

International Beading Week 2024

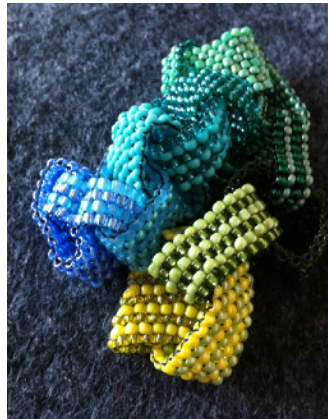
Ribbon necklace

by Floor Kaspers



What is a ribbon necklace?

When I first started with beadweaving, I started with making pieces of even count peyote stitch. I did not know the name, did not really know what I was doing, and I was using whatever size and quality seed beads I had laying around. When I realized I could join them, I remembered the cheerful garlands we used to have in kindergarten. They were ribbons of paper looped together into a garland or necklace and they inspired my bead project.



So, my first finished beadwork project ever was what I now call a 'ribbon necklace'.



Essentially, it is a necklace made from strips of peyote stitch, zipped up looping it into the previous loop. It is great project for beginners, but also lends itself to varying with patterns and colors.

Below, I will show a pattern for a simple ribbon, and how to loop it. However, there are many variations possible.

A few guidelines and ideas

Width and length of the ribbon

I often like to make the ribbons a bit more than 4 times the width of the ribbon. This creates a nice effect where the ribbons (because they are looped) are about as wide as they are long in the necklace. However, you can vary the length and the width as much as you want. You can for example make them in graduating length for variation in your necklace. One thing to consider though is that if you make your ribbons quite wide, you will also be needing more length to loop the next ribbon around.

I suggest you cut some paper ribbons and try it out, but beware that the beaded ribbon will be more flexible and 'hang' into the previous ribbon.

Colors and patterns

There are many ways to create interest in your ribbons, from very simple to quite complicated. I have mostly used three methods: color graduating, patterns and letters.

Color changes

Because there are so many loops to make a necklace, it lends itself well to show a slow change in colors, which is what I like to do with these. Take out my colors, and start picking colors in an order that sits well. These have always been very popular.



Patterns

The ribbons work great with a variety of patterns, from simple lines to more complicated ones. A great resource for patterns for these ribbons are the patterns that are created for the two holed plastic carrier beads. They are most often even stitch peyote, 6 wide, and 25 rows. If you search for these patterns, you are sure to find interesting ones that will suit you. You can use this exact size, but I suggest making them a few rows longer.



Letters

My most recent ribbon necklace was made with graduating colors and letters. The letters were a combination from several free peyote fonts available, used in a 8 width ribbon. In my case, I used a swear word (blurred out, you get the idea) but you can use whichever message you like. If you want it to be visible, you should only use the letters on every other ribbon, as only one will be visible when worn.



Making the necklace

These ribbon necklaces are a lot of fun to make. But...they do take more time than you may think. Because the necklace is looped, you basically are creating a lot more length than if you were just creating a regular necklace or bracelet. How many loops you will need depends on the length of the ribbons and the length of your necklace. Mine have upwards of 50 ribbons

For me, I like to make them long, so I can put them over my head and be quite a statement necklace. I just loop the ends together with the final ribbon, and it is a continuous loop. Especially if you are using graduating colors, this means you can turn the necklace to suit the colors you like that day.

You can also create a shorter necklace or even a bracelet. In that case, a clasp is required. A specific type of clasp that works well for this is known as a pearl necklace shortener.

If you already know the order of the ribbons, you can just attach each loop to the next as you go along. If you are unsure of the order you want them in, you can just create all the ribbon pieces first, and then attach them at the end.

Materials

I use either delicas or size 15 Miyuki seed beads for these. However, that is entirely your choice. You can just as well use Czech seed beads, different sizes, or even combine them in the same necklace.

Personally, I like to use Fireline thread, 6lb, but again, that is a personal preference. I suggest starting with about 3 feet of thread, which usually is enough for a single ribbon without having to attach a new thread. If you have measured out the thread for the first one, you will know if you finish it how much thread you need for each.



