



Ode to Victoria

Making an Heirloom Graduated, Multi-strand Necklace *by Janice Parsons*

Queen Victoria reigned over the British Empire from June 1837 until her death in January of 1901. She was a formidable monarch and a powerful adversary. She was also a trend setter for more than a quarter century; whatever Queen Victoria wore and did was copied throughout the British Empire, Europe and America. She popularized the Cameo and high Edwardian lace collars. She created the demand for pearls by the rising middle class and was the first bride to wear white. Today's renewed interest in vintage jewelry began with the first woman to rule much of the world we know today. Little did she realize she would become a fashion icon.

Project Level: Intermediate/Advanced Time: 6-7 hours

We highly recommend reading the handout completely before starting.

About this Necklace

Care and time is required when creating a period design. When jewelry was made in the 19th century, there were no cars, computers or cell phones. Artisans had time to make detailed, well-crafted jewelry and artifacts. To bring that same energy to today's jewelry means slowing down and thinking of each section of your design carefully. Don't rush this. The old saying, "Patience is a virtue", was true for most Victorians. Try to think like one and channel your attention to detail; it will pay off. This project is designed to improve your pattern and color blocking expertise while honing your fitting skills with graduated, multi-strand necklaces. When your project is completed, wear it with the pride of a queen!



This Recipe is based on a necklace with the shortest strand 16", middle strand 17" and longest strand 18" in length. There are enough supplies listed to adjust the design and make a longer necklace.

Ingredients:

- 3 16" strands of freshwater potato pearls size 4mm
- 1 16" strand of freshwater almost round pearls size 5-6mm
- About 8" of freshwater almost round pearls size 8 mm
- 1 Marcasite pendant or antique-type locket or lavalier
- 2 Marcasite beads with extra large holes or 2 3-hole spacer bars
- 2 Marcasite double bead caps or 4 single bead caps
- Handful of 11/0 or 12/0 seed beads, smaller is better
- 1 3-strand Marcasite or antique-looking clasp
- 1 Extra Small jump ring and wire-wrapped tiny gem, tiny charm or your jewelry tag

Studio Essentials:

- 6 Crimp beads
- 6 Crimp covers
- 1 Spool .013 Beadalon® or .014 Softflex® wire
- 2 Chain-nose pliers (or 1 chain-nose and 1 bent-nose)
- Crimping pliers and wire cutters
- Scotch tape and tape measure
- Design board and mirror large enough to view yourself
- Mannequin neck display (optional); Can be purchased at most jewelry display websites
- Antiquing solution (optional)
- Pro Polish Cloths (optional)
- Scratch paper and pencil

Note: Wire Guardians were not used on this necklace; they give a modern look that was not available until very recently.

At the time of publishing 9/2009, most ingredients are available on www.beadshop.com. We also encourage jewelry artists to "bead green" and substitute materials you have on hand.

For technique reviews on "How to Crimp", "How to use a Crimp Bead Cover", "How to Open and Close Jump Rings" go to www.beadshop.com and click on "Free Tips and Techniques"



Background and Inspiration

Designing a necklace of graduating lengths instantly creates the illusion of vintage jewelry. Often the beads themselves were graduated from smallest at the back to largest in front. During the Victorian period, jewelry was intentionally meant to cast the viewer's eye down a woman's body. Necklaces of cascading lengths called attention to a woman's femininity.

Shape is the first consideration in creating a necklace that replicates the elegance of the Victorian age. The curves of an hourglass and the grace of symmetry were companions of that period.

From just under the chin to well below her waist, a woman of wealth would drape pearls and chains of various lengths. She might also add a cameo or a pin. This brooch might be fastened just above her cleavage to suggest flirtation or up high on a lace collar to signify chastity. The fashion was accentuating the feminine from the long, elegant neck to an impossibly tiny waist.

Queen Victoria as a young woman



The shape of this cap mimics the Victorian feminine ideal of the hourglass silhouette. Using two caps end to end will also give a similar look.



A pendant with an intricate pattern almost invites the creation of a period piece. Lace and garden flower themes were very fashionable during the Victorian Period.

Marcasite was a popular stone at the time, as well as bloodstone, jet, amber and of course, pearls.

blush	cream	mint
lilac	light rose	delt blue
dusty pink	eggshell	dove

Color is the second essential key to creating a Victorian look. Women wore shades of rose, ivory, soft green, pale grey, whisper blue and light yellow. Gowns in deep garnet, hunter green and indigo were also very popular.

