wire "tie off". I do not recommend reducing to 1 bottom wire for pieces with just 3 rows. There are not enough twists between the bottom of the basic row and the bottom of the petal to hold it together. A leaf with 1 bottom wire is shown in **Photo 15**.
- **Reduce to 2 Bottom Wires** - for small or medium pieces. This is shown in the Basic Frame technique instructions on page 34.
- **3 Bottom Wires** - Heavier medium to large sized pieces will need 3 bottom wires to prevent them from drooping. Just like constructing the initial frame, we want to keep this wire as smooth as possible to prevent lumps on the flower stem. Untwist any sections of the bottom wire that are twisted, and straighten them as best you can. Then line the working wire up in between the two bottom wires, and pull down while twisting them together. A leaf with 3 bottom wires is shown in **Photos 16 & 17**.



Photo 15



Photo 16



Photo 17



Photo 18



Photo 19

Reverse Wrap

A Reverse Wrap is a simple modification of the Basic Frame where you wrap around one of the frame wires by crossing over the *back* of the wire, while wrapping the other frame wire over the normally by crossing over the front of the wire. This will make the wire wraps exposed on opposite sides of the petal. Look at **Photos 18 and 19**. They show two sides of the same leaf. On one side, the wires are exposed on the top. On the other side, the wires are exposed on the bottom. This technique helps conceal frame wires when both sides of the petal would be visible in the finished flower. This may sometimes be abbreviated in patterns as **RW**.

LESSON SIX: LACING

TERMS TO REMEMBER

- Lacing
- Lace-as-you-go

Simply put, lacing is sewing across a petal or leaf with a thin gauge of wire. **Photo 1** shows a petal that is unlaced. Even if your technique is perfect the rows of beads in petals over a certain size will separate, leaving the petal looking unkempt. Shaping the petal into a more natural shape with bends and twists and folds creates a disastrous mess. We fix this problem with **Lacing**.

Lacing is used to prepare our flower components for assembly. It's one of the things that many French Beaded Flower artists love to hate, and hate to love. Why? Because it can be a real pain in the fingers. However, it vastly improves the appearance of flowers by keeping the rows nice and tidy, and by allowing you to shape flower components into more natural shapes without getting a mess of beads and wire. Don't skip the lacing!

Not everything needs to be laced. Each artist has their own set of rules for when to lace. These are mine:

- Lace anything that is 11+ rows wide. (You don't always have to lace at 11 rows, so decide those on a case-by-case basis.)
- Lace anything that is over 2 inches (5 cm) long, no matter how many rows.
- Lace any piece that will endure a *large* amount of shaping (bending and molding pieces into natural shapes).
- For long petals and leaves, lace once for every 1 to 1 ½ inches (2.5 - 3.8 cm) along the Basic Row.
- Lace whenever YOU feel it's necessary, even if a pattern doesn't call for it!



Photo 1

For this exercise, make a Basic Frame leaf with 24 gauge (.5 mm) wire in any shape and with any size basic row that is at least 13 rows wide. Use 30-32 gauge (0.2 - 0.25 mm) copper core wire to lace. I recommend using a color of wire that closely matches the beads, if you can find it. I will be using a mismatched color so you can see it more easily in pictures.

1. To begin, cut a length of 30-32 gauge wire that is approximately 2 ½ times the width of the leaf. Fold the wire in half.
2. Insert the wire into the *front* of the petal, with one wire end on each side of the Basic Row (**Photo 2**).
3. Pull both wire ends all the way through to the back of the petal. (**Photo 3**). The center fold in the lacing wire should "catch" between two beads on the Basic Row.
4. Cross the wires on the back of the petal so they switch places (**Photo 4**).