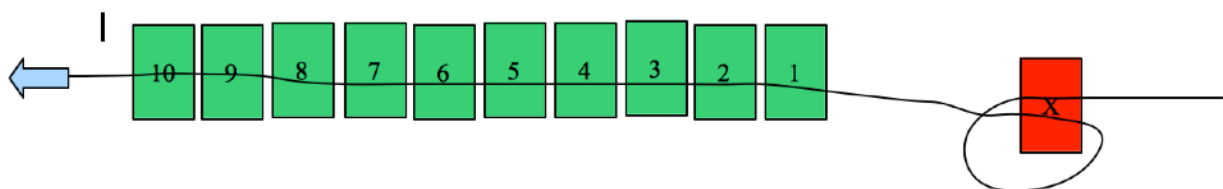
Project description simple ribbon necklace

Materials

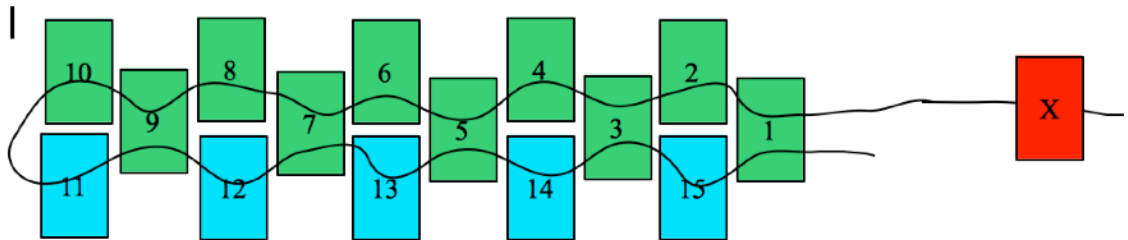
- Miyuki Delica beads or any other beads
- Fireline thread, 6lb or your favorite thread.
- Bead mat
- Scissors
- lighter/threadzap (often not needed)
- beading needle (I will use John James needles or Tulip beading needles, size 11)

Basic peyote stitch

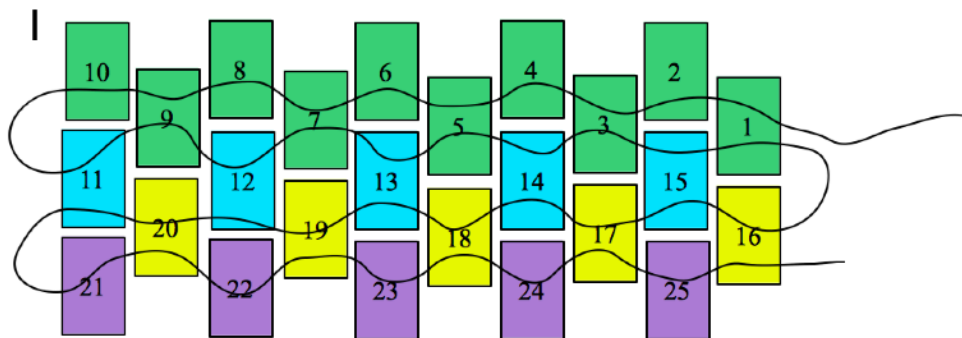
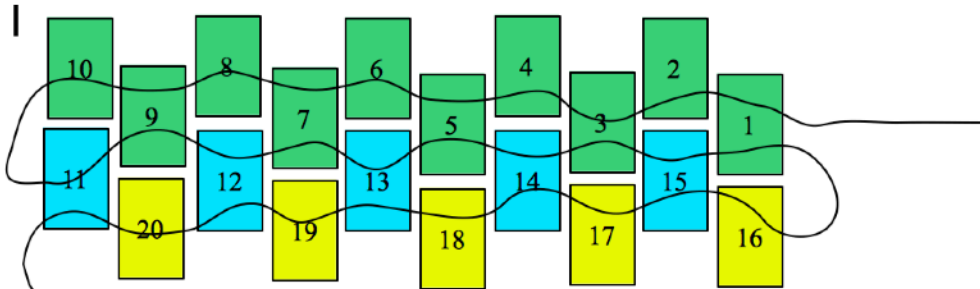
1. Cut a piece of thread (about 3 to 4 feet)
2. Flatten the end of the thread (between your finger nails) and thread it through the needle. If you have trouble with this, hold the tip of the thread with one hand, and the needle in the other. Bring the needle towards the thread, instead of the other way around.
3. Pick up a stopper bead: thread it onto the thread with the needle, and then thread it again from the same side. Pull the stopper bead to about 4 inches from the end of the thread. This stopper beads keeps your strung beads from falling off.
4. Pick up 10 beads. These will be the first 2 rows. After this, you will need 5 beads for each row.
Please note: The example in the description starts with 10 beads, but you can also use 6 or 8 or 12 (or more if you are using 15's)

