

Glossary of Jewellery Making and Beading Terms

A jewellery glossary of beading terms and jewellery making terminology combining clear images with easy to understand dictionary like definitions. This bead glossary also provides links to more in depth content and bead resources. It can be used as a beading A to Z reference guide to dip into as needed, or as a beading and jewellery glossary for beginners to help broaden beading and jewellery making knowledge. It is particularly effective when used alongside our [Beading Guides](#), [Histories](#), [Theories](#) and [Tutorials](#), or in conjunction with our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#) and [Venetian Glass Making Glossary](#).

A

ABALONE

These edible sea creatures are members of a large class of molluscs that have one piece shells with an iridescent interior. These shells have a low and open spiral structure, and are characterized by several open respiratory pores in a row near the shell's outer edge. The thick inner layer of the shell is composed of a dichroic substance called nacre or mother-of-pearl, which in many species is highly iridescent, giving rise to a range of strong and changeable colors, making it ideal for jewellery and other decorative objects. [Iridescent](#) nacre varies in colour from silvery white, to pink, red and green-red, through to deep blues, greens, and purples. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Paua and Red Abalone.

ACCENT BEAD

Similar in purpose to a [Focal Bead](#), this is a bead that forms the focus for a piece of jewellery, but on this occasion rather than through its size, it is usually through contrast. So for example it will be an unusual shape, of a different colour, or differing in pattern or texture.

ACID WASHED

Use of an acid to create a [Matte](#) finish on glass or other materials.

ACRYLIC

A man made resin or thermoplastic used to make moulded plastic beads or applied to the surface of beads to give them colour or [Lustre](#). Due to improvements in technology acrylic beads are an economical alternative to glass and crystal, being durable and light. Click to view a selection of our [Acrylic Beads](#).



Above are some examples of typical acrylic beads including faceted, starflake, pony, and star.

ADHESIVE

Used to keep thread knots from unravelling and to keep small items such as beads in place. Also known as bead cement or glue. Click to view a selection of our [Bead Adhesives](#).



Above is a tube of G-S Hypo Cement used for gluing beads in place, strengthening knots and other creative applications.

AFRICAN TRADE

Sometimes called Slave Beads, these were decorative beads used between the 16th and 20th centuries as a currency to be exchanged for goods, services, and labour. Made mostly by Venetian merchants they were used to ease the passage of European explorers and traders, mainly across the African continents, but trade beads were also used in North America and Canada, and throughout Latin America. The production of trade beads became so popular that literally tons of beads were used for this purpose with the beads used as ballast in ships for the outbound trip. The beads and other trade items were then exchanged for human cargo as well as ivory, gold and other goods desirable in Europe and around the world. In part, the success of this form of currency can be attributed to the high intrinsic value African people placed upon decorative items. Africans often used beads for currency and wealth storage, with social status determined by the quality, quantity, and style of jewellery worn. This created a high demand for trade beads in Africa. To this end the beads were usually large, bright, colourful and often cylindrical in shape. To learn more about the European glass industries role in this trade read our [History of Venetian Glass](#).



Above are two Venetian glass African Trade beads from the early 1900s – a feathered elbow bead and a millefiori bead.

AGATE

Is a microcrystalline variety of [Quartz](#) characterised by its fineness of grain and brightness and range of colours. Agates are normally associated with volcanic rocks but can also be found in certain metamorphic rocks. Agates have been used in jewellery making since ancient times with archeological finds in Crete placing its use to the Bronze Age. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Banded, Blue Lace, Condor (Argentina), Dendritic (Kazakhstan), Fire, Green, Honey Brush, Moss, Polka Dot, Red, Rosette, and Scottish Agates.

AIKO

Cylindrical beads manufactured by Toho in Japan that are precision made to be consistent in size and shape. Learn more in our [Guide to Seed Beads](#)



Above is a run of Toho Aiko beads in Dark Amethyst.

ALABASTER BEADS

A form of [Gypsum](#) that is soft enough to be hand carved into beads, jewellery, or more ambitiously statues. It gives beads a dense translucent white or tinted finish reminiscent of old [Milk Glass](#).

ALLOY

A metal mixture made from the combination of two or more metallic elements or metallic and nonmetallic elements usually fused together or dissolved into each other when molten in order to provide added strength and durability. [Brass](#), [White Gold](#), [Sterling Silver](#) and [Pewter](#) are examples of alloys with, for example, brass being an alloy of zinc and copper.

ALUMINIUM OXIDE

A hard abrasive, available in various grades and grain sizes, for use in jewellery making.

AMAZONITE

Is a green variety of microcline feldspar and is found in coarse granite or pegmatite. It is mostly opaque and derives its name from deposits originally found in the Amazon. It is often found with white, yellow or grey inclusions and a silky lustre or silvery sheen. Colours are blue green and pale green. These stones can be found in Brazil, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Namibia, Russia, United States and Zimbabwe. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Chinese, Pale Green (with grey inclusions), and Russian Amazonite.

AMBER

Fossilised tree sap resin that is cut and polished and used as a gemstone. It is typically golden brown in colour with translucent qualities. It is also a descriptive term relating to the colour of amber. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Baltic, Black Sarawak (Borneo), Ciapas (Mexico), Dominican Blue, Golling (Austria), Lee Creek (USA), New Jersey (USA) and Sabah (Borneo) Ambers.

AMETHYST

A form of [Quartz](#), this semi precious stone has a purple translucent appearance created by the presence of iron and manganese when it was forming. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of African, Brazilian and Deep Purple coloured Amethyst.

ANKLETS

An ornament of gold, silver or other material worn around the ankle in the same manner as a bracelet on a wrist.

ANNEALING

Is the process of reheating a material and then cooling it slowly to make it stronger and more pliable. Examples of annealing would be the strengthening of metal wire whilst in turn making it easier to work with, or when working with glass to prevent say lampwork beads from shattering.

ANTIQUÉ BEADS

Like [Vintage Beads](#) this is a subjective description used to indicate the age of an item. Strictly speaking an antique is an item over 100 years old but is also a term that can be used to describe styles and materials from another era such as 1930s Bakelite, Victorian cut beads, Native American beadwork, etc. Since this gives these beads a certain rarity, they are often sought out by designers wanting to create a unique, one of a kind, jewellery piece. Click to view a selection of our [Antique and Vintage Beads](#).



Three antique ojime beads made in the Orient for the Western market during the Meiji Taisho era or the early 1900s.

ANTIQUED or ANTIQUE FINISH

A process or surface finish used to give beads and jewellery components an aged appearance.



An example of an Antique Finish on a pair of split ring chain keyrings.

APATITE

Is a group of phosphate minerals found in sedimentary rocks. Apatite is the defining mineral for [5 on Mohs Scale of Hardness](#) and occurs in colourless, yellow, blue, violet or green. As a gemstone their use is infrequent but good transparent stones of clean colour when faceted correctly can be bright, vitreous and strongly coloured. Usually they are cut as cabochons providing a cats eye effect. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Asparagus Stone (Spanish), Blue, Cats Eye and Violet Apatite.

APPLIQUE

The art of sewing beads onto leather or fabric.

AQUAMARINE

This gemstone is named after its resemblance to seawater with its coloration created by iron. Aquamarine is a hard gemstone, which makes it an excellent choice for jewellery that will be worn frequently. However, it should be stored in a dark place as it can become paler when exposed to sunlight. Colours are light to dark blue, blue green. These stones can be found in major deposits in Brazil. They are also found in Australia, China, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, the United States, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Light Blue Aquamarine.

ARAGONITE

Is a form of calcium carbonate, like [Coral](#) or [Marble](#), and is named after Molina de Aragon, Spain, where it was first found in 1790. It is transparent to translucent and is usually colourless or white when pure, but impurities can bring about shades of yellow, blue, pink or green. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Blue, Peruvian Striped and Orange Aragonite.

AURORA BOREALIS (AB)

Often reduced down to AB this is a micro thin layer of metal giving a rainbow [Iridescent](#) finish to a crystal or glass bead. First developed for use on crystals by [Swarovski](#) when working in association with the fashion designer, Christian Dior, in 1956. It is extremely popular and is now applied widely by all bead manufacturers. This is a durable finish as the metal is permanently bonded with the glass. This finish is also known as [Rainbow](#), [Iris](#) and [Fancy](#). Click to view a selection of our [Aurora Borealis Beads](#).



Above is a set of Black Diamond Round Fire Polished Czech Glass Beads with Aurora Borealis finish.

AUGHT

Unit of measurement for [Seed Beads](#). It is usually denoted by a number followed by a slash and a zero or a degree sign (e.g. 11/0 or 11°). The higher the first number, the smaller the bead. To learn more about Seed Beads and Seed Bead sizing read our [History Of Seed Beads](#).

AVENTURINA

Is a glass paste composed of very fine copper flakes or powder, which is used to decorate glass beads or to simply add sparkle. This technique originated in Venice in the 15th century but the powder is used in both genuine Murano glass and by many of its imitators. Learn more in our [Glossary Of Venetian Glass](#).



Above is an example of applied Aventurina decoration on a vintage orange and black pinched nugget bead.

AVENTURINE

This gemstone is a form of [Chalcedony](#) that contains small mineral inclusions. These additional materials, usually mica or iron oxide, give the stone a glistening effect. Aventurine's granular appearance and particular translucence are its most distinctive characteristics. It is also called aventurine quartz. It is usually dark green but it also comes in reddish brown and golden brown. These stones can be found in Austria, Brazil, India, Russia, and Tanzania. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Blue, Green, and Red Aventurine.

AWL

This is a multi purpose beading tool which can be used, amongst other things, for helping to create knotted designs, clearing clay release blocking glass bead holes, or for making indentations, holes and fine line engraving in polymer or precious metal clays. Read more in our guide to [Beading Tools and Jewellery Making Tools](#).



Above is a typical Beading Awl.

AZURITE

Is a soft, deep blue copper mineral produced by weathering of copper ore deposits. It usually occurs with green Malachite, which may form green stains or specks on Azurite crystals or aggregates. The two minerals sometimes occur banded together, forming what is called Azure Malachite. A rarer Azurite mixture, known as Bluebird, is Azurite mixed with dark red Cuprite. Azurite is used for beads and as jewellery but due to its softness and tendency to lose its deep blue colour as it weathers its uses are limited. Heating also destroys azurite easily, so all mounting of azurite specimens must be done at room temperature. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Azurite with small [Malachite](#) inclusions.

B

BACK STITCH

A basic stitch used to apply beads to fabric. This stitch can be used to secure each bead in turn, every other bead, every third bead and onwards depending on the resilience required for the garment or design.

BAGUETTE

A rectangular shaped small diamond or gemstone, usually used as the centre piece of a ring or used repeatedly to form a bracelet.



Above is an example of a Baguette cut diamond.

BAIL

A jewellery finding that is used to connect and position a pendant onto a necklace using clips, glue or a ring embedded in the pendant itself. It is meant to slide onto the chain rather than to be soldered to it so that the pendant is not permanently part of the chain. Click to view a selection of our [Pendant Bails](#).



Above is an example of a pair of bronze finish metal Bails.

BAKELITE

A hard mouldable plastic invented by Leo Baekeland in 1909, which helped to define the jewellery of the 1930s, whilst remaining highly collectable to the present day. Not to be confused with Catalin which came later in the 1930s, was made by a rival company, and had a far wider range of colours.



Above is an example of a Bakelite dog brooch and an orange barrel bead.

BALI SILVER

Handmade sterling silver jewellery findings that are produced in Bali, Indonesia. Typically very ornate these pieces have a silver content of no less than 92.5%.

BANGLE

A bracelet made of solid or hollow metal, or wire. It may be a single piece that is placed over the hand to hang loosely or made with an integral hinge so that it can be opened and fastened around the wrist. Click to view a selection of our [Bangles](#).



Above is an example of a hinged silver plated Bangle with cabochon setting.

BAR and RING CLASP

Also known as a Toggle Clasp this two piece finding consists of a 'T' shaped bar that fits inside and then straddles a loop to secure the item of jewellery. They are perfect for heavier necklaces or where

the necklace needs to be clasped at the front as part of the decorative design of the piece. The loop is usually circular but can also be heart, leaf, square or star shaped. Click to view a selection of our [Bar and Ring Clasps](#).



Above is an example of an antique bronze Bar and Ring Clasp.

BAROQUE BEADS

An irregularly shaped bead. Often a term applied to [Pearls](#), but it can be applied to any bead type whether natural, cultured or manufactured.



Above is an example of a Baroque Bead in the form of an emerald green transparent pressed glass Czech bead.

BARREL BEADS

Not too surprisingly these beads are barrel shaped and can be made of any material including glass, metal, plastic or wood.



Above is an example of some handmade horn Barrel Beads.

BARREL CLASP

A [Clasp](#) made of two parts that screw, snap or use magnets to come together to form a barrel shape. They are usually used to secure necklaces. They are available in most metallic finishes as well as ivory, black and Vintage. Click to view a selection of our [Barrel Clasps](#).



Above is an example of a barrel clasp in a silver finish.

BARRETTE

An ornamental bar with a pin and clasp mounted on the back worn as a hair ornament, similar in design to a hair grip or slide



Above is an example of a decorative bronze finish filigree Barette.

BASE METAL

Any metal other than gold, silver or platinum – which are all considered [Precious Metals](#). Examples would include brass, bronze, copper and nickel.

BAUBLE

A decorative but inexpensive piece of jewellery.



This fashionable one piece plastic statement ring would qualify as a bauble.

BEADS

Small pierced objects made of natural or man made materials that can be strung onto thread or wire for the creation of jewellery. They can be made of bone, clay, glass, metal, paper, plastic, porcelain and stone but bead makers are ever inventive and other materials are used. Typically the defining characteristic is that they will have a hole for stringing purposes.

BEAD BOARDS

Useful to have for planning out jewellery designs ahead of stringing. They come in different sizes, but all have grooves into which you place your beads and components so that you can try out layouts. Some have multiple grooves so that you can plan multi stranded designs. Around the outside of the grooves are measurements to help you determine the length of the finished piece. Click to view our selection of [Bead Boards](#).



Above is a Beadalon bead board. The boards come in a number of different sizes to allow for large and small jewellery stringing projects.

BEAD CAPS

A pair of bead caps can be used to top and tail a bead. They are generally domed in shape to neatly fit round a bead. Bead Caps can be purely decorative, serving to off set a bead but they can also be used to help cover up a large bead hole giving a neater finish. Click to view a selection of

our [Bead Caps](#).



Above is an example of a vintage silver plated Bead Cap with Art Nouveau like detailing.

BEAD CEMENT

Used to keep thread knots from unravelling and to keep small items such as beads in place. Also known as bead adhesive or glue. Click to view a selection of our [Bead Cements](#).



Above is a tube of G-S Hypo Cement used for gluing beads in place, strengthening knots and other creative applications.

BEAD CLASP

A clasp mechanism that is hidden in a bead or pearl using a magnet, screw, tab or bayonet to ensure a secure closure.

BEAD CONES

A metal cone shape that is used to secure and cover the ends of several strands of beading.



Above is an example of bronze finish cone end bead caps.

BEAD CRIMPING TOOL

A bead crimper or pair of Crimping Pliers help finish off strung jewellery designs by crimping (or neatly squashing!) crimp beads at the end of the strand to prevent the beads from sliding off.

BEAD CROCHET

Using beads on crochet thread to slide them into the design as the crochet progresses

BEAD EMBROIDERY

A technique for adding beads to fabric using traditional embroidery stitches, some of which are detailed in this glossary.

BEAD KNITTING

Knitting beads into fabric at certain regular points in a design

BEAD LOOMS

A small frame that can be strung with warp threads so that a beaded weft can be used to create a piece of bead weaving.



Above is an example of a table top Bead Loom.

BEAD MATS

Make life easier and stop those errant beads from rolling away! A [Bead Mat](#) can be a piece of towel or fleece material that has enough pile to its surface to prevent speedy rolling. A bead mat will also protect your work surface.



Above is a typical three coloured pack of Bead Mats with the different coloured mats providing better contrast for different colour beads.

BEAD REAMER

See [Reamer](#)

BEAD STOPPER

A simple fastener that is clipped to the end of a bead strand whilst stringing to avoid beads falling off the end. It is particularly useful for multi strand designs. See [Stopper Beads](#).



An example of a Bead Stopper. The thread is passed through one of the coils of the stopper to secure it in place, with the side loops allowing the stopper to be secured to a work surface.

BEAD THREADS

Bead threads are specifically designed to be strong and stretch resistant. Synthetic fibres reduce the risk of fraying or rotting. Sometimes they are treated with a coating to reduce the slippage of knots. Click to view a selection of our [Beading Threads](#) or read our [Guide To Cords Threads And Wires](#).



Above are three rolls of Nymo Size D bead thread.

BEAD TIPS

A metal [Finding](#) used to finish off a strung necklace or bracelet by hiding the stringing knots. The knot sits inside the concave piece of the tip which is then folded over and closed shut. The loop is used to attach the bead tip to the clasp. See also [Calottes](#).



Above are some gold plated metal Bead Tips or Calottes.

BEADED BEADS

An individual bead constructed of small beads such as [Seed Beads](#) or crystals, stitched together, usually over a base bead, to form a three dimensional shape.



Above is an example of a Beaded Bead using Peyote stitch and Seed Beads.

BEADING CONES

Are used to give a professional finish to the ends of a multi stranded necklace. The metal cone covers and contains the knotted strand ends.



Above is an example of some large decorative bronze finish beading cones.

BEADING NEEDLES

These are essential if you are working with any type of supple thread. English hard needles have an eye no wider than the shank of the needle so they are very slim and will pass through the smallest of holes. Collapsible or large eye needles are easier to thread and they reshape as they pass through the bead. The higher the number of the needle, the finer it will be. The longer needles will curve when you use them, but many beaders prefer them this way as it makes them more dexterous! Read our [Guide To Beading Needles](#) or view our [John James and Beadalon needles selection](#).



