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## Trade Route Necklace, a class by Janice Parsons

Using a time-tested, macramé flat knot and an ancient silk-wrapping technique adapted to thin gauge wire, beads from around the world are woven together like a journey along one of the old trade routes. It's exciting to think that many of the beads I love were once carried from China or India across the Himalayas to Europe or from Bohemia and Venice to Africa and the new world, America.

Trade Route Necklace starts with a button and ends with a loop. I would caution you not to fret over making the perfect knots on your first or even second macrame knotting project. You will get more consistent with practice!

The handout also covers the tools needed, how to use a thread burner, about the best threads for micro-macramé and recommended reading. Enjoy!

# Trade Route Necklace

by Janice Parsons

Welcome to the art of macramé in small scale, also known as “micro-macramé.” Some of you might remember the plants hanging outside your family’s porch made of heavy hemp that had been woven with knots. It was hugely popular in the 1960’s along with hippies, The Beatles, avocado and harvest gold appliances and “dropping out.”

Today’s micro-macramé has become very sophisticated and popular in large part to the emerging interest in sustainable, more environmentally friendly jewelry components in our designs and the high cost of metals; It’s just too darn expensive to wire-wrap with sterling but you can still float your gems and other beads with thread. It’s pretty, feels new and different and costs much less.

No previous experience is required, so you could say this is a Beginner Level project. The flat knot technique is one of the easiest knots to learn. What makes this project challenging and exciting is the depth of techniques covered. You’re going to learn to select the right thread, make a button loop, wire-wrap the silk wrap method and use a thread burner. Since there’s plenty to learn, let’s get started!

All directions and ingredients are for a 22-24 inch necklace with the button resting on the side visible when wearing. One side of the necklace is 16 inches in length from button to center focal pendant and the other side is 8 inches, including the loop.

Please read all steps of the project before beginning.

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## Threads, Tools and Materials

There are so many wonderful threads made now that weren't available even ten years ago. So, if you pick up an old macramé book at your local library, be aware you can find so many new products that weren't made when some of these books were published. Even hemp has evolved incredibly in colors, available thickness and strength.

Since we're targeting techniques applicable to gemstones and smaller beads, we're going to focus on threads meant for micro-macramé. The best threads are Superlon18 made by Beadsmith and Tuff in #5 by Eurotool. Conso upholstery thread is also very good. Find one you like and is available in a range of colors. It is not recommended you use waxed linen because the coating of wax can build up and look a gluey-white when knotted too much. We use a bit of beeswax in this project at the needle, only if needed.

The techniques can be adapted to thinner threads. I can also recommend Beadsmith nylon in # 4 or 6 and/or Tuff in #2 and #3.



A



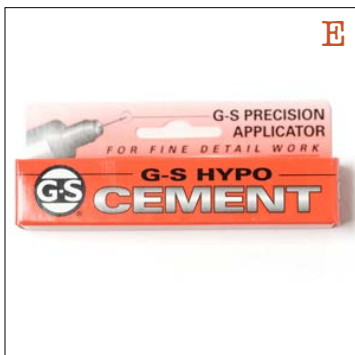
B



C



D



E



F



G



H

- A. 7-1/2yards Superlon 18 Thread
- B. 1-2 Flexible Eye Needles
- C. 1 Button with shank
- D. Thread Burner

- E. Hypo-tube Cement
- F. 2 Bead Mats or Towels
- G. Wire Cutters
- H. Knotting Tweezers

### Additional Supplies:

Tape Measure  
Scotch tape

Baking Sheet with sides  
Straight pins

2 heavy-duty binder clips  
Cardboard for wrapping thread



## Threads, tools and materials continued



I



J



K



L



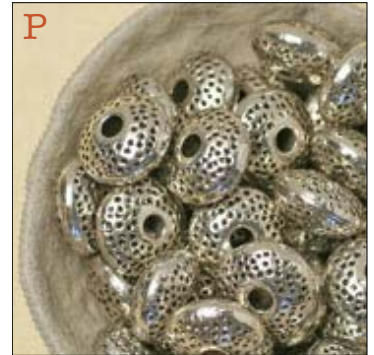
M



N



O



P



Q



R



S



T

- I. Chain Nose Pliers (2 pairs)
- J. Bead Reamer (optional)
- K. Beeswax (optional)
- L. 1 Foot Compassion Suede
- M. 1 Foot 28 Gauge SS Wire (or metal of your choice)
- N. Brass Ring (or other pendant, key or centerpiece)
- O. Christmas Beads (or seed beads in 10-12/0)
- P. Silver Spacer beads

- Q. Venetian-Style Trade Beads
- R. Old Carnelian Trade Beads
- S. Padre Beads and a scrap of twine (as pictured)
- T. Carved Wood Beads
- U. Metal Ring (or other metal beads to string)



U

In total, you will need about 18 inches of beads to make a finished necklace 22 inches in length.



