

Bead Embroidery

with Emily Miller

A wonderful way to express your artistic visions is to embroider with beads! Follow Emily down the rabbit hole with two projects that will bring you peace and quite a sense of accomplishment. Emily says, “I can spend all day with a needle, thread, and beads... stitching away, it’s mesmerizing, and totally engrossing. Bead embroidery is one of my all time favorite techniques...you can make pendants, pins, patches...the sky is the limit!”

Find recipes and full ingredient lists for these two samples, Turkey Feather and Stained Glass Sunset, at beadshop.com in our Bead Embroidery Projects.

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Rather than bead by bead directions, Bead Embroidery can be somewhat freeform or experimental, but it does help to have a bit of guidance, or at least a place to start and stop!

Inspiration for this project came from two sources, one was the turkey feathers found everywhere in my neighborhood, as well as observing the turkeys. They have a lovely iridescence to some of their feathers, only visible in the sunshine.

Stained Glass Sunset was inspired by a piece of artwork, and like so many inspirations the final result bears only some similarity to the original idea. What was lovely about the original was the simplicity of lines, the shades of the glass, and even the setting of the photograph used to sell the piece.

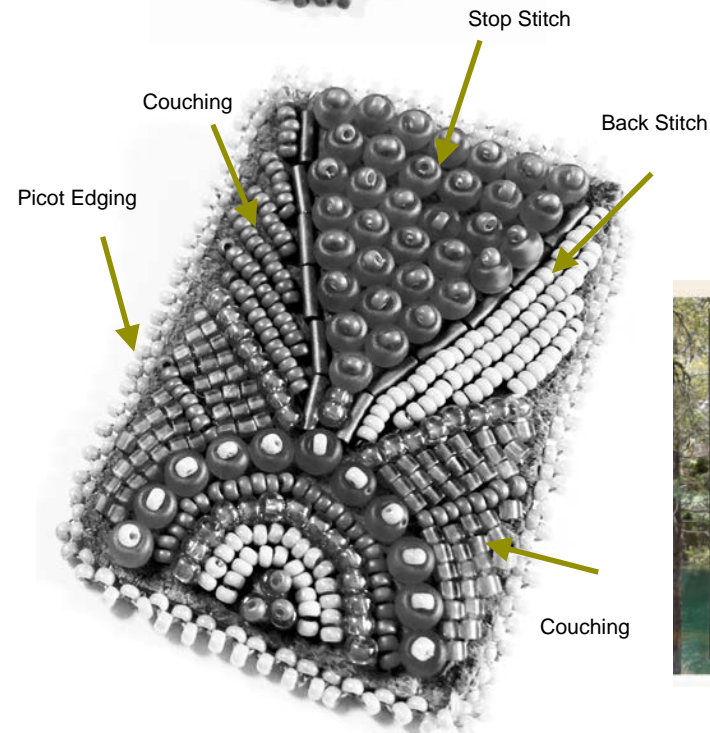
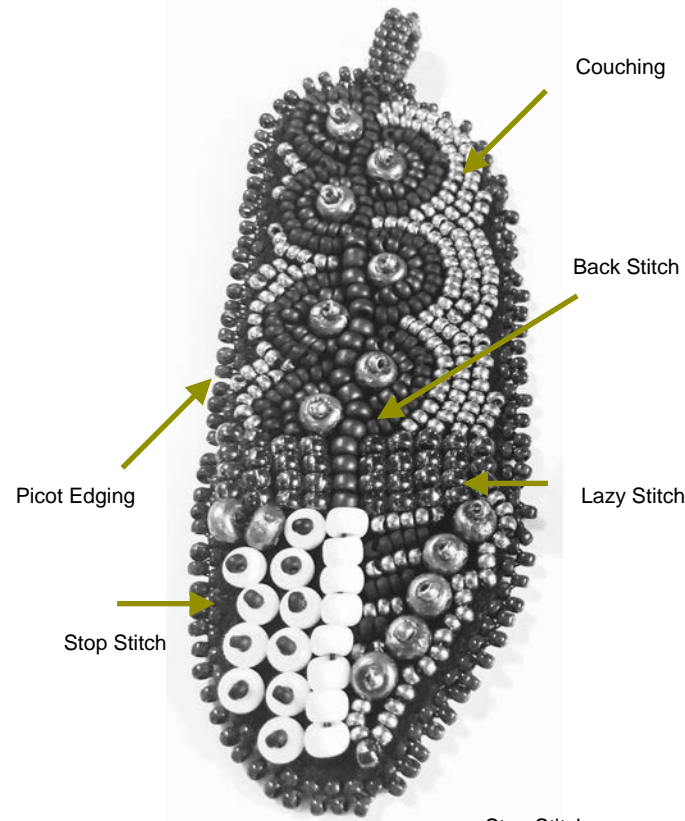
Getting ready to bead~