Above is an example of a mixed size pack of John James Hard English Beading Needles.

BEADING TWEEZERS

Useful for handling tiny [Seed Beads](#) and unpicking knots in stringing materials.



Above is an example of a pair of fibre tipped Beadalon beading tweezers.

BEADING WIRE

Very fine wires twisted together and covered with a smooth coating. Tiger Tail is the common name of a beading wire made up of 7 strands of wire, but wires are also available made from 19 and 49 strands, these have better drape than the 7 strand. All have good strength, but can deform if jewellery is not looked after when stored. Beading wire will not knot, so you will need to use a crimp bead to finish designs or to space beads. Click to view a selection of our [Beading Wires](#) or read our [Guide To Cords Threads And Wires](#)



Above is an example of Olivine Tiger Tail Beading Wire 0.38mm by 80 metres.

BEAD WEAVING

Brings weaving techniques to beading allowing the creation of accessories, jewellery, and artworks. Weaving can be done on a Loom or with a needle and thread, otherwise known as off loom.

BEADWORK

A descriptive header term for the art of making jewellery or decorative items using beads

BEESWAX

A natural wax which in beading is primarily used to condition beading thread to make it easier to work with. Because it is sticky it is particularly useful when using multiple threads reducing the need to reposition the needle when thread is doubled up. It should be used sparingly so as not to clog the opening in smaller sized beads reducing the number of passes possible.



Above is a block of beeswax used to condition beading thread.

BEGGAR BEADS

Large, irregular or [Baroque](#) semi-precious stone beads usually made from [Agate](#). They are so called because it was believed that Agate was an attractor of wealth. Traditionally these beads were worn on necklaces by beggars to attract alms.

BELL CAPS

Perform exactly the same function as [Bead Caps](#) but are bell shaped. They are also known as [End Caps](#)



Above is an example of a pale gold coloured Bell Cap.

BENT CHAIN NOSED PLIERS

Are useful for general wire work, holding, and especially when working for prolonged periods of time for example when making [Chain Maille](#). The plier tips are bent so that the users wrists are kept at a comfortable working angle.



Above is an example of a pair of Beadalon Bent Chain Nose Pliers.

BEZEL

A type of jewellery setting, usually made of metal, used for encircling and securing a crystal, stone or [Cabochon](#). A continuous groove is cut into the setting to seat the faceted stone. The metal above the groove is then burnished or folded over the edge of the stone to provide a secure setting for the piece.

BICONE BEADS

An extremely popular bead shape particularly when it comes to crystals! Bicones resemble two cones stuck together flat end to flat end, and they can be faceted or gently rounded. Click to view a selection of our [Bicone Beads](#).



Above is an example of some gold plated metallised Bicone Beads.

BIRTHSTONES

[Semi precious](#) and precious stones assigned to each month or zodiac sign, purported to enhance qualities in the wearer or bring good fortune or health. There are several lists of official birthstones and these vary. The birthstones list that Big Bead Little Bead uses is provided by the National Association of Goldsmiths of Great Britain, created in 1937. It includes both precious and semi precious stones, as each month is association with a gemstone and a mineral. Visit our [Guide To Birthstones](#) for this list as well as the American version.

BIWA PEARLS

A cultured pearl from Lake Biwa in Shiga Province, Japan. Only those beads cultivated in this freshwater lake can be called Biwas as opposed to freshwater cultured pearls.

BLACK LINED

Typically relates to [Bugle Beads](#) and [Seed Beads](#) where the bead hole has been lined with a black finish giving greater depth to the bead colouring.



A collection of clear Czech glass farfalle beads with a Black Lining.

BLOODSTONE

This is an opaque, green, spotted variety of [Chalcedony](#). Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are two variations of Bloodstone.

BODY JEWELLERY

Is a catch all term to describe jewellery for pierced parts of the body other than ears. It also covers fashionable items such as toe rings.

BOHEMIAN GLASS

Is a nostalgic name for glass sourced from Czechoslovakia. Historically this Eastern European region was named Bohemia and it was here that glassmaking grew into an art form in the late 1700s. To learn more read our informative [History Of Czech Glass Beads](#).

BOX CLASPS

A two piece clasp with a tab or tongue which is inserted into a decorative box section which can be accented with gemstones, enamel, filigree or inlay work. Some clasps come with safety latches or chains which prevent the wedge shaped tongue from pulling out and allowing the jewellery piece to fall off. They are typically used for lightweight necklaces, bracelets and anklets.



Above is an example of a vintage gold box clasp with a white glass dome.

BRACELET

An ornamental chain worn about the wrist, arm or ankle. Bracelet length will vary according to the style and the dimensions of the wearer. To work out the length of a bracelet, measure the circumference of the wrist and add 1.5 cm, then subtract the length of the closure method chosen or refer to our [Bracelet Size Guide](#). To see how many of a particular sized bead are needed for a bracelet use our handy [Online Bead Calculator Tool](#) also found in the menu bar above.



Above is a monochrome bracelet from our Create Your Own range of jewellery kits.

BRASS

A metal produced from varying proportions of copper and zinc with different alloy formulas **producing different brass colours and levels of ductility or workability.**

BRELOQUE

A small decorative item such as a [Charm](#) designed to be hung from a chain.



An example of a Breloque in the form of a silver comedy mask charm.

BRICK STITCH or COMANCHE STITCH

Refers to the stitch in which [Seed Beads](#) are sewn together to resemble the spacing of a brick wall.

BRILLIANCE

In reference to a gem this refers to the brightness of the stone, which is related to the surface polish and the internal reflection of light from the back facets.

BRIOLETTES

Pear or tear shaped beads or gemstones typically used for drop earrings. They can be faceted or smooth.



Above is an example of a Preciosa Crystal Briolette.

BRONZE

An [Alloy](#) of copper and tin in various proportions, sometimes with small traces of other metals added.

BRONZITE

A brown gemstone of the pyroxene mineral family. This iron like substance creates a metallic bronze like sheen on the surface of the gemstone. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Bronzite.

BROOCH or BROACH

Any decorative piece of jewellery that can be pinned to clothing typically using a brooch back or button fastener.

BROOCH BACKS or BROOCH PINS

These are typically manufactured with a flat metal plate attached to a hinged pin component usually with a safety catch. The pin is used to secure the finished brooch to a garment whilst the plate can be used as a base for a jewellery design. These designs can be built up with beads, cloth, embellishments, findings and wirework. Many brooch backs have holes in their metal plates to aid gluing and wiring.



Above is an example of some silver plated metal brooch backs.

BUGLE BEADS

Short thin tubes of glass which are usually less than 2mm thick. They are made by drawing out a long tube of glass and then cutting this into shorter lengths. They are good for shine and swing and were famously used on flappers' dresses in the 1920s. Read more in our informative [Guide To Bugle Beads](#), or click to view a selection of our [Bugle Beads](#).



Above are a number of hexagonally faceted vintage emerald glass Bugle Beads from the 1920s.

BULLION

A length of wire worked over a thread end to produce a tight coil or spring to provide added protection and a professional finish. See also [French Wire](#).

BUTTERFLY STOPPER

A butterfly shaped component that fastens to an earring post to secure an earring against the ear



Above are a handful of bronze finish butterfly earring stoppers.

C

CABOCHON

A flat backed domed or faceted bead that is usually applied using glue to a setting or woven into position. As with normal beads they come in a great variety of shapes, sizes, materials, and finishes.



Above are a number of turquoise coloured howlite round cabochons.

CAGEWORK

Also known as [Stamping](#) is a finding or charm made from sheet metal which has been cut and shaped between two dies in a press. The pattern is formed in relief with a hollow or concave reverse.



Above is an example of a vintage raw brass pleated cagework stamping.

CALCITE

Calcite is an anhydrous carbonate, and one of the most widely distributed minerals on the Earth's

surface. It is also the defining mineral for 3 on Mohs Scale of Hardness. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Blue, Golden, Manganese and Yellow Calcite.

CALIPERS or CALLIPERS

A tool or instrument used to precisely measure the dimension of small objects such as beads. In beading they are usually in the form of a graduated ruler with one sliding jaw and one that is stationary allowing measurements to be taken precisely from the ruler.



Above is an example of a set of brass Calipers.

CALOTTES

Also known as a Bead Tip, Clam Shell or Knot Cup. Small metal finding used to hide the method of ending a strand. Two halves of a hollow sphere encase a knot or crimp thereby giving the appearance of a neat end. [Calottes](#) can be simple or decorative.



Above are some gold-plated metal Calottes.

CAMEO

Traditionally, cameos are made from shell or gemstone. The surface is carved so that the design (perhaps a head and shoulders portrait) is raised and of a different colour to the background. Modern cameos are often made of plastic or resin but traditionally they would be made from natural materials, glass and porcelains.



Above is an example of a Cameo charm.

CANDY GLASS BEADS

See [Furnace Glass Beads](#).

CANE GLASS BEADS

See Furnace Glass Beads.

CARAT

A unit of weight in part used to determine the relative value of precious stones. One carat equals one fifth of a gram.

CARBON STEEL

A form of steel that contains a proportion of carbon plus other trace alloys. It also denotes a generic type of steel other than stainless steel.

CARNELIAN or CORNELIAN

Is a gemstone from the quartz family. It is a warm reddish orange or brown colour. These stones can be found in Brazil, India, and Uruguay. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Carnelian.

CARTOUCHE

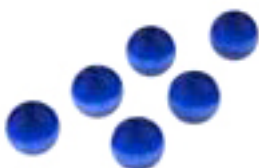
Is a decorative or engraved piece with a symmetrical ornamental shape. Originally used to depict the names of the Pharaohs in Egypt.



A vintage Egyptian revival Cartouche.

CAT'S EYE BEADS

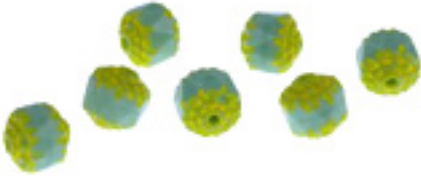
Also known as Fibre Optic Beads. These glass beads are called cat's eye beads because of the [iridescent](#) white streak that glows from the middle and resembles a light-reflecting cat's eye. This is due to light refraction within the bead.



Above are some Royal blue Cats Eye Beads.

CATHEDRAL BEADS

A style of glass bead manufactured in the Czech Republic using a steel mould to form a pressed glass bead which is then given a coloured surface finish. By grinding in facets and polishing the beads the base glass is presented on all sides with the end of the beads retaining their surface finish.



Above are a set of turquoise and yellow Czech glass cathedral beads.

CELLULOID BEADS

Was one of the first plastics to be used in bead making pre-dating Bakelite and Catalin by several decades. As with all plastics decorative items were easy to mass produce and affordable and came into their own with the bold geometric designs of the Art Deco period.



Above is a 1930s shiny maroon coloured celluloid bead with a deeply carved art deco pattern.

CERAMIC

A medium, including clay, parian, porcelain, terracotta, raku and earthenware, that can be modelled, moulded, and pressed before firing to harden it. After which it is usually decorated with glaze or paint.



Above is an example of Ceramic in the form of a twilight fern heart glazed pendant.

CEYLON BEADS

A glass bead finish that is used with translucent or transparent beads to give a shiny pearlescent finish. The use of Ceylon before a colour indicates the addition of a lustre coating to the exterior of a bead or an inside colouring to an opalescent bead.

CHAIN

Comes in many different designs and is made from a variety of different metals as well as light weight polyester for a modern alternative. Small lengths can be used to link different components or single links from a large chain can be used as a focal feature. Click to see the [Contemporary and Vintage Chain](#) offered on our website



Above is a length of sterling silver belcher Chain.

CHAIN EXTENDER

A short length of chain, beaded chain or other necklace material with a connector on one end and a loop on the other used to lengthen a necklace.

CHAIN MAILLE

Maille, also known as Chain Mail, Chainmail, Chainmaille, Mayle, or just plain Mail. It is a flexible material composed of small interlocking metal rings or loops of chain. It was historically used to make body armour, but is commonly seen today in jewellery, sculpture, and fashions.



A square of Chain Maille.

CHAIN NOSE PLIERS

Are the perfect all purpose tool and should be on the list of essential jewellery making tools that you will need. They are used to bend, cut, hold and manipulate wire and findings. They are used for similar jobs to flat nosed pliers but have a smaller jaw and a pointed tip which makes them ideal for working on small items and in small spaces. They are also smooth faced to avoid leaving marks.



Above is an example of a pair of Beadalon Chain Nose Pliers.

CHAIN TAGS

Are used at the end of a chain to attach a lobster, spring or trigger clasp too. The smaller hole is attached to the chain using a jump ring with the larger hole used to fasten the clasp through.



A handful of gold plated clasps or Chain Tags.

CHALCEDONY

This gemstone, found in Brazil, India, Madagascar, Namibia, Sri Lanka, the United States, Uruguay and Zimbabwe, has a semi transparent or translucent quality alongside a solid colour, commonly pale bluish grey. It also has a near wax like lustre. Colours are blue, purple, pink, white, yellow, orange, and gray with blue and purple the most popular hues. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Pale Blue, Grey and White Chalcedony.

CHANDELIER FINDING

Used as an ear ring with a loop at the top to attach it to an earring finding and a series of additional loops below, creating a run of decorative drops that hang down from the main piece to provide an effect similar to a chandelier. It can also be used as the centre piece of a necklace



Above is a pair of silver plated chandelier findings or droppers.

CHARLOTTE BEADS or CHARLOTTES

Originally these were Czech made size 13 [Seed Beads](#), with one hand cut side, making them slightly faceted. Now it is possible to buy Seed Beads of other sizes with a single facet, and these are called one cut or true cuts. Read our [Guide To Seed Beads](#) to learn more.

CHARLOTTE CRIMPS

Small findings used to produce a neat professional ending to a strand. Two halves of a hollow sphere are used to encase a crimp or knot to provide a neat and secure end.



Above is an example of silver plated Charlotte Crimps.

CHARMS

Small ornaments or Pendants generally added to bracelets, necklaces or anklets but may also be used as pendants or hung from brooches or watch chains. They have innumerable designs often depicting animals, figures, sports, occupations, numbers, or letters. To learn more read our [History Of Charms And Charm Bracelets](#)



Above is a pewter cockle shell Charm.

CHARM BRACELETS

A bracelet worn on the wrist used to carry the aforementioned Charms, which are either purely decorative or have an important significance in the life of the person wearing the jewellery. To learn more read our [History Of Charms And Charm Bracelets](#)



A typical example of a Charm Bracelet with thirteen sterling silver charms.

CHARM HANGER

A jewellery finding that can be attached to a chain or cord with a jump ring or bail. The bottom portion of the hanger or chain holder can be opened to add individual or multiple charms.

CHASING HAMMER

Used by jewellery designers for striking chasing tools with the large head reducing the possibility of missing! The ball side of the hammer is used for flattening rivets or adding decoration to metal. Typically used alongside a metal bench block.



A wooden handled jewellers Chasing Hammer.

CHATON

A jewellery setting where the stone is held in place by metal claws. This term also refers to a foil backed cone shaped crystal or stone where the top circular edge is bevelled running to a point on the underside. Some chatons are designed to be set and used in chain work and therefore do not

have the foil backing. These chatons are faceted the same on both sides.

CHEVRONS

Also known as Rosetta or Star Beads are made of multiple layers of different coloured glass laid down in a corrugated fashion so as to form a starburst when the ends have been ground away thereby revealing the pattern. They were first produced in Murano at the end of the 14th century and to learn more you should read our [Venetian Glass Glossary](#).



Above is a contemporary Venetian chevron bead produced by acclaimed Italian bead artist Luigi Cattelan.

CHINA CRYSTALS

These lead free glass beads are made to resemble Swarovski Crystals. They are less expensive than the crystals they are trying to imitate and as such the difference in quality is noticeable.

CHLORITE

The chlorites are a group of phyllosilicate minerals commonly found in igneous rocks. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Chlorite.

CHOKER

A tight fitting Necklace worn at the base of the neck. Measures about 16 inches / 40.6 cm depending on neck size. To see how many of a particular sized bead are needed for a choker use our handy [Bead Calculator Tool](#).



A beautiful Miriam Haskell cream coloured pearl choker necklace with crystal drop.

CHRYSOBERYL

The mineral or gemstone chrysoberyl is an aluminate of beryllium. The name is derived from the Greek for a gold-white spar. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Chrysoberyl.

CHRYSOCOLLA

Chrysocolla is a very soft stone that comes in a bluish green colouring. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Chrysocolla.

CHRYSOPRASE

Is a gemstone variety of Chalcedony that contains small quantities of nickel. Its colour is normally apple green, but varies to deep green. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of standard and Citrine Chrysoprase.

CHRYSOTINE

Is also known as Grass Turquoise. Though normally green in colour, chrysotine can also be cream coloured or light yellow. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Chrysotine.

CINNABAR

Has come to refer to different things over time. Originally a soft brick red stone formed of mercury sulphide carved into intricate shapes, it now more commonly refers to [hand carved lacquered wooden beads](#) originating from China, or moulded Polymer Clay beads imitating the aforementioned carved and lacquered beads.



Above is a large vintage hand carved chinese patterned Cinnabar bead.

CITRINE

A yellow to brownish variety of quartz which is nowadays mis sold as [Topaz](#). These stones can be found in Argentina, Brazil, Madagascar, Myanmar, Namibia, Russia, Scotland, Spain, and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Citrine.

CLAM SHELL

Another name for Calottes.



Above are some gold plated metal Calottes.

CLAMP or CRAMP

The metal claw or prong on a gemstone setting used to keep the stone in place

CLARITY

A measure of the clearness or absence of impurities in a gemstone.

CLASPS

A jewellery component used to join two ends of a piece of jewellery together. Available in many different styles and sizes. To view a selection of our Contemporary Clasps [click here](#) or to view our Vintage Clasps [click here](#).