## Getting Started

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### Step One:

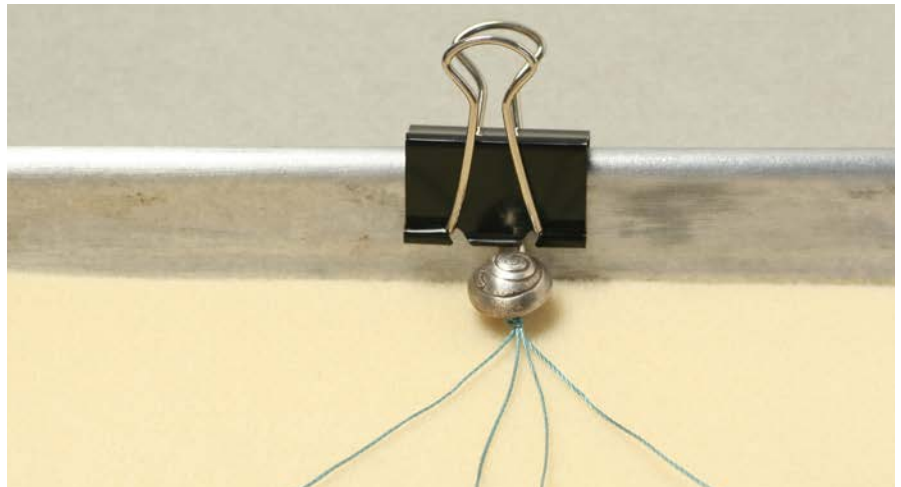
Cut a length of thread 5 yards long and thread your needle bringing the needle to the middle (2.5 yards) String your needle and thread through the shank of your button. Stop at the half way point. All four strands will be the same length.

Tie a simple overhand knot with your thread so it sits closely to the shank of the button. Pull all four threads individually to tighten and even out the knot.



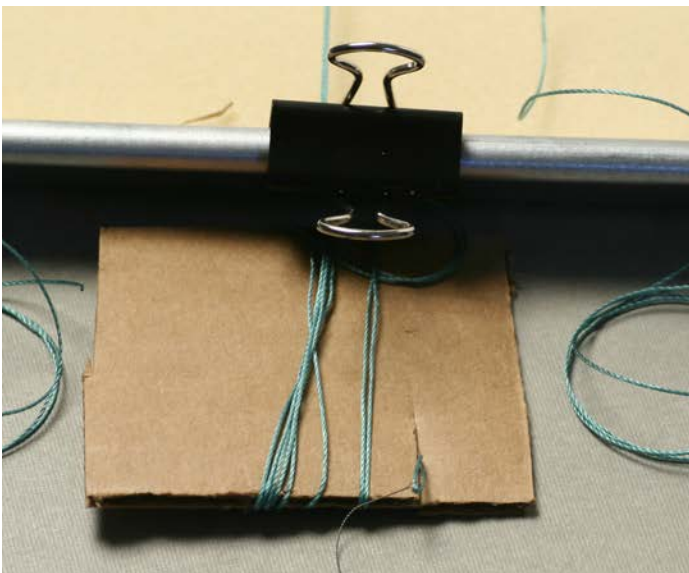
### Step Two:

Loop your twine through the shank or around the button for securing to the binder clip to the side of the baking pan. Cover the inside flat surface of the baking pan with bead mats or towel.



### Step Three:

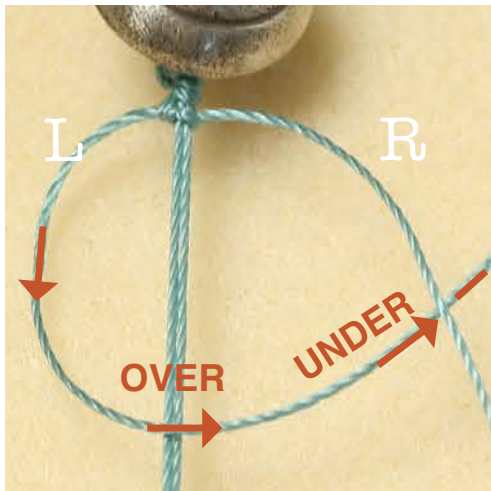
Secure the twine and binder clip to the pan side with your button facing up and threads in place. Make sure your button is sinched close to the clip.