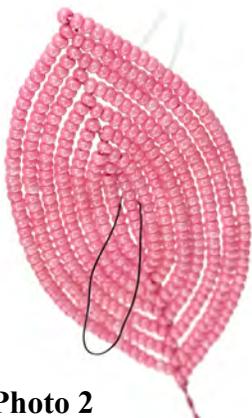


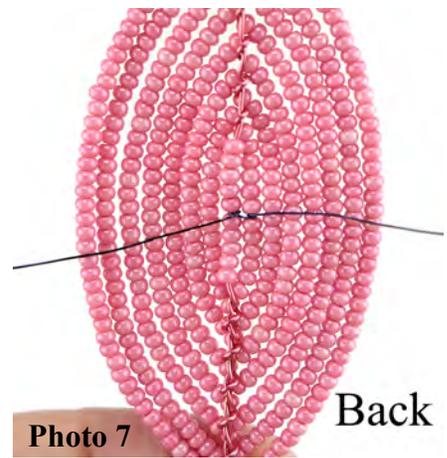
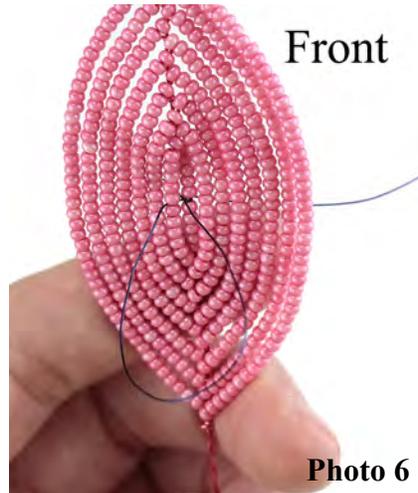
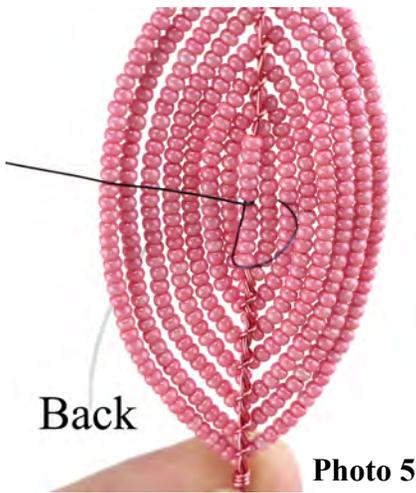
Photo 2



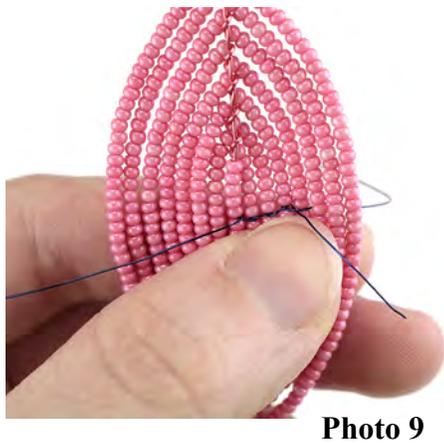
Photo 3



Photo 4

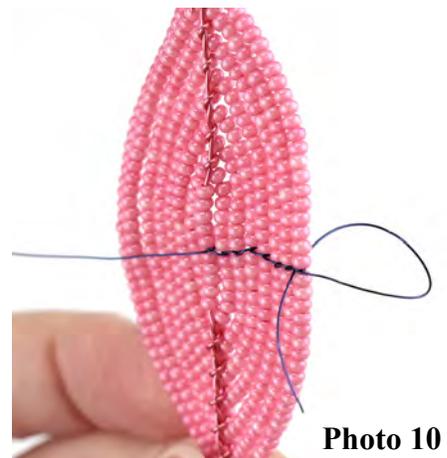


5. Still looking at the back of the petal, select one of the wire ends and insert it between the first and second rows of beads (**Photo 5**). Pull the wire all the way through to the front of the petal.
6. Flip to look at the front of the petal. Insert the end of the wire between the Basic row and the first row beside it (**Photo 6**). Pull the wire all the way through to the back, making a complete loop around the first row of beads beside the Basic Row (**Photo 7**). *If you are familiar with sewing or embroidery, this is very similar to back-stitch.* Check the front of the leaf to make sure the wire is tightly between two beads. On the front side, you shouldn't see much wire - just an almost imperceptible loop around the row. On the back there will be a wire crossing over between the Basic Row and the row beside it.
7. Repeat, skipping over a row with every loop of the lacing wire until all the rows are sewn together. If you've done it correctly, the lacing wire should only show on the back of the petal. (**Photo 8**)



*TIP: I find it very helpful to use my thumbnail to mark the petal just below the lacing line. Not only does this pinch and hold the rows together while you lace, but it also helps guide the lacing wire between the correct beads (**Photo 9**).*

8. When you reach the outer edge of the petal, wrap the lacing wire twice around the last row of beads to secure it (**Photo 10**). Use wire cutters to clip it close against the petal. If there is a tiny tail of wire left, fold it down between the beads with pliers or a fingernail.