Above is an example of a silver plated vintage three strand clasp with small hematite stones for subtle sparkle.

CLAW

A setting used to hold gemstones in place

CLOISONNE

An enamelling technique. Strips of bent wire are soldered onto a metal base (usually both these are of copper) to form a pattern. The spaces between the wires are called cloisons, and these are filled with enamel. The object is then fired and polished several times. The exposed wire outline is sometimes given a gold plated finish. There are other cheaper to produce methods that also produce a finish referred to as cloisonné, but the best quality Cloisonne work is produced as described above.



Above is an example of a floral Cloisonne Bead with black background.

CLUSTER SETTING

A metal frame, usually circular, which is used for setting multiple stones in place in close proximity to each other

COBALT GLASS

Is glass pigmented none too surprisingly with the element cobalt. This gives the glass a rich deep blue colouring. It is also refers simply to the same deep colour blue but without the presence of cobalt!



An example of rich cobalt blue lampwork glass beads.

COCKTAIL RING

An oversized ring with precious or semi-precious stones popular in the 1940s and 50s



Above is a typical larger than life modern dome shaped cocktail ring.

COIL BEADS

A simple metal bead manufactured using coiled wire and similar in appearance to a spring. Some coil beads can be pinched like a crimp bead.



Above is a handful of coil beads shaped like miniature cotton reels.

COIL ENDS

A simple metal bead manufactured using coiled wire and similar in appearance to a spring but with an end loop.

COLD WIRE WORK

Wire-working techniques that don't require solder or heat – i.e. cutting, wrapping, hammering, coiling and bending.

COLLAR or DOG COLLAR

A necklace piece, similar in style to a choker, but comprising three or more strands of beads that fit snugly against the neck. Originally made fashionable by Queen Consort Alexandra, the wife of Edward VII, in the late 1880s they experienced a revival in the 1960s. When designed with a front facing clasp they are known as a Plaque de Cou.

COMANCHE STITCH

See [Brick Stitch](#) above

COMPONENT

Typically a small functional self contained element used in jewellery making and beading.

CONE BEADS

Beads shaped like cones!



A group of Cone Beads handmade from rolled paper.

CONE ENDS

Also known as End Cones or End Caps. A cone is used at the end of a multi strand jewellery piece to gather together the strands whilst hiding the knots and crimps. They can also be used to make bead or chain tassels.

CONFETTI BEADS

Glass beads rolled in tiny pieces of glass while the bead is still hot. Also known as [Sugar Beads](#).



Above are three round amethyst confetti or sugar beads.

CORAL

Comes in black, reds, and pinks and has a distinctive wood-grain texture that can help identify it as the real thing - against the plastic, glass, porcelain and stained bone which is used to imitate it. Sponge coral, when polished smooth, has visible pores like a sponge. Bamboo coral grows in segmented branches that resemble bamboo stalks, with beige/brown sections partially covering the black under layer. Coral is much softer than other gem materials, and as a result it should be stored carefully to avoid scratches. Cosmetics, hot water and bright daylight are damaging to it. It can be found in the Mediterranean Sea or in the Pacific off Japan and Taiwan. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Apple, Fossil and Red Coral.

CORD

A string or thread made up of twisted strands. There are many types of cord suitable for stringing, including cord made of silk, synthetic fibres and waxed cotton. Click to view a selection of our [Beading Cord](#) or read our [Guide To Cords Threads And Wires](#)



Above is an example of some Blue Bird Beading Cord.

CORD ENDS

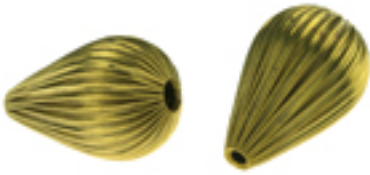
Another name for [Folding Crimps](#).



Above is an example of Cord Ends or Folding Crimps in black antique finish.

CORRUGATED BEADS

Hollow metal spheres or beads made from corrugated tubing giving a repeating pattern of grooves and ridges. Twist corrugated beads have corrugations that spiral around the bead horizontally instead of vertically. These beads are also known as Formed Beads.



Above are two vintage raw brass tear drop fluted or corrugated beads.

CORUNDUM

Corundum is the crystalline form of aluminium oxide and one of the basic rock-forming minerals. It is the defining mineral for 9 on Mohs Scale of Hardness. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Corundum.

COSTUME JEWELLERY

Has come to describe 20th century jewellery that has all the appearance of precious metals and jewels but is made from faux gemstones and plated metals. It takes its name from the theatre where it was necessary to accentuate the jewellery props used on stage so that they could be seen by the wider audience. Miriam Haskell was a notable costume jewellery designer who came to the fore in 1930's America. You can read more about this area of jewellery and her work in particular in our [History of Miriam Haskell](#)



Examples of Miriam Haskell costume jewellery running from left to right a Turquoise Brooch c1940s, a Gilt Cuff Bracelet c1940, a Red and Brown Necklace c1945, and a Yellow Necklace c1945.

COWRY or COWRIE SHELLS

Are small rounded shells with a creamy porcelain like quality, a narrow slit like opening, and interestingly patterned outer surface.



Above are examples of polished yellow Cowrie sea shell beads.

CRACKLE GLASS BEADS

Beads are made by plunging molten glass into water, causing the exterior to crack whilst the still hot interior stays solid. A Venetian glass making discovery.



Above are examples of Emerald and Crystal Crackle Glass Beads.

CRIMPS or CRIMP BEADS

These are tiny metal round beads made of a soft metal. They can be used for helping attach Necklace or Bracelet beading wires to clasps, holding beads in position on stringing wire or cord and for holding together multiple wires. Crush or flatten the crimp with flat nose or crimping pliers to lock its position on the wire or cord.



Above is an example of black antique finish metal Crimps.

CRIMP COVER

A decorative metal cover that is closed over a Crimp Tube to provide a clean finished look to a jewellery design.



Vintage raw brass crimp covers.

CRIMP TUBE

A Crimp Bead made into a tubular shape rather than round. These little tubes negate the need for knots in the stringing material.

CRIMPING PLIERS

This is a specialist two part tool that will give a neat finish to your crimp beads. A pair of flat nose pliers will flatten a crimp bead – perfectly functional – but [Crimping Pliers](#) will produce a rounded shape to the crimp that looks better and more professional if you are leaving them exposed. These pliers have two different shaped holes (when the jaws are closed) to squash and then round the crimp so that it securely grips the wire. Some crimping pliers have several different sized holes so that they can be used to crimp different sized findings.



Above is an example of a pair of Beadalon Crimping Pliers.

CROSS HOLE

The hanging hole passing through the end of a Drop or [Pendant](#).

CROW BEADS

Slightly oval glass beads resulting from the tumbling process used in their manufacture. Typically 6 to 9mm in diameter with a 2mm hole or larger. [Pony Beads](#) have similar qualities but are larger still.



Above is an example of Vintage Marbled Topaz Crow Beads.

CRYSTAL

A clear transparent mineral formed from crystallised quartz. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Crystal.

CRYSTAL GLASS

Glass with a high lead content (typically greater than 30%) which gives it a brilliant transparency and shine. As the lead is contained within the glass crystal beads there is no issue with toxicity. Swarovski and Preciosa are the two big names that make crystal beads and pendants, but crystal is also available from Chinese manufacturers. Crystal beads are nearly always faceted to show off the light refracting qualities of the glass, the best quality beads are precision cut by machine.

CUBIC ZIRCONIA

A synthetic substitute for diamonds. To the untrained eye they are very similar in appearance though Cubic Zirconia has a Mohs hardness rating of 8 as opposed to 10 for a Diamond. They are also result in a heavier stone than similar sized diamond. A process perfected in Russia, they have been available commercially since 1976.

CUFF BRACELET

A wide bracelet which is either slipped over the wrist or hinged. Named after its resemblance to the size and shape of the cuff of a shirt sleeve.



Above is an antique silver filigree style cuff bracelet.

CUFF LINK

A closure used to fasten the two sides of a shirt sleeve cuff. Originally composed of two metal buttons separated by a short length of chain, nowadays a cuff link is commonly based on a swivel style finding, with the mechanism hidden by a cabochon, stone or small decorative plate.

CURB LINK CHAIN

Has oval but twisted links which are designed to lie flat against the wearer. Read more in our [Glossary of Jewellery Chain](#)



Above is an example of an antique copper finish Curb Link Chain.

CUTTERS or SIDE CUTTERS

Are compact round headed cutters used for general wire work. They are used for cutting most wire end, with side cutters putting a neat finish on your wire (sand the end of the wire for a super smooth finish). However, [Memory Wire](#) is a different kettle of fish as it is so tough, and needs to be cut either with specialist Memory Wire Cutters, or a pair of sharp household pliers. Use your jewellery pliers and risk ruining the jaws. Likewise do not be tempted to use scissors for wire cutting as even the finest wire will make grooves in the blades and ruin them.

D

DANGLE

Are generally beaded Head or Eye Pins finished with a loop, or a small object with a top loop, attached to bracelets, necklaces or earrings in the same manner as a charm might be. And yes, they dangle . . . adding extra movement to piece of jewellery.



Above are a number of unusual vintage white lucite beads in brass wired dangles.

DAPPING

A jewellery making technique used to add shape and form to a normally flat ornament, for example doming a plate metal ornament. Usually formed using a Dapping Block, Dapping Punch or Press.

DELICA BEADS

Japanese Seed Beads trade marked to to the Miyuki Shoji Corporation. They are made of precisely cut glass giving them a uniform size, shape and colour. They typically have large holes compared to their diameter and have a rounder shape with thicker walls than normal seed beads. To learn more read our [Guide to Seed Beads](#)



Above is an example of Miyuki Delica beads in lavender blue transparent lustre.

DENIER

The unit of measurement used to denote the thickness of Silk Thread.

DIAMOND

Diamond is the defining mineral for 10 on Mohs Scale of Hardness. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Diamond.

DIAMANTE

Glass stones that have been cut and finishes applied to make them sparkle like a diamond. Similar to [Rhinestones](#)



Above are a pair of box clasps with central diamante faceted stones.

DICHROIC GLASS

This incredibly beautiful glass of oily, rainbow iridescent colours is the result of super high-tech aerospace engineering. Multiple layers of metal oxide are applied to a base coat of glass to the thickness of approximately 1/40th of a sheet of paper. The oxides are applied using an electron bombardier inside a vacuum chamber. As many as 50 layers can be added in specific order and thickness to create the result desired. The thin layers of metal over glass allow some wavelengths of light/colour to pass through and others to reflect, and this creates the shimmering chameleon visual effect. The combination of the metal oxide types used determines the colours presented, and the base glass can be of any colour. The presence of tiny amounts of metal particles in glass can create a similar effect, and this is a far older technique – see the [Lycurgus Cup](#) in the British Museum collection that dates to 4th century A.D.



Above is an example of a striking dichroic glass pendant.

DISC or DISK BEAD

A very short cylindrical sliced bead with parallel faces and a central or tabular hole (from edge to edge). In effect a squashed round bead!



Above is an example of vintage light sapphire glass Disc Beads.

DOG COLLAR

Similar to a Choker, this is a wide band of material worn as a necklace high around the neck often with a focal bead or pendant positioned at the front.

DOLOMITE

Is a carbonate mineral composed of calcium magnesium carbonate. It comes in hues of white, grey, pink, green, brown and black. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Dolomite.

DOUGHNUT or DONUT BEADS

These are flattened disc like beads with a large central hole usually fashioned from glass, stone or wood.



Above is an example of a semi precious Donut Bead in red jasper.

DOUBLE CUP BEAD TIP

A component used to conceal knots at the end of beadwork and also to connect Clasps.

DOUBLET

Any stone made up of two component parts or sections, such as a garnet overlaying green glass.

They are often used as pendants.

DOUBLE NYLON JAW THREAD PLIERS

These pliers have removable plastic covers over the metal jaws so that they don't scratch or mark the softest wire. They are ideal for working with precious metals, coloured metal wirework and for straightening bent or tangled wire.

DRAWN BEADS

Beads sliced from a long tube of glass drawn from a ball of molten glass. An air hole is used to make the bead hole and when hardened they are usually tumbled or reheated to soften their edges give a more rounded finish. Bugle, Crow, Pony and Seed Beads all fall into this category. To read more about this process see our [Guide to Seed Beads](#)

DROP BEAD

A bead or component which is wider at one end than the other. Similar in shape to a droplet of water with a hole passing through the length of the centre of the bead or at the small end perpendicular to the bead.



Above is an example of a vintage Japanese turquoise glass Drop Bead.

DRUK

A spherical pressed glass bead made in Czechoslovakia. No seam line should be visible and it should be optically perfectly round.



Above is an example of a vintage peridot Druk Bead.

DRUSY

The name given to a thin layer of minute quartz crystals that have formed across the surface of a gemstone.

DUCTILITY

The ability for a metal to be drawn into wire.

DUMORTIERITE

Is a fibrous aluminium boro silicate mineral which forms vitreous crystals of brown, blue, green and more rarely pink and violet. It was first described in 1881 and named for the French paleontologist Eugene Dumortier (1803-1873). Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Dumortierite.

DYED BEADS

Some beads, notably [Seed Beads](#), are dyed or painted. A surface colourant is applied after the bead has been made. This seems to apply most to some beads of a pink, purple or fuchsia colouring, and the result is that beads of these hues are more likely to fade or have their colouring rub or wash off. A spray of suitable varnish can help to slow the deterioration. UV light (from the sun and fluorescent bulbs) may also fade dyed beads.



Above is an example of dyed beads in the form of howlite skull beads.

E

E BEADS

A larger [Seed Bead](#) – size 6/0 or bigger. Also known as [Pony Beads](#).

EARRINGS and EARWIRES

These Jewellery Findings come in a variety of styles and finishes, both for pierced and unpierced ears. They are easy to work with to produce a quick piece of jewellery, as there will either be a hoop to attach danglers to, a plate to glue a stone to, or you can thread the beads straight onto the earring.



Above is an example of a pair of silver-plated flat wire Fish Hook Earwires.

EARRING CLIP or EAR CLIPS

A two piece hinged mechanism attached to the back of an earring which closes around the ear lobe with just enough mechanical pressure to hold the earring in place. The outside of the clip can have a setting for a Cabochon or other design. A pain free alternative to having your ears pierced!



A pair of vintage raw brass Creole Ear Clips.

EARRING POST

Designed for pierced ears this is the straight part of the Earring that is passed through the ear. They can have either a loop, a stem, or an ornamental piece to which you the earring design can be attached.

EBONY

A very hard dark brown wood from the Tropics used to make beads as well as other decorative items.

ELASTIC THREAD

Perfect for making quick fashion bracelets or for childrens projects. Simply add beads and knot together the ends (add a drop of glue for extra security). It comes in a variety of colours including clear. Don't overload our [Elastic Thread](#) with heavy beads as it will stretch.



Above is an example of an Elastic Thread called Stretch Magic.

ELECTROPLATING

The process of using electricity to cover a base metal with a thin film of precious metal such as silver or gold

EMBOSSSED

A moulded or carved pattern which stands proud of the surface in low relief – think of the face of a coin. Achieved by a stamping technique which is pressed into a plain area of metal to leave an impression in relief

EMERALD

A gemstone variety of Beryl with a green colour caused by chromium or vanadium. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Emerald.

ENAMEL or ENAMELLED

A decorative technique that sees coloured powdered glass or glass paste fused to metal using heat. This technique has a heritage stretching back to ancient Greece.



Above are two patriotic enamelled Union Jack charms.

END BAR

A finding used to attach a single strand clasp to a multi strand necklace. Typically one side of the bar will have a single loop with the opposite side have multiple loops depending on how many are required for the design.



A group of gold plated three strand to one strand bracelet or necklace End Bars.

END CAPS or END CONES

Jewellery Components which are used to finish a strand of jewellery. See [Cone Ends](#).

END CUTTERS

Also referred to as End Nippers or End Cutting Pliers. They are used to cut wire.



Above is an example of Beadalon End Cutters.

END HOLE

Half drilled hole located at the hanging end of a Drop or Pendant

ENGLISH CUT

Ironically without a cut in sight these are crudely moulded round beads with irregular facets and traces of the mould remaining on the bead surface.

ENGRAVED

A pattern that is carved, etched or inscribed into a surface using tools, stamping or a drill. This usually applies to glass, metal or wood.

ENHANCER

A round ball like finding that can be opened up and then placed over a strand of beads or pearls

and then locked closed. Also known as a Pearl Enhancer.

EXTENSION CHAIN

A short length of Chain added at the clasp point of a necklace or bracelet, to allow the necklace length to be worn at variable lengths, or to fit a larger wrist.



Above is an example of a silver plated Chain Extender.

EYE

A loop made of wire or another material that is used as a connector for chains and pendants.

EYE BEADS

Beads with a circle, a dot, or a combination of the two so that it resembles an eye. The intention being to avert the gaze of the Evil Eye.



Above is an example of a vintage turquoise Eye Bead in lampwork glass.

EYE PINS or EYEPINS

A short length of wire ending in a turned loop. Add beads to produce a dangle or other decorative flourishes. Use the loop to join to other findings or components



Above is an example of three vintage brass Eye Pins.

F

FACET

The flat face or surface of a cut bead, gem, or crystal. The more facets there are the more the item sparkles as light is reflected off the surface in multiple directions.

FACETED BEADS

Are cut to produce multiple flat sides or faces to reflect light and to create sparkle and different depths of colour.



Above are three faceted jet black fire polished Czech glass beads.

FAUX

Originally from the French meaning false or fake this refers to jewellery that is artificial or imitation. For example 'faux pearls' is often used to describe imitation pearls

FAUX PEARLS

Today these are usually plastic or glass beads with a coating that creates an imitation 'pearl' look. These pearls can be very inexpensive but the coatings can rub away or crack over time leaving the plain surface of the bead that was used. Read our fascinating [History of Faux Pearls](#) to discover the more unusual products that were used to make Faux Pearls in earlier times.