#### Step Four:

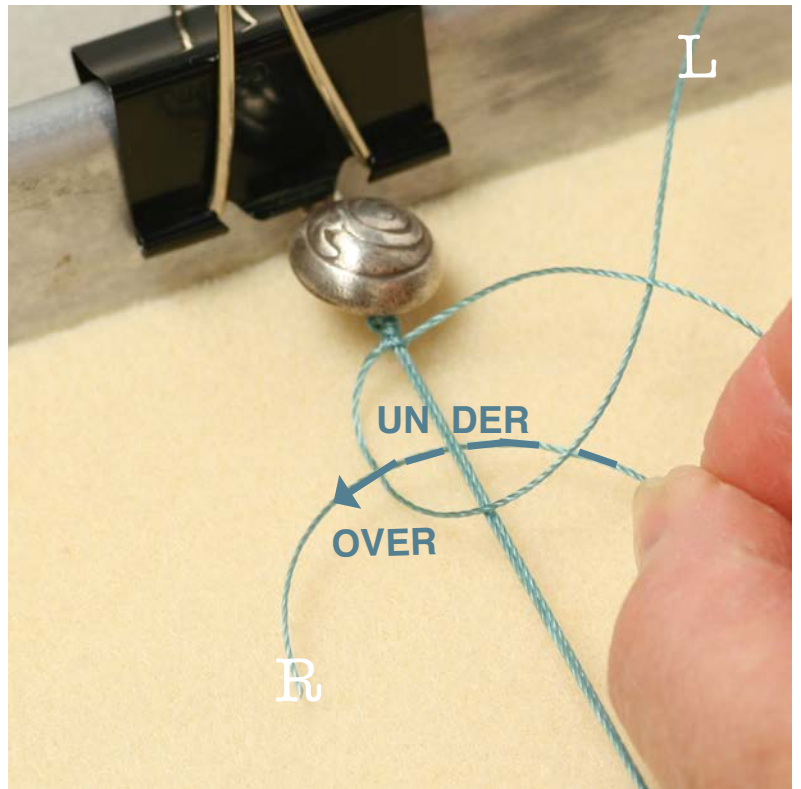
At the opposite end of your pan, wrap the needle and center threads around cardboard and attach with the second binder clip to the pan.

You will have two loose threads, a left and a right.



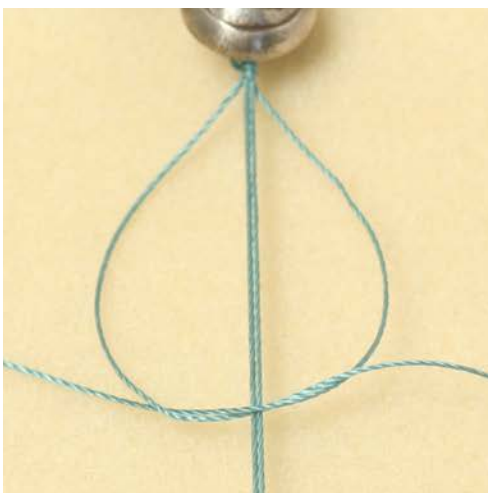
#### Step Five:

Begin with your **LEFT** outer thread:  
Loop it **OVER** the center threads and **UNDER** the **RIGHT** thread.



#### Step Six:

Take your **RIGHT** thread and loop it **UNDER** the center threads and **OVER** your **LEFT**.



#### Step Seven:

What you have is a flat knot with your inner cords captured by each half knot.

Gently pull the threads to tighten the knot up against your button.