~ Sketch out an idea on a piece of cardstock paper and cut it out. This will serve as a template for the beading.

~ Transfer the outline to a piece of UltraSuede, using a pencil or pen. On light backgrounds a pencil will work fine, use a pen with darker ink on darker colors of suede. It can be helpful to draw in some details to give parameters to the embroidery, consider these to be spaces to fill with beads.

~ Cut the UltraSuede to a manageable size, with at least a ¼ inch border past the outline, more than that will be in the way and wasted as well at the end. It will be helpful to make the shape somewhat regular here, later it will be cut down to finish.

~ Place the ultra suede over a piece of cardstock of the same size, any color. The cardstock gives stability and stiffness to the finished piece. Many other options for this are available, but cardstock is the most readily available.



Back Stitch

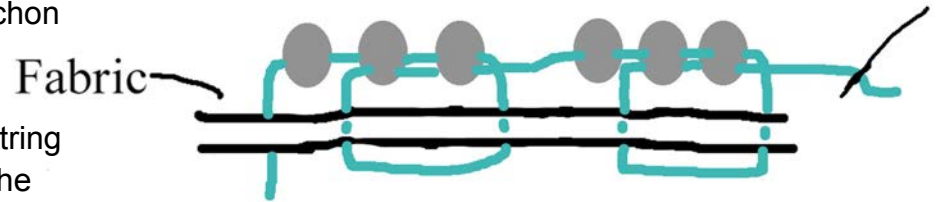
Back Stitch is one of the easiest and smoothest ways to encircle a cabochon or large bead. Back Stitch creates lines of beads to outline a shape or fill an area.

Bring the needle and thread from the back of the fabric to the front and string on up to 8 beads. Slide the beads down to the fabric and stitch through the fabric to the backside of the fabric. Bring the needle up between beads 4 & 5 and pass through beads 5-8 again. String on more beads and repeat. Use an even tension and keep the beads close together; pull too much and the fabric will pucker, too loose and the bead holes will show. This technique is very secure, if you are using larger beads than seed beads, string on only 1 bead and backstitch through each bead. When the entire row is finished, pass the needle and thread through all beads again to smooth the appearance.

Couching

Similar to Back Stitch, Couching can create long paths of beads.

Couching is best for spirals and independent curves. Bring your needle up from the back of the fabric and string on 4-8 beads. Hold the thread down against the fabric with the beads lined up against the end of the thread. Needle down through the fabric. Bring the needle up through the fabric in the middle of the beads, and needle back down passing over the thread running through the beads. You may choose to string on larger qualities of seed beads and couch between every 3rd to 4th bead to create curves and spirals.