Above is an example of some vintage faux lustella glass imitation pearls.

FERRULE

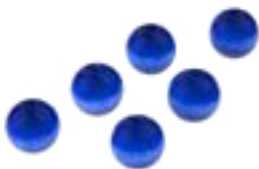
A metal cup or band that is attached to the end of a cord, thread or wire to prevent fraying or simply to add decoration.

FESTOON

A reasonably sized pendant with rings on either side through which chain or cord can be passed or attached. This pendant would usually act as the focal point of a necklace.

FIBRE OPTIC BEAD

See [Cat's Eye](#)



Above are some Royal blue Cats Eye Beads.

FIGURE OF EIGHT KNOT

Produces a more substantial knot than an [Overhand Knot](#), so can be useful for providing a tie-off within a [Calotte](#). See illustration for how to tie:



FILIGREE

In jewellery terms this usually refers to a decorative metal component with an open lace like structure which is formed by soldering bent wire into delicate designs or alternatively stamping or casting metal into predefined ornate shapes.



Above is an example of a bronze finish metal fancy Filigree beading embellishment.

FINDINGS

Covers all those useful jewellery components that turn a handful of beads and a length of thread into a wearable piece of jewellery – Clasps, Earwires, Crimps, Head Pins, Jump Rings, etc.

FINENESS

Is the proportion of silver or gold in a metal alloy. It is usually expressed as parts per thousand so for example sterling silver has a fineness of 925

FINE SILVER

Also known as White Silver is a silver alloy which contains 99.9% silver or better. Fine silver is softer than sterling silver and is much more brittle.

FIRE POLISHED

These glass beads start life as a pressed round which is then machine-faceted, it is then placed in a polishing furnace that heats the bead's surface and softens the facets. The resulting facets don't have the machine-cut precision of, say, crystal glass beads, but this gives them a charm of their very own. Fire-polished beads do not contain lead, so they are distinct from crystal glass and should not be labelled as such. Czechoslovakia produces beautiful fire-polished beads in a myriad of colours and applied finishes. India produces similar beads but they are generally of lesser quality – the facets won't meet as neatly and the glass is less reflective.

FISH HOOK EAR WIRES

Designed for pierced ears this is a type of Earring Finding that passes through the ear and resembles a hook used for fishing. They can have a loop on the front or a hook from which you the earring design can be hung. Sometimes these are referred to as French Earwires.



Above is an example of a pair of silver-plated flat wire Fish Hook Earwires.

FISH HOOK CLASPS

A type of Necklace Clasp that has a hook like element that fits into the main body of the clasp to secure it.



A typical Fish Hook Clasp in gold plated filigree with the pull out hook visible to the left.

FLAMBEAU

A decorative jewellery piece shaped like a flaming torch end

FLAT NOSED PLIERS

These pliers have straight sided outer and inner jaws You will need the flat inner jaw for squashing shut crimp tubes, folding down ribbon ends and keeping a good hold of wire when the need arises (wrap your jaw ends in plastic tape to avoid scratching the metal). Used in pairs they can used to open and close jump rings, to hold the wire when wire wrapping and for a multitude of other wirework tasks. Pliers without serrated teeth are preferred as these will not mark the wire. These pliers have fine jaws for delicate work.



Above is an example of Beadalon Flat Nosed Pliers.

FLOURITE

Is an extremely variable stone in terms of colour but has an enviable glassy lustre and richness whatever the colour. They can be an intense purple, blue, green or yellow; also colourless, reddish orange, pink, white and brown. Flourite is the defining mineral for [4 on Mohs Scale of Hardness](#). These stones can be found in Brazil, Canada, China, England, Germany, Morocco, Spain and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Flourite.

FLUSH CUTTERS

Are similar to Side Cutters but have a pointed tip so that they can be used to trim wire from hard to reach places. These cutters will cut wire flush and not leave jagged edges thereby avoiding sharp wire ends. Typically they will work up to wire guages diameter 14.

FLUX

A liquid or paste that is used when soldering metals together, both reducing the surface temperature of the two surfaces and protecting the fused metals from oxidisation.

FOB

A short chain traditionally used with pocket watches, now repurposed for jewellery pieces and in particular charm bracelets and necklaces.

FOCAL BEADS

An eye-catching centrepiece bead, usually larger than its companions, or used alone.



Above is an example of a winged heart lampwork Focal Bead.

FOIL BACKED

A transparent or translucent stone that has had its back face coated with gold, silver, or coloured foil in order to enhance the colour and brilliance of the the stone by reflecting back more light. Typically used in costume jewellery and Rhinestones.



Three round silver foil backed siam red acrylic cabochons.

FOIL LINED or FOILED BEADS

A glass bead made around a tiny piece of silver or gold foil. The metal foil used can be 24 ct gold, [Sterling Silver](#), or simply gold or silver coloured metal. Genuine Murano glass beads use pure metal and this is reflected in their price.



An example of an Indian lampwork glass foiled bead with a black core accentuated by gold foil.

FOLDING CRIMPS

Also known as Thong Ends or Cord Ends. If you are stringing with lengths of leather, suede, ribbon etc. you may use these [Crimps](#) at the ends of your work. Place the end of your thong or cord on to the middle of the crimp (use a drop of glue if you like), and fold first one then the other of the sides over the centre. They have an end loop.



Above is an example of Cord Ends, Folding Crimps, or Thong Ends in black antique finish.

FOLD OVER CLASPS

Also known as Snap Lock Clasps these are a hinged closure that fold shut with a quiet snap and provide a simple clasp finding for anklets, bracelets and necklaces.



Above are a number of vintage copper plated fold over clasps.

FORMED BEAD

Typically refers to a [Corrugated Bead](#) which is made by corrugating a length of tube, then cutting it to length before forming the bead shape in a press

FRENCH EARWIRES

See Fish Hooks.



Above is an example of a pair of silver-plated flat wire Fish Hook Earwires.

FRENCH WIRE

Also known as Gimp or Bullion. A length of thin wire tightly coiled like a spring. Use a short length of this to feed your thread through at the clasp end, and thereby add some protection to the thread as it would otherwise rub directly on the loop of the clasp. Gives a professional looking finish.

FRESHWATER PEARLS

As their name suggests form in freshwater mussels in the same way pearls form in saltwater oysters. The difference is they are irregular in shape rather than the perfectly round pearls derived from oysters. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of a Freshwater Pearl.

FRINGES

An embroidery technique used to add interest and movement to garments and objects. It can be seen on objects as varied as lampshades to beaded purses and cowboy jackets! It is also commonly used to finish jewellery created with brick stitch and associated bead stitching techniques.

FRIT

Crushed particles of coloured glass applied to the surface of molten lampwork glass beads as decoration.



Above are a number of handmade lampwork glass nugget beads with a frit finish.

FROSTED BEADS

Have a dull finish similar to a coating of ice across the bead surface. See also [Matte](#)



Above is an example of some Frosted aqua glass flowers.

FURNACE GLASS BEADS

Also known as Cane Beads or Candy Beads. Created in a furnace or kiln, glass canes are fused together to create a pattern in cross section. A bubble is blown into the centre of the glass, and then the glass is pulled to create a long hollow tube which may be as long as 24 metres/ 80 ft!. This long cane is then cut into small lengths, tumbled and fire polished to smooth the edges and create a shiny finish. The process is carried out by hand so these beads can be expensive!

G

GALVANISED BEADS

Beads (especially [Seed Beads](#)) that have been plated with zinc or other metals. This type of finish can, unfortunately, be lost over time due to friction or acidity from the skin. You can coat the beads with a spray varnish in order to stabilise the finish and slow down the wear.

GARNET

Is typically a dark red gemstone although they do appear in yellow, green, pink, white and gray.

They are found in Australia, Brazil, India, Scotland, Tanzania, the United States and Uruguay. Its most appealing quality is its brilliance. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Garnet.

GAUGE

The American unit of measurement for the thickness of wire. The higher the number, the thinner the wire. Wires produced in the UK are listed by their dimensions in mm, however as so many beading reference sources are American it is useful to know the gauge gradings too. To learn more read our [Guide to Cords, Threads & Wires](#)

Wires most frequently employed for jewellery making are listed below:

34 gauge wire = 0.16mm (0.006") Good for wire knitting and twisting. Too fine for firm shaping. Will fit through the smallest seed beads and pearls.

28 gauge wire = 0.32mm (0.013") Good for wire twisting and knitting. Will fit through smaller seed beads, pearls, smaller semi-precious stones and crystals (2-3mm).

26 gauge wire = 0.40mm (0.015") Good for wire twisting and knitting. Use for semi-precious stones with holes too small for 24 gauge wire, pearls and smaller seed beads and crystals.

24 gauge wire = 0.51mm (0.020") Good for wire crafts and general use including wire wrapping beads and stones. This wire type should fit through slim semi-precious stone holes, seed beads, pearls, smaller crystals.

22 gauge wire = 0.64mm (0.0253") Good for wire crafts and general use including wire wrapping beads and stones. This wire type should fit through slim semi-precious stone holes, size 11 seed beads, 4mm and larger crystals, smaller metal beads (2-3mm) and glass beads (including Czech glass).

20 gauge wire = 0.81mm (0.032") Good for making jewellery, clasps, findings, wire wrapping (beads and stones), ear wires and jump rings. Will fit through most crystals 4mm and larger, larger seed beads (size 8 plus), larger semi-precious (you may need to use a reamer), and glass beads (including Czech glass).

18 gauge wire = 1.02mm (0.040") Good for making heavy jewellery as long as the bead holes are big enough, and for clasps and findings. Use for lampwork and other large glass beads, also larger metal beads.

GEMSTONE

These are beads made from Precious or [Semi-Precious](#) stones. Many of these stones are described in greater detail within this glossary as well as in our dedicated [Glossary of Gemstones](#).

GHOST

Translucent [Matte](#) beads with an [Aurora Borealis](#) coating giving a beautiful iridescent finish.

GIMP

See [French Wire](#).

GIRANDOLE

A pendant earring usually with three ornaments hanging from a central piece.



An exquisite example of an antique Girandole earrings by Oliva Collings.

GIVRE

Pronounced gee-vray refers to a crystal (colour) or transparent bead with a swirl of interior colour similar to that found in a child's marble. The beads are usually made using a glass encasing technique before they are pressed into moulds, and then polished. The term appears to have been first used by Swarovski and it comes from the French word meaning frosty.



Above is an example of some unusual vintage frosted blue and yellow cut glass Givre Beads.

GLASS BLOWN BEADS

Are those made in a real Murano glass furnace in Venice. They are made using a technique called [Filigrana](#). The glass blower rolls out canes of coloured glass giving the distinctive stripping in each bead. They are then turned as spirals or straight stripping, before being fashioned into balls, teardrops or pennies. They may also be made using lampwork techniques, or *perle a lume* as it is in Italian. In this case they begin life as a larger cane of Moretti glass which is then melted into a soft ball on the end of a small blow pipe. To learn more about Venetian glass manufacture look at our [History of Venetian Glass](#) and our [Glossary of Venetian Glass](#).



Above is an example of a yellow and white spiral Blown Glass Bead.

GLAZE

A glassy coating applied to ceramic and then fired to protect the object and to make the surface impervious



Above is an example of glazed ceramic in the form of a twilight fern heart pendant finished front

and back in a glossy dark glaze with vivid blue highlights.

GLUE

Used to keep thread knots from unravelling and to keep small items such as beads in place. Also known as bead cement. Click to view a selection of our [beading glues](#).



Above is a tube of G-S Hypo Cement used for gluing beads in place, strengthening knots and other creative applications.

GOLD COLOUR

Means that a [Base Metal](#), such as brass, has been covered with a thin layer of gold, but this layer will be extremely thin and impure.

GOLD FILLED

The process by which a thin layer of gold is applied over a [Base Metal](#) and mechanically bonded using a combination of pressure and heat. To be classified as gold filled a piece must be at least 1/20 gold by weight.

GOLD FOIL BEADS

Beads that contain gold foil leaf to add depth and sparkle.



Above is an example of a black and Gold Foil Lined lampwork circular cushion bead.

GOLD or GILT LINED

A transparent bead with a gold coloured lining to its hole. Not as hard wearing as [Silver Lined](#) beads, and the gold coloured lining may be lost over time.

GOLD PLATED

Means that a [Base Metal](#), such as brass, has been covered with a thin layer of real gold. This must conform to an industry standard thickness of .15mm to .25mm and of at least 10 carats. 10 carats means that the metal contains 10 parts gold to 14 parts other metals (24 carats is pure gold). See also [Rolled Gold](#) and Gold Filled.



Above is an example of Gold Plated metal round spacer beads.

GOLDSTONE

See Aventurina

GOLD TONE or GOLD FINISHED

Jewellery finished with a gold colour that has no appreciable amount of gold content

GRAM

The unit of measurement used to package small beads such as [Seed Beads](#). 100 grams equals 1 Kilo.

GROUND STITCH

An off loom bead weaving stitch which can be used to create daisies, gods eyes, and lightening eyes. It can be used to make rope style anklets, belts, bracelets, chokers and necklaces.

GUARD CHAIN

A small chain usually 7 or 8 centimetres long that has one end attached next to the clasp of a necklace or bracelet. The other end is attached to a loop or link on the opposite end of the piece. It is used as a fail-safe in case the clasp opens on a necklace or bracelet.

GUILLOCHE

Pronounced gee-oh-shay. It is a technique where an enamel finish is applied over a craved metal surface.

GYPSUM

Gypsum is the defining mineral for [2 on Mohs Scale of Hardness](#). Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).

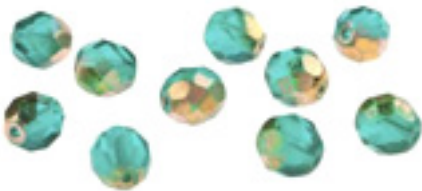


Above is an example of Gypsum.

H

HALF COAT BEADS

These are beads where a coating has been applied to only one side of the bead.



Above are a number of vintage teal glass faceted beads with a half coat of copper surface finish.

HALF DRILLED BEADS

Simply put these are beads where the hole only goes half way through the body of the bead. There are Findings designed specifically to make use of these beads for varied applications such as for in ring settings, as memory wire end caps or to finish earring posts.



Above is an example of vintage Czech speckled green Half Drilled Beads.

HALF HITCH KNOT

Serves a similar purpose to the [Overhand Knot](#), and can be used for securing tail ends of threads and weaving in new ones. See the illustration below for how to tie it and read our [Guide to Beading Techniques](#) to learn when to use it.



HALLMARK

A mark stamped into precious metals to indicate its purity or fineness, the maker or sponsor, the Assay Office where it was tested, and the year that it was tested. This process of hallmarking dates back to 1300 when Edward I instituted the assaying and marking of precious metals to reduce fraud and to maintain fair competition.



Above is an example of a UK silver Hallmark denoting the maker, the Assay Office, in this case London, and the quality stamp.

HAMMERED METAL

A jewellery making technique or finish that results in a piece of metal with a pitted surface where it has been struck repeatedly with the jewellers hammer to form a shape or to give surface interest.



A hammered metal tear drop stamping in copper.

HAND KNOTTED

Relates to items of jewellery where individual beads are strung one at a time with a knot placed between them to provide added strength and to avoid abrasion between beads. An obvious example being Pearl Necklaces.

HANK

A bundle of bead strands, usually 10 to 12 strands of a approximately 18 ins in length. Traditionally the

measurement for a hank = 3.333 fathoms or 6.667 yards or 20 feet or 6.096 metres. However this does vary by type and size of bead, manufacturer and country of origin. To learn more about hanks read our [Guide To Seed Beads](#).



Above is a hank of cut transparent dark olive Picasso fire polished glass beads.

HASSONITE

Belongs to the grossularite garnet group. Its vivid orange brown colouring has resulted in the nickname cinnamon stone. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Hassonite.

HAT PIN

A long metal pin with an ornamental head used to fasten a ladies hat by passing the pin through the hat and into the hair.



A selection of decorative vintage Hat Pins.

HEAD PIN

A short length of wire ending in a 'Head' to prevent a bead falling off (a Seed Bead can be used to add a little extra diameter if needed). Once the bead is on the head pin it can then be attached to the larger jewellery piece. Generally head pins end in a tiny round of metal soldered on horizontal to the wire, but look out for decorative Heads including ball heads, decorative metal heads and decorative glass heads.



Above is an example of some black antique finish Head Pins.

HEAT TREATED or TREATMENT

The application of heat to precious stones and minerals to change their physical or chemical properties,, usually with a view to changing colours or improving clarity or hardness. For example applying heat to a blue green aquamarine will make it turn blue. This can be done for aesthetic reasons but also to disguise one stone for another perhaps more lucrative one.

HEIRLOOM BEADS

Beads and jewellery that have been passed down through a family.

HEISHE or HEISHI BEADS

Pronounced hee shee are tiny tube or disc shaped beads cut from shells, wood, or ground and polished stones. Originating with the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico. Authentic heishe beads are completely handmade and it can take days to produce a strand of beads. Typically strips of shell or stone are drilled with evenly spaced holes, then cut into squares, before being shaped and sanded by hand.



Above is an example of some disc shaped turquoise Heishe Beads from Pueblo New Mexico.

HEISHE BAR

Pronounced hee shee bar is a narrow spacer bar used to hold heishe beads, bugle beads or seed beads in parallel without them twisting or tangling.

HEMALYKE

A man made cost saving material manufactured to resemble more expensive natural hematite. It can be magnetised and also used as a base material for various finishes and coatings.

HEMATITE or HAEMATITE

Is the mineral form of iron oxide which has a rust red colouring. As gemstone beads they are quite striking and are usually heavy shiny and silvery black in colour. These stones can be found in Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, England, New Zealand, and the United States. True hematite leaves a red streak when scratched across a piece of unglazed porcelain, while simulated products usually leave a grey streak. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Hematite.