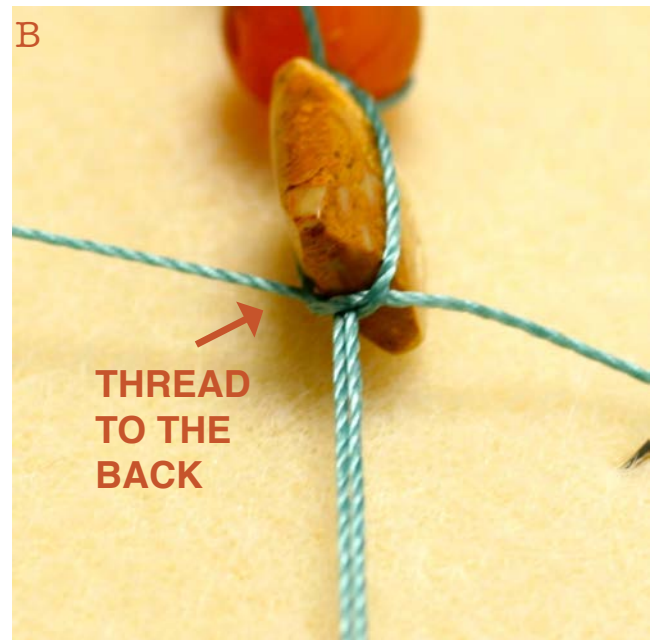
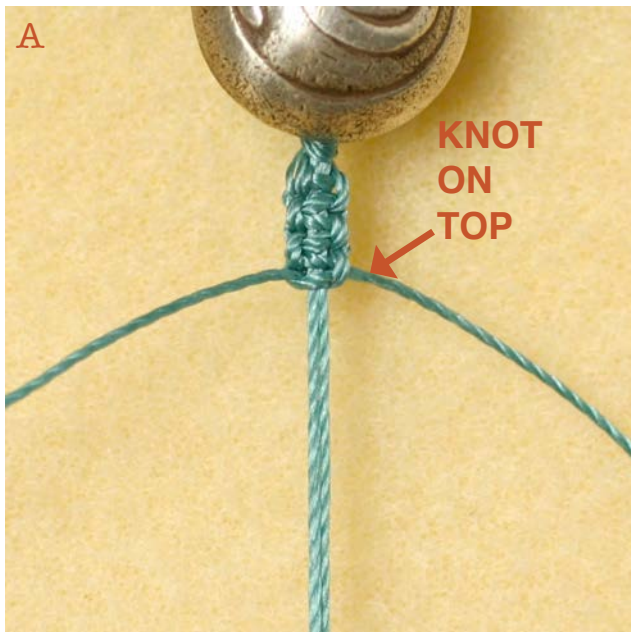
## Knotting Along

After you have completed your first flat knot, you will want to do 5-6 more. Your second knot starts with the right thread going over the center cord and under the left. It ends with the left thread going under the right, under the center and over the right.

These 5-6 knots will give the button room to move around and “breathe” away from the beads you will be stringing next. If you are anything like me, I sometimes forget in the middle or after my knot....”so, which thread should I be doing now?”

So, I’ve come up with a couple of tips to remind myself if I zone out and just forget.

- A. To remember which thread starts out the beginning of the knot, it is always the thread that has the knot on top. The top knot will alternate from left and right side after each knot.
- B. In the middle of a knot, if I forget which thread to loop with next, it is always the thread which is furthest to the back or away from me.



It’s also comforting to learn that no one is really going to notice if you make a mistake. Give yourself some room to learn, especially on your first few projects. You will get better over time. Most macramé instructors have students start with the loop side and leave the button for ending. I do the opposite because I feel that by the time you have finished the project, your knots will be improved and the loop is the only section that anyone can really tell if the knots are inconsistent. Plus, I have a very nice way of completing the loop!

Now, it’s time to begin stringing on your beads.....



## Romancing the Stone

Now comes the really fun part! Selecting your beads and pre-stringing them in sections. Unclip the binder clip at the base of your pan and unwrap your center threads, which have been secured by the cardboard. String on a random selection of beads. I would recommend 3-4" of beads at a time. I don't want you spending a great deal of time thinking through what you should string. Just keep your first couple of beads on the small to medium size so the knots around the first few beads won't be really challenging because of bead size. Besides that, don't over think it! The thread wrapping around each bead and the knots between will act as a harmonizing element to "marry" whatever selection you choose.



### Step One:

To pre-string your beads, unwrap the cardboard and thread at the base of your pan and string on several inches of your beads. Re-wrap your excess thread and re-clip to the the pan side.

**Step Two:**  
Slide your first bead up the inner cords until it is up against your knots.





**Step Five:**

Grab each outer cord and make the knot below the first bead. Repeat starting with the other outer thread first. I did 2-3 knots between each bead to space them apart, but you can do as many as you wish.



