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facebook live:  
5.10.17  
SoftFlex 101



Hello Everybody!

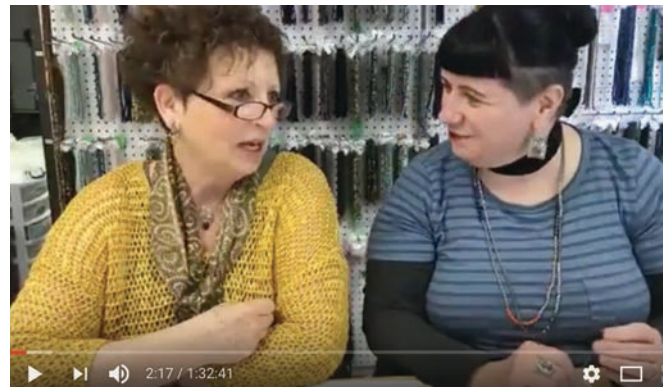
Today on Facebook Live, Kate and Janice went back in time and reminisced about the old days at The Bead Shop, when SoftFlex was the center of our beading universe. Janice made a departure from stringing wire in favor of thread and cord when she was building our online presence, but she is really ready to re-ignite that passion for products that allow you to be creative so easily.



We had a little bit of “housecleaning” as Kate refers to questions and letters from viewers. Since we had so much to pack in, we had time for just one project question from a readers; it was from Donna, who was wondering the best way to transition in a laddering bracelet. Kate recommended [Simple Stitches in Time- Kindness](#) as a good place to see one popular way of doing that with [Pony Express Beads](#). Here is a [link to the Handout](#).



Kate is ready to get going. She begins by asking Janice to share her process for designing. Where does she begin? Before she ever learned to bead, Janice was drawing and painting. That passion has never died and Janice walks us through how she sketches.



As you watch the episode, you’ll see there are other ways to loosen up and be creative even before you pick up a bead to string. Janice shares how she sketches necklines and plays with drawing different permutations of design.



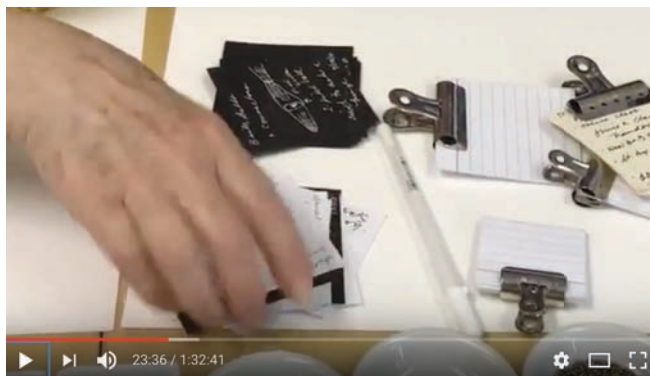


Here is a recommendation for a starter set of 12 colored pencils. You can find others but this one has twelve colors that you can mix and shade almost any color combination from. Just add a tiny bit of water and the pencil shading becomes a water color.



With Grace Noland's help, Janice created downloadable outlines you can print out and use to create your own Design Sketches. All you have to do is doodle and add color!

And why not sign them and date them? Save them as reference for future projects. We hope you enjoy~



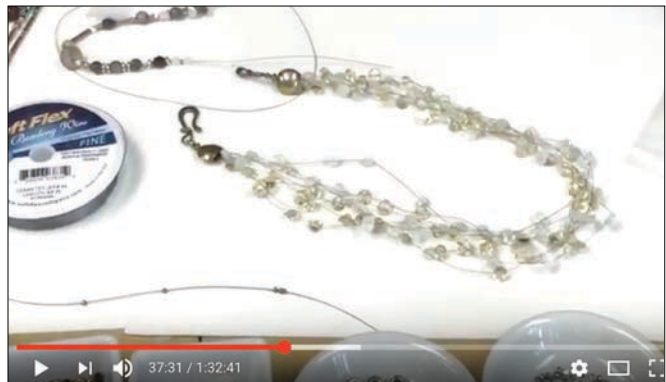
Kate shares with us how she finds inspiration and creates sketches of her ideas, and then how she documents her thoughts by adding the date and notes on the back. Using cut-up file cards, binder clips and pens, she doodles away wherever she is. Her tools and paper included:

- Index Cards
- Bull Dog Binder Clips
- Micron Pens
- Black Artist Tiles, UniBall Signo Pen and Grey Le Pen.

