



Wire Working Basics

Working with a Head Pin

by Judy Markwell

Tools:

- Chain Nosed Pliers
- Flat Nosed Pliers
- Needle Nosed Pliers
- Side Cutters
- Emery Board

If your wire wraps aren't quite as even and nice as you'd like, or if you've never done wire work before, why not practice attaching a bead on a head pin. Good workmanship is a wonderful thing to have in your work - it makes your designs the center of attention instead of loose wires and crooked twists taking away from them.

The tool list may seem a little long for a project this small, and you could get by without the flat nosed pliers, but if you make much jewelry at all, these tools will truly come in handy.



Fig.1

One of the most used wire-working techniques is attaching a bead to a head pin. If you plan on making earrings, this is the easiest way to make them. You just attach as many beads as you'd like onto a headpin as shown following, and then add whatever kind of earring finding you'd like. If you're interested in what the blue stuff is on my tools, it's Tool Magic, and I don't work without it.

It keeps my tools from making marks on my metal

So now here's the how-to. In Fig.1, you'll notice that on this pin there is a black seed bead on the bottom. The hole of this bead is so large that the head pin would run through it, so I've started with a seed bead as shown. I put one at the top simply for uniformity. Now grasp the wire with chain nosed pliers right at the top of the bead and make a hard bend in the wire that's about 90° angle as shown in Fig.2.



Fig.2

Remember the “Rule of Three” which is that whenever you try something new with wire, it will take you three tries to get it to look right. So plan on it, don't get frustrated by it.

As shown in Fig. 3, grasp the wire with your needle nosed pliers right in the bend, and using either your fingers or a your flat nosed pliers, grasp the end of the wire and wrap it around the end of the needle nosed pliers, so you have something that looks like Fig.4.

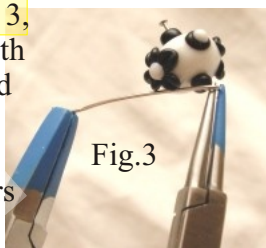


Fig.3

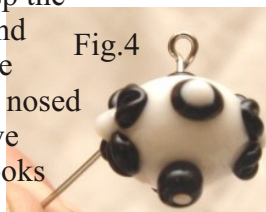


Fig.4

At this point, hook your bead onto whatever you're attaching it to, be it an earring finding, or a charm bracelet shown in Fig.5. - whatever.

The next steps close the loop, so now or never.

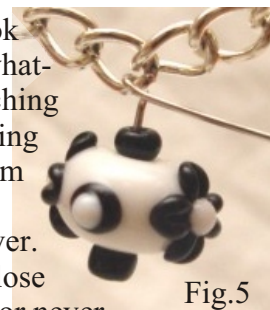


Fig.5



Fig.6

Take hold of the headpin right on the loop, so that the entire remaining shaft of the head pin is exposed, as shown in Fig.6. Using either your fingers or the flat nosed pliers, grasp the end of the wire and loop it around the headpin, taking care that your wraps are even and go straight around the head pin. Continue until you are right next to the top of the bead.

Using your flush cutters, cut the end of the wire off right next to the wrapping as shown in Fig.7 ("flush" with the wrapping- get it?) If you haven't used flush cutters before, be sure to read the inset box below. It might save you or your customers a little pain.



Fig.7



Fig.8

Fig.8 shows the tail that you'll have left after you've cut your wire. Even when you use your cutters the proper way, this is still unacceptable. Take hold of the head pin on the loop that you've

made using your needle nosed pliers (this isn't shown so you can see what I'm doing in here) and use your chain nose pliers to "tuck" that wire into place, as shown in Fig.9. This will



Fig.9

keep the end from catching on skin or clothing, and it's one of those little details that will makes your work professional.

Flush Cutters

If you haven't notices yet, there are two sides to your flush cutter. When you cut wire, your cutter will leave one end of the wire quite flat, and the other end will be honed into a mini-weapon.

Take a moment and cut a piece of scrap wire and look at the two cuts that the cutter makes. The side that's "flush" is the one that you want to leave on your jewelry, always.

If you don't learn it beforehand, one good jab will insure that you remember !



If you've already progressed to owning a set of needle files, that's what you'd use for the step shown in Fig.10. If not, use an emery board. First, run your finger over your work, and if you feel anything sharp, file it off. Continue filing and checking until it feels smooth.



Fig.10

That's it. This is one of the most basic skills that you need if you're going to be making much jewelry, and well worth a little practice to get perfect!!