**Step Six:**

“Listen” to your beads and they will let you know the path of least resistance to insure the outer threads travel around the bead and knot well underneath.



**Step Seven:**

The outer threads can also be used to string beads on. Add to each strand just enough beads to complete the flat knot with very little thread showing.



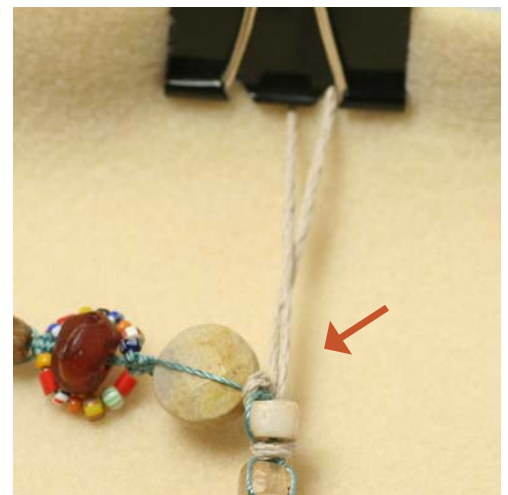
**Step Eight:**

It can look quite nice to add a few random “beaded” beads like this in your project to enhance interest and more texture.



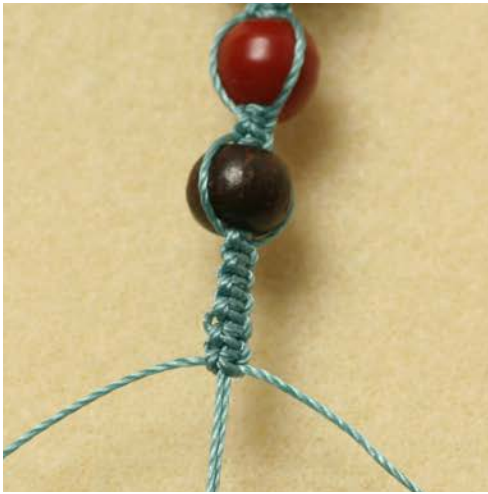
**Step Nine:**

Continue to knot and add beads onto the center cords, as needed. Re-clip the tails to the bottom of the pan.



**Step Ten:**

If your project is getting too long, reposition the twine. Loop it through a section of beads and re-clip to the edge of the pan.



### Step Ten:

When you have knotted to a length of about 16 inches, flat knot 5-6 knots. We're going to silk wrap with wire our centerpiece over this section of knots.



### Step Eleven:

Using your thread burner or wire cutters, cut off the two outside cords leaving the center threads.

A thread burner is easy to use. Thread your cord through the opening of the heating element. Bring the element as close as you can to where you want to cut and singe. Press the on button and gently pull the tool down and away. It will melt the cord and nothing else. I would suggest you practice a few times!



### Next:

Learn to silk wrap using fine gauge wire. Below are the steps photographed using cord large enough to view easily.

## Silk Wrapping

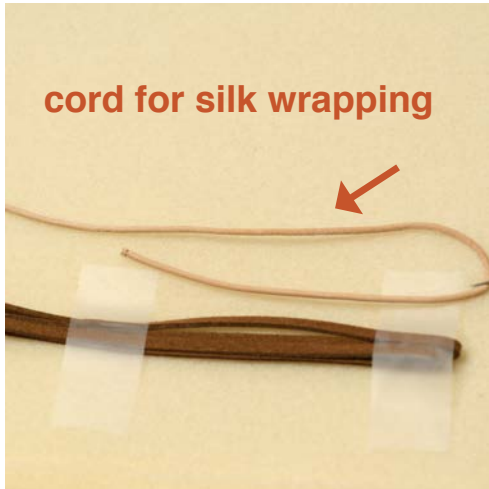
Silk wrapping is a technique I am really passionate about. I would like everyone to learn how to do this centuries-old method of gathering cords together and finishing them off. It's easy to learn and adaptable to fine gauge wire, which is what is used in this project.