The mid-Victorian era also ushered in the age of wearing black for mourning. The Queen popularized the black dress when her husband, Prince Albert, died in 1861 of typhoid fever. She became known as the “Widow of Windsor” and never left Windsor Castle again. She was only seen in black until her death in 1901.

American women who lost a loved one in the Civil War would wear black; cover their windows to keep out light; and wear jewelry made of jet, black, enamel or glass. A lock of hair of the deceased might be braided and inserted in the front or back of a brooch or locket.

Civil War brooch from author’s personal collection.
The enamel and gold frame surrounds a center of braided hair under glass.



With lace collars hiding a woman’s “attributes” by day, an off-the-shoulder, low cut neckline was the perfect setting for a lovely necklace in the evening. An exquisite closure added visual delight at the nape of the neck. In Victorian times, a woman’s neck could be as alluring as her décolletage. So select a clasp worthy of a second a look!

Part One: The Pendant

Step 1

Deciding the length of each strand is your first decision. Begin in front of a mirror holding the pendant at the point you want it to rest. Position it to hang in the center on the longest strand. Take your tape measure and calculate the length from the center of the back of your neck (the nape) to the point where the pendant will sit. Write that number down. You have calculated half the total length of your longest strand. Multiply that number by 2. What is the total length? Jot that down. Remember, your clasp length gets included in the total number of inches for each strand. Measure the clasp's length and subtract that from the total inches of your pendant strand. This will leave you with the approximate number of inches you will string for your pendant strand. Your two inner strands will be roughly two and one inch shorter respectively.



Step 2

Cut a 28"-length of stringing wire. String on your pendant and find beads that hug the pendant in place. Your choice shouldn't fight with the pendant for attention. Their job is to fit closely to the pendant and keep it sitting firmly *on* your stringing wire, not sagging down. Try several options before you decide on your favorite. Keep the taped flag on one side and continue stringing up the open end.

Taping off wire off next to beads will help you choose beads that will lift the pendant up and not let it sink.



Step 3

Create a hash mark "template" for pattern measurements. This is done by marking with a pen on paper the lengths of patterns on the first side of each strand. It helps with matching and stringing on the second side(s). These little pen marks can cut way down on the need to re-string because a pattern is "off". Be sure to refer to them often for each strand. You will end up with several hash marks, so keep track of which is which!



Step 4

Keep your most interesting design elements within the first 3-4" of beads on each side of the pendant. This doesn't mean to stop designing after 3" of stringing; just focus the "story" closer to the center. The double bead cap fits nicely at the 3" mark. String 13-14" of beads on one side and tape it securely shut. Don't worry about what you need to do to end the strand; leave that for later. Focus on designing a pleasing single-strand necklace that is special all by itself.



Step 5

Put tape over the first side and begin stringing the other side, which will be a carbon copy. Check as you go make certain that the bead count mirrors the first side *and* the beads selected for the second side synchronize in placement with their partner on the first side. You will

be doing this pattern matching for every strand.

You have an option now of making this pendant strand a single strand project with its own clasp. If so, the inner 2 strands would require a 2 strand clasp later.

Also refer back to your hash marks to detect differences.

Part Two: The Graduated Strands



Step 1

Cut two pieces of stringing wire 26" in length and set one aside. Again, we begin stringing at the necklace center. Work begins on the middle strand first. String on an odd number of beads. These should include your largest beads as they will help weight the center down. Focus on keeping this section simple, so that when your necklace is completed, the pendant won't have a bead pattern too nearby that fights for attention.

Lay this strand inside your pendant strand and see how it looks. Experiment with how much shorter you'd like it to be. Position it where you want it to live with the center bead directly over the pendant. Since you are not adding the last few inches of beads to any strand now, you will be able to adjust lengths later to keep the

patterns where you want them to be and to maintain the correct lengths.