HEMIMORPHITE

Is a zinc containing mineral with its name derived from the unusual character of its crystals – with one end formed of a point but the other being pedion or flat faced without a geometric link to any other faces. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Hemimorphite.

HEMP

Used in Macrame jewellery, it is a strong and versatile cord derived from the coarse fibre at the centre of the cannabis plant.



Above is a ball of Hemp.

HERRINGBONE STITCH

A stitch where beads are sewn together to create a pattern similar to herringbone fabric.

HEXAGONAL BEADS

Are faceted and resemble a small tile

HEX CUT BEADS

Six sided hexagonally shaped seed beads cut to give maximum reflection and sparkle. They are manufactured in a variety of sizes and finishes



Above is an example of some emerald green hex two cut glass beads.

HIDDEN SCREW CLASP

A necklace fastener consisting of two short barrels with screws that connect. This clasp is then partially buried in a bead or pearl, giving the necklace a clean look when the clasp is screwed together.

HOLLOW BEADS

Made from blown glass for lightness or to allow decoration inside the clear glass. This term can also apply to carved beads of bone, stone or wood.



Above is a handmade amber coloured hollow lampwork glass bead.

HOOK and EYE CLASPS

A very simple clasp with a long history that is formed with a hook on one side and an open loop on the opposing side. As with many clasps the loop is usually circular but can be made to be oval or any other open shape.



Above are a pair of hook and eye clasps in a bright solid copper.

HOWLITE

Is better known for imitating other minerals than it is in its own right. For instance when dyed blue its distinctive veining makes it resemble turquoise. It is a calcium borosilicate hydroxide first discovered in southern California in 1868 and named after Canadian mineralogist Henry How (1828 to 1879) who first described it. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Howlite.

I

ILLUSION CORD

Soft and flexible 'invisible' cord, for use in floating and illusion designs as it can be knotted to hold the beads in place (or you can use glue or discreet crimp tubes).



Above is an example of Beadalon Supplemax Illusion Cord.

ILLUSION SETTING

A prong jewellery setting containing a faceted metal plate that surrounds the girdle of a diamond or other precious stone, thereby making the stone appear larger.

IMPERIAL JADE

The popular name given to fine quality, translucent, emerald green Jadeite. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Imperial Jade.

INCISED

A jewellery piece, usually metal or glass, that has had its surface engraved or cut.

INGOT

Metals cast into a bar or other shape for further processing. In the case of precious metals such as gold, silver and platinum they can also be seen as currency or as a currency reserve.



Above is an example of a platinum Ingot.

INLAY & INLAID

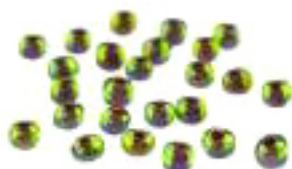
A pattern that has been created by setting a material into a surface whilst retaining the overall surface level.



Above is an example of an Inlaid Abalone shell pendant.

INSIDE COLOUR

See [Colour Lined](#).



Above is an example of some vintage Japanese red heart green glass beads [Colour Lined](#) with an

earthy red colour.

INTAGLIO

Is a method of decoration which sees a design cut into the reverse surface of a jewellery piece, such as a glass cabochon or stone. This recessed design is typically found in signet rings.



A beautiful vintage monochrome Intaglio ring with a portrait etched into the reverse of the glass at the centre of the ring.

IOLITE

Named from ios the Greek word for violet it is a purplish blue hard cordierite mineral. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of lolite.

INCLUSIONS

Natural birthmarks inside a gemstone that can affect its flow of light but can also add uniqueness and character. Depending on the stone in question and the size, shape, quantity, position and colour of the inclusions they can have either a positive or a negative effect on a stones desirability or value.

IRIDESCENT BEADS

Glass beads traditionally processed with arsenic to create a rainbow or pearly lustre. The arsenic is chemically sealed inside the glass meaning there is no health risk to the wearer. As light catches the surface of an iridescent bead it provides a lustrous almost metallic effect.

IRIS

An Iridescent coating on opaque glass or darker bead colours giving a rainbow or metallic effect.



Above is an example of some Czech round glass green, blue and red Iris finish druks.

IRRADIATION

The process of exposing gemstones and minerals to radiation to enhance their colour.

IVORY

A hard, smooth, natural white material derived from the tusks of elephants, extinct mammoths, and sea mammals. It has been used throughout history for beads and other decorative items but with the possible extinction of many of the animals it has been traditionally 'harvested' from it is now illegal to trade in new ivory. Synthetic alternatives are made from Plastic, [Celluloid](#) and Casein.

IVORY CLASP

A necklace fastener consisting of two short barrels which connect by means of a male and female screw. Also known as a Hidden Clasp.

J

JADE

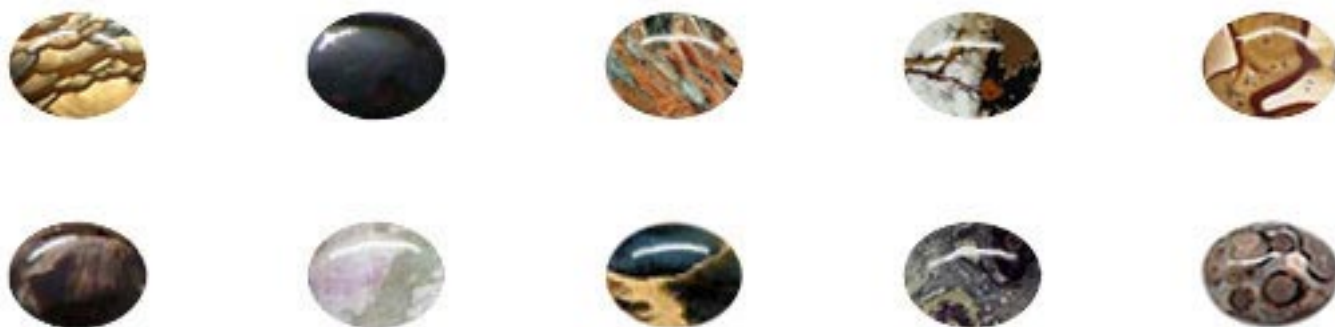
Has been a highly valued gemstone for thousands of years especially in the Orient and in particular in China. Colours are a variety of green hues, off white and yellow. These stones can be found in Australia, Canada, China, Guatemala, Japan, Kazakhstan, Myanmar, Russia, Taiwan, the United States, and Zimbabwe. In 1863 it was discovered that the name Jade was being applied to two distinct minerals. These two minerals, Nephrite and Jadeite, are relatively hard to distinguish from each other and so the name Jade has persisted. Nephrite, is an amphibole silicate and usually displays only green and creamy white, whilst Jadeite, is a sodium aluminum silicate and can have the full range of jade's colours. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above are examples of Soft Canadian, China, Green, Lavender, Nephrite, New, White, and Yellow Jade.

JASPER

Is a member of the quartz family and is one of the oldest known gemstones. Because Jasper is found in many colours it is often named by appearance, for example [Leopard Skin Jasper](#). Its main features are stripe, circles or spots with colours ranging from white to gray, pink, red, brown, yellow, and green. These stones can be found world wide, but the primary sources are Australia, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, India, Madagascar, Russia, the United States, and Uruguay. Its polish might wash away in water, so clean with a soft, dry cloth. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).





Above are examples of Biggs (USA), Blood, Brecciated, Chinese Painting, Deschutes (USA), Firewood, Florence, Imperial (Mexico), Kambaba (Madagascar), Leopard Skin, Morrisonite (USA), Noreena (Australia), Ocean (Madagascar), Opal, Owyhee (USA), Peacock, Picasso, Picture, Polychronic, Poppy, Rainbow, Rainforest, Royal Sahara Picture (N Africa), Russian, Sagebrush, Silver Leaf, Spiderweb Imperial and Yellow (China) Jasper.

JET

Is petrified coal or more precisely the product following the decomposition of wood under high pressure from millions of years ago. It is easily shaped and polished and is considered to be a minor gemstone. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#).



Above is an example of Jet.

JEWELLERY TAG

A small flat metal disc or tag finding that is added to a piece of jewellery having first been stamped with the makers mark.



Above are two large jewellery tags in stainless steel.

JEWELLERY WIRE

In general this is aluminium, brass, copper, silver, gold, silver-plated, gold-plated or gold-filled wire. This wire is sold in several sizes, called [Gauges](#), with the larger gauge wire being smaller in diameter. You can [buy coated wires](#) in all sorts of fabulous colours.



Above is an example of Copper Jewellery Wire.

JIG

A peg board or base plate with an arrangement of holes into which pegs are placed to allow wire to be bent into specific repeatable shapes. Typically used to create earrings, pendants, spacers or ornate clasps.

JUMP RINGS – OPEN

Circles of wire or metal with a split in their diameter used to join together jewellery elements. The rings can be opened with pliers and used to add jewellery making components to each other and then closed shut to create a relatively secure closure.



Above is an example of open silver plated metal Jump Rings.

JUMP RINGS – CLOSED OR SOLDERED

The same circles of wire or metal as detailed above but in this case they have been soldered closed to be used as connectors. These rings cannot be opened and are therefore very secure.

K

KARAT

The measure used to determine the pureness of gold with 24k being pure gold. 20k, 18k and 14k are golds combined with an alloy in varying degrees.

KEEPER RING

A ring that is used alongside a more expensive ring to keep it in place securely on a finger

KIDNEY WIRE

Metal earring findings shaped like a kidney which are more secure than [French Earwires](#) or [Fish Hooks](#) but are not as user friendly. They are used in pierced earring and are generally closed, as opposed to a shepherd hook or a fishhook, which remains open.



Two pairs of basic raw brass Kidney Wire Earring findings.

KILO

A unit of measure equal to 100 grams in weight. Kilos and grams are the standard unit of measure for small beads such as [Seed Beads](#)

KNOT CUP

Another name for a [Calotte](#)



Above are some gold plated metal Calottes.

KNOTTING

Small knots tied between beads, most typically pearls, to stop them rubbing together and to secure them in case the necklace breaks. To learn more read our [Guide To Beading Techniques](#).

KYANITE

Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Kyanite.

L

LABRADORITE

A gemstone in the same family as Moonstone which gives a good idea of why it is valued. When light hits labradorite from a particular direction, it can display striking rainbow-colored reflections (known as labradorescence or schiller). Colours are dark gray, black, or brown with iridescent coloring. These stones can be found in Australia, Canada, Madagascar, Mexico, Russia, and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Labradorite.

LACE BEADS

Another name for Millefiori Beads



A beautiful example of a handmade Venetian Millefiori Tube Bead.

LADDER STITCH

A stitch often used in the first row of a [Brick Stitch](#) project where the beads are sewn together with one bead on top of the other resembling a ladder.

LAMPWORK GLASS

Glass beads made by hand with a flame torch and finished in kiln. A rod of glass is heated and then spun around a mandrel or metal rod. When a base bead has been formed other glass colours are added to create a surface design. Because they are made on a mandrel they tend to have larger holes than machine-made glass beads. To learn more read our [Guide to Making Lampwork Glass Beads](#).



A handmade Lampwork Glass Victorian style heart.

LANYARD

A clasp used for handbag straps

LAPIS LAZULI

A deep blue gemstone with white gray and gold inclusions. The fewer the inclusions in a bead, the more valuable it is. One of the primary minerals in this stone, namely lazurite, is light-fast so these stones don't fade with time. These stones can be found in Afghanistan, Chile and Russia. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Lapis Lazuli.

LARIAT

An open ended (no clasp) necklace that can be worn in all sorts of imaginative ways. Generally about 48 inches / 121.9 cm in length as this allows for wrapping, draping and loose knotting. To see how many of a particular sized bead are needed for a lariat necklace use our handy [Bead Calculator](#) in the menu bar above

LATTIMO

See [Milk Glass](#)

LAVALIERE

A small jewelled pendant or ornament to be worn around the neck often designed with fine chains

LAVA STONE

Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Lava Stone.

LEAD CRYSTAL

A colourless transparent glass resembling Rock Crystal, that must have a minimum 10% lead content to be considered crystal

LEOPARDSKIN JASPER

A type of [Jasper](#) with a spotted appearance resembling the skin of a leopard. The spots on Leopardskin Jasper are usually pink against a dark background. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Leopardskin Jasper.

LEVER BACK EARWIRES

Designed for pierced ears these earwires have a hinged back that provide a secure closure once the earring is put on. There is usually a hanging loop or hook from which the earring design can be attached.



Two pairs of bronze finish Lever Back Earwires designed for pierced ears.

LIMOGES

A style of enamel work similar in appearance to a painting

LINING

Are metallic or coloured coatings on the interior or hole surface of a transparent bead giving added depth to the bead.



An example of vintage Silver Lined grey glass oval beads.

LIQUID SILVER

The description given to the effect created when thin silver tubular beads are used en masse either on a jewellery piece or when embroidered on clothing

LIQUID GOLD

The description given to the effect created when thin gold tubular beads are used en masse either on a jewellery piece or when embroidered on clothing

LIVER OF SULPHUR

Is the alchemists name for a chemical mixture which when dissolved in water oxidises silver and other metals, particularly copper alloys such as gold, producing finishing shades of brown, green, magenta, purple and blue-black. The outcome is variable and dependent on the composition of the Liver of Sulphur, the strength of the mixture, the temperature, the water used, the treatment time and the actual composition of the metal being treated.



A bottle of Liver of Sulphur in gel form.

LOBSTER CLASP

Another term for Trigger Clasp. It is a secure metal clasp that resembles the shape of a lobster claw! The pincer arm is under tension by an internal spring that is opened and closed by a lever on its side. It is used for finishing necklaces, bracelets and other jewellery.



Above is an example of a decorative Trigger or Lobster Clasp.

LOCKET

A small pendant that is hinged and opens to reveal a space for the wearer to keep an image, a lock of hair, or other memento inside



Two decorative raw brass heart Pendant Lockets.

LOOM

A rig upon which beads can be hand woven.



Above is an example of a table top Bead Loom.

LOUPE

The name given to the magnifying tool used by jewellers and photographers to look at items up close and in detail.



An example of a small pocket magnifying Loupe.

LUCITE

A polymer form of plastic that is denser and therefore heavier than other forms of plastic used for beads. They make for very good quality beads being less likely to display seam lines and better able to stand the test of time in terms of wear and tear.



Three frosted Lucite trumpet flower beads made from lucite.

LUSTRE or LUSTER

A slightly shiny, often gold or silver coloured, transparent finish applied to transparent and opaque beads. Creates a bead with a soft reflected light or radiant sheen.



An example of Lustre beads in a dusky pink glass.

M

MACHINE CUT

Refers to beads that have highly polished facets with sharp angles and consistent and regular surfaces. This creates brilliance and sparkle achieved through the use of machinery.



An example of sharply cut vintage emerald green Machine Cut drops._

MAJORICA

A manufacturer of high quality imitation pearls based on the Spanish island of Mallorca (or Majorca as it is also known). Learn more about man made pearls in our [History of Faux Pearls](#)

MALACHITE

The beautiful green of this gemstone comes from the copper contained in the stone which is an altered form of copper with the presence of water affecting the shade. The more water in the copper makes it lighter, and less water makes it darker. Whilst the absence of water makes it black. Striations of green, light green, and black are malachite's special feature. This stone scratches easily and can become dull. These stones can be found in the major deposits of Zaire, and also in Australia, Chile, Namibia, the United States and Zimbabwe. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Malachite.

MANDREL

Any stepped tubular rod or bar around which sheet metal, wire or molten glass can be formed to shape it. Typically used in lampwork and wireworking they can be used to make jump rings, for shaping earwires or bespoke clasps.



An example of a jewellers ring Mandrel.

MARbled BEADS

The careful bending of two or more different colours of glass or other bead making material to create a surface pattern reminiscent of marbled stone.



An example of vintage Marbled acrylic beads in a cream and tan colouring.

MARQUISE

Pronounced mar-keys and also called a Navette. It is an oval gemstone which tapers to a point at both ends. It was named in honour of the Marquis de Pompadour, the mistress of King Louis XV.



Beautiful vintage blue and black striped glass Marquise drops.

MASS

A unit measurement or quantity for seed beads. One mass = 1,200 beads.

MATINEE NECKLACE

This is a necklace with a length between 20 inches and 30 inches / 50.8 cm and 76.2 cm. To see how many of a particular sized bead are needed for a matinee necklace use our handy Bead Calculator in the menu bar above

MATTE

Not shiny. Matte finish beads have usually been chemically etched or tumbled to remove the top layer of the bead surface, creating a low lustre velvety non reflective finish. However, if the beads, typically seed and bugle beads, have been colour lined with brass, silver, or copper, the surface will be matte but with a shiny surface showing through from the colour-lining. Also known as Flat Finish.



Industrial looking Matte grey vintage acrylic ribbed beads.

MEDALLION

A round or oval disk generally cast or stamped with a head or figures. They resemble coins and are usually mounted in bezels, hung from chains, or inserted into jewellery.

MEMORY WIRE

Tempered stainless steel wire with excellent 'memory' (shape retaining properties), so it is nigh on impossible to bend it out of shape. It therefore holds its circular shape and can be used without a clasp. Memory wire comes in coiled loops of different dimensions, i.e. bracelet, necklace or ring sized. Don't use your jewellery pliers with this wire it is just too tough. Use household pliers or specialist Memory Wire Cutters.



An example of Memory Wire sized to fit childrens wrists.

MEMORY WIRE CUTTERS

Also known as Hard Wire Shears they are made from strong tempered metal designed for cutting through Memory Wire. Don't use normal cutters for cutting this wire as it will blunt your tools and run the risk of injury squeezing too hard and seeing pieces of wire fly away.

