

Pearl Knotting Like a Pro
By Janice Parsons



Welcome to my favorite type of stringing! I just love to knot. I am continually fascinated and intrigued by the mysteries and beauty of the process of knotting. Whether you choose to use this technique with pearls, gemstones, glass or a mixture of all sorts of beads, knotting is a skill you will never be sorry you know how to do.

Let's begin today with our list of supplies.

To knot a strand of pearls, these are the ingredients and tools you will need:



Ingredients:

- 1 16" strand of freshwater pearls size 8-12mm
- 1 flexible eye needle size 12
- Gudebrod Silk Thread in Size D or E (We will not be using Griffin Silk in this class)
- 1 Pair traditional end tips in sterling silver or gold-filled
- 1 Clasp in sterling silver or gold-filled
- 1 Pair small bead caps in sterling silver or gold-filled



Tools:

- Thread scissors
- "Un-knotting" tweezers
- Tube of Hypo-tube cement
- Very sharp, fine pointed wire cutters
- Needle-nose pliers

All about thread:

I always get the most questions from students about thread. And, I can understand why. Thread can really be a mystery. It is the least seen of all the components of your jewelry, yet it is so critical. We don't stop to think about the cables holding up the Golden Gate Bridge but we expect them to really perform! Well, we want our thread to do the same for our jewelry. Silk is the thread of choice when knotting. However, it's your thread of choice **only** when you knot between each bead. For straight stringing, it's not strong enough. Silk will stretch out far faster than nylon if used without knots. But, for pearl knotting it is ideal.

The silk used in class is made by Gudebrod/Champion. It comes on spools and cards. Carded Gudebrod/Champion Silk is available in Size D and E only. Spooled silk comes in a full range of sizes starting with 000 and going to FFF. Here is just a "guesstimate" of what thread will work with the kinds of beads you are knotting:

Beads	000,00,0	A , B and C	D and E	F, FF, FF
Pearls	Seed pearls	Seed and Freshwater	Freshwater and Cultured	Glass pearls
Fine Gems		Emeralds, Rubies, Sapphires	Aquamarines, Citrine, Jade, Lapis	Jade, Coral, Turquoise, Amethyst
Stones			Rose Quartz, etc. in 4mm	Rose Quartz, Onyx, etc.
Glass			Sometimes E	Most use F or FF
Wood, etc.				Recommend Nylon



For pearl or bead floats, the ideal silk thread is made by Griffin and it comes on cards with a needle already attached. This thread is not used double as it already comes triple-twisted. It is strong enough to be exposed to "the elements", so you can "float" your beads without worrying that the thread will fray. It doesn't make as pretty a knot as the Gudebrod/ Champion. I don't recommend it for traditional knotting because you cannot separate your threads after each knot to tighten the knot down.

Griffin comes in sizes from 1-14. #1 is the finest and #14 being heavy enough it qualifies as a cord. For floats, you would generally use sizes 2-6, depending on your beads.

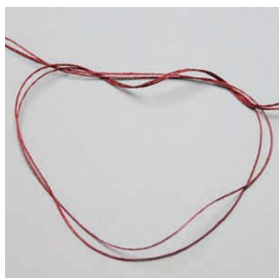
After learning traditional pearl knotting, you will be able to knot a float, no problem!

How much thread do I need?

To calculate how much thread you need, take the finished length of your necklace and multiply it by 3 and then multiply the result by 2. Example:

Finished Length	x 3	x 2	= thread length
20	60	120	120

Let's start!



Begin by threading your needle.

Take the two ends together and make a double overhand knot. This knot is a simple overhand knot except you go through the same knot 2 or 3 times.

Going through the same knot more than once creates a knot which is large enough not to slip through the hole of the end tip.



After you make the double or triple overhand knot, dab some hypo-tube cement on the knot. Make sure you get glue on all sides of the knot.



Now, string on your end tip from the handle going up through the top of the "umbrella."

Make sure you try pulling on the knot once it is sitting inside of the end tip. If it slips through the end tip's hole, you need to go back and make a new knot going through it more times. String on your bead cap if you are using one. The cap's large side should be ready to embrace the bead.

You don't have to wait for the glue to dry to begin knotting.



1. String on your first bead. Do not put a knot next to the end tip either when you start or when you end. Exposing a knot next to the end tip creates an area where the silk will break down with the constant wearing against the rotating end-tip.

2. String on all of your beads. String them on only as far as you need to in order to get all of your beads on the thread. We will be moving one bead at a time down to the end tip. This is the time to check your pattern, if you have one, to make sure you have strung it on correctly.

3. After you have strung on all the beads, you can now string on the second bead cap (if you are using one) and the other end tip. When stringing on this end tip, take your needle up through the umbrella top going towards the handle. Add a piece of tape securely over your thread so none of your beads will come off.

So, now you are ready to knot!

Here's the whole process in 7 easy steps! Begin by pushing one bead up to the cap and then...



Step 1: PINCH

Using the thumb and forefinger of your non-dominant (ND) hand pinch the thread just under the bead. The end tip faces the ceiling. Your palm is open and facing you.



Step 2: WRAP AND PINCH AGAIN

Hold onto the thread with your dominant (D) hand and wrap it around your ND palm. The thread wraps around the back of your hand and goes in the direction from your wrist towards your finger tips.

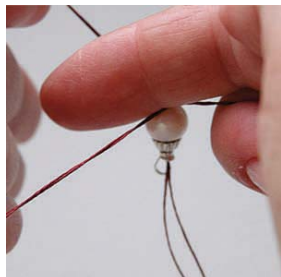
Bring the thread back in front of the bead and pinch again with your ND thumb. At this point, the thread is secure and you should be able to let go with your D hand.