As Kate packs up her pens and notes in her Creativity Bag, she reads us something she wrote: "Learn as much as your brain can hold, as often as your time allows." Nice one, Kate! And also, Kate likes to use these zip mesh bags to ensure she can be creative on the go.



Some of you have written to us wondering where the learning for this old-school float necklace lives. It was done on .010 Beadalon using gemstone top-drilled beads from the old shop. Here's the link to the class handout, Floating Spaces.



So, now let's get started on SoftFlex and Kate's take on how to be successful.

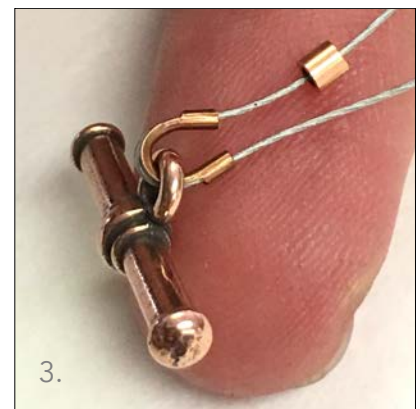
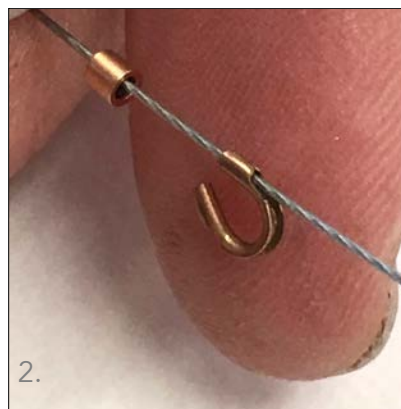
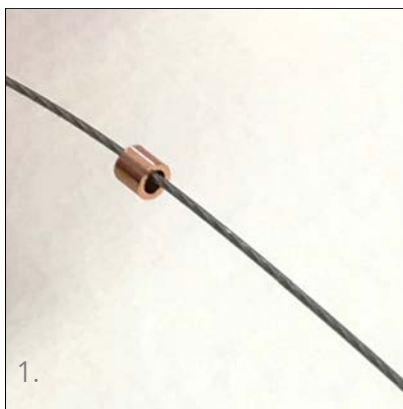


- Kate recommends:
- A. An assorted pack of crimp tubes
  - B. A package of Wire Guardians
  - C. A package of Crimp Covers

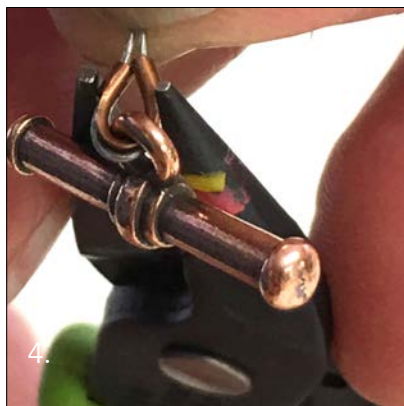


There are lots of questions about SoftFlex and what is the correct size to use when stringing. Even our moderators have differing opinions! The size we carry when this episode aired is the all-round size we recommend the most: .014, which has 21 strands of wire coated with plastic.

Janice feels this is the only size she has ever needed to use (except when repairing a Squash Blossom necklace), but Kate finds having the .019 for heavier-weight jewelry is also good to have in your bead studio. There is also a .024, which is extremely heavy-duty.