- Repeat with the other wire end to lace the other half of the petal. **(Photo 11)** *I tend to flip my petal upside-down to lace the second side because it is easier for me if I move right-to-left.*

Photo 12 shows the back of the finished petal. The lacing wire should only show on the back.

Notice in **Photo 13** that rows still stay mostly together when you twist and shape the petals.

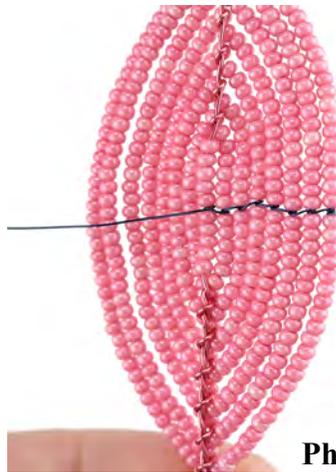


Photo 11



Photo 12

Most of the time you will lace straight across a petal or leaf. Beads won't always line up exactly to get a perfectly straight line across, but do try to get it as straight as you can.

Other times you may need to lace in a **v-shape**, especially near the top or bottom tips of a leaf. This is done exactly the same way as regular lacing, just lace at an angle rather than straight across. **Photo 14** shows an example of a leaf with a v-shaped lacing line. Sometimes my patterns will have dashed lines like these to tell you where to place the lacing wires.

NOTE: You can also lace from one side of the leaf to the other side, instead of starting in the middle. However, because my hands are small, I find it harder to hold the piece and all the rows in place while lacing that way.



Photo 13

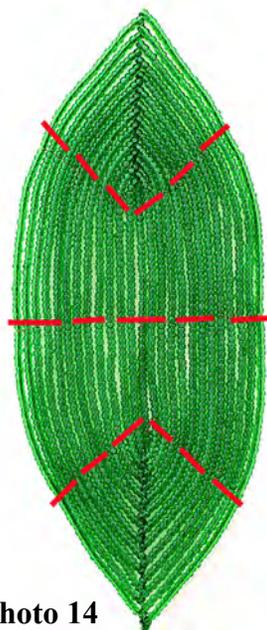


Photo 14

Lace-As-You-Go

When making very long or very wide petals and leaves, it can be difficult to get the rows of beads to line up nicely. For these pieces, it is very helpful to lace them while you make them, rather than waiting until you have all the rows finished. Lacing during construction is called **Lace-as-you-go**. Some French Beading artists choose to lace all of their pieces this way, no matter the size.

- Wrap the first three rows of a leaf. Then add in the lacing wire(s) exactly as you would with regular lacing. Lace all the rows you already have (**Photo 15**). Because this is a long leaf, it requires three lacing wires.

