



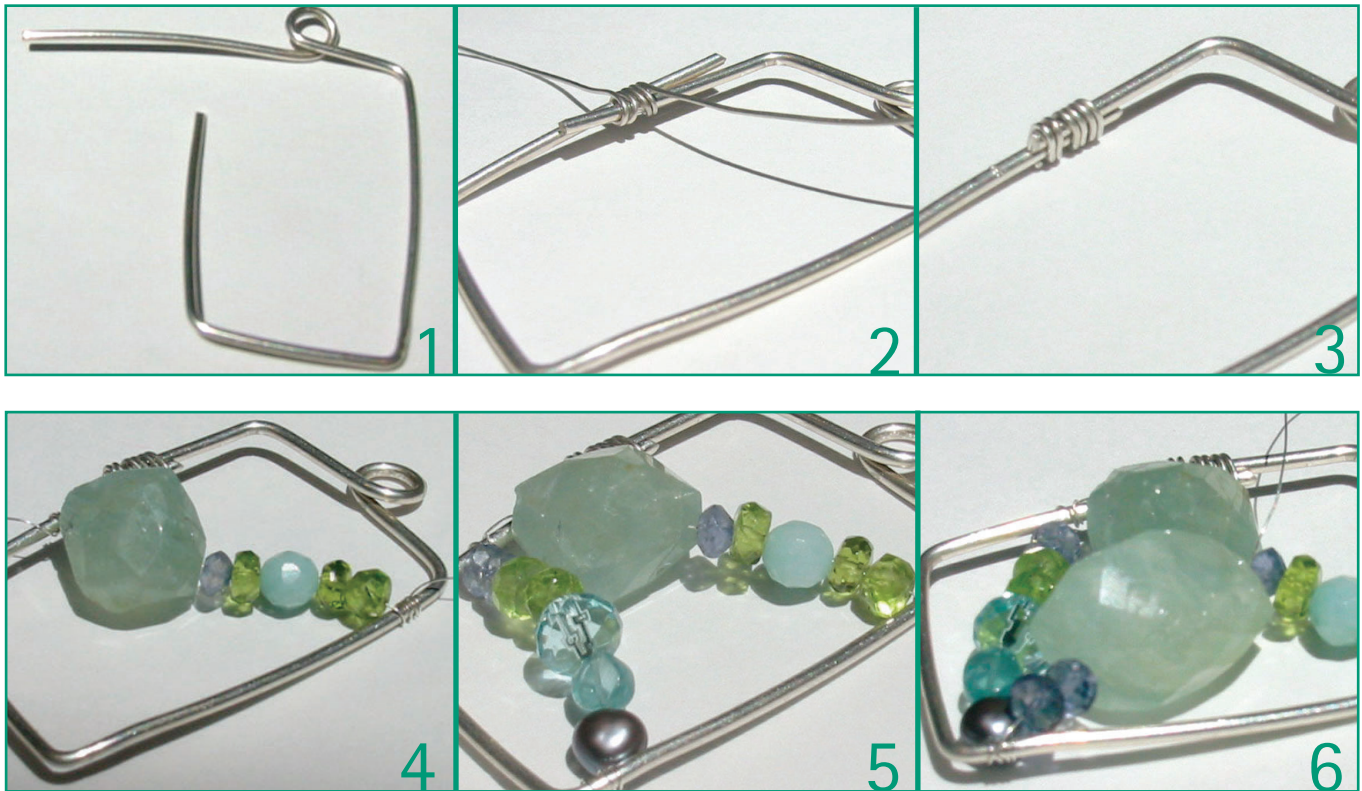
Anything goes in freeform weaving, just be sure 28-gauge wire will fit through all your bead choices
by Kate Ferrant Richbourg

Cage a handful of beads in wire

Beads proliferate. Leftovers, irresistible single-purchase strands, projects that lost their appeal before they made it all the way to assembly—whatever their stories, loose beads multiply. Scooping up an assortment initiates designer's playtime. In the ten years I've worked with wire, freeform weaving has become a favorite method for corralling loose beads. These pendants can be simply strung on leather cord, attached to a chain, or built into a dazzling necklace. Start by selecting centerpiece nuggets—any larger faceted type will do—then add shapes and sizes to enhance your choice. The only drawback to this approach is the inevitable need to go buy more beads to supplement what you already have, thus triggering more leftovers, and hence starting a neverending cycle. But what jewelry designer would have a problem with that?

Make the armature

Outline a shape you like on a piece of white paper with a heavy black marker. This drawing will become your template for the armature. The sample is a rectangle measuring $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 2" (1.3cm x 5cm). A loop at the top allows the pendant to be suspended from a jump ring or bail. Use needle-nose pliers to bend the 16-gauge wire to fit the shape of your pattern template. [1] Overlap the ends of the wire in the center of one of the sides or at the bottom of the armature. Wrap the open ends of the armature together with 22-gauge wire to close the shape. [2] Tightly squeeze the ends of the wire wrap around the armature to secure it. [3]



Process photos by Kate Ferrant Richbourg

Wire beads to armature

Cut 12" (31cm) of 28-gauge wire. Bend the wire in half over the side of the armature; make a few wraps with one end to secure the wire to the armature. Slide a nugget and smaller beads on the wire until they reach the opposite top corner. Wrap the wire around the armature a few times, creating a "spoke" across the armature. [4] Do not cut the wire. Add beads to the other wire end until the beads reach the opposite lower corner, and secure as above, creating a second spoke. [5] Add a third spoke with one of the wires in the same manner. [6] These three spokes will serve as the base.

Fill every space

Continue weaving new beads onto the armature using both wire ends. Use single or multiple beads as needed. If your pendant does not feel solid enough, weave more wire in and around the beads to expand the base. Fill in until no open

materials

- 12" (31cm) 16-gauge sterling wire
- 5" (13cm) 22-gauge sterling wire
- 5-10 ft. (1.5-3m) 28-gauge sterling wire
- 1 or 2 semiprecious nugget beads
- assortment of semiprecious beads (a mix of 2-3 16"/41cm strands 2-6mm in size)
- needle-nose pliers
- wire cutters
- nylon jaw wire straightening pliers
- ruler or tape measure

spaces remain. Add beads around the side of the armature to provide texture and interest.

Jewelry designer and instructor Kate Ferrant Richbourg owns Beadissimo, a full service bead store, with her partner, Anne Mitchell. Materials used in this project can be ordered through their store; call 415-282-BEAD (2323).

If you run out of wire, secure the end inside a bundle of beads, making three wraps in the same place before you cut away the extra wire. Wrap a fresh piece of wire several times to secure it inside a bundle of beads, then continue to weave.