

International Beading Week 2025

Color mixing beads: three-drop peyote necklace

By Floor Kaspers

There are a thousand ways to work with colors in beadwork. Some people prefer to work with detailed patterns, some work with starkly contrasting colors. For me, gradual color changes work best. In this pattern, I will explain how I create gradual color changes in a single piece.



This is just an example of a piece you can make, you can use the same gradual color changing technique for large netting pieces, a ribbon link necklace or whatever larger piece you are working on. It does not work as well for smaller pieces, as you need quite a large piece for really nice gradual color changes.

The piece we are making here is a 3 drop peyote flat necklace, 1.4 inches wide, 40 inches long, made from size 11/0 delicas. However, you can just as well use other seed beads, including mixed seed beads for a more textured look.

This pattern is written for those with a general knowledge of beading and (three drop) peyote stitch.

Materials

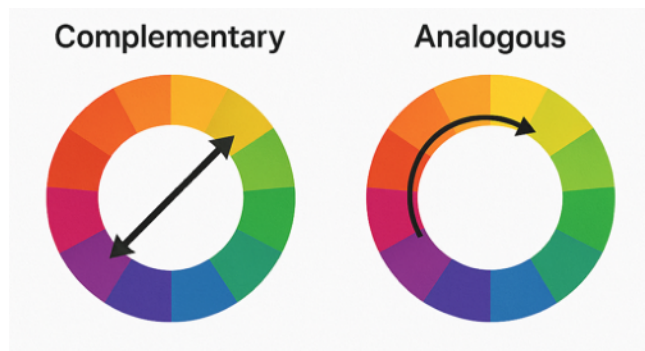
60 grams of miyuki delicas
A lot of thread (I use Fireline 6lb)
A size 11 needle
A thread burner or lighter
5 zip lock bags or bead containers
(one for each mix, and one for the mixed beads you are working with transitioning from one mix to the next)



Instructions

Step 1

Pick your color scheme



When you look a color wheel, I like to look at colors that are close to each other to combine in a piece. Those are called analogous colors. Complementary colors are opposite of each other on the color wheel.

Examples of analogous color schemes that work well are for example from yellow to green (cool colors) or from yellow to red (warm colors). But ofcourse, you can see what works for you.

Step 2

Pick your size

Decide how big you want your piece to be to calculate how many beads you need. If you follow the basic pattern for the 40 inch long necklace, you will need about 11.500 beads. This is about 60 grams of delica beads, so that is a lot!

Step 3

Create your bead mixes

We will use 4 color mixes for one necklace. We mix the beads into color mixes, so it is more of a natural looking color. So instead of using one type of yellow bead, you will use 3 or more yellow bead colors. You can use matte, shiny, silver lined, coated, etc all mixed together. You can also use up small leftover beads that were mixed or are just not enough to start a new project with.

You will make 4 mixes of 15 grams minimum. To give yourself some extra to work with, I would use at least 18 grams, but it does mean you will have more left over. If you are using 3 different colors per mix, you would need 5 grams or just a little extra per color.

So for example, you could make it as follows:

Mix 1: yellow

6 grams of bright opaque yellow
6 grams of dark silver lined yellow
6 grams of matte soft yellow

Mix 2: orange

6 grams of silver lined orange
6 grams of matte dark orange
6 grams of transparant orange-red

Mix 3: red

6 grams of lipstick red
6 grams of dark transparent red
6 grams of silver lined bright red

Mix 4: purple

6 grams of silver lined purple
6 grams of matte aubergine
6 grams of transparant violet

Or you can just mix and match with what you have, play with it, mix it like paint.

Step 4

Start beading

This is done with three drop peyote stitch. It creates a very soft fabric like piece of beadwork. It can also be done with single peyote or two drop peyote stitch. In essence, it is the same as regular peyote, except you pick up and skip three beads for each stitch instead of one. I have created two simple videos (while sitting outside at a French cafe, so you can mute or enjoy the vibe;-)). You can find them here: <https://youtu.be/C1d2BicrdgE?si=CNIL9GP8aMaqboyE> https://youtu.be/-rqmPgv_kzU?si=fdZ3u0UhrZ44s8MD There are other videos on three drop peyote stitch available as well.

Start with a stopper bead and then string 24 beads of Mix 1. These form rows 1 and 2. Pick up three beads, skip three beads and thread your needle through three beads from the first 24. This how you start building the ribbon. I suggest using a pretty loose tension. Bead about 2 inches (5cm) of length with this mix.

Inch	color
1	Mix 1
2	Mix 1
3	5% Mix 2
4	10% Mix 2
5	30% Mix 2
6	50% mix 2
7	70% Mix 2
8	90% Mix 2
9	95% mix 2
10	Mix 2
11	Mix 2
12	Mix 2
13	5% Mix 3
14	10% Mix 3
15	30% Mix 3
16	50% mix 3
17	70% Mix 3
18	90% Mix 3
19	95% mix 3
20	Mix 3

Inch	Color
21	Mix 3
22	Mix 3
23	5% Mix 4
24	10% Mix 4
25	30% Mix 4
26	50% mix 4
27	70% Mix 4
28	90% Mix 4
29	95% mix 4
30	Mix 4
31	Mix 4
32	Mix 4
33	5% Mix 1
34	10% Mix 1
35	30% Mix 1
36	50% mix 1
37	70% Mix 1
38	90% Mix 1
39	95% mix 1
40	Mix 1

Step 5

Start transitioning

After the first two inches, start adding beads from Mix 2 slowly for a gradual color change. I have created an example of how you can mix the beads in this table. Start by adding about 5% of the beads with the new color mix, then 10%, etc. This is just a general guideline.

Personally, I tend to add some more beads of the new mix every time I add a new thread. The main advice I can give for mixing the beads is: go slow! You do not want to be able to see where one begins and the other one ends.

As you can see, I have about 3 inches of one color mix, then 7 inches of going from one color to the next color. So the section in which I am transitioning is more than double the length of the section where I only use the single color mix.

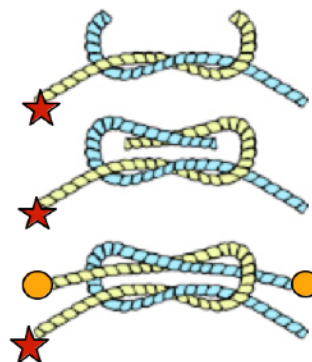


Step 6

Adding new thread

I add a new thread when I have about 2 to 3 inches of thread left. 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 half an 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.



★ Piece of beadwork is attached here

● Melt a tiny ball here

Step 7

Finishing off

When you start getting to the end, you will be transitioning from mix 4 back to mix one. This can be a bit tricky, so make sure you start the transition soon enough. Again, the table gives you a good guideline for this.

Once you have finished the desired length, just zip the two ends together and enjoy your necklace.

