

How-To do Wire Looping to Create Beaded Jewelry

by Kristin Mulvihill

Description: This how-to video is meant to teach beginners how to use pliers and wire to do "wire looping." Wire looping is the method we use to create a simple or complicated project. Instead of using those loops that have a little break in them, you can actually use wire to connect parts of a piece of jewelry together, almost tying a knot with the wire loop. That wire loop is much stronger than a store-bought loop attachment. It's not as difficult as you might think to do it, either! It just takes a little practice, and a couple of pliers and some wire. I'll show you how it's done and why it looks nice and how you can use the method in many different projects. I'll also show you the technique using a pipe cleaner! That way, you can see exactly what is being done and then apply what you learn to simple projects, like pendants or earrings, or lengthy projects, like necklaces or bracelets. Enjoy!

Supplies:

Wire (26 gauge or 24 gauge, depending on quality, and get used to working with the thicker wire)

Notes on wire: There are lots of choices. The people who work at bead and jewelry supply stores have a lot of experience and, personally, are my favorite source for advice on selecting wire. For example, you might want to select some inexpensive wire when you start out, just to get used to the process. As you get used to wire looping, then you can upgrade to the more expensive stuff. I highly recommend working with 26 gauge or 24 gauge wire when you start out. The heavier wire, though a little harder to bend, gives you some flexibility to learn how to hold the pliers and bend the wire as you feel the strength of the heavier wire. And because it's heavier, it's easier to bend it slowly and correctly. It also helps you feel which muscles in your hands and wrists are being used.)

Flat nosed pliers/Bottle nosed pliers

Notes on pliers: You will see people working without pliers, but it can cause a lot of injuries to the fingers and muscles in the hands from repetitive use. Anyone might be strong enough to do it once! But if you want to make jewelry using the wire loop technique, please learn to do it properly and ergonomically when you start out! Avoid those injuries!

Wire cutters

Notes on wire cutters: Wire cutters are designed to cut wire. Scissors and nail clippers are not. You can cheat, if you're trying this just once, and use scissors or nail clippers. But you'll probably be damaging what you use, and it might even effect how the wire looks after it's cut.

Beads!

Notes on beads: Your choice for beads or any kind of material that you are going to use for a wire looping project is entirely up to you. When I took my first class on wire looping, they gave us inexpensive round beads, but they looked wonderful once I finished a bracelet. And the repetition of doing the same method of wire looping in the class to complete the bracelet gave my brain a chance to let the methods sink in.

Project recommendations: If you're not able to take a class or you want to try this out just once, for the first time, I recommend working on a simple project like earrings or a pendant, which only require wire looping once or twice. But you can buy enough wire to practice it several times (and learn from your mistakes) before choosing the final loop for the final project. A simple project gives you a chance to learn the moves, but you aren't committed to doing all that wire looping 40 times to make an entire necklace or bracelet! Also, the pendant or earring project gives you a chance to decide if you want to continue doing this when working with jewelry. I know many people who try it and decide to stick to using other methods which can be just as much fun. One final note! Sometimes, a beading or jewelry supply store might even let you borrow the tools while you are in the store! (They'll probably still ask you to buy the wire, but they often would rather you use their practice tools instead of buying brand new ones only to return them later!)

Here's what I teach in the video:

1. For beginners, cut the wire at about two inches to give yourself plenty of room for practice!
2. Use the flat nosed pliers to hold the wire in place while using the round nosed pliers to bend the top of the wire at a 90-degree angle.
3. Switch hands so that you are now holding the round nosed pliers with your main hand, and use the flat nosed pliers to wrap a loop around the round nosed pliers above the right angle. The result will look like your wire has a "head" that is the loop you just made, where the end of the wire looks like a scarf that is now at a 90-degree angle from the base of the loop.
4. Use the round nosed pliers to hold the loop on its side (see video).
5. Use the flat nosed pliers to wrap the wire carefully around the base of the loop. (It's as if you are taking that "scarf" and wrapping it around the neck below the loop.
6. After you wrap the wire around the neck of the loop at least two or three times, you can cut the remaining wire off.
7. Use the flat nosed pliers to pinch the piece of wire where you just cut it so that it isn't sticking out too far (so that it won't snag on clothing when someone wears the final project!).

After doing that for one side, it's up to you what beads you place before looping the other end of the project. You'll use the same process to wire loop the other end, but between steps "3" and "4" above, you'll need to do the following if you are connecting this segment to other segments in a necklace or fixing.

Between steps "3" and "4" above, to connect the piece to another piece that is looped already or a fixing,

1. Hold one side of the loop with the round nosed pliers,
2. While holding the other side of the loop with flat nosed pliers, carefully and slowly bend the loop up to create an opening between where the scarf usually is in contact with the end of the loop,
3. Slide a fixing or another looped segment through the "scarf" part of the wire until it is hanging inside the loop,
4. Use the pliers to close the loop again, so that it's just like it was before, except now there is something inside the loop!

The professionals sometimes describe this process as if you are "opening a little door" with the loop and making it possible to slide things inside the loop before closing the loop again and proceeding to wrap the wire around the base of the loop. **That's how it's done, as well as I can explain it, and hopefully you'll see how it's done a few times in this video!**