Please read through the steps, practice with some scrap cords and you'll be ready to adapt it to your project using wire and suede. If you would like to watch the video about silk wrapping, go to:

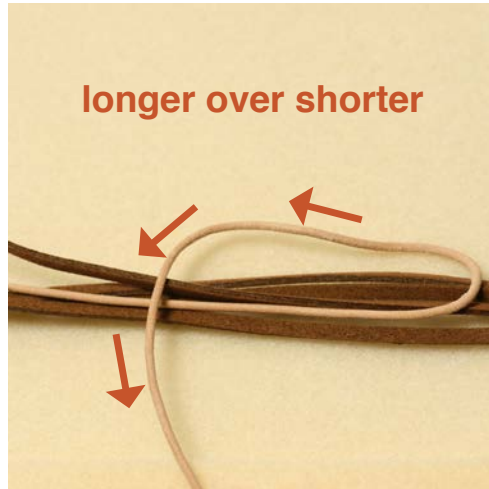
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgU6F87LDrM&feature=mfu\\_in\\_order&list=UL](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgU6F87LDrM&feature=mfu_in_order&list=UL)



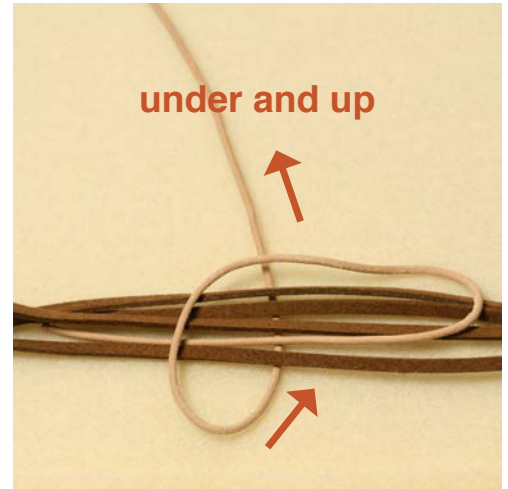
## How to Silk Wrap



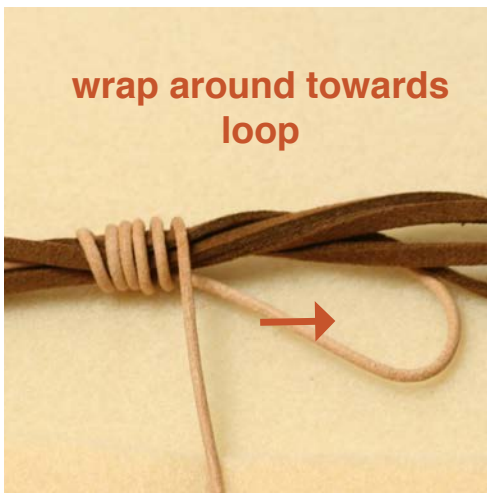
**Step One:**  
Cut a length of cord about 12 inches long. Make a loop and rest the short end below the long end.



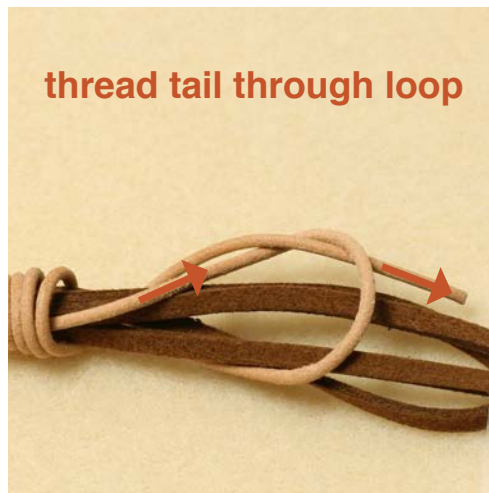
**Step Two:**  
Lay the longer end over the shorter. Your loop should be longer than the length of the wrap of the finished wrap.



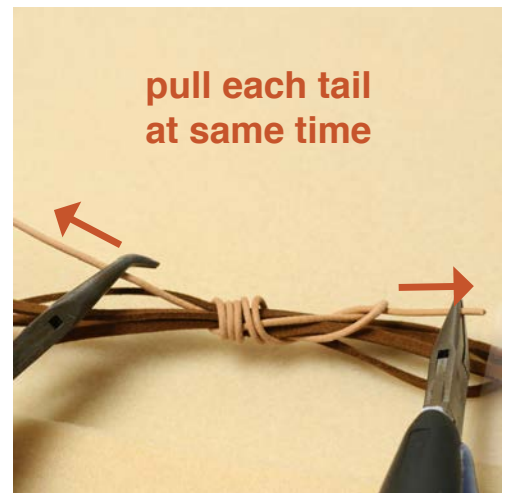
**Step Three:**  
Slip the long end under and up whatever you are wrapping around.



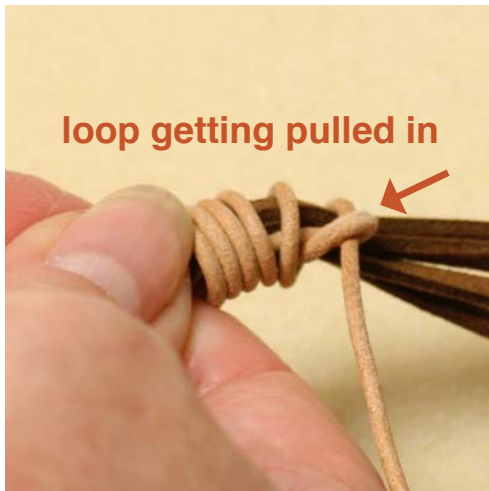
**Step Four:**  
Continue wrapping around as many times as you want going in the direction of your loop. Try to keep the wraps near each other and laying evenly.



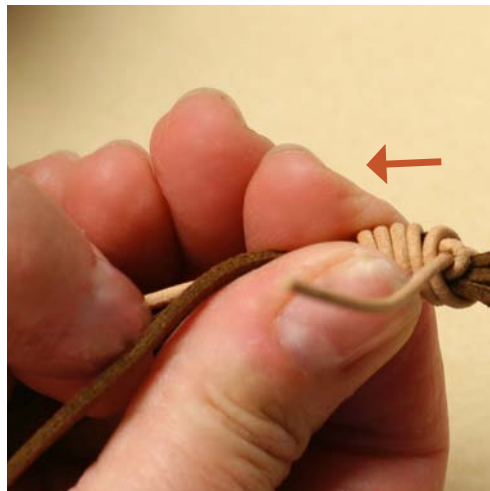
**Step Five:**  
Bring the cord end through the loop. As you transition to pulling on both tails in step 6, you may have to apply pressure over the wraps to keep them from slipping. Do this with your hands as needed.



**Step Six:**  
Using your hands or pliers, pull gently on both tails. The short one has been sitting idly by while the long one has been doing all the work. Now it's the short one's turn to shine!



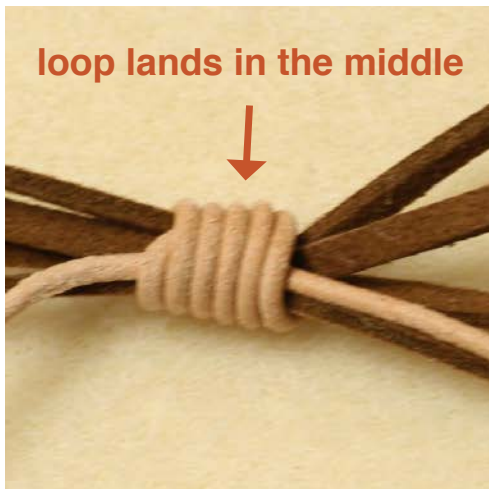
**Step Seven:**  
When the long loop is close to your wraps, gently pull on just the short end. You should see the loop beginning to pull in underneath the wraps.



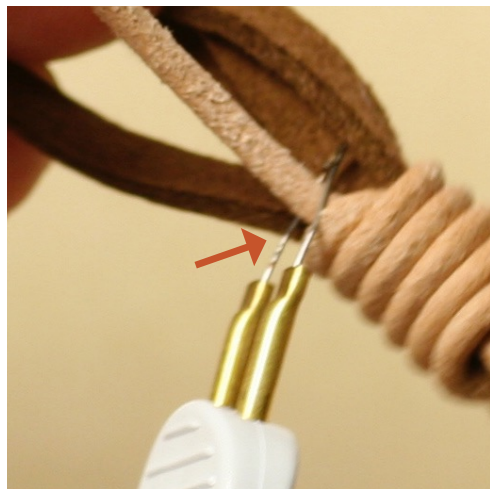
**Step Eight:**  
Keep pulling gently until the loop is resting inside the middle of the wraps. If you look closely, you should be able to see it moving.



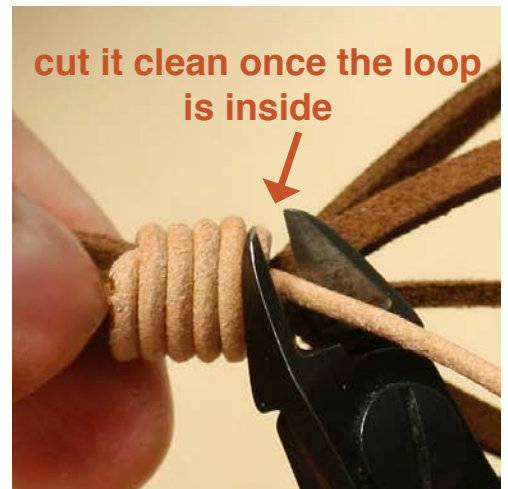
**Step Nine:**  
If you pull too far, try pulling it back using the long tail on the right.



**Step Ten:**  
You're finished when the loop is hidden inside close to the middle of the wraps.



**Step Eleven:**  
Carefully using your thread burner OR wire cutters, cut the tails close to the wraps.



**Step Twelve:**  
The loop should securely sit inside the wrap and last without any need for glue.



## Wrapping with Silver

Now you're ready to wrap your centerpiece ring or pendant on with wire and suede using the silk wrapping technique. Loop your suede cord around your Trade Route necklace threads. The pendant is going to sit on that section of 5-6 knots you made on Page 10, Step 10. Make sure you create a suede loop large enough to rest comfortably on the macramé knots.



**Step One:**  
Loop your suede around the ring and macramé knots a couple of times.



**Step Two:**  
Scotch tape your pendant and suede down to make it easier to begin wrapping with your wire.



**Step Three:**  
Cut a piece of 28 gauge wire 1 foot in length. Following the steps to silk wrap, loop and wrap the wire around the suede.



**Step Four:**  
Pull gently both tails to bring the loop into the center of the wrap.



**Step Five:**  
Cut the excess tails away. Now you're ready to add thread and finish up your necklace.



## Adding in More Thread and Making a Button Loop

It's easy and safe to add thread into your macramé design as long as you want to replace outer threads and not the center threads. Sometimes Trade Route Necklace and other longer projects can have too much thread to handle or an occasion arises where you run short on thread. I added this chapter to give you the opportunity to learn to lengthen your cord.



### Step One:

Take your leftover 2-1/2 yards of thread and bring it between your two center threads. Even the ends out so they are equal.



### Step Two

String a bead on your center cords (the one with the needle) and slide the bead all the way up close to the last knot.



### Step Three:

Knot under your bead just as you have been doing throughout the project and continue to macramé.



### Step Four:

To repeat the approximate length of the sample, macramé about 6 more inches. Please note how you can cluster beads together and knot beneath them rather than a knot after each bead.



**Step Five:**  
Macramé about 2 inches of flat knots. You'll know how much to knot by checking it against the size of your button.

**Step Six:**  
The goal is to make it just the right size so the button will slip through but not be such a huge loop it's really noticeably long. Keep checking. When it's just right, you're ready to close!



**Step Seven:**  
Reposition your binder clip and twine to secure the middle section of your loop to the side of the pan.





### Step Eight:

Fold the loop over onto itself and using your two outside threads, make a complete flat knot *around* the loop. Then flip your beads over and repeat the flat knot twice. These three knots will rest on top of earlier knots you did when making the loop, but it's hardly bulkier.

Lay your necklace on its side and dab some glue directly into the knots on both sides. Allow the glue to dry.

Using the thread burner, singe the excess threads away.





## Design Ideas

This style of macramé knotting lends itself to so many styles and can be translated to finer gemstones and pearls using thinner thread. You can also bulk it up and knot with hemp or even cotton or leather. It's up to you!

I hope you enjoyed making a Trade Route Necklace. I would love to hear how it went and see your creations. I can always be reached with questions and comments. It's been a pleasure!

xoxo janice

[janiceparsons@yahoo.com](mailto:janiceparsons@yahoo.com)



This was the sample I made for the San Francisco Bead and Design Show May 7, 2001. I used Beadsmith Nylon Size 8 in olive. The beads have a single thread going through them and one wrapping on the outside and knotting a simple overhand knot a few times after each bead. Notice I didn't even macramé a button loop!

More experimentation and mistakes! This is how to learn what you like and don't like. I read books and flipped through magazines and realized I didn't like starting with the loop first....my knotting wasn't good enough! So, I designed my necklace handout with the button as the beginning and saved the macramé loop for last because I figured, if you are like me, your best knots would come at the end!

