

How-To Do Machine Washable Period Beadwork:

An Arts and Sciences Class for Pensic XXX

By Lady Elspeth Grizel Of Dunfort, OW, APFx2 - Barony Flaming Gryphon, Midrealm



First, this is really easy, whenever I teach folks they go "That's it? That's easy!". It really is simple, you won't believe it. My students come back going! "WOW! everyone thinks I'm like a god now!" Really. Once you do it a few times, your' hooked. It progresses faster than regular embroidery.

Yes, as far as my embroidery goes, everything is couched within an inch of it's life. No escape, no surrender.

Period method was to string all the beads on at once and then one by one couch them in place with a second thread. It's hard cumbersome and not durable, if a thread broke you could loose whole lines.

I have developed a method that is in looks Identical to period couching but is... gasp... machine washable and sturdy as a elephant and even can be worn in yes... battle. This is what is contained within.

You can download this file IN COLOR as a PDF format file (or view as a webpage) as well other past class handouts, by going to: <http://www.medievalbeads.com>. Proceed to the "CLASS NOTES" section where you will find these files. The site also houses tons of photo documtentation and reffering texts (when I can find them).

Jen Funk Segrest
Lady Elspeth Grizel Of Dunfort

3217 Keays Ave
Middletown, OH 45044
513-424-9202

Email me!: grizel@medievalbeads.com



DRAWING IT OUT

Using PENCIL like I said before, I use a mechanical pencil (just easier since it doesn't have to be sharpened and fits in the bead kit better)

I draw cross hairs more often than not so I can periodically check the way the material is shifting. You can use a magazine, postcard any thing SQUARE for this check.

You will from time to time have to redraw areas, don't fret it's normal. Especially in freestanding shapes like this. IF you DON'T do it everyone will know as it will be lopsided and uneven. Get used to the idea you WILL be doing touch ups to the design.

I hand draw, but you could use carbon paper, there is a line at art supply houses for fabric that washed out.

Or you can hold the fabric to the window and have a black line drawing behind it against the cloth and trace the image on the front, this works really well if you don't have a lightbox. This is how I do designs sometimes.



(I didn't start shooting pictures of the procedure until I was started, but that's OK, just pick up from here. Sometime in the future I'll re-shoot this)

Come up next to your drawn line with your needle.

OK one thing to remember is your guidelines

Which ever way you will be running your beads, the sticking to the guidelines is the most important part, you may need to back off the line a bit so the edges fall directly on it.



Load your needle with some beads.

Gather the beads at the end of the thread with your needle and find out where your thread needs to go next.

Go down right next to the end bead, don't leave too much or not enough room, the beads should lie flat and not have a sag or open gaps.

In small tight areas you may only want a few, in longer straight areas you could well do over 20 or 30.

I usually tech folks with 4 beads at a time at first, it can be hard to scoop them from the bowl until you learn how to hold the needle and 4 is easy to do without trying.



Come up from underneath and come up in the middle of your line you just put down, at a crack between beads so you will not cause gaps.

You can use the stitch coming up between your lines to shape the row into curves, it will naturally lay flat, but come up a bit to one side and come through the rest of the line and it will curve. This is how you shape the lines.



Pass your needle through the beads starting from where you came up.

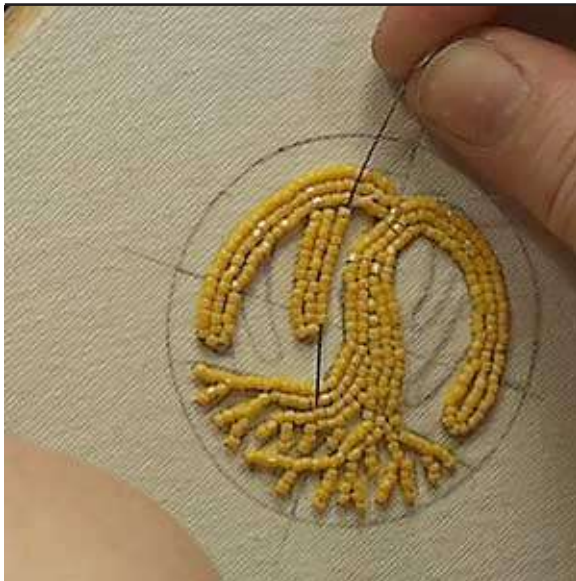


Pass your needle through the beads starting from where you came up.



And continue, repeating the steps so far as you need.

When you need to lay another row, give room for the beads, don't come up RIGHT next to the edge. Roughly give a 16th of an inch, or less. You'll get how to work the spacing after awhile.



When you get a section tacked down, whatever a section will be to your design, it's time for the next step.

Come up on one end of your section, and pass through one row ON TOP of the fabric.

This is an easy step, it's just basically like lacing your shoes. You will do a running pass through all your beads of that section, or area, on top of the fabric. You might need to do it in a couple tries as they surely will not all get on the needle in some designs due to length of the lines or curves. Just whip in a out till you get it done.

But this is easy, just run through, get to the end go through the next row, an the next... just turning around at the ends to go again, no need to go UNDER the fabric and come up unless you want to of course.

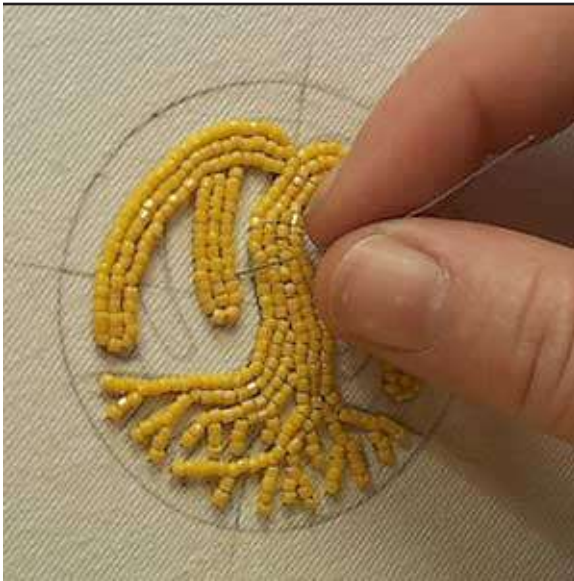


Okay, here I was trying to show you how to weave in and out, but it didn't photograph well, I plan on reshooting this section with colored thread soon anyway)

If I was just doing this on some fabric, without filling it in, but just the tree, I would be going through twice in opposite directions like lacing your shoes, (think left to right then turn around and right to left in the opposite directions)

What you are trying to do is have thread going IN and out of each bead to the ones next to it

See the diagram at the end of this handout to see this more clearly. I hope.



Come up anywhere near an end of your section, at a crack between two beads. Go down next to the crack in the neighboring row



Here is a show showing the thread and the rows involved.

Pull thread from underneath till thread POPS past the beads and onto the threads through the beads.



Come up in between those two rows.
And pass over the second row and the third row.

Repeat as far as you need, this goes much faster than it sounds.



Once on the inside of your shapes, if the cracks are aligned for it, you can pass over three beads.

You might need to tuck the thread down if it doesn't hide enough.

Some Useful Tips and Tricks:

Got a thread that is showing more than you'd like? Couch it too!



Come up from underneath on one side, and then go over it on the other. Then give a nice tug, and it will get pulled down and neatly out of sight.



Tadah! All hidden!

Removing bothersome, or crowded beads.



Sometimes as you begin to couch the rows of beads will kinda of grow, expanding ever so slightly as the thread adds some bulk to the line.

You might be able to tell that one of these here needs to die.

Now, don't panic this is easy. I mean how do you think you're going to do this? Undo possibly hundreds of stitches -don be silly!

Poke at the beads a bit and see which one is the beast candidate, beads, no matter how even they look, are all differently sized, a thinner one may be all you need to make the room, kill a larger one and you might have a gap, so pick the right one.

Use your needle to pull them forward and look how the rest sit, When you find the one that "needs killin" stick a straight pin or even your bead needle through it.



Grip the bead with needle-nose pliers.

Try to go ALONG the thread not across it. - along the needle if you can like shown, otherwise you could cut the thread with the glass shards, but that is what the needle is there for, to protect the thread from being driven down on by the pliers and the glass, as well as help you get at it.

