



Bead Sizes:

The smaller the number of the bead the larger the bead. For example, a 6/o bead will slide onto DK weight yarn 8/o bead will fit finer yarn. Size 10-11 beads were most commonly used for bead knitting (using the finest needles and thread) as well as sewn bead work. Though I have seen samples of purses knit with 8/o's. The Blue Sampler Bag (Plaited Bead Kniting) was knit with 8/o seed beads.



There are two styles of Knitting with Beads. The first one discussed will be “**Beaded Knitting**“. These techniques differ from “**Bead Knitting**” in that the beads are applied onto, above or beside your knit stitches. With “**Bead Knitting**“, each bead is knit into a stitch, sitting on an arm of your knit stitch.

Beaded Knitting

The concept of embellishing your knits with beads, sometimes requiring that you pre-string your beads and sometimes not. These two methods do not require the pre-stringing of beads;

- 1). Method: By sewing beads where you want them, using a fine beading needle and beading thread. Not one that I use very often.
- 2). Method: By using the “add as you go” method, this involves a small crochet hook and places the bead onto both arms of the stitch chosen. This is very popular with lace knitters as the beads can be seen on both sides of the knitting.

Method: Using a crochet hook, a 0.6mm works for most 10/o or 8/o beads, pick-up the bead with the crochet hook and then slip the next stitch on your left hand needle off with the crochet hook, holding the stitch with the hook and slide the bead down the hook and on your stitch. Place the stitch back onto your left-hand needle and then knit as the pattern dictates. This is a very modern method of bead placement. Mary Thomas does not describe this method in her book, first published in 1936. I first saw it described in Montse Stanleys The Knitters Bible. If you don't have a small crochet hook handy try the method below.

[Got Beads? Got Dental Floss Threaders? You can add beads to your Knitting! | Le Tissier Designs \(wordpress.com\)](http://www.le Tissier Designs (wordpress.com))

All other methods of beaded knitting require that the beads be pre-strung onto the yarns before you begin knitting. Keep your dental floss threaders handy for pre-stringing beads!



Notes on Pre-stringing beads:

All of these techniques require that the beads be strung onto your yarn before you start knitting. The first time that you try knitting with beads I recommend that you work the pattern with only one colour of bead. That way as long as you have enough beads there won't be any problem with beads not being strung in the right order. This is the simplest way of learning the methods. After the first time you will be able to decide if you want to knit in a coloured pattern.



Figure 1 Beads strung in pattern for a loopy edge

When working a coloured pattern the beads must be strung in the correct order. In order to do this you string the beads in the reverse order that they are being knit. The first bead knit is the last bead strung. If you are working from a chart, flip your chart upside down and use the reverse chart for the bead stringing order.



Managing your Beads:

Once your beads are strung they will need to be managed and controlled. Your yarn and beads could be kept in a zip-lock bag, glass bowl, or anything to contain the yarn and beads. Many knitters prefer to wrap their beads around cardboard rolls and will move beads down their yarn as necessary, some will lay the yarn and beads out in long lines over their floors, no pets allowed. As the knitter you will have to explore and create the option that works for you and your style of knitting.



1) **Cast on with beads** – A beaded edge is easily worked with two strand (long tail) cast on. Place beads on the yarn that is wrapped around the thumb and slide a bead up as each stitch (or every other stitch) is created.

For the 'knitted on' or cable cast on slide a bead between the stitches as they are cast on. For the latter, the wrong side looks better than the usual right side.

2) **Beads between purl stitches**– This is the easiest of the pre-strung beading techniques. The beads are pulled up and placed between your stitches, usually purl stitches for the best effect. The stitches hold them in place. This technique does not work as well between knit



stitches as they will fall to the purl side. The bead sits horizontally on the bar between the stitches.

Method: Purl your stitch, pull up the bead and purl the next stitch. This method is often used for beaded purses. The fabric of the bag is garter stitch and the beads are strung between the purl stitches. These strands of beads will often start at 7 or more beads per section and slowly decrease down to 1 or 2 beads.

3) **Beaded loops** – Technique is the same as the beads between purl stitches. The differences are that loops are best placed between knit stitches and you will be pulling up multiples of beads. For best effect the multiple should be an odd number of beads. Method: Knit your stitch, move yarn forward between the needles and then pull beads up to rest tight to the stitch, move yarn to the back and knit your next stitch, keeping your tension firm. If knitting more than one row of loops the second row of loops needs to be 1 stitch offset from the first row or the section with the loops will open up.



3) **Beads over slipped stitches** – This technique works well on a stockinet surface. The bead will sit horizontally on the yarn in front of the stitch. Do not stack too many beads on one line of stitches with this technique as it can cause the fabric to gather vertically on the one line. Method: Knit to 1 stitch before the stitch you wish to place a bead on, purl the first stitch, yarn is forward, slip the next stitch purlwise, pull up the bead, resting it on top of the slipped stitch and close to the purl stitch, purl the next stitch, yarn to the back and resume knitting. The purl stitches hold the bead in place. The technique will work with knit stitches on either side of the slipped stitch but the bead will find it easier to migrate.

