



Beads in Every Color

Metal Clay beads come in all shapes and sizes. Use your scrap to create tiny embellishments or build large beads that stand on their own as striking focal points.

Supplies

The Basics

Teflon sheet
Clay Roller/Slats
Badger Balm
Water and Brush
Scalpel
Ruler

Clay

Clay of your choice.
This is a good opportunity to use small bits of clay from other projects that may dry up before you get to use them again or just small bits at the end of a package.

Other Tools

Texture mats, texture rollers, anything making a nice imprint. These can be found in "Texture Tools" section of the shopping area. Some of my favorites are:
Totem Blank(SM2-TOBK)
Abstract Grids (SM3ABGR)
Cool Doodles (SM3-CODO)
Contrast Blocks (SM3-CNBK)

Pattern Cutter Sets: There are several shapes found under "Cutters" in the shopping section of the website

Tissue Slicing Blade (SB)
Straws
Bead Reamer (DBRS)

Finishing

Wire or Brass Brush
Tumbler/Shot
Shine Brite Polishing Compound (SHNBRT)
2" x2" Ultra Polishing Pad (ULTPOLPAD)
Micro-Mesh Polishing pads (3MSTP364)
Agate Burnisher (BTSTONE2)

Liver of sulfur (LOS)
Jeweler's Black (JBLACK)

Step-by-Step. . . and some thoughts from the Project Guide Editor. . .

As I am writing this on the first day of fall, my thoughts immediately turn to what would be good holiday projects. Many artists and crafters do holiday sales and fundraisers and there are always gifts needed for friends and family.

Those labor intensive projects don't always fill the bill. So, for the next few months we will try to provide you with some suggestions for some quick, yet striking, projects.

We always enjoy your feedback and suggestions for any of our projects.

If you have small left over bits of clay, too small for the next project, try making a couple of beads with them. This will prevent the clay from drying out and going into the scrap pile. Just let the beads dry, clean them up a bit, and fire them with another firing. Remember to keep them labeled as to type of clay so that they get a proper firing.

There are many ways to make beads. They can be thick or thin, large or small (or even teeny), silver, gold, copper or bronze, long or short. Use your imagination.

Here are a few variations to get you started:



1) Roll clay into a small ball, press down on a textured area until somewhat flattened, place another texture on top and with your fingers, press down, working from center to edges. Remove the texture pieces, let dry slightly and cut out a hole for stringing.

2) Roll clay out flat and cut various shapes with a tissue slicing blade. Long tailed triangles make particularly striking beads. Roll them around a straw which has been coated with a good coat of badger balm or wrapped with paper. Join the edges with PMC3 Paste or Syringe clay. The ends of your beads can overlap or fit together precisely like a ring band.



3) Improvise. On our large fish bead, the original impression did not quite fit around the ring mandrel which I was using to dry it, so I made another smaller fish, cut it out, and used it to join the back of the bead. Wrapping with paper is always best for big fat beads as they are harder to remove when dry (especially copper and bronze).



4) Long rectangles make long rolled beads which can be dried straight or curved slightly for a necklace centerpiece.

5) Use the large size pattern cutter for the exterior border of the bead and cut out the middle with a different shape.

6) Cut the hole for stringing off center. Cutting the interior holes different sizes also makes the beads hang differently.



7) Make a large flat bead, textured on both sides so that it can be used as a centerpiece for a pendant with other beads strung on top of it.

These are just a few suggestions to get you started. Don't forget all the usual steps like conditioning each piece of clay before you begin and cleaning your tools when switching to a different kind of clay. Beads usually require minimal cleanup. Look them over, make any changes that are needed, and fire according to the manufacturer's directions for the clay you are using. Tumbling the beads for an hour will shine and work harden them.

Liver of Sulfur or Jeweler's Black can be used to patina your beads. Burnish or polish them or leave some areas unpolished. Combine them with purchased beads or found objects. String them and re-string them when the mood strikes.

You can make your beads very uniform and construct an elegant piece or vary them in size and shape for interesting conversation piece.

The options are endless.

Most important of all, have fun.