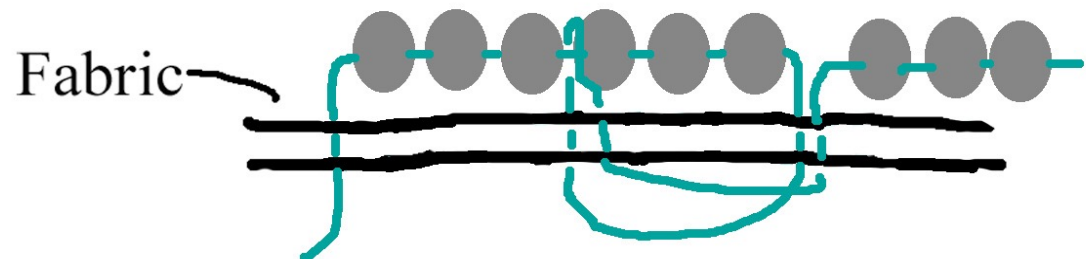


Reminders

After each stitch bring the needle and thread back to the top of the suede.

When covering long distances or using a long piece of thread, occasionally knot to one of the threads on the back (paper) side. Just in case a thread breaks on the beaded side, loss of beads will be minimized.

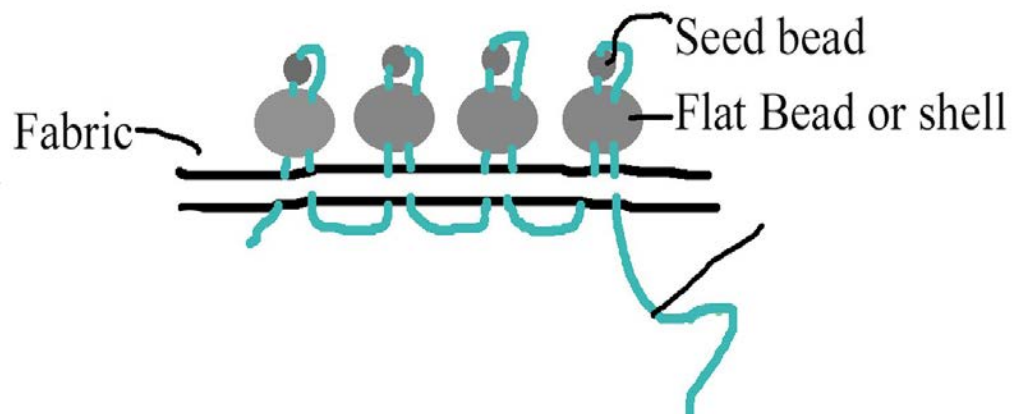
Work generally from the inside of the design, this will help with thread tangles and catching.



Stop Stitch

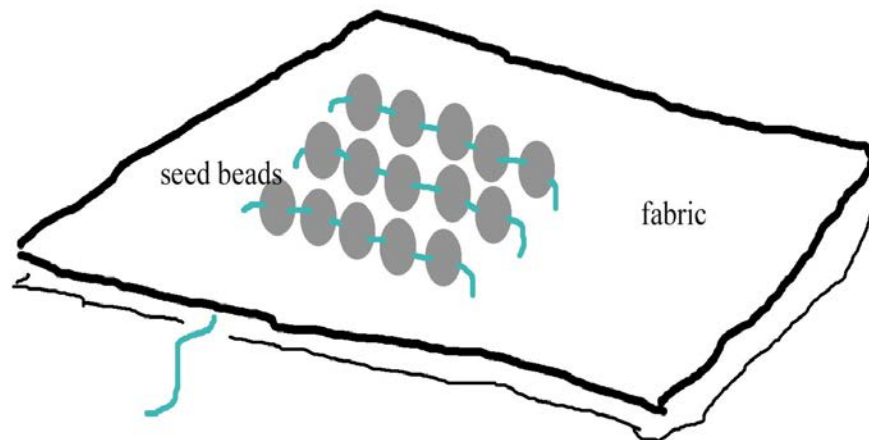
Stop stitch is a very simple stitch in bead embroidery. Like a very short fringe!