METALLICS or METALLISED BEADS

Opaque coatings that include gunmetal, bronze, gold, silver, copper, antique gold, or antique silver giving a shiny metal like surface to beads



Beautifully rich looking acrylic beads with a warm copper coloured Metallised surface finish.

METAL STAMPING

An ornamental stamped metal part, such as a charm, generally formed by die striking.



An example of a decorative Stamping in the form of vintage raw brass Art Deco style wings or flourishes.

MILK GLASS

Usually white (but sometimes has coloured dyes added) this glass is almost opaque but with a degree of translucency that somehow diffuses the colour. Can look similar to a glazed porcelain. Lattimo is the italian name for this glass, from the italian for milk latte.

MILLEFIORI

This term is applied to glass beads that have been produced using a particular technique, it literally means thousands of flowers (mille is italian for thousand, and fiori is flowers) for that describes the patterning on the beads. Millefiori beads have plain glass cores to which thin slices of cut glass cane (known as murrine) have been applied to the surface. Each of the canes has been made up of many smaller canes arranged so that the cross-section creates a flower-like pattern. Beads can be decorated with a few murrine, or the whole surface can be covered with them. This is a technique that many polymer clay artists have borrowed from for producing their beads. Millefiori beads can only be produced by hand so the best examples can be very expensive. Occasionally these beads are also referred to as Lace Beads or Mosaic Beads.



A beautiful example of a handmade Venetian Millefiori Tube Bead.

MIRACLE BEADS

These very bright plastic beads have a silver mirror-like core to which very thin layers of colourful lacquer are applied, they are then finished with a clear coating that contains UV inhibitors. Light passes through the outer coating, the lacquer layers and reflects back from the mirrored core. The result is a shimmering illusion of great depth. Japan produces many miracle beads.



An example of Miracle Beads in emerald green.

MIRROR BACKED

A reflective coating on part of the surface of transparent materials, either to act directly as a mirror, or to multiply internal reflections created by the bead facets.

MOHS SCALE

Or Mohs Scale of Mineral Hardness, was invented in 1812 by German mineralogist Friedrich Mohs. It is a way to gauge the hardness of a gemstone or mineral when compared to other stones and minerals. The Mohs scale ranges from 1 to 10, with 1 being the softest and 10 being the hardest. Diamond, the hardest natural substance rates as a 10. However, it is worth noting that the Mohs scale does not deal with the absolute hardness of a substance, just it's hardness as it relates to the 10 minerals Friedrich Mohs initially tested. To find out more read our [Guide to Mohs' Scale of Hardness](#)



A portrait of German mineralogist Friedrich Mohs.

MOKUME

A Japanese technique used to texture metal so that it resembles wood grain.

MOMME

Pronounced mummy is a unit of weight used by the Japanese to weigh both silk and pearls. 1 momme equals 3.75 grams.

MONOFILAMENT

This product was originally produced as fishing line, and is a cheap way of producing jewellery designs. It is strong (although not as sturdy as beading wire) and comes in lots of colourful options. Monofilament is straight forward to use as it is stiff enough to not require a needle and generally can be knotted (might need to add a drop of glue to secure).



An example of Monofilament from leading manufacturer Beadalon.

MOOKAITE

Mookaite is named after the place it was first found namely on Mooka Station sheep farm in Western Australia. Colours are an earthy mix of reds, yellows and browns. To date these stones have only been found in Australia. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Mookaite.

MOONSTONE

The floating light phenomenon and sheen within these gemstones is called Adularescence or Schiller. The light is scattered by alternating layers of two kinds of feldspar producing a misty lustre of white, dull yellow, yellow-gray or greenish-gray. The stone's main color also comes in shades of peach and gray. Colours are white, yellow, and clear. These stones can be found in Brazil, India, Madagascar, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above are examples of Grey, Pink, Rainbow and White Moonstone.

MORDANT

An acid used to etch the surface of glass, metal and stone.

MOSAIC

Decorative work in which a design is formed of small squares of coloured glass or enamelled material set into cement.

MOSAIC BEADS

Another name for [Millefiori Beads](#).



A beautiful example of a handmade Venetian Millefiori or Mosaic Tube Bead.

MOTHER OF PEARL

Is derived from the iridescent coating on the inside of mollusc shells found in the warm waters of Asia.

The main source for this gemstone is the pearl oyster. This freshwater mussel lives in many rivers of the United States and Europe, as well as the [Abalone](#) of California, Japan and other Pacific regions. It is so named because when an irritant gets inside a shell, the shell protects itself by coating the irritant with the same material that creates pearls. Therefore, this substance is the creator, or 'mother' of pearls. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of a Mother of Pearl disc.

MOURNING JEWELLERY

This style of jewellery can be directly attributed to Queen Victoria. After her husband Albert died in 1861, she went into an extended period of mourning during which time she wore black clothing and what was to become known as mourning jewellery. English fashion was greatly influenced by this and mourning jewellery became de rigueur. Typically black in colour it was traditionally made of Jet or black glass along with metal with a japanned finish.



The inside of an ornate Victorian jet pendant showing portraits of four departed relatives.

MURANO GLASS

The island of Murano, Venice has been home to glassmakers for many centuries and their skill is world renowned. Many beads are still made by hand on this island and sold around the world. The style and quality of Murano glass beads is something that many other makers aspire to and emulate, but only beads produced on the island should be termed Murano beads, other beads are Murano-style. Read our [History of Venetian Glass](#) to learn more.



An example of Murano Glass in the form of two vintage green and aventurine glass lentils.

MYRRH BEADS

Are made from the fragrant hardened sap of the African Myrrh tree.

N

NACRE

A substance produced by mollusk shells that coats particles and other foreign objects within the shell case. Over time this nacre builds up around the particle to form pearls



An image showing the Nacre surface of some Mother of Pearl discs or cabochons.

NAILHEAD BEADS

A type of sew on bead much used in the 1920s to add sparkle to flapper dresses. Used before sequins were developed, they were made of glass and were flat on one side so that they would lie close to fabric. Designed in different shapes, sizes and finishes they are now very collectable.

NECK CHAIN

A chain that can be used to hang beads, crosses and lockets around the neck. It varies in length and can be worn separately or in multiple lengths.

NECKLACE EXTENDER

A short length of chain, beaded chain, or other necklace material with a connector on one end and a loop on the other used to lengthen a necklace.



A gold plated chain or Necklace Extender.

NECKLACE LENGTHS

Standard necklace lengths are [Choker](#) – 16 inches, [Princess](#) – 20 inches to 24 inches, [Matinee](#) – 28 inches to 30 inches, [Opera](#) – 45 inches and anything longer is known as a [Lariat](#). To see how many of a particular sized bead are required for each of these lengths use our handy [Bead Calculator](#) in the menu bar above.

NECKLET

A short necklace or chain typically less than 18 inches / 46 centimetres in length.

NEEDLES

For regular stringing, twisted-wire needles work best as the large eye closes to fit through the beads. For seed beads use beading needles which resemble sewing needles but are usually longer and thinner, with the larger the number indicating the thinner the needle. To buy beading needles [click here](#) or [here](#) to read the fascinating [History of Beading Needles](#)



Above is a packet of three Beadalon collapsible eye Needles.

NEIHUA BEADS

Are Chinese beads which have been hand painted from the inside.

NETTING STITCH

A stitch in which three or more strands of beads are sewn together in a loose fabric to resemble a net.

NICKEL

A metal typically used in fashion jewellery and occasionally as an alloy in gold jewellery. Its use has been much reduced as it was found to cause allergic reactions and skin irritation in some people. European legislation in the form of the 'Nickel Directive' now defines the amount of nickel that can be used in jewellery to ensure it remains below the proven levels for skin reactions



Plated brooch backs showing the colour of Nickel.

NOTHING NECKLACE

An extremely fine chain made of gold often with small stones or ornaments.

NYLON BEADING THREAD

Like an upscaled version of nylon sewing thread in appearance. This thread is strong, supple and drapes well. It is good for use with lightweight beads such as seed beads, and for bead weaving.

NYMO

A nylon thread that was originally developed to be used as a stitching thread in the manufacture of shoes. It is strong, supple and perfect for beading with seed beads. Use with a beading needle.



Size D cream coloured Nymo thread.

O

OBSIDIAN

Is a natural glass that forms from volcanic activity. The gemstone is made of the same minerals as granite, but cools so quickly when exposed to the air that the minerals do not have time to crystallise. Colors are black, red-brown, and dark gray. These volcanic stones can be found in Iceland, Italy, Japan, Java and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above are examples of Black, Mahogany and Snowflake Obsidian.

OCEAN JASPER

This gemstone is harvested during low tides along the shores of Madagascar. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)

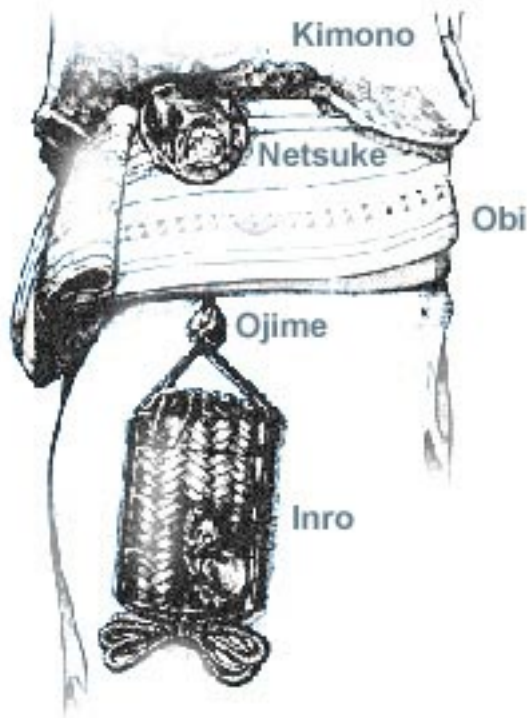


Above is an example of Ocean Jasper.

OJIME

Pronounced oh-jay-meh are a decorative bead which originated in Japan. They are a moveable bead through which the cord of the netsuke and sagemono passes to keep an inro closed. They are typically under an inch in diameter and are often made from exquisitely carved metal, ivory, stone, jade, lacquer, tortoise shell, glass, coral, bone, antler or other natural materials.

The inro, made up of two to seven layers, was a box used for carrying small personal items such as seals, medicinal herbs, tobacco, acupuncture needles. It became fashionable alongside the traditional Kimono which had no pockets. Japanese men and women would wear this compartmentalised box hung below the obi, a wide fabric kimono belt, on a double cord. At the top of the cord, a large carved bead called a netsuke (pronounced nets-kay) acted as a toggle to anchor the inro with the cord then passing under the obi. The smaller ojime bead served as a sliding closure to secure the lid of the inro as shown below.



Their origins lie in the Edo Period (1654 to 1868) but it wasn't until the Meiji Period (1868 to 1912) when inro became symbols of status and taste and the ojime bead evolved into a beautifully crafted object incorporating themes from everyday life as well as myths, traditions, and poetry. To learn more about Ojime read our [Guide to Ojime Beads](#).

ONE YEAR PEARLS

Cultured pearls with an extremely thin layer of Nacre

ONYX

A form of quartz that can come in almost any colour. The pure black form is the most famous, especially for gemstone beads. Colours can be striped, white, black, brown or red alternating bands, blue, green and white. These stones can be found in China, India, Madagascar, Mexico, South America, and the United States. Onyx may chip or scratch easily so should be stored carefully. Much of what is now sold as onyx is actually [Agate](#) that has been stained. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above are examples of Black, Blue, Banded, Green and Red Onyx.

OPAL

A semi-transparent iridescent gemstone composed of silicon and water which are highly valued because their rainbow like hues display a show of colour within the stone. They diffract light at various wavelengths, creating multiple colours. This play of colour diminishes when water is lost from the stones over time and as such Opals are quite high maintenance - needing to be kept away from heat and strong light which can dry them out and cause cracks. Colours are white, pale yellow, brown, bluish-gray to dark gray, dark blue, dark green. These stones can be found primarily in Australia with additional deposits in Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Russia, and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above are examples of Boulder, Imperial, Pink and White Opal.

This term can also apply to a semi translucent, milky finish applied to beads to give a similar appearance to the aforementioned semi-precious opal gemstone.

OPALITE

Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Opalite.

OPAQUE

With this finish light will not pass through the object which when applied to beads means you cannot see through them. From a jewellery design perspective these beads often provide a good contrast when alongside shiny, matte or beads with other applied finishes.



Moss green Czech glass daggers providing an example of Opaque Beads.

OPEN SETTING

A stone setting with open sides so that the lower portion of the stone is visible.

OPERA NECKLACE

A long necklace of approximately 28 inches to 32 inches / 71.1 cm to 81.3 cm. It is worn as a single strand and may have a clasp closure or be permanently joined end to end. To see how many of a particular sized bead are needed for an opera necklace use our handy [Bead Calculator](#)

ORTHOCLASE

Orthoclase is the defining mineral for 6 on [Mohs Scale of Hardness](#). Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Orthoclase.

OVAL BEADS

Oval or teardrop shaped bead



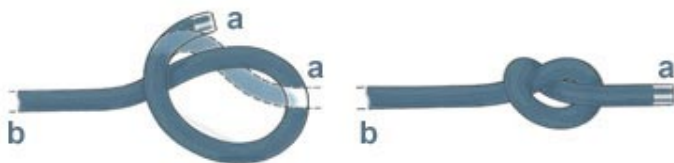
Subtle mauve lampwork glass beads giving an example of Oval shaped beads.

OVAL SETTING

A setting similar to a Tiffany setting but shaped in an oval to accommodate oval shaped stones

OVERHAND KNOT

Useful knot for tying off ends of thread, anchoring seed beads and incorporating new threads into a piece. See the illustration below for how to tie it and read our [Guide to Beading Techniques](#) to learn when to use it.



OVERLAY

A decorative layer applied to the surface of an object

OXIDATION or OXIDISING

Creates darkening or other color changes to metal which is accelerated by humidity, especially salty air or the presence of acidic perspiration. This does not happen to very high karat gold or stainless steel.

P

PADRE BEADS

Are turquoise glass beads made for trade purposes in China in the 17th and 18th centuries.

PALLADIUM

A rare and lustrous silvery white metal

PATINA

This term, when applied to jewellery, usually relates to something having the signs or appearance of age. This can be genuine through the oxidation of metal, or artificially applied in order to make a component or beads look old.

PAVE' SETTING

Pronounced pah-vay is a method of setting small stones as close together as possible, so that the piece literally looks like it is paved with stones.

PEARL CUP

A cup designed to hold a pearl secured by adhesive. It sometimes has a small peg that fits into a hole in the pearl for additional security.

PEARL DROP

A real or imitation pearl with a metal ring attached for suspending from a piece of jewellery.

PEARL ENHANCER

A round ball like finding that can be opened up and then placed over a strand of beads or pearls and then locked closed. Also known as an Enhancer.

PEARLS

The pearl is an organic gem grown within oysters and a few other molluscs. It is formed when a tiny particle makes its way into the mollusc's shell. The irritation caused by this foreign particle forces the oyster to form a secretion, called nacre, to cover it. Nacre being the same material that forms the mollusc's shell. When dried, the particle again irritates the animal, so it begins to secrete again. As this process continues thousands of layers of nacre coat the intruder and a pearl is formed. The process takes anywhere from four months to seven years with the length of time determining the size of the pearl. They can be found in Australia, Burma, China, Ceylon, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, Scotland, Tahiti and the United States, with the finest oriental pearls are found in the Persian Gulf. "Cultured" pearls are those in which the foreign particle is implanted by man with the molluscs kept in a pearl farm while the coating process goes on. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#) and also have a look at our [History of Faux Pearls](#)



An example of a perfectly formed natural Pearl Bead.

PENDANT

An ornament that hangs from a chain or necklace.



A vibrant red glass and brass vintage pendant drop.

PENNYWEIGHT

A unit of Troy weight for precious metals. It is 1/20th of a troy ounce or 24 grains.

PERIDOT

Also known as Olivine is a yellowish green gemstone, composed of silica, magnesia, and iron. Common in certain volcanic rocks. The crusaders brought it back to Central Europe in the Middle Ages. Later revived as the Baroque era's most popular stone. These stones can be found in Australia, Brazil, China, Kenya, Mexico, Myanmar, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Peridot.

PEWTER

A metal alloy composed of tin, antimony and copper



Above is an example of Pewter in the form of handmade cockle shell charms.

PEYOTE STITCH

A stitch in which beads are stitched in an undulating pattern. When turned on its side this beading stitch looks like [Brick Stitch](#)

PICASSO FINISH

A opaque marbled or mottled finish applied to a glass bead. This finish can give the bead the appearance of being of ceramic or a semi-precious stone.



The Czech glass dagger beads above have a Picasso Finish.

PICASSO MARBLE JASPER

A type of [Jasper](#) found in Utah, North America. It is a softer form of Jasper, only 4 to 5 on the [Mohs Scale of Hardness](#). It is made up of brown, black, grey, and white colours. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Picasso Marble Jasper.

PICTURE JASPER

A type of [Jasper](#) formed from mud that solidified in gas pockets within molten lava. The patterns that result from this process are felt to resemble pictures or landscapes. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Picture Jasper.

PIETERSITE

Is a variety of [Tiger's Eye](#) which was discovered in Namibia, South Africa in 1962 by Sid Pieters. This remains its primary source although it has also been discovered around Nanyang in China. Colours are mostly lavender blue or light green and some may have small inclusions of red or gold. The Chinese Pietersite has a unique gold colour. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Pietersite.

PINCH BAILS

A metal jewellery finding which comes partially folded with short prongs on the inside of each end. When pinched together with pliers it holds a pendant chain or cord and the pendant then hangs from the chain or cord. It can serve as a jump ring but is usually decorative and therefore adds to the overall design of the pendant.



An example of vintage Swarovski gilt pendant Pinch Bails.

PLATE

Metal sheet used for stamping out findings. Alternatively plate or plating is the process of using electrolysis to add a surface of precious metal over a base metal.