Step 3: TAP, TAP, TAP!

Secure the loose thread with the two last fingers of your D hand. Your D hand needs to be close enough to the bead, that you can tap the top of the bead with your forefinger.

Tapping is just until you learn to keep your hand close... Then you can stop tapping!

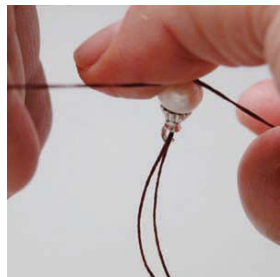


Step 4: PUSH IT UNDER AND WAVE AT THE FLOOR

Using your D forefinger, push the bead under the thread wrapped around your palm. Keep the forefinger inside the loop you have just created.

The fingers of your ND hand should rotate during this move so they all point down towards the floor.

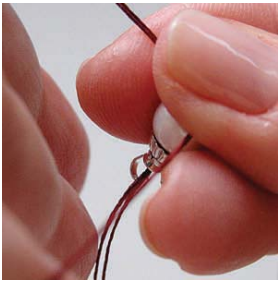
Replace your D forefinger with your D thumb by sliding the thumb into the loop and sliding the forefinger



Step 5-A: THUMB ON TOP, FINGERS ON THE SIDE

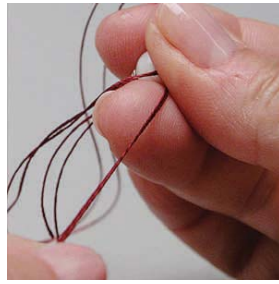
Your D thumb should be squarely on top of the knot.

Meanwhile rotate your D hand so your forefinger and middle finger of your D hand cup the bead on both sides from underneath.



Step 5-B: THUMB ON TOP, FINGERS ON THE SIDE

If you are doing this correctly, the palm of your dominant hand is facing the ceiling. You are using the forefinger and middle finger to stabilize the bead on both sides. Your thumb is holding the knot in place.



Step 6: PULL THE THREAD

With your ND hand, gently but quickly pull the excess thread in. Try to complete this in one fluid motion. It helps to begin pulling with your ND hand up close to the bead and do it in one motion. Remember to keep your thumb down as you pull the thread in.



Step 7: SEPARATE YOUR THREADS

The last step to the knotting process is so important. After each and every knot, separate the threads and pull the knot tight. This really helps to stretch the thread, so it's a step that shouldn't be missed.



Continue Steps 1-7 until you have all your beads knotted.



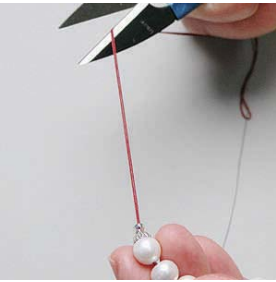
Your knotting will improve with time. It is not going to be perfect at first. Be patient!

One common mistake that creates unnecessary space between beads is during Step 5.

Remember to cup the bead on the sides, not from underneath. When you stabilize the bead from underneath rather than on its sides, you are creating distance from the last bead.

Finishing your necklace

Well, you are at the other end now and it's time to close. Remember, you don't put a knot after your last bead and before your end tip. Now it's time to close with a secure knot tied into the end tip.



1. Begin by cutting off the needle. You want to leave about 4" of thread.

Separate your two threads. We are going to do a modified square knot. Remember, we want a chubby knot that won't slip through the hole in the end tip.



2. Begin by taking the right thread over the left thread and going through the first half of the knot 3 times.



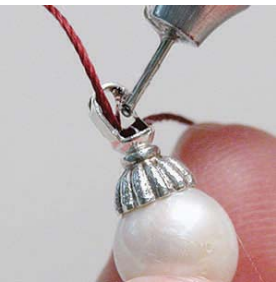
3. Pull the ends so that the first part of the knot falls inside the end tip without wrapping itself around the hook portion of the end tip.



4. Without letting go of the two ends, take the left thread over the right thread and wrap it around 2 times.



5. Then pull it tight. Again, check it doesn't get caught on the hook.



6. Using your hypo-tube cement, dab a generous dollop of glue onto the knot and then let it dry for at least an hour.



7. We can now cut the excess threads as close as you can to the knot using very fine wire cutters. Next we can add a clasp.



8. You will have just a tiny bit of thread showing. This will look less visible after you have attached your clasp.



9. Loop your clasp onto one end tip. Using the chain nose pliers, gently push the hook down into the cup of the end tip.



10. The hook should rest just inside of the cup to form a secure fit. Repeat this step on the other end of your necklace.

Q and A's about pearls and pearl knotting

1. How much length does knotting add to my design?



On average, for every 15 inches of beads (sizes 6-10mm) knotting will add 1 inch. The smaller the beads, the more knots and the more length the knotting will add. Remember to calculate the length of your clasp and add another 3/8" for the addition of the end tips when figuring final length. The 16" strand of pearls I used in today's project actually ended up to be 18 1/4" with knots, end tips, caps and clasp. So, keep that in mind when determining if you want to use all of your beads.

2. Can I combine glass and pearls?

I believe the more the merrier! Unless you are designing something that absolutely must be the finest quality in gold and gems, it's fun and interesting to combine mediums.

3. Do I have to match the thread color to my bead color?

No, you don't. In fact, for the class project today I used burgundy thread.

4. How can I learn more about pearls?

I recommend these websites: www.amnh.org/exhibitions/pearls/
<http://theculturedpearl.com/7facthatdetq.html>

I hope you have enjoyed class today. If you have any questions or problems, you can best reach me at janice@beadshop.com. Good luck with your knotting!

Notes: