



Skill Builder: Memory Wire

Memory Wire is such a fun material to use as the base for your jewelry design. It's really easy to get great results. As long as you understand the limitations of the material (and you have the right tools!), the sky's the limit. There are just a few things you need to know and in just minutes you can create stunning, knockout jewelry.

Think of Memory Wire as the summer camp of jewelry making! In less time than you can snap your fingers, you'll be transported to your happy place where every bead is ready to play...

In addition to this handout, please watch:
Facebook Live Episode 4.17.17,
when Kate and Janice review tricks and tips to designing,
color swatching and closing on Memory Wire.



Memory Wire comes in multiple flavors, shapes, and sizes. For bracelets, it is available as small as 1-3/4" in diameter up to 2-1/2" in round and oval. Necklace size is 3.6" and ring is 3/4". The most popular size for bracelets is 2-1/4 inch, but you may want to experiment to find the size right for you.



You don't need much in the way of tools, but a special extra-strong flush cutter is essential. This wire is carbon steel and it can ruin your nice, jewelry cutters. Investing in Xuron Memory Wire Cutters is recommended. You will also need:
Round Nose Pliers
Chain Nose Pliers
and Zap Glue (optional)



You also need beads! And this is where the real fun begins. You can choose almost anything that has a normal bead hole. Memory Wire will not fit through fine gemstones and because of its stiff bend it doesn't like long beads, like bugles 12mm in length. But outside of that, you can even string 2-hole beads like Tiles or Tilas.
Optional: Eye Pins and Small Charms



Before you begin, it's important to keep in mind that you need a bit of wire overlap so you can factor the wire that will be used up for making the loop. We suggest you cut your wire before you begin. In the photo to the left, the overlap is about 1/2 inch.

Use your Memory Wire Cutters and pencil in a guide for you to follow.



Using your round nose pliers to form a loop, you can go either curve up and over (A) or around and under (B). But choose a direction and stay with it.

It's important the loops you make are really closed. If needed, press firmly with your chain nose pliers to close up any gaps.

Start your bead stringing with a sturdy bead. This is the one spot where you can have friction between the bead and the metal. Select a bead that is really built to take a beating.

We recommend a metal, wood, or even a fire polish glass bead.





You can use those same closing loops to create more interest to your jewelry by adding a charm or dangle to the loop. It's as simple as stacking a few beads on a headpin and attaching to the loop with a simple wire-wrapped loop or a rosary loop.



You can also create a really beautiful cuff bracelet by using 3mm Fire Polish beads as spacers and stacking them between your bracelet ends. Simply stack a bead on your head pin, then one loop of one bracelet. Stack another bead, another bracelet loop, another bead, another loop, and so on. Repeat with the other side of your bracelets. End with a rosary loop and a dangle! Gorgeous! See how Janice demonstrates this on First Fire in our FB Live video.



If making loops to close your Memory Wire creations doesn't suit you, there is another way you can end your piece!

By using a dab of Zap Jewelry Gel glue you can simply glue a bead in place at the very end of your Memory Wire. Kate used this method while making Lily on FB Live.



If you decide to do a continuous wrap, an easy way to string your beads is to tape one end of your Memory Wire down to your board and use the other end as a needle to pick up beads. Hold the "needle" end up and allow gravity to pull your beads down. It's easy and fast!

The patterns are endless.

Use a small spacer, like Little Shadows and 11/0 seed beads with 6mm bugles and you will get a graceful, calm design.



Mix it up, like a jumble sale, and you have a much more eclectic look. Both POV are compelling styles. If you keep all your beads in one color family, the resulting design focuses attention on the shapes, sizes, and finishes.



You can also use two-hole beads, like CzechMate Tiles. Watch FB Live to see Kate and Janice demonstrate the best way of stringing them side-by-side. They add a nice addition to the bead mix. Unfortunately, it would be too challenging to try and do a multi-strand wrap using these. Stick to single wraps with 2-hole beads.



Happy beading!