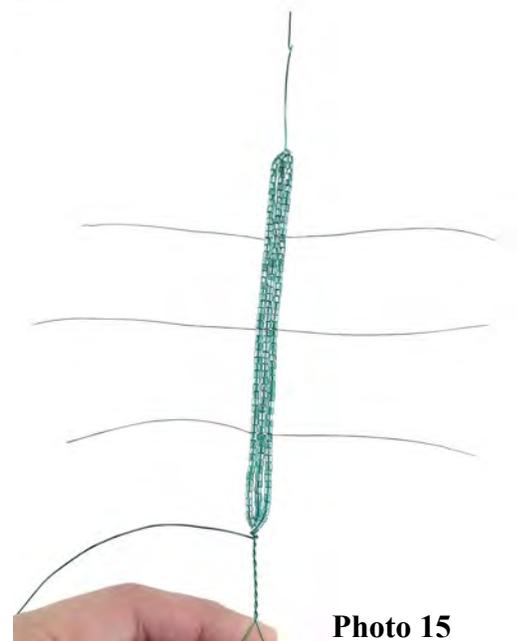


Photo 15



Photo 16



Photo 17

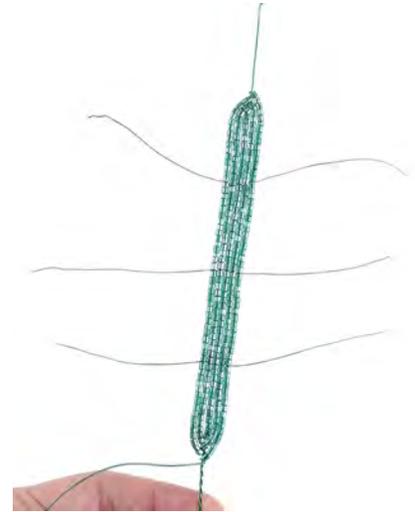


Photo 18

2. After the lacing wires are in place you can continue adding rows. Measure the beads needed to reach the first lacing wire, hold tension on the beads so no gaps form between them, and loop the lacing wire around. (**Photo 16**)
3. Measure the beads needed to reach the next lacing wire, hold tension, and loop the lacing wire around (**Photo 17**).
4. Repeat until you reach the end of the row, then wrap the working wire around the top or bottom wire to secure the row. (**Photo 18**)
5. Repeat on all the remaining rows.

For shorter pieces that you need to lace-as-you-go, you can carefully measure out the beads needed for the full row and wrap at the Top or Bottom Wire, then go back through and loop all the lacing wires around it before moving on to the next row.

Resources

Because I live in the USA, most of the shops that I have actually used are located in the US. However, I have also added some sources that I know of in other countries. I have browsed the sites to see if materials are available there, but have not purchased from them.

Seed Beads:

USA

- Fire Mountain Gems - firemountaingems.com
- Shipwreck Beads - shipwreckbeads.com
- Beaded Edge Supply - beadededgesupply.com
- Orr's Trading Post - orrs.com
- Pow Wow Supply - ponwowssupply.com
- Aura Crystals - auracrystals.com
- Caravan Beads - caravanbeads.com
- Eureka Crystal Beads - eurekacrystalbeads.com
- Fusion Beads - fusionbeads.com

UK

- GJ Beads - gjbeads.co.uk
- Spellbound Beads - spellboundbead.co.uk
- Spoilt Rotten Beads - spoilrottenbeads.co.uk
- The London Bead Company - londonbeadco.com

Canada

- Bead FX - beadfx.com
- Beazu - beazu.ca
- Butterfly Beads - butterflybeads.ca
- I-Bead - www.ibeadcanada.com
- That Bead Lady - thatbeadlady.com

Wire:

USA

- Parawire - Parawire.com, UnkamenSupplies.com
- Artistic Wire - Beadalon.com, Shipwreckbeads.com, GreatCraftWorks.com
- Zebra Wire - Firemountaingems.com
- Paddle Wire - *local craft or florist supply store*
- Florist Stem Wire - Papermart.com, *local craft or florist supply store*
- Galvanized Steel Wire Coils - *local hardware store*, Amazon.com

UK

- Scientific Wire - wires.co.uk

Other Supplies:

Any store with a floral department should have a selection of foam, moss, marbles, floral tape, and other potting and assembly needs.

- Embroidery floss - *local craft store*, DMC.com, JEC.com (for flat untwisted silk floss)
- Non-hardening Clay & Plaster - *local craft store*, Amazon.com, dickeblick.com

More Tutorials & Patterns:

My website has many more technique lessons, as well as my free and paid patterns and my blog. - BeadandBlossom.com

Historical References:

- Levi, Ragnar. *Flower Forever: Bead Craft from France and Venice*. 2015.
- Crabb-Edwards, Jonalee A. (2001) *Origins of Beaded Flowers*. View at <http://www.Roxelana.com/new/papers/origins-of-beaded-flowers>.