1. Begin by stringing on crimp tube. Kate shares with us the importance of not putting a bend in the SoftFlex: If you do, the wire coating can crack and that bend reduces the strength of the SoftFlex.
2. This is why Kate likes to use Wire Guardians. The Wire Guardian ensures that the SoftFlex maintains a nice gentle bend around the clasp so that it reduces any risk of being too tight or damaging the wire.
3. The loop of the clasp is then fed through the Wire Guardian. You can string the SoftFlex through the Wire Guardian before or after looping it onto your clasp, as Kate addresses in the video.



4. Feed the short tail of SoftFlex through the Crimp Tube. Squeeze gently on the Wire Guardian with Chain Nose Pliers or 4-in-1 Crimping Plier to bring the Wire Guardian horse shoe closer together.
5. Slide the Crimp Tube up close to the Wire Guardian, leaving a barely-visible bit of air.

The Xuron 4-in-1 Crimping Plier is a great all-around tool that has an important job to do: crimp! It can handily form and fold-over the crimp tube to create a tight, secure seal wherever you want it. (At Minute 29:44, Kate shares how Janice has marked her pliers with nail polish to easily distinguish which opening to use for different sized crimps. Great idea Janice!)

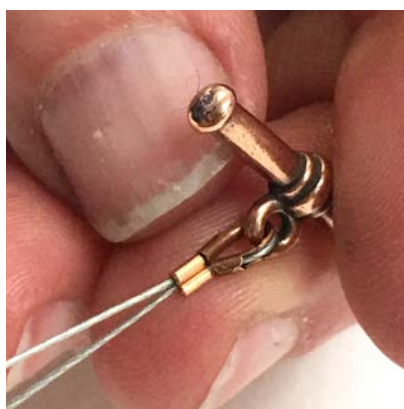
And the tips double as fine chain-nose pliers that can press your crimp tube securely once it's gone through two steps below:



Step One:

Position your Crimp Tube in the jaws of the 4-in-1 in the last groove. Gently close the jaws to form a hammock or taco. Make sure your strands of SoftFlex are separated and not crossing each other. Kate shows in the Episode how she spreads out the SoftFlex away from the center. Minute: 49:22.

Step Two: Reposition your formed Crimp Tube in the plier opening nearer to the tips. Gently squeeze the plier handles to help the crimp tube fold again. Janice says it reminds her of a folded blanket.



Your goal is for it to look like this. Kate shares in the Episode that she designs and strings on one day and measures and crimps on another day just because crimping correctly requires your full attention and uses different muscles in your brain. After doing it several times, it gets easier! You can watch her demo this at Minute 52:40.

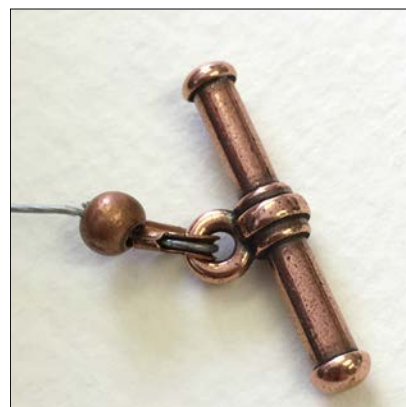


Before moving on to adding your Crimp Covers, gently pull the excess wire away using the tips of your 4-in-1 Crimping Pliers. Then position your Xuron Maxi Shears to accurately cut away the excess SoftFlex by the folded crimp.



Position your Crimp Cover in the jaws of the 4-in-1 Crimping Pliers and coax the folded crimp tube into the opening. Gently press the cover closed. Kate works the Crimp Cover slowly closed moving it from all angles, rather than trying to get a perfect seal on the first press.

When you're all done, it will look like this!





