

What pliers do I need?

With so many options available, we hope that this information helps you make the best decision.

Most beaders only need a few basic tools when starting up. Think about the techniques you will be using in your jewellery art and buy accordingly. Add to your collection of tools as you expand your range of skills and then be guided by either your instructor or the book you are using to learn the new technique.

Pliers are used when you are working with metal so it is important to use ones with smooth as opposed to serrated jaws so that the metal is not scratched. Don't use jewellery pliers for other household tasks as you risk damaging the pliers and making them unsuitable for your jewellery work.

Consider size, comfort and quality as well as price and frequency of use when choosing pliers. There are some cute, very small pliers on the market suitable for children or when you have to do repairs when at a show. Most people would find that their hands would cramp very quickly if the small pliers were used on a continuous basis. Consider extra-long handles if you have a large hand. Try to test the grip before buying by holding the pliers in your hand. Some are more ergonomic than others. Test several different qualities (be guided by the price) to see how you like them. Then make a decision based on price and the frequency of use. Remember that you are buying a tool to help you make beautiful things. A retired university art instructor commented once: "Buy the best you can afford because using cheap tools affects the quality of your work and your pleasure in creating beautiful things."

The basic pliers are chain nose, round nose and flat nose.

CHAIN NOSE PLIERS

Chain nose pliers are the most used in jewellery making and would be considered essential by most. Their jaws are long and tapered and the inside of the jaws are flat. These pliers are used for bending, holding and turning wire especially when in small, tight places. They are used for opening and closing jump rings as well as for some crimping applications. If you work with seed beads, these are the pliers to use if you have to break one of the glass beads to correct a problem. Many times you may need to work with two of these pliers to achieve your objective. A variation are bent nose pliers where the jaws curve away from the handles. Some find it easier to see where they are working with these pliers.

Prices range from \$12 to \$50



ROUND NOSE PLIERS

These have tapered round jaws so that you can make different sized loops depending on which section of the jaw you use. They are used when you have to hold, shape and bend wire at the same time. We like them when doing wire wrapping, closing bead tips, and when forming loops and coils. Some variation on the basic round nose pliers are three step pliers which make it easier to make the same size ring consistently; round nose pliers with a cutter included near the joint (called rosary pliers); and a plier that has one round nose jaw and one concave jaw which is even better for making a consistent round shape.

Prices range from \$12 to \$50



FLAT NOSE PLIERS

The primary purpose of flat nose pliers is for gripping as the blunt end of the jaws is much wider than chain nose pliers so there is more gripping surface. Flat nose pliers are useful if you are trying to pull a threaded needle through a bead where the drill hole is slightly smaller than others on a strand or through a seed bead which already has had several strands of thread through it. You can break a bead but usually the smooth even tension you get when using the pliers solves the problem.

Prices range from \$12 to \$50



CRIMPING PLIERS

Crimping pliers have two grooves in the jaws. One is for flattening the crimp to secure the two strands of wire together and the smaller groove is to fold the crimp over itself to give a smooth, professional finish. You can use chain nose pliers to flatten crimps but it is difficult to get a professional finish. There are different sizes of crimping pliers, depending on the size of the crimp you are using.

Prices range from \$20 to \$33



SOME NOTES ABOUT QUALITY

The two arms of pliers are joined together either using a lap joint or a box joint. Lap joints are used on less expensive pliers as the manufacturing process is less complicated and therefore cheaper. With use, the joint can become wobbly which affects performance. Box joints are longer lasting, have a more precise alignment and don't tend to loosen with use.

Most people prefer to use pliers which have a spring mechanism which means that the jaws will open once you stop applying pressure. Having a spring mechanism is easier on your hands.

If you have any questions, please let us know: orders@canbead.com. We like to help.

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