Stitch through the fabric from back to front. Choose a flat bead or a larger seed bead and string it on the thread, all the way down to the fabric. Pick up a seed bead and stitch back through the first bead and fabric to the back; pull snug but not tight. The seed bead is the "stop" bead as it stops the flat bead from falling off! Repeat again close by, or let some of the fabric show between the beads. This technique allows the use of buttons and shells as well as beads. Stop Stitch is a great filler stitch if you need to cover irregular areas of fabric. Stop Stitch could also be used to edge around an object. You may want to try making the stitches with more beads in a stack, remember to skip the last bead before heading back through the beads and into the fabric.



Lazy Stitch

Lazy stitch is the way to cover large areas of fabric with beads. Bring the needle and thread from back to front of the fabric, and, pick up 5 seed beads. Slide the beads down to the fabric, and, keeping them in a straight line, poke the needle back through the fabric. Bring the needle back up through to the front on the fabric, just to one side of the first group of beads. Add 5 more beads and stitch down again in a straight line. Lazy stitch could also be made with lines of 2-5 beads. Try it with 3mm Japanese bugle beads, which have wonderful sparkle and are more delicate than most bugle beads.



Finishing Your Embroidery

For making a pendant

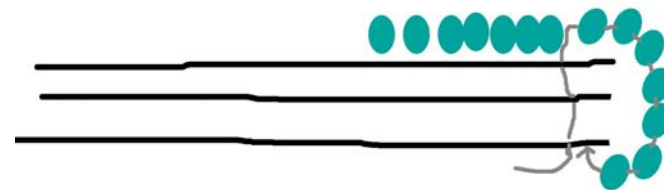
Cut a piece of ultra suede the same size as the front, use a small amount of glue and spread over the cardstock and threads. Press the backing into the glue and allow to dry overnight. Using a sharp scissor, trim the edge of all the layers to a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Make a loop at the top, for hanging, and finish the edge with either Whip Stitching or Picot Edging.

For making a pin

Pin backs should ride in at about the top $\frac{1}{3}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ on the back of the piece. Lay a closed pin back on the table. Press a piece of ultrasuede firmly on the two points of the pin back. Where these marks are, make two (smaller than you think you need) vertical cuts. Open the pin back, and work the hinge and clasp through the slits, adjusting as needed. Apply glue to the back of the beadwork, spreading evenly to just beyond the beadwork. Press the second piece of ultrasuede onto the glue and allow to dry.

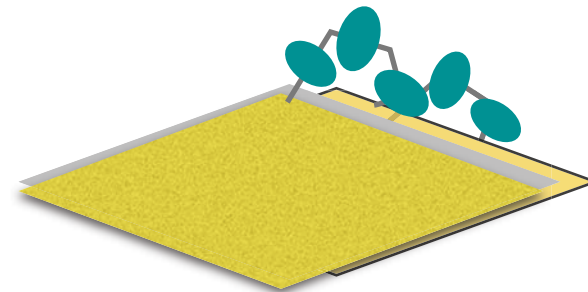
Whipstitch the backing

1. Double $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards of thread and knot the end. Slightly open the back fabric to expose the paper and needle through to the front of the fabric, exiting just under the beadwork.
2. String on enough seed beads to completely cover the edge of the fabrics and the horsehair, about 5-7 size 11 seed beads. Needle back through all the layers, exiting again just under the beadwork next to your previous stitch.
3. Repeat all the way around the cuff, knot and trim the thread to finish.



Picot Edging

1. Double $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards of thread and knot the end. Starting at one side, slightly open the back fabric to expose the paper and needle through to the front of the fabric, exiting just under the beadwork.
2. Pick up 3 beads and stitch from back to front, then through the 3rd bead. Pull up snugly.
3. Pick up 2 beads and stitch from back to front, then through the second bead.
4. Continue to stitch around the edge, adding the picot edge. For the last stitch, add only one bead. Bridge from the last picot to the first.



Shape Templates

