



ESSENTIAL BeadMAKING Magic & TRICKS...

In our excitement to learn fancy techniques and make amazing beads it's easy to overlook the essentials.

You may make spectacular beads but still have the same problems occurring in every bead. You might be just starting out and feel like you don't have a handle on things just yet. Either way it all boils down to your ability to control the glass. With control of the glass you can make your simple beads and your fancy beads even better.

My goal is to share a few of my essential magical tricks to put you in control of your beadmaking.

Heather

Does this sound familiar?

You take your beads out of the kiln, clean them and lay them out in neat and tidy rows. They are so beautiful but THEN you start to notice:

Some beads have sharp edged holes on both sides!



Other beads have nicely puckered holes on one side but sharp edged holes on the other side!



Then there are those that are just not quite round!



Time for the Magic & Tricks...

If any of these situations sound familiar, read on for the tricks to make the fixes.



Those beads with sharp edged holes on both sides!



Don't those pokey sharp things just bug you!? They stick out on both sides of your bead hole but you don't know why you have them?

Now the magic...

It's all about the gather and the placement. YOU need to be in charge of the glass rather than the molten glass controlling your movements.



First, take the really hot gather you've built for your bead out of the flame, let it cool down just a bit before touching your mandrel.

Now it's all about the touchdown of the glass on the mandrel. It might seem logical to drop the molten glass onto the top of your mandrel when you start your bead.



BUT instead I'd like you to try touching your hot glass gently to the front side (the side towards you) of the mandrel instead. You want a very small "footprint" on your mandrel when you start.



You can always add more glass later but your initial footprint needs to be small. While touching the mandrel in the front, simultaneously rotate the mandrel away from you stretching the glass out about an inch.



Continue turning the mandrel away from you and wrap the glass around the mandrel.

Voila! You will be able to apply an even wrap of glass to your mandrel and avoid creating those pesky sharp edged holes.



All those beads with one good puckered hole and one sharp edged hole...



What the heck? Why did this happen? These were your best beads ever! You'll just grind the one end, put it in a necklace and no one will ever know! Problem solved, right? Yes and No. So why does this keep happening?

Here's the magic...

Keep your mandrel horizontal and level with the earth/table all the time. This is so simple to say yet so easy to forget.



As you make your bead you concentrate very hard so it's easy to focus on the detail work and forget about the rest of the bead. Gradually the end of your mandrel starts to tip up and then it happens...one side of your bead has a great puckered end and the other end is sharp.

You may try to add glass at this point and that helps for a while but then it happens again because you are concentrating again and the end of the mandrel goes up again! Keep that mandrel horizontal!

I'd love to be able to add a beeper to the other end of my mandrel. If I broke my concentration and the end my mandrel unintentionally tipped up the buzzer would go off. Not practical maybe, but it would be helpful in building new habits.



Making the beads ROUND!



Why is it so hard to make the bead round!? You heat and roll, heat and roll and nothing happens. Sometimes you get it round then all of a sudden, it's not round any more! It's so frustrating.

Let's work some magic...

Repeat these magical words after me: Rotate, rotate, rotate... in BOTH directions!



Beads can go out of round if they are not constantly rotated in both directions while you are making them. Gravity takes over when you stop and the hot glass begins to sag.



Try this exercise using a cold mandrel:

- Fold a piece of masking tape over what would be the cold end of your mandrel so you have a small flag on the end of your mandrel. This will give you a good visual of how many revolutions you are making with your mandrel.
- Holding your mandrel (horizontally of course!) between your thumb and index finger, roll the mandrel away from you, down the pad of your thumb as far as you can then roll it back up toward you as far as you can. This motion should give you 2 complete and possibly 3 rotations of the mandrel.
- Continue this rotating, slowly, **WITHOUT STOPPING!** I rotate my mandrel ALL the time, in both directions. Even as I am going into the kiln my mandrel is rotating.



If I could give you only one other piece of magical advice to improve your bead making, what would that be?



SLOW DOWN & WORK COOLER!!



OK, so that's two things; but really, after teaching all these years I just can't say it enough.



I am a production beadmaker so speed is important yet I work slowly and carefully.

Remember... revisit these essential magic tricks when problems arise in your beadmaking. It's all really magic and tricks, right?

More tips and tricks in my tutorials are available online at heathertrimlett.com/tutorials.htm



BONUS - Tiny Tips!

Tiny Tip # 1

No Flashing!

It is important to keep your bead evenly heated. When you wag your mandrel back and forth through the flame to "flash" the bead with heat you are creating stress in the bead. Instead, move way out in the flame and continue rotating where it is cooler. You can hang out there and your bead will be safe as you think about your next move.

Tiny Tip # 2

Smooth Out...

Adding a few small beads to your bead release/separator will help mix it up and break up any lumps.



My favorite bead release is made by Fusion Products International.
www.fusionproductsintl.com