Step 2

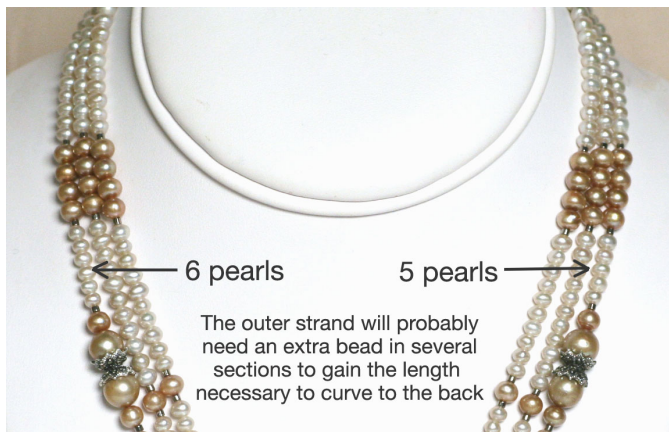
Begin to focus on the two inner strands that need to graduate together. These two strands get built simultaneously, stringing some of each as you go. Pick up your last strand of stringing wire and string on center pearls. This strand also has an uneven number, but less than the first. Don't forget to tape the ends closed! And remember to position the center bead over the middle bead on the longer strand.



Step 3

Having a bead suited to fit the two strands side-by-side as they “turn the corner” is an important requirement to the success in keeping the strands stationary and curving gracefully. Match the size of your beads with the placement of the holes on your spacer bar *or* large hole bead like this one. Pay special attention to how these beads will help the strands curve harmoniously together.

Refer to the pattern on your pendant strand to see if you like them all together.



Step 4

Continue patterning up each side, *always* taping off open ends as you go. As you string your pattern, tape your design to the neck mannequin but also keep checking against yourself in the mirror. Hold up the strands to see if the patterns and color blocking match up from one side to the other. The slightest variation in bead size or placement can throw off the visual symmetry. Beads, especially organic materials like pearls and gems, have variations within the same size. As you string, keep “eye balling” and checking the template so the patterns match each other.

When the patterns line up as intended, the overall look is elegant and you will have interesting sections of color blocking. Of course, it’s never going to be impeccable, but that’s part of the beauty of a hand-crafted piece by an artisan, rather than a manufactured piece.



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Step 5

As you are getting ready to bring your three strands together, observe the placement of the loops on your clasp. Create an ending which doesn't detract from the beauty of your clasp. You want every part of your necklace to be exquisite! This pattern will be repeated on all strands.

Remember to subtract the length of the clasp + a smidgen for the crimp beads from your total length.

Step 6

Complete the shortest strand first. Add the beads needed to string to your finished length. Before you crimp, the clasp should be positioned for use by someone right-handed. Unless you know the recipient is left-handed, the standard placement is with the the right hand tasked to open and close and the left hand passive. (Sorry lefties!) Before you crimp:

- A. Scotch tape closed all ends
- B. Hold it up *one more time* on you in front of the mirror
- C. Adjust the bead count if needed
- D. Check your patterns again
- E. Crimp both ends
- F. Test crimp bead is secure and cut excess wire below the crimp bead

Step 7

Repeat Steps A-D with the middle strand. Before you crimp the ends, add or remove beads as necessary to meet up with the loop on the clasp.

When crimping (Step E), maintain an equal distance on the stringing wire loop going through the clasp equal to that on the shortest strand. Without consistency even with the size of your loops, your pattern and color blocking can go askew. Repeat Step F.

Step 8

Almost there! Put the 2 strand necklace on and stand in front of the mirror. Hold up your pendant strand. How many more beads do you need to add to get the length just where you want it? Go slowly! Not adding enough beads to this last strand can cause the middle strand to overlap; add too many beads and the spacing of strands will be off. When you have added or subtracted what you need, check the pattern from side to side. When you're ready, repeat Steps E and F.

Step 9

If you want or need to, now is the time to antique crimp covers. Using silver black or Liver of Sulfur, darken the covers to match the antique look of your clasp and components. Buff off the excess blackening with a Pro-Polish cloth. Add crimp covers to all three strands. The outer jaw of your crimping pliers or bent chain nose pliers work great for cradling the crimp cover as you wrap it over the crimp bead.

Add your design tag or, if you want, a small charm you might call your "signature." You could also wire-wrap a gem or bead. It's not essential to add anything, but it certainly adds allure to the nape of the neck and speaks volumes of being a custom, museum-quality creation. There are designers that wire-wrap a gem in their birthstone to distinguish their look. You choose.

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Your necklace is complete. It probably used up a good amount of scotch tape and patience. It required your complete attention, but wasn't it worth it? I hope you're pleased. You have created an heirloom, period necklace worthy of a Queen. Thank you, Victoria, for the inspiration!

Would you like to share your finished necklace with others on beadshop.com? Please email a photo with a description and you will be contacted. Also, if you have suggestions on how to improve this handout and others in the future, *please* let me know.

My email is janiceparsons@yahoo.com

Thank you and remember, beading is art!
janice