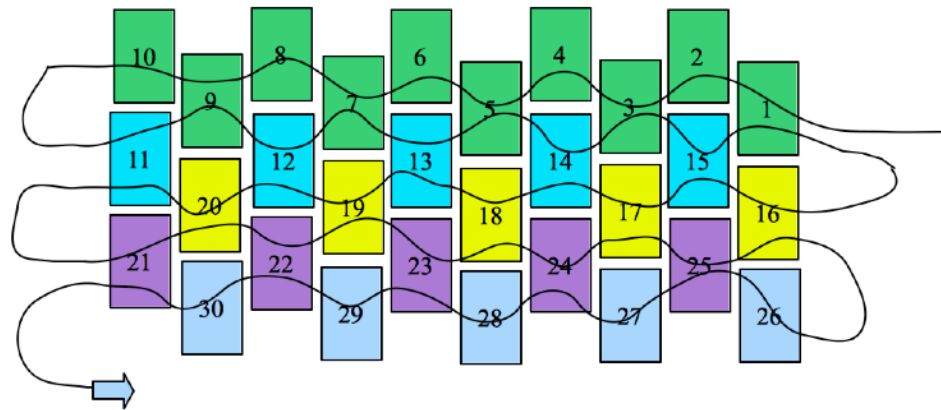


5. Pick up bead number 11 and go through bead number 9. Pick up bead number 12 and go through bead number 7. This will create 'up and down' beads. Continue.



6. When you have picked up bead 15 and have gone through bead number 1, you pick up the first bead of the next row. This is bead number 16, and you then go through bead 15. Continue.





Attaching a new thread

When you are coming to the end of your thread, there are several ways to attach a new thread. I like to use a method that does not require the thread to be woven in.

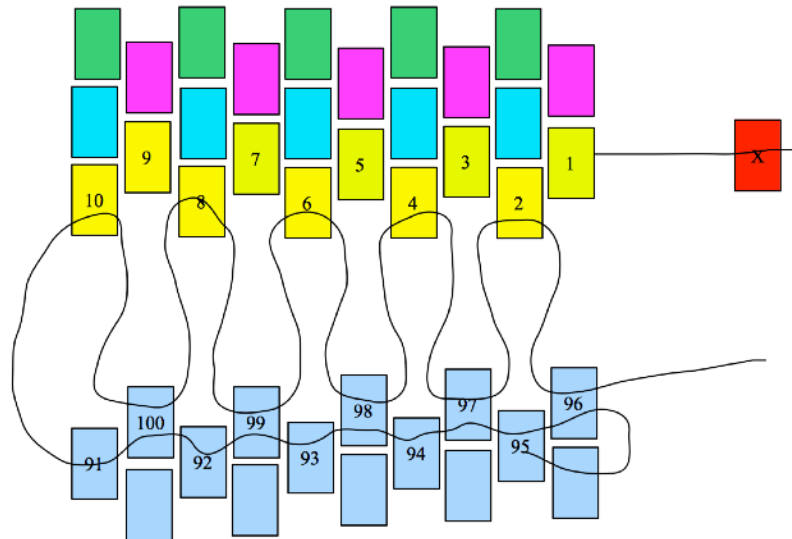
Cut a new piece of thread. Make a square knot with the old and the new thread. Cut the ends about 1 inch from the knot. With a lighter, melt a tiny ball at the end of each thread. You do this by slowly moving the thread towards the low part of the flame. After you have melted both ends, pull the threads tight. You will now have one thread, attached to the beadwork, with a small knot. If the threads pull loose, you need to make the balls a bit bigger. If the thread will not go through the beads easily, the molten ends are too big. In that case: cut the knot out, and do it again.

This method is shown well in a video by Patrick Duggan here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdHD23yzB-I>

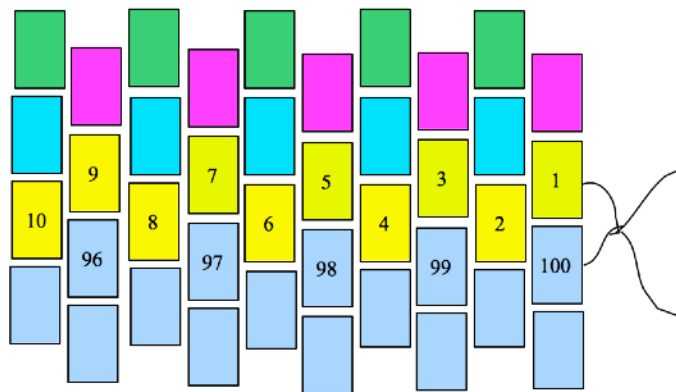
Finishing

To make the strip into a loop for the necklace, you need to line up both ends of the ribbon. Make sure they are 'opposite' of each other when it comes to which beads are 'up' and 'down'. This means you have used an even number of rows.

Connect the ends by going through the 'up' beads on both ends. Zip the piece together. Remove the stopper bead from the thread from the beginning. You can knot the two thread ends together, but it is not required.



Next, weave the thread ends into the beadwork. When the thread is woven in, cut off the remaining piece of thread close to the beads.



Then, you start on your next ribbon, and when it is time to zip it up, you put it through the previous loop.

Keep going, and create your own very first ribbon necklace. Or two, or three, or.....