

Cleaning Clear + Filigrana Glass Rods

(with a bonus trick for opaque turquoise beads)

We all want super-clear glass, especially when clear casing a bead! I have two techniques I use to achieve super-clean clear and filigrana glass rods.

Soap + Scrub

This option is straightforward so I always try it first. I use a degreasing dish soap like Dawn Dishwashing liquid and a Scotch Brite non-scratching pad to scrub the rods with some vigor. Rinse with hot water and dry with a cotton towel.



Pickle

Sometimes the Soap and Scrub method doesn't remove all the spots and scale from my glass. When this is the case, I move to a more aggressive approach.

I pickle the glass rods. Pickle is used mostly by jewelers and metalsmiths to clean their work after soldering. It is a solution of sodium bisulfate that you mix up from a powder, then warm gently.

I use a crock pot filled with water and a few tablespoons of Rio Pickle or Sparex (they are the same chemical, just different brand names).

! Note: your crock pot must be dedicated to pickle from this point on. Do not use your pickle pot for cooking!

(I've put a couple of sources for pickle at the end of this article.)

First, get set up. Pickle is a weak acid solution, so protect your skin and eyes when mixing it up or using it. Set your crock pot on a surface you don't care about, or put it inside a shallow plastic dish pan. You will also need a plastic tablespoon and plastic, wood or copper tongs.



How to pickle your glass:

1. Fill the crock pot with water.
2. Add a few tablespoons of pickle to the water, without splashing!
3. Turn the crock pot on high.
4. Slide your clear and/or filigrana rods gently into the solution. Usually the entire rod will not fit into the crock pot. No worries: after the rods have soaked for 30 minutes or so, turn them around so the other ends can soak.

Only use plastic, wood or copper tongs in the pickling solution because they are non-reactive. Stainless steel or iron will react with the pickle and your tongs will end up with a thin copper plate on them.

Cleaning glass rods with pickle takes about a half hour if you can fully immerse them, or about an hour if you have to flip them around. Don't worry if you leave the

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rods in the pickle for longer than that; your glass won't be harmed.

Once your glass is done, transfer the rods to a large bowl or bucket. Take them to your sink and use the Soap and Scrub method to give them a final cleaning.

Be sure to turn off your crock pot and/or unplug it from the wall. If you leave it turned on for long enough the water in the pickle solution will evaporate and your pickle will go back to powder. In case that happens, just gently add water to the crock pot to create a new solution.

I use the same pot of pickle for a LONG time, like months of daily use. You will know it's time to make up new solution when your pickle takes seemingly forever to work or stops working altogether.

! Before disposing of the old pickle, neutralize it with baking soda. Slowly add baking soda until the solution stops foaming.

Please don't pour the old solution down the drain. Pickle can harm your pipes, not to mention the aquatic life or the septic field at the other end of your pipes.

Instead, follow the instructions on the Rio Pickle or Sparex package, and look up your municipal or county guidelines for disposal of neutralized pickle.

Pickle Sources

Go to riogrande.com and search for Rio Pickle. Choose Rio Pickle for Non-Ferrous Metals.

Go to beaducation.com and search for Sparex.

Rio Grande and Beaducation also sell copper tongs.

The Turquoise Bead Trick

I'm mad for beads made with dark turquoise opaque glass but I do not like the gray reduction that appears when my beads come out of the kiln. Guess what? The pickle solution will take the reduction right off!



1. Poke some holes in the bottom of an empty yogurt cup.
2. Fill the cup with your turquoise beads that have unwanted reduction. Containing the beads in a cup is much easier than fishing them out of the pot one bead at a time.



3. Using plastic, wood or copper tongs, gently place the container into the heated pickle solution.
4. Check on the beads after 30 minutes or so. Sometimes the reduction comes off quickly and other times it takes a bit longer.

5. Transfer the yogurt cup to a large bowl, take it to your sink and rinse your beads with warm water.

6. **Voila! All clean.**