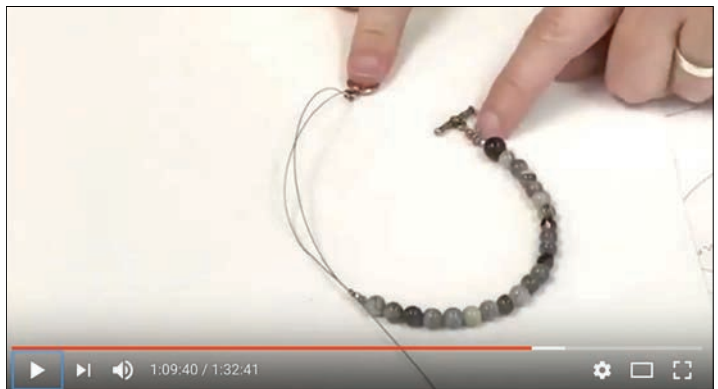
A neat little tip that we hope will save you some heartache....When you're stringing with a toggle clasp, string small beads close to the toggle bar.

"Why you ask?" Because as that bar turns sideways to go through the opening of the toggle loop, if there's a large bead butting up against it, it's usually going to be impossible for it to turn adequately to fit through the loop.

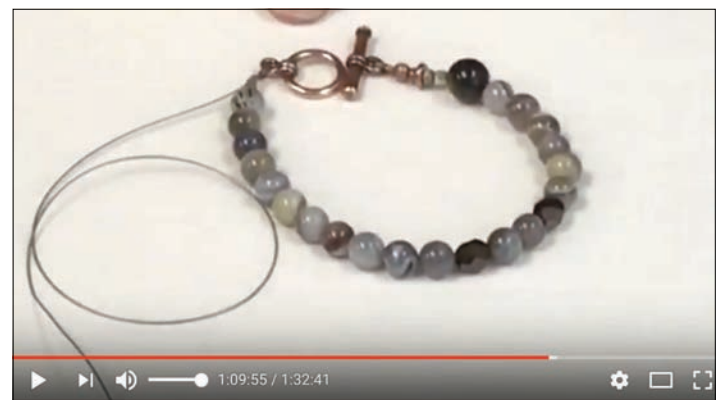


Don't skip the step where Kate shows you how to always close on a circle, rather than a line.

Whether it's a long necklace or just a little, single-strand bracelet, you want your SoftFlex relaxed and ready to breathe and feel more like thread than a stiff wire.



If you can, close the two parts of your clasp, which will force you to crimp on a circle. If not, just create the circle.



If you have ever had a necklace strung on beading wire break by the pendant, be sure to see Janice sketch out a way to solve that by just adding a few small, round beads on both sides.





As we were getting near the end, Janice had the idea of doing a second week to cover all the wonderful things you can do when you design using SoftFlex. We asked ourselves, "how did we ever think we could accomplish this in one broadcast?" And you, the viewers, agreed!

So that's what we're going to do. Next week will be Part Two...the fun and, hopefully, less technical side.

And if you are new to Free Tip Fridays, Kate (and sometimes Janice) go live on Friday mornings at 10:30am. We hope you can join us.

We'd like to send out a very special thank you to everyone at SoftFlex and Xuron. Thank you, SoftFlex for that great giveaway this week. We promise to get in the colors in .019 as soon as we can...but do you promise to try and give us more colors in .014? That would be incredible!

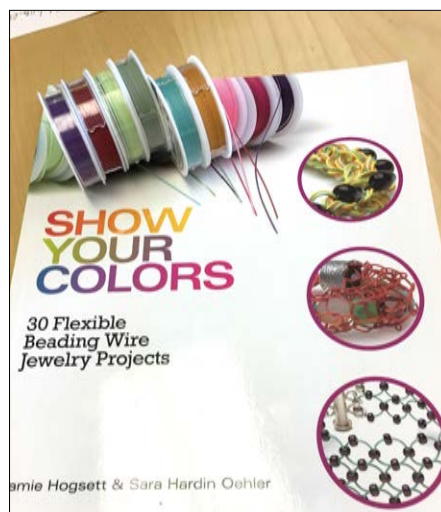
And a special thanks to everyone who wished me a happy birthday. That is all the celebration I need. I love you all!  
~janice (and kate, of course!)



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