PLATINUM

A heavy, malleable, corrosion resistant, grey-white precious metal. Platinum is more precious than gold.

PNBT

An acronym meaning Pass Needle Back Through. Used primarily in beadworking.

PNT

An acronym meaning Pass Needle Through. Used primarily in beadworking.

POLYMER CLAY

Is a clay like material made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC), plasticizer, and pigment. It comes in a huge variety of colours and has great versatility as a medium. It can be baked or cured in a domestic oven. To learn more read our [Guide To Making Polymer Clay Beads](#).



An example of some handmade Polymer Clay beads with a decorative leaf design.

PONY BEADS

A size 6/0 seed bead is sometimes referred to as a pony bead. Plastic pony beads are also available in every hue and they are a perfect cheap starter bead for children to work with as their hole size is generous. Pony beads aimed at the young beader come in all manner of novelty shapes, aside from the barrel shape of the original.



An example of some vintage marbled acrylic topaz Pony Beads.

POPPY JASPER

A type of [Jasper](#) that is characterised by poppy like red and yellow dots. It is found in North America in an area of California known as Morgan Hill. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Poppy Jasper.

POST

The pin that sticks out from the back of a stud earring, with the pin passing through a hole in the earlobe and then into a catch to secure it



Vintage brass decorative ear studs showing the surgical steel post behind the stud.

PRECIOUS METALS

There are only three: Gold, Silver and Platinum. All others are classified as [Base Metals](#).

PRESS

Mechanical equipment used to stamp findings in the form of an electric press, foot press, hydraulic press, percussion press or screw press.

PREHNITE

Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Prehenite.

PRESSED GLASS

A glass bead making technique whereby heated glass rods are put into a two piece mould and the two halves brought together to create the three-dimensional shape. A needle pierces a hole in the molten bead. By making use of patterned canes (the glass rods fed into the machine) the resulting beads can be elaborately coloured, often giving the beads a slightly random appearance, even if the shape is exactly the same. One `feed` of a hot rod might result in 10-20 beads, and a single operator can make thousands in a day. Because the bead hole is created by the introduction of a wire into the glass, rather than the bead being created around the wire (see [Lampwork](#)), it is possible to produce a bead with two or more holes. When the technique was devised in the 19th century it was the first radical change in glass bead-making for over 2,000 years! Pressed glass beads are most commonly made in the Czech Republic and Germany. Click here to read about the [History of Czech Glass Beads](#)



Lovely vintage mint green Pressed Glass coin beads.

PRINCESS LENGTH NECKLACE

A necklace length slightly longer than a choker. Usually 18 inches / 45cm long including the clasp.

PRONG SETTING

A setting consisting of a jewellery setting that has a series of prongs around the perimeter, usually four to six, that can be bent over to hold a stone, bead or crystal in place.



An example of a prong setting in the form of a large warm gold four Prong Setting.

PYRITE

Is a variety of [Tiger's Eye](#) which was discovered in Namibia, South Africa in 1962 by Sid Pieters. This remains its primary source although it has also been discovered around Nanyang in China. Colours are mostly lavender blue or light green and some may have small inclusions of red or gold. The Chinese Pietersite has a unique gold colour. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Pyrite.

Q

QUARTZ

A broad term defining very hard minerals composed of silica. Many gemstones are quartz, including crystal quartz, citrine, opal, agate, rose quartz, amethyst, and also tiger's eye. Quartz is the defining mineral for 7 on [Mohs Scale of Hardness](#). Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)

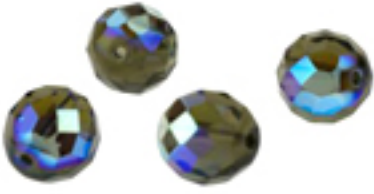


Above are examples of Angel Hair, Cherry, Lemon and Rose Quartz.

R

RAINBOW BEADS

Also known as Aurora Borealis (AB), Iris and Fancy these beads have finishes which augment the beads primary colour with a rainbow of hues.



An example of Aurora Borealis finish or Rainbow faceted beads.

RAINBOW JASPER

Is a type of [Jasper](#) that as it's name suggests is identifiable because of its rainbow of colours. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Rainbow Jasper.

RAKU FINISH

Aurora Borealis finish applied to a [Matte](#) bead.

RATTAIL

A brightly coloured Rayon decorative cord with a satiny texture used for stringing larger beads. Best used in a piece without sharp edges as the cord has tendency to fray.

REAMER

The Reamer is used to clean, neaten and enlarge the holes of glass beads, ceramic beads and stones, ensuring that a bead will fit onto your chosen wire or thread. It is particularly useful if you are working with semi precious gemstones for enlarging the holes. Read more in our guide to [Beading Tools and Jewellery Making Tools](#)



An example of a diamond tip jewellery Reamer.

RELIEF

A form of decoration that protrudes from the surface of a piece, such as a the carved appearance of a cameo



A beautiful example of a cameo showing a portrait of an elegant lady in Relief.

RHODIUM

Is a metal plating that was popular in the 1930s as a cheaper alternative to Platinum.

RHODOCHROSITE

Is a uniquely marbled manganese ore based gemstone which has beautiful striations of various shades of pink, ranging from very light to a deep raspberry. These stones can be found in major deposits in Argentina but also Chile, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Rhodochrosite.

RHODONITE

Is a more more durable gemstone than Rhodochrosite giving beads a flatter finish as it does not polish well. Colours are deep rosy pink to lavender with characteristic black veins called dendrites. These stones can be found in Brazil, Mexico, Peru and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Rhodonite.

RHYOLITE

Is an igneous rock with high silica content and is chemically identical to granite but having cooled from a molten state too quickly for crystals to form. Colours are mossy greens, browns and grays. These stones can be found in the Western and Southwestern United States.

RIGHT ANGLE WEAVE

A stitch where beads are sewn at right angle to each other.

RING ADJUSTOR

A metal device which clamps inside a ring. It is used to tighten a ring that is too large or needs to be

large to fit over a knuckle. Also known as a Ring Guard.

RING GUARD

A finding used to temporarily reduce the inside diameter of a ring. Also known as a Ring Adjustor.

RIVERSTONE

Are naturally polished by the action of water and other rocks moving against them. Colours are creamy beige and pale gray. These stones are found worldwide in rivers and on beaches.

RIVIERE NECKLACE

A necklace of precious stones graded in size from a large central stone.

ROCAILLE

Pronounced roh-kai is a word that now often is used generically to mean [Seed Bead](#). Historically, it is a French made Seed Bead with a silver (or gold) lined bead with a square hole (the square hole works as an inner facet to reflect the light).



An example of Czech glass Rocaille seed beads with a lovely topaz colouring.

ROLLED GOLD

A sheet of a base metal is laminated with a very thin sheet of gold (which must be at least 10 carats). The two layers are heated to fuse them then the sheet is rolled into a thin sheet from which jewellery items are made.

RONDELLE or ROUNDEL

A bead in a rounded shape with a flattened off or faceted top and bottom alongside a central hole.



Rondelle turquoise Czech glass beads with a picasso finish.

ROPE CHAIN

A chain of fine wire in close spiral links resembling a rope. Read more in our [Glossary of Jewellery Chain](#)

ROPE NECKLACE

A long necklace of 40 inches to 45 inches / 101.6 cm to 114.3 cm. A clasp is not necessary with this length of necklace. The classic look for a rope necklace is a string of pearls 1920s style.

ROSARY BEADS

A string of beads with a cross attached used by Catholics to count prayers. They are often made with a specific number of small beads between larger beads to remind the owner of the order of their prayers.

A chain of beads used by Roman Catholics to count during devotional prayers.



An example of a Rosary Bead necklace in black and silver.

ROSE GOLD

An alloy of copper and gold this combination produces a warm gold coloured metal with a subtle hint of pink or red.

ROUND NOSE PLIERS

These pliers have tapered circular section jaws. You will need these for putting smooth bends and forming neat circular loops in wire. Perfect for finishing off head pins and eye pins when making earrings or charm dangles. The tapered round jaws can be used for making jump rings, or simply opening and closing them. Professional quality pliers have very fine points so that they can be used to make very fine loops and rings. These pliers are useful for making earring wire, making the loop for wrapped loops and for making eye pins.

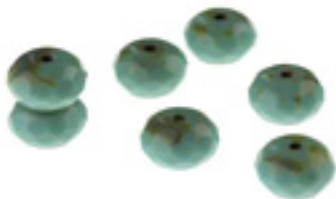


ROUND SETTING

A round shaped metal setting that uses bezels, prongs, or any other means of clamping the stone securely.

ROUNDEL or RONDELLE

A bead in a rounded shape with a flattened off or faceted top and bottom alongside a central hole.



Rondelle turquoise Czech glass beads with a picasso finish.

RUBY

This gemstone is from the mineral corundum and comes in a range of colors from pink to brown. Other color variations would be in the sapphire family. On a scale of 1 to 10 the Ruby has a hardness factor of a 9 which is second only to diamonds. Rubies have a wide range of prices depending on the cut, color, clarity, and size of the gemstone. The most desirable colour is 'pigeon's blood' a pure

red with a hint of blue. These stones can be found in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Thailand. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Ruby.

RUBYCROSITE

Or Ruby-in-zoisite. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Rubycrosite.

RUSSIAN GOLD

Describes a gold metal finish that typically has a matte antique appearance. Notably used by the American jewellery designer [Miriam Haskell](#), who employed European craftsmen, many of whom had learnt their trade in the jewellery houses of Europe but found themselves as refugees due to war or persecution in their home countries.

RUTILE

Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above are examples of Amethyst, Black and Golden Rutile.

S

S HOOK CLASP

Typically a two part clasp formed from flat findings that are used to fasten a bracelet or necklace. The first part is 'S' shaped with the second part shaped like the number '8'. When used together they work as a clasp. Alternatively the 'S' hook can be used alongside a Jump Ring with only one side of the hook being open.



A number of silver plated metal S Hook Clasp.

SAFETY CATCH

A bar or tongue catch for brooches, necklaces and pins. The tongue or bar can be operated to close the opening in the catch preventing the loss of jewellery.

SAPPHIRE

Is the non red variety of corundum with [Ruby](#) being the other variety. Corundum comes in many colors, and any color other than red is referred to as Sapphire. They are the most precious of blue gemstones due to their colour, hardness, durability and luster. Large sapphires are also extremely rare. Colours are a variety of blues, clear, pink, orange, yellow, green, purple, and black. These stones can be found in primary deposits in Australia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Sapphire.

SATIN BEADS

Glass beads with a striated, satin-like appearance.



Striated pink Czech glass Satin twist bow beads.

SATIN FINISH

A low lustre satiny surface effect intermediate between glossy and matte. Achieved through sandblasting, brushing with a stiff wire brush, or by chemical means

SAUTOIR NECKLACE

A very long [Rope Necklace](#) (finishing below the waist of the wearer) often ending in a tassel or pendant. Popular in Edwardian times and with 1920s flappers.

SCALLOPED

Used to describe an ornamental edge to a component made up of a series of curves reminiscent of a shell edge



An example of a Scallop Edge found on a brass drop charm.

SCARAB

An Egyptian representation of a scarabaeus beetle used in jewellery and revered as a symbol of resurrection.



A set of beautiful vitrail finish Scarab cabochons.

SCARABEE FINISH

A brilliant iris coating usually over jet glass.



Unusual Scarabee Finish bicone beads.

SCREW BACK

An earring attachment for non pierced ears where the earring is tightened against the lobe by means of a screw with a padded flat end



An example of vintage brass Screw Back earrings designed for non pierced ears.

SCREW EYE

A short straight wire with a ring at one end. The straight end is inserted into a bead or pearl with adhesive to convert it into a pearl drop.

SCRIMSHAW

The ancient art of ivory carving as practiced by seafarers to pass their long days at sea. Nowadays these intricate carvings are made using ivory from old sources such as piano keys, long dead animals as well as antler and bone.



An example of an elegant flat ivory Japanese Scrimshaw pendant dating back to the mid 1900s.

SEA GLASS

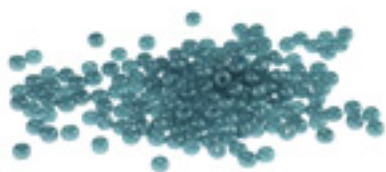
Glass tumbled to a smooth matte finish by the washing of the tide along with the sand found in such environments. Sea glass is found upon the shoreline, and may have originated from a piece of jetsam dropped into the sea centuries ago (certain colours of glass indicate an historic provenance – i.e. black glass from 18th century gin, wine and beer bottles). Inevitably imitation sea glass is available, made to mimic its appearance, but created less romantically in a stone tumbler.



An example of Sea Glass beads.

SEED BEADS

Small glass beads, named for their dainty size. Generally made of glass, although metal and plastic are also used. They come in a seemingly endless range of colours and finishes and they are very versatile in their use. Seed beads come in a range of shapes, most commonly they have a rounded doughnut shape, but the appearance of this varies between manufacturers. Also popular is a cylindrical shape, often precision made, perfect for very uniform work when producing heavily beaded items or pieces made on a bead loom. Cylindrical beads tend to have a larger hole so they allow for multiple passes of the thread in complicated designs. Other shapes include a teardrop with an off-centre hole (Magatama), triangles, cubes, beads with six sides (hexs), beads with two-facets (two-cuts) and one-facet (Charlottes). Wonderful pieces of jewellery can be constructed from seed beads alone. To learn about these small beads have a look at our [Guide to Seed Beads](#). To view a selection of bugle and seed beads for sale [click here](#).



An aqua pearlescent blue example of Czech glass Seed Beads.

SELENITE

Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Selenite.

SEMI PRECIOUS STONES

Also known as [Gemstones](#), these are stones produced from organic sources such as rocks, stones, plants (amber) and animals (pearls). Generally they are less valuable than precious stones (diamonds, rubies and emeralds etc.), although very rare or high-quality semi-precious stones can be as costly. Many of these stones are described in greater detail within this glossary. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)

SEQUINS

Typically plastic or metal sew ons used as jewellery embellishments or more usually on clothing, handbags, shoes or household objects such as curtains and lightshades.

SERAPHINITE

Is a trade name for a particular form of clinochlore, a member of the Chlorite group. It comes from the Korshunovskaia mine situated not far from Baikal Lake in Eastern Siberia, Russia. It was found and described by the famous Russian mineralogist Nikolai Koksharov (1818 – 1892). Seraphinite is generally dark green to grey in color, has chatoyancy, and its hardness is 2 to 2.5 on [Mohs' Scale](#). Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Seraphinite.

SERPENTINE

Also known as Bowenite is a translucent, waxy silicate of magnesium. Because it is usually some shade of green, it is often referred to as 'New Jade' or 'Green Jade'. This is despite the fact Serpentine is softer and less dense than most real jade. Colours are green, yellow, and brown. These stones can be found in Afghanistan, China, New Zealand, and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Serpentine.

SETTING

A metal form into which a cabochon, crystal, or stone is set using a bezel, prongs or other means to hold the piece in position.



A vintage raw brass round Setting with a crown finish to the top.

SHANK

The metal part of a ring that goes around the finger. The shank and the setting into which a stone is set are collectively referred to as a ring mounting.



A number of vintage gold plated rivoli rings showing the Shank.

SHELL CAMEO

A cameo carving in which the white upper layer of a shell stands out from the darker brownish

underside.

SIGNET RING

A ring with an insignia, monogram, coat of arms or family crest on it.



A plain gold signet ring awaiting an insignia or monogram.

SILK CORD

Made up of twisted strands of silk. Traditionally this is used for stringing pearls and lighter semi-precious beads as it gives a lovely fluid movement and it won't damage the beads.



Griffin No 4 natural white Silk Cord.

SILVER COLOUR

Means that a [Base Metal](#), such as brass, has been covered with a thin layer of silver but this will be extremely thin and impure. Silver colour items are prone to wear and polishing to remove discolouration may eventually rub away the outer layer. Sometimes the expression silver-finished or silver-washed will be used instead.

SILVER LINED

Transparent glass beads lined with a silver colour. Coloured glass silver lined beads have a special brilliance and sparkle. Silver lined bead are harder wearing than colour lined ones



An example of Silver Lined Preciosa Czech glass seed beads.

SILVER PLATED

Means that a [Base Metal](#), such as brass, has been covered with a thin layer of silver which must conform to an industry standard of 0.15mm to 0.25mm thickness. The silver plating must be at least 92.5% silver. Silver-plated items are prone to wear and polishing to remove discolouration may eventually rub away the plating.

SLAVE BEADS

Another term for Trade Beads



Above are two Venetian glass African Trade beads from the early 1900s – a feathered elbow bead and a millefiori bead.

SLIDE

An embellishment that can be slid onto another piece of jewellery such as a necklace

SODALITE

Is a sodium aluminum chlorine silicate which is almost identical in composition to [Lapis Lazuli](#) which often causes misidentification. Colours are a dark intense blue color with white and sometimes yellow streaks. These stones can be found in Brazil, Canada, India, Italy, Namibia, Russia and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Sodalite.

SOFT TOUCH WIRE

Is a finer version of [Soft Flex Wire](#) used for weaving and threading.

SOLITAIRE

Used to describe either a ring with a single central stone or the central stone itself.

SPACER BARS

A component used to hold apart and in position multiple stranded jewellery designs. Used at regular intervals throughout the piece or at either end. Useful for necklaces as the natural curve of the neck can otherwise result in strands of beads sitting on top of each other. They also help prevent tangling.



An example of Spacer Bars in the form of vintage warm brass connectors.

SPACER BEADS

Small or thin beads used between the 'main' beads in a design. Their function can be to space out feature beads; or to add length to a piece – often at less cost than using the equivalent length in other beads; to hide large holes or to help with the articulation and drape of a piece.



Vintage brushed metal circular Spacer Beads.