4)

[Method for Pre-strung Beads – Placed in Front of Slipped Stitches | Le Tissier Designs \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.letissierdesigns.com/2018/05/04/method-for-pre-strung-beads-placed-in-front-of-slipped-stitches/)

5) **Finishing with beads** – Cast-off with your pre-strung beads by pulling each bead up onto either the front or back arm of your stitch and then pull the preceding stitch over the stitch just knit. The beads can be on every stitch or on a set stitch sequence. Ie., every second stitch or every third stitch.

[A Fine Finish – Casting-off With Beads | Le Tissier Designs \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.letissierdesigns.com/2018/05/04/a-fine-finish-casting-off-with-beads/)

Bead Knitting

This method of working with beads is the most traditional method used and is sometimes called purse knitting.





This method of beading places a bead on one arm of the stitch. Note that the bead sits on the diagonal unlike the previous methods where the bead sits horizontally. If you are knitting something flat avoid placing beads on end stitches. Bead knitting in the flat offers some challenges, predominantly purling through the back of the loop and pulling the bead through, not for the faint of heart! Bead knitting is best worked in the round, but does have a tendency to bias, severe blocking is sometimes necessary.

Beaded bags often make this tendency work with the pattern.

Also, with this method of bead work the bead has a tendency to travel to the wrong side of the work. To avoid this work the stitch on the following row through the back of the stitch.



1) When knitting in your bead you will always knit into the back of the stitch on which you wish to place your bead. The twisting of the stitch by knitting through the back of the loop ensures that the bead will be locked into place.

2) When the needle is in place in the back of the stitch, pull up the bead up to approx $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch away from your knitting. As you knit the stitch, pull the bead through to rest on the front arm of your stitch.

3) The bead will be furthered anchored when the stitch on top of it is also knitted through the back of the loop.

This is done when knitting the next row of beads in place. If beading the next row you will automatically twist the stitch with your current bead. If no bead is being knit into place simply knit into the back of the stitch above the bead to finish the anchoring process.

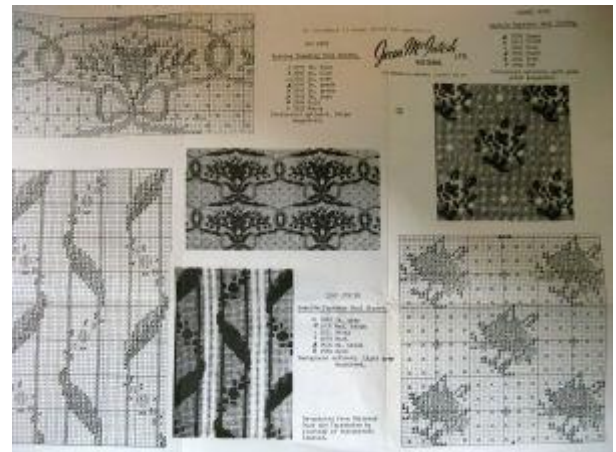




Bead Patterns Sources for Bead Knitters:

Most of the bead knit bag patterns from the 18th and 19th Centuries were originally “borrowed” from the Berlin wool patterns that were coming to the drawing rooms of the fine ladies of Europe. These were the forerunners of the needlepoint and petit point charts of today.

At this time these charted needlepoint pictures were very popular activities for the ladies to pass away time in the drawing-room. It was only natural that these charts would cross over and become guidelines for the bead bag knitting.



The stitches in needlepoint all lean-to the right, just like the beads in the bead knit bags – the look of both is very similar. It is very easy to substitute a bead of the same colour instead of a stitch.

Yarn:

Unless you are working on a project that calls for very large quantities of beads that all need to be pre-strung and moved down your yarn almost any yarn with a firmly strung core will work.

Lace weight mohairs are gorgeous when beaded, the glint of the bead through the mohair is so pretty.

The weight of yarn will determine the size of the bead. A finer yarn would require a finer bead and the heavier yarns like worsted would work best with a size 6 or even a pony bead (size 4).

If you are embellishing a garment, a basic sweater for example, with beads the strength of the yarn is not important – there will usually not be enough beads to stress the yarn unduly.

If you are choosing the yarn for a bead knit project you will want to choose a tightly spun, smooth yarn. It is usually advisable to check your yarn for knots as well before you start stringing your beads. Good quality crochet cotton, lace weight silk and rayon are all good choices for bead knit projects in particular. If you are knitting a small bag with thousands of beads you will want a very strong yarn.

Flower Bud Chart - read from right to left for knitting and turn upside down and read from right to left for beading. First bead strung is last bead knit.

Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	10
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	9
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	8
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	7
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	6
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	5
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	4
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	3
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	2
Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	1

Figure 2 Simple chart to practise bead knitting.

