

Needles

TWISTED STEEL NEEDLES were designed for stringing gemstone beads and freshwater pearls. They are made of flexible wire with a large eye to make threading easy. The eye will collapse if required to go through the drill hole. Sometimes drill holes in natural stone beads are unevenly drilled and the flexible needle can be wiggled through such a hole. Twisted steel needles are usually only used once. When using them, pull the needle between the pads of your fingers to avoid bending them with your fingernails. If the needle and thread seem to be resisting going through a drill hole, use flat nose pliers to try and tug the needle. Make certain that the size of the needle is appropriate to the diameter of thread you are using. Hard needles are not usually used with pearls and gemstones as they aren't flexible enough to get around obstructions and sometimes they can break a bead.

NEEDLES FOR SEED BEADS:

For seed bead work, beading needles that look like long very fine sewing needles are the go-to-first choice. They have a sharp point which makes it easy to pick up beads and are usually 1" to 2" long. The eye-hole end is specially designed to be not much wider than the shaft of the needle. They have some flexibility so that they can be manoeuvred easily if you are doing any weaving or having to go through a bead several times. If you are doing bead weaving on a loom, you may want to get much longer beading needles to help you work faster.

If you are sewing beads onto fabric, you might want to use short beading needles which you may find easier to use.

Glovers needles are designed for working on leather and suede. They have a triangular point for piercing the leather easily but make certain they are fine enough to go through the seed beads you propose to use. There are a variety of sizes available.

Curved beading needles are useful when applying beads in tight spots but some people find them fiddly to use.

Big eye needles are two pieces of wire attached at both ends and can be used with off loom projects but are most useful with stretchy cords. Threading is much easier and either end can be used to go through the beads. A disadvantage is that the thread can sometimes wear through the join especially if you are having to tug the needle often to get it through the beads. Since these needles are thicker than other beading needles, consider how many passes you have to make through the beads before choosing them for your project.

Don't choose twisted steel beading needles when working with seed beads unless you have a well-defined reason to use them. Their blunt end makes it difficult to pick up seed beads easily and because they are so flexible they will not stand up to the number of times the needle has to pass through seed beads used in your project.

Needle size is important. Remember with hard needles, the higher the number, the finer the needle. (Machine sewing needles are sized differently: lower numbers indicate finer needles). Also remember that sizing may differ between brands of needles and type of needle. Size 10 or 12 beading needles can be used for size 8/0 to size 15/0 seed beads. You may need to use size 13 or 15 beading needles if you have to go through the smaller seed beads several times during the construction process.

Needle Quality varies considerably. Because they are so fine, many beading needles will curve in use so they are not necessarily long lasting. Some inexpensive beading needles are made from low quality steel and will break easily. We have found that Tulip needles are exceptional but they are considerably more expensive. They are made from high quality steel and seem to last much longer than the John James we used to always use. Tulip needles are flexible enough for off loom weaving projects and don't bend or warp easily. Since the John James company switched to manufacturing in China, we have found the needles seem to break and warp more easily than when we first started carrying them. They are still a good quality needle for the money.

Disposing of bent or broken needles: Be considerate with broken needles and dispose of them safely. Some people collect broken and bent needles in old plastic prescription bottles kept with their beading tools. Others wrap the needles in sticky tape. Some use empty needle packages, write "old" on the outside and use that for a safe discard.

TIPS FOR THREADING NEEDLES: If you have trouble threading needles, consider these ideas:

1. Make certain that the thread is not too thick for the needle.
2. Thread the needle off the spool if you are using a multifilament thread, before cutting the length you need.
3. Use sharp scissors to cut the thread.
4. Flatten the tip of the thread with your fingernails, teeth or a pair of chain nose or flat nose pliers.
5. Hold the thread between your thumb and index finger with just a little bit of thread showing. Bring the needle to the thread. (Many are taught or think that you should try poking the thread through the needle but try our way and you will be successful more often!)
6. The hole in beading needles is punched and thus there is a groove at the hole on one side of the needle. Try turning the needle 180 degrees if you are having problems.
7. Be patient: take a few deep breaths and try again. Even experienced people encounter threading problems.
8. Finally, there are special threaders for beading needles which are finer than the ones used with sewing needles.