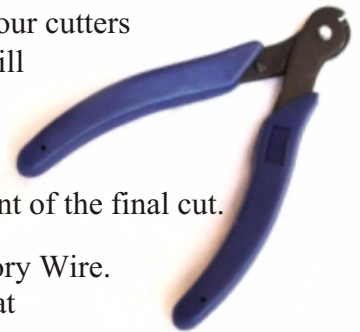# Memory Wire Basics

by Judy Markwell

If you've never worked with Memory Wire, you should know that it's one of the easiest ways to make beautiful jewelry. The wire keeps it's shape and doesn't need a clasp, so you don't have to have any findings. This means that not only are the bracelets easy to make, they can be very affordable, depending on the beads that you use. Memory Wire bracelets are a great "first project" for kids, too.

The only hard, fast rule that you need to follow when working with memory wire is this:

Don't Use Your Jewelry Wire Cutters to Cut it. It will ruin your cutters

quickly. Here's a picture of the cutters that we sell. They're very affordable, and will save your good cutters. Another alternative is to grasp the wire with two pair of pliers with about ¼" between them, and twist the wire back and forth to cause the wire to break. The upside to this method is that it's REALLY cheap, the downside is that it may leave sharp ends, and you don't get quite the control over the placement of the final cut.

Here are a few facts that you should know about Beadalon® Remembrance™ Memory Wire. It is made of Stainless Steel (except for the plated kind - see below). This means that it won't rust.

Beadalon© Memory Wire Sizes

Ring	0.75"-0.84" (1.9-2.1cm)
Bracelet	1.75"-2.25"(4.4-5.7cm)
Lg.Bracelet	2.25"-2.63" (5.7-6.7cm)
Necklace	3.63"-4 " (9.2-10.2cm)
Lg Necklace	4"-4.5" (10.2-11.4cm)

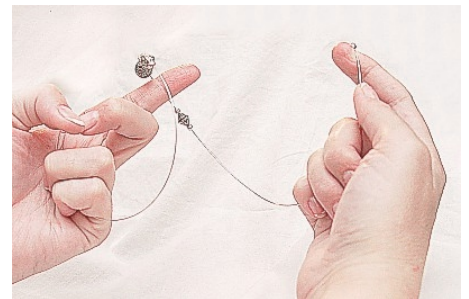It comes in many sizes, as shown in the chart on the left. All of it is the same thickness, about .62mm or .025". One thing to remember is that due to the way that it's made, each batch is a different diameter. It can be stretched, as shown below, to make it a little bit larger, but you can't make it smaller. You use the regular bracelet size when you're using small beads, and the large bracelet for large beads. The large can also be used for anklets.

The Only Absolute Rule:
Don't Use Your Good Jewelry Wire Cutters To Cut It!

If the ends are digging into your wrist, you can straighten them out a bit, too. Just hold the bracelet close to the end in one hand (use a thumb and forefinger) and hold the very end in the thumb and forefinger of the other hand and bend the end out just a bit. But remember, only do a little at a time and test each time for comfort. It's easy to do but hard to undo.

If the whole bracelet is too tight, it's fairly easy to stretch it. Use the photo at right as a guide, and think of your motion as "uncoiling" the wire. Actually try to work the loops larger instead of just pulling them apart. If you do just a little at a time, you can make the bracelet bigger. Again, test it every so often for size, because it's very hard to "undo".

A word about plated Memory Wire. If you'd like to make a bracelet with the wire exposed as at the top of the page, you can use Plated Memory Wire. It comes in both Gold and Silver Plating in the Large Bracelet size. A word of warning: the plated memory wire is NOT stainless steel, so there is some danger of rust, especially if the plating comes off. And if you try to bend the ends of the plated memory wire, the plating WILL come off. I recommend end caps for all plated memory wire.

Finishing the Ends

There are three common ways to finish off the ends of your memory wire, and one other little trick that gives a very professional ending at a very affordable price.

1 The Loop

This is the most common way to end off your wire. Simply use your needle nose pliers and twist the wire around to make a small loop. I've found if you make your loop going the opposite direction of the curl of your bracelet (see diagram at right) it won't jab into your wrist.

2 The Dangle

This is simply a variation of the loop. After you make the loop, add a simple bead dangle as shown here. If you need instructions on making a bead dangle, see the "Wire Working Basics" tutorial. This gives your bracelet a little more finished look, and adds a some movement.

3 The End Cap

This method takes a little more work and some drying time, but it makes a very professional end. Rough up the end of your wire with either sand paper or an emery board. You can also use the method shown below for scoring the wire. Then glue on your choice of end caps, using either E-600 or a 2-part adhesive. Now you have to let the first end dry 24 hours, make your jewelry, and then finish the other end and let it dry for 24 hours or more.

4 The Crimp Tube With Loop End

This end uses a crimp tube with a loop on the end - you'll find them in our store. Start by scoring the end of your memory wire. Hold the wire with a little pressure in the end of your cutters. Hold the cutters a little bit tightly and rotate the wire so that you score the end of the Memory wire. Do this in 2 or three places, so you'll have

Fig 2

something that looks like fig 2. This scoring prevents the crimp tube from sliding off the end. Now use your standard crimp pliers and crimp the end in the normal fashion. You may want to secure the cap with a drop of glue before crimping - E-6000 would be best.

It may take you a time or two to get the hang of it, but you get the look of an end cap with a loop at a fraction of the cost.