SPLIT RINGS

An alternative to [Jump Rings](#), these rings have a double coil of metal to provide a very secure joining method. Harder to open as they are like very tiny key rings (and they are bad enough), but you can get a special split ring tool to assist you. They are typically used to attach charms to bracelets.



A number of bronze finish metal Split Rings.

SPLIT RING PLIERS

Have one bent up jaw and one flat one. They are designed specifically to open all sizes of [Split Rings](#), to attach [Jump Rings](#) or wrapped loops of beaded dangles.

SPINEL

A gemstone of the Ruby family which is considered the poorer man's ruby. Colours range from olive green, topaz, dark red, mauve pink, golden amber, and light blue. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Spinel.

SPRING RING CLASP

These one piece clasps are used to fasten a bracelet or a necklace. The clasp is held closed by a spring mechanism acting against a pin closure. A small lever is drawn back to open the clasp.



A group of vintage raw brass Spring Ring Clasps showing the pull back lever.

SQUARE STITCH

A stitch in which beads are sewn in regular rows and columns resulting in a finish that looks like loom work.

STAMPING

Also known as [Cagework](#) is a finding or charm made from sheet metal which has been cut and shaped between two dies in a press. The pattern is formed in relief with a hollow or concave reverse.



Above is an example of a vintage raw brass pleated Art Deco style Stamping.

STERLING SILVER

Pure silver is very soft so most silver used for quality jewellery is 92.5% silver and 7.5% copper or other alloy. The copper allows sterling silver to be flexible and workable. All sterling silver must be 92.5% silver (or higher) and may be denoted as such with the use of the '925' stamp. Occasionally you may see the phrase 'made from sterling silver' to describe goods that are manufactured from sterling silver, but which, due to the manufacturing process of the goods, may not test as .925 sterling silver because of the amount of manufacturing residue left on the product – this may be true of small and very intricate beads. Sterling silver will tarnish over time if it is in contact with air, but this surface discolouration can be polished away.

STONE CANYON JASPER

A type of [Jasper](#) from California, North America which is found in a region between Los Angeles and San Francisco. It has yellow, white, and grayish-blue bands. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)

STOP or STOPPER BEADS

A bead used to stop other beads falling off a thread whilst you are working. Pass your thread through the bead and then through the bead again from the same side. For clarity use a bead of a different colour. Remove before finishing off the piece. Alternatives are a piece of low-tack masking tape, a paper clip, bulldog clips or a commercial product called a 'bead stopper' (a coil of wire that grips the thread).

STRANDING

A jewellery making technique in which strands of beads are manipulated to form jewellery pieces.

STRIATED BEADS

Have an opaque, translucent or transparent body with threads and swirls of tones or colours on their surface.



An example of some acrylic cream marbled beads with fine striations running through them.

STUD

A simple style of earring for pierced ears that has a single stone or focal point on a straight post with no dangling parts.



Vintage brass and steel decorative ear studs with a claw setting.

SUGAR BEADS

A cheap and cheerful clasp which is secure but requires nimble fingers to unclasp it.



Sparkling acrylic amethyst sugar beads.

SUNSTONE

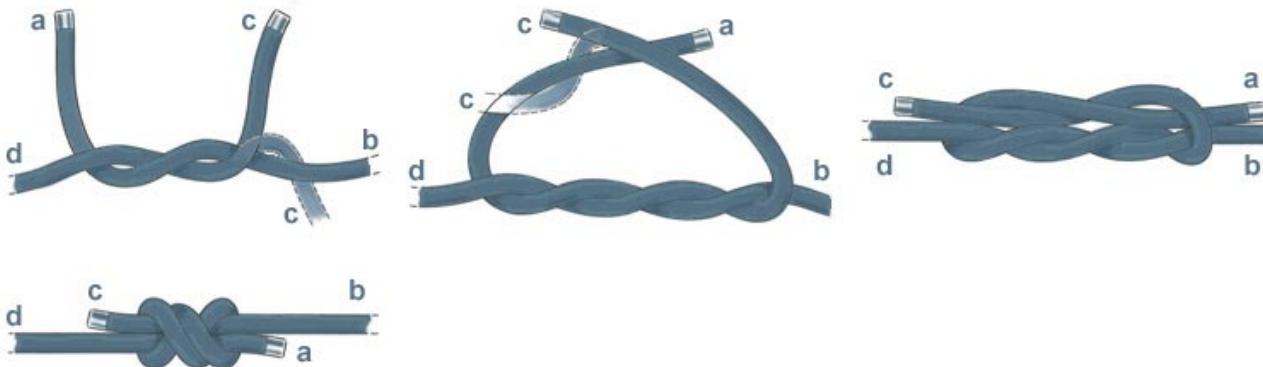
Is a bright sparkling stone also known as aventurine feldspar. It is formed as a crystal in molten lava. As the lava weathers away, the crystals are released. Sunstone sparkle comes from the reflection of light from tiny platelets of hematite or goethite within the stones. This gemstone varies from golden to orange to red-brown, and can be transparent or translucent. These stones can be found in Canada, India, Madagascar, Norway, Russia and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Sunstone.

SURGEON'S KNOT

Can be used for tying two ends of thread, string, cord together. See the illustration below for how to tie it and read our [Guide to Beading Techniques](#) to learn when to use it.



SURGICAL STEEL

Useful for jewellery components as it is a non-allergenic material (when left uncoated).

SUZULITE

Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Suzulite.

SWAGE

The name given to shaping or bending cold metal with a hammer or other tool

SWAROVSKI CRYSTAL

A brand name for the crystal glass produced by the Swarovski company of Austria. The company dates back to 1892 when Daniel Swarovski invented a faceting machine that automatically ground facets into lead crystal resulting in beads with very high reflective qualities.



Five Swarovski magma red crystal heart pendants.

T

TALC

This is the defining mineral for 1 on [Mohs Scale of Hardness](#). Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Talc.

TALISMAN

A Charm in the form of an ornament, ring or stone that is believed to have magical protective properties.

TAMBOUR WORK

A stitch used in embroidery in which beads are first strung onto a thread and hook needle, then fastened to a wooden handle or Tambour needle, before being used to make chain stitches on fabric as beads are placed into the stitches underneath the fabric.

TANZANITE

Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Tanzanite.

TEMPERING

A heat treatment of metals, alloys and glass to increase the strength and ductility of the material through controlled reheating to a level below its annealing temperature.

THAI SILVER

Handmade by the Karen Hill Tribe in Thailand these beads are 99% pure silver meaning they will not tarnish as quickly as Sterling Silver. As with any handmade item there will be slight variations in sizes and shapes.

THONG ENDS

Another name for [Folding Crimps](#).



Above is an example of Thong Ends, Cord Ends, or Folding Crimps in black antique finish.

THREAD

Beading thread is made of nylon and is used in beadweaving and loomwork. Other types of thread used in beading include decorative cords such as raffail.

THREAD CONDITIONER

Acts to prevent thread from tangling and also to make the thread stronger. [Beeswax](#) can be used as a conditioner, but you can also buy commercial products such as Thread Heaven. Thread the needle, run your thread through the wax and then run through your fingers to remove excess wax.



A box of Thread Heaven thread conditioner.

THROUGH HOLE

In a bead or pendant passes through the material whilst remaining symmetrical with respect to the overall form.

TIFFANY SETTING

An elegant setting which is usually round with six prongs which flare out gracefully over the stone clamping it in position.

TIGER'S EYE

Is a quartz gemstone with rich yellow and brown stripes, and a fine golden luster. When viewed from the opposite direction, the colors are reversed. This stone features golden stripes that catch light. None to surprisingly this effect resembles a cat's eye. Colours are gold, yellow, and brown. The most significant deposits are found in South Africa but it is also found in Australia, India, Myanmar, Namibia, and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above are examples of African, Black, Tiger Iron, Red and Yellow Tiger Eye. (Tiger Iron is comprised of Tiger Eye, Red Jasper and Hematite).

TIGER TAIL

A beading wire made up of 7 strands of wire, with a plastic coating. 'Tiger Tail' has become a generic term for this type of wire. The plastic coating can be coloured, so you can match wire to your beads.



Olivine green Tiger Tail beading wire.

TIN CUT

A faceting process carried out by hand. The bead was placed on a notched wooden stick and then held against a rotating tin wheel to create the facets. Because the facets are hand cut, the facets may be slightly irregular in size if examined closely.

TOGGLE BAR

See the entry below.

TOGGLE CLASP

A two piece clasp consisting of a bar which fits into a loop. The bar is passed through the ring to secure the piece. This clasp design is good for heavier bracelets and necklaces, or in the case of a necklace where the decorative design of the piece dictates that the clasp should be seen at the front.



An example of a simple silver plated toggle clasp.

TOPAZ

A hard gemstone, Topaz is the defining mineral for 8 on [Mohs Scale of Hardness](#). It comes from many different parts of the world including Afghanistan, China, Japan, Madagascar, Mexico, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, the United States and Zimbabwe. Colours include red, orange, peach, pink, gold, yellow, blue, brown, green, white, and clear. Yellow is the most familiar colour with red being the rarest. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above are examples of Blue and Smokey Topaz.

TOP HOLE or END HOLE

Is a half drilled hole at the hanging end of a pendant or drop which needs a glued or screwed in hanger.

TORC or TORQUE

Dating back to Roman times this is a bangle that is pliable enough to be wound around a wrist. The two bracelet ends are traditionally finished with a ball which can be plain or embellished with gemstones

TOURMALINE

Is a complex crystalline silicate containing aluminum, boron and other key elements and as such it is more of a group of minerals than a single type. Colours are pink, red, green, yellow, blue, green, and clear. The most important deposits for this stone are in Brazil but it is also to be found in Afghanistan, Australia, India, Italy, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tanzania, the United States, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above are examples of Green and Pink Tourmaline.

TRADE BEADS

Old glass beads, mostly made around Venice 200 to 400 years ago, used for trade in Africa and the Orient, including the Slave Trade. Usually large, cylindrical, and colourful.



Above are two Venetian glass African Trade beads from the early 1900s – a feathered elbow bead and a millefiori bead.

TRANSLUCENT

Some light can pass through, but it is not possible to see through clearly.



Translucent white opal fire polished translucent beads.

TRANSPARENT

It is possible to see through and light passes freely. Transparent beads can be light, dark, medium or deep in terms of colour saturation and hue.



Clear Czech glass transparent beads.

TRIANGULAR BEADS

Beads shaped like a triangle with a central hole.



Unusual vintage agate triangular beads.

TRIGGER CLASP

Another term for a Lobster Clasp. It is a secure metal clasp that resembles the shape of a lobster claw! The pincer arm is under tension by an internal spring that is opened and closed by a lever on its side. It is used for finishing necklaces, bracelets and other jewellery.



An example of a decorative Lobster or Trigger Clasp in antique silver finish.

TROY OUNCE

This unit of weight is traditionally used for gemstones and precious metals with 1 troy oz = 1.097 oz. The ounce contains 20 Pennyweights each of 24 grains. The name is derived from Troyes, France where the system was used prior to its introduction to Medieval England in the 15th century. The conversion to metric for precious metals is largely complete.

TUMBLING

A method of polishing large quantities of jewellery by rotating them in a barrel or vibrating them in a tub. Special polishing agents and abrasives are used. The pieces are polished as they rub against the abrasives or each other.

TURQUOISE

Is one of the most easily identifiable gemstones due to its colouring and the fact it has been used throughout history. Rare and highly valued turquoise stones are usually sky-blue in colour without inclusions.. Colours are light blue, blue green, and apple green. These stones can be found in Afghanistan, Australia, Brazil, China, Iran, Israel, Mexico, Tanzania, and the United States. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Turquoise.

U

UNAKITE

First discovered in the Unaka Mountains of North Carolina it is relatively new addition to the jewellery world. It is an altered granite composed of pink orthoclase feldspar, green epidote, and generally colorless quartz. Colours are a blend of red, pink, green, and white, gray and have a granite look. These stones are found mainly in the Unaka Mountains but also in Brazil, China and South Africa. Read more in our [Gemstones & Minerals Glossary](#)



Above is an example of Unakite.

V

VACUUM COATING

The process of laying an extremely thin metallic coating over plastic or very inexpensive metals using volatilization within a vacuum. It can be applied to beads, findings and other jewellery components.

VENETIAN BEADS

A style of glass bead making originating in Venice in the late 1800s but that has since been copied by many other countries including India and China. Generally speaking the term denotes a very high level of craftsmanship and that the beads have been made individually by hand. Antique Venetian beads are rare and much sought after by collectors. Read our [History of Venetian Glass](#) to learn more.



Above are three examples of 19th century Venetian glass beads. The first is a biconical king bead with eyes and filigree, the second a millefiori bead with rosetta cross sections and the third a millefiori bead with mosaic eyes with an inset rosetta layer.

VENETIAN SOMMERSO BEADS

A style of glass bead originating in Venice where small flecks of colour, often [Aventurina](#), are

suspended inside transparent glass. Sommerso means submerged in Italian. Read our [History of Venetian Glass](#) or [Venetian Glass Glossary](#) to learn more.



Above is an example of Sommerso in the vintage form of a baby blue lampworked bead with aventurina beneath clear glass from the 1950s.

VENETIAN FIORATO BEADS

Are decorated with small flower beads, with Fiorato meaning flower in Italian. The bead can be made by any technique but on the outside there will be a small flower drawn using molten stringers of coloured glass. These beads require more skill in their manufacture than Sommerso beads. Read our [History of Venetian Glass](#) or [Venetian Glass Glossary](#) to learn more.



Above is an example of Fiorato in the antique form of a hand painted blue Murano glass bead.

VERMEIL

A heavy gold plating over sterling silver. The [Gold Plating](#) must be 10 carat or higher and have a minimum thickness of 100 millionths of an inch or 2.5 microns of fine gold. Vermeil components are of better quality than gold plated items as the item plated is of sterling silver. As with any plated item, the plating can eventually wear away.

VINTAGE

Like [Antique](#) this is a subjective description used to indicate the age of an item. Vintage is deemed to be a bead or item of jewellery older than 10 years but younger than 100 year. Or alternatively an item that is no longer in production. Since this gives these beads a certain rarity, they are often sought out by jewellery makers. To view the vintage and antique items available for sale through our site [click here](#).

VITRIL

An iridescent finish with silver, yellow, green and red hues.



Stunning vitrail finished Czech glass aqua flower beads.

W

WALDEMAR CHAIN

A watch chain usually worn across a waistcoat front with a swivel fitting for the watch bow and spring ring at the other end for a charm. Typically about 14 inches / 36 centimetres in length. Read more in our [Glossary of Jewellery Chain](#)

WATERMELON BEADS

Are glass beads made in Czechoslovakia in the 1920s, usually stripped in yellows, blues, and greens. Read our [History of Czech Glass Beads](#) to learn more.



Above is an antique watermelon bead in blue, green and red.

WEFT or WOOF

The name for the thread that is used with a needle to string beads that are then woven perpendicular to the Warp threads on a loom

WHITE HEART BEADS

These are not heart shaped beads but transparent beads with an opaque white core resulting in a white lined hole. The outer part of the bead is coloured. This type of bead has been produced since the 15th century and the majority of white hearts available today are [Antique](#).



Above is a yellow vintage white heart bead.

WIRE

As distinct from [Beading Wire](#), which is constructed to be like a metal thread, is wire in its usual form. All the common metal types are available with copper and aluminium wires coming in a rainbow of colours through the use of enamels. Wire is supplied in different [Gauges](#) (thicknesses) which are denoted by a number according to an american system or by its diameter in mm. The table below details the most common gauges and their uses for more detail see [Gauges](#)

28 = 0.32mm (0.013") Good for binding, knitting and weaving.

24 = 0.51mm (0.020") Good for threading small delicate beads. Binding and twisting.

20 = 0.81mm (0.032") Good for wirework with crystals and medium beads.

18 = 1.02mm (0.040") Good for wire wrapping large beads and creating wire components.

16 = 1.02mm (0.040") Good for bold chunky wire worked design.

Wire is available in four different levels of hardness: dead soft, soft wire, half-hard and full-hard. [Memory Wire](#) is the hardest of all the wire types. It also comes in a wide variety of cross-sections such as round, triangular and square and is sold both by length and weight.

Dead Soft Wire can be easily bent and broken with the hands, so any shape produced is vulnerable to becoming damaged or distorted. Good for wire wrapping of larger beads or stones, and thicker wire can be used.

Soft Wire is very similar to the above, but is slightly tougher.

Half Hard Wire is the most versatile type of wire as is soft enough to bend, but strong enough to act as a functional component in jewellery – i.e. for use as an earwire or eye pin. Use the correct cutters with this wire.

Full Hard Wire is stronger than half-hard and can be trickier to work with, again suited for use where you need reliable strength and form. Use the correct cutters with this wire.

Tiger Tail Wire is a speciality twisted beading wire with a nylon coating, whilst Soft Flex wire is

similar but has greater flexibility and is less prone to kinking. Solid or plated silver and gold wire is also available.

To learn more about the uses of wire see our [Guide to Beading Techniques](#)

WIRE GUARDIAN

Is similar to a [Bullion](#) only rigid. It is used where you want to form a loop for example where the bead wire goes through the loop on the clasp at the end of your piece. They are available in a range of metal finishes including, black, copper, gold, silver and antique.



Above are examples of gold and copper wire guardians.

WIRE JIG

A device used to bend wire into elaborate shapes, and to replicate the shape time and again. Commercial jigs are available, but a simple one can be made at home by hammering nails into a piece of wood. The wire is bent against or looped round the nails.

WIRE WORK

The art of bending wire into jewellery and decorative items often with the addition of beads.

WIRE WORKING TOOLS

A chasing hammer and steel stake are used for flattening and work hardening or toughening wire shapes. Chasing hammers are light weight and easy to handle. Steel stakes on which to hammer work have an ultra smooth surface to eliminate the possibility of marking items being worked on.

X

Y

Z

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