You may at some point have to grip it the other way, along the rounded sides of the bead, at an angle from the needle, in that case just be careful.

When you go to snap the pliers shut and crack the bead off cup your free hand or lay a cloth/kleenex over the work. The glass WILL fly. I've had it shoot in my eye before, so covering it's escape route is good idea. You could wear goggles, but you'd look silly, just keep a scrap of cloth in your kit for this, much easier.

Some Useful Tips and Tricks: Cont'd

Keeping it in focus.



If you are making stand alone shapes, and even if you aren't, always keep your guides and drawings close at hand to refer to, to help keep shapes precise and lines straight.

TIPS: (or stuff I learned the hard way)

- First USE good heavy cloth, broad cloth weight weave will pull apart and believe it or not, the weave will form holes and beads will flip around to the backside if you aren't careful. I've done this, trust me, use cloth up to the task.

- I recommend you do pieces Oxford, light canvas, or even trigger type materials. They have a dense heavy weave. Basically if you can read a license plate through it it's too light. If you are doing accent pieces for light garb recommend you appliqué it on, hey it's period! And if the garment wears out, you simply remove it and apply to something else.

- If you want fabric showing around and IN your design but one that isn't capable of handling it, or want added protection, BACK the material with trigger or somesuch. More is never a bad thing.

- Use good beads. Buying Czech beads will help immensely, the cost is actually the same as the cheapo Taiwan beads available in crafts stores. Czechs are more uniform, the cheapos are odd in size and shape and sometimes color within the same bag. 8 or 10 grams of cheapos are like 99 cents at your craft store. 40 gr., or thereabouts, of czechs are like \$2.99.

- Never use ink to draw designs, use pencil, always, use colored pencil even, NEVER USE INK, it will bleed and make you curse the heavens.

- Always follow your drawn lines. If you bead line falls a bit short fine, but don't over shoot it, it will widen after the couching is done, and you may find you even need to remove beads from one end that is now too long and wants to draw up on you.

- Always make sure lines of beads lie flat to begin with, no bowing of the lines, this will make your job easier from the start.

- Use either beading floss or the premium sewing threads that are 100% long grain polyester, usually the more expensive ones. Not much more expensive, but they are worth it. Regular thread like Coats and Clark will fray on you sometimes in as little as three passes. I can work a good thread the very end god willing.

- Use thread to either match the beads or the material. Matching the beads will result in a more solid look, matching the fabric will give you a more mosaic look.

- To wash pieces before (to remove pencil lines) or after attaching to garments I suggest a fabric wash sack. For small items merely tossing them in a sock and tying the top will work to protect the machine as well as the beads. For garb I say spend a few bucks (or use scrap material) and make a muslin or T-shirt drawstring bag, just shove the it in and knot it, throw it in and wash it. This is to mainly make, sure the beads don't grind on the metal sides of the washer.

- The only real problems is tension.
 - Always use a hoop and keep the material as tight a possible. (Bouncing quarters tight)
 - Always work from the center of your design to the outside, doing the other ways could cause your piece to "bowl" or pucker. Fill in areas the same way.

- Don't pull the string until you turn blue, most of the time and firm tug to pass the crack of the beads is usually enough. This is something you learn in time. Pulling too much will make your piece bow upwards, convex... with practice you'll learn, and you're piece will flatten. Practice make perfect, you ought to see my first pieces.

In Brief: Building a design from the inside out.

This is a much-shortened version of one of my webpages where I have a step-by-step of how I build a medallion as an example of how to build a design from the inside out.

Always build this way as otherwise the pressure of the threads and the beads will PUSH the fabric around and you could end up with "bowled" or baggy, puckered sections that become unbeadable, or just plain ugly. Building from the inside out will push the fabric evenly outwards and while you may have to periodically redraw your design, the fabric will remain taut and flat.

You can view this webpage *IN COLOR*, with many more pictures, and with tip and comments by going to: <http://www.medievalbeads.com>. Proceed to the "CLASS NOTES" section and look for the "Step-by-Step" tutorial.

