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EARRINGS

# Basic to bold

*One simple technique makes a variety of earrings*

If you can turn a loop, you can create an entire wardrobe of earrings in styles ranging from plain and simple to wildly exuberant. Few materials are required, so even the most deluxe earrings are relatively inexpensive to create. Experiment with the three examples offered here and see how far you can go in creating your own variations. When designing earrings, think in terms of the finished weight. You'll want to keep the combination of beads you choose light enough to be comfortable.

The simplest style here—our “basic”—consists of a single bead hung from a finding. The type of bead you choose will determine the look. Go with funky glass, bone, or plastic for a casual daytime look. Choose lustrous pearls, semi-precious stone beads, or sparkling crystals to go from day into evening.

To add movement, enhance the basic style with a dangle below the single bead. For a totally different approach, create a cluster of dangles to hang from the earring finding.

## stepbystep

The basic earring consists of a bead strung on a head pin. Make a loop above the bead and hang it on the earring finding. For the basic earring plus dangle, you string the top bead on a leftover piece of head pin or eye pin and make a loop both above and below the bead. Then you string a bead or group of beads on a head pin, make a loop on top, and hang it from the top bead. Hang the assembly on an earring

## materials

### basic

- 2 Beads
- 2 Flat spacer beads—optional (use with beads that have large holes)
- 2 Head pins, plain or decorated
- Pair of earring findings with a loop

### simple dangle

- 2 Medium to large beads
- 2 Head pins, 2 in. (5cm) or longer
- 2 Eye pins—optional (use with short head pins)

- 2-4 Small beads, different shapes and sizes
- Pair of earring findings with a loop

### cluster earrings

- 6 in. (15cm) 16- or 18-gauge Sterling silver wire
- 24 or more 2-4mm Beads, pearls, or stone chips
- 24 or more Short silver head pins
- Pair of hoop earring findings

**Tools:** wire cutter, round- and chainnose pliers; steel block and small smooth-faced hammer for cluster earrings

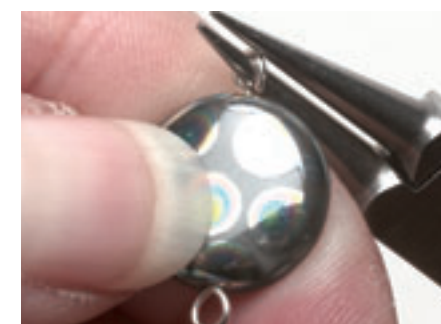
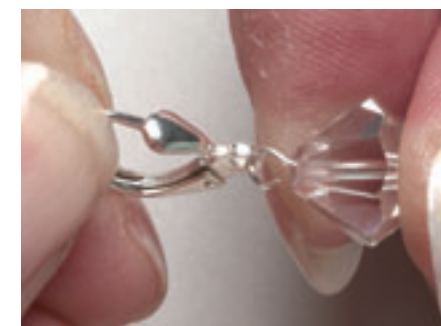
finding. The cluster earring can be a bead with a large loop below and many small beads on head pins attached to it, or in this case, a stiff silver wire with a small top loop and a large bottom loop to hold many single dangle beads.

### basic earring

- 1 String your bead on a head pin and cut off all but  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (1cm) of wire above the bead (**photo a**).
- 2 Turn a loop in the wire above the bead (see “Basics,” p. 136).
- 3 Open the loop sideways (see “Basics”) and hook it onto the loop on the earring finding (**photo b**). Then close the loop sideways.

### dangle earring

- 1 Start the dangle by stringing a bead or group of beads on a head pin. I find that with a group of beads, the earring looks best if the largest bead is on the bottom or in the middle. Cut off all but  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. of wire and turn a loop against the top bead.
- 2 If the leftover piece of wire is the length of the main bead plus  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (2cm), you can use it for the top bead. Turn a loop on one end of the wire and string the top bead. Then turn a loop



above the bead (**photo c**). Alternatively, start with an eye pin and turn a loop above the bead. Orient the loops in the same plane by grasping each with a pair of pliers and twisting until the pliers jaws are parallel (**photo d**).

- 3 Open the loop on the dangle group and attach it to the bottom loop of the main bead (**photo e**). Then close the loop.
- 4 Open the loop at the top of the main bead or on the earring finding and link the bead to the finding.

### cluster earring

- 1 Cut the heavy silver wire into two 2-3-in. (5-7.6cm) pieces and make a loop at each end.
- 2 Hammer the shaft of wire between the loops, but don't hammer the loops (**photo f**). Hammering adds hardness, texture, and visual interest.
- 3 String one small bead per head pin and make a loop above each. Make 12-

18 dangles for each earring. Because I chose pearls with very small holes, I had to use ultra-thin head pins. (These decorated, single-ball pins are from Bali.) Since the head pins I used were so thin, I opted for wrapped loops for additional security (see “Basics”).

- 4 If you have plain loops on your dangles, open them and attach each to the bottom loop on the wire shaft. Attach wrapped loops as you make them. When the earring has the fullness you desire, stop adding dangles.
- 5 Open the loop on the earring finding and attach the top loop on the wire shaft or slip the top loop onto a hoop finding. ●—A.K.

# Making odd ends meet

*Unite a bead miscellany in a cone-capped necklace*

by Adele Clausen



A beautiful, random-patterned necklace is not the result of haphazard stringing. In fact, successful random designs take special planning. To achieve balance within a random pattern, you must consider the color, size, weight, shape, and texture of the beads. Here are some design guidelines.

## choosing your beads

Start with color. Lay out several color combinations from your bead stash and go with what catches your eye first. If your bead stock is too limited to offer inspiration, visit a bead store or even a fabric store to seek appealing color combinations. You can also peruse art books and magazines. Wonderful color palettes may be found everywhere if you train your eye to see them.

I love the mysterious quality a piece of jewelry acquires from a mix of ethnic beads and charms. For the necklace shown here, I selected the spotted black beads as a starting point. I chose black seed beads to set off the bright red, blue, and green accent beads I chose to coordinate with the dots on the focal beads.

I think seed beads are the best way to separate the larger beads, providing space for each one to make a statement. I couldn't resist the faux Phoenician head bead, the many-colored eye beads, the brass hand and face charms, and a few Chinese clear-glass beads with images painted inside.

When selecting the rest of the beads, I looked for different sizes, shapes, and textures within my color palette. If all the beads are shiny or matte, they lose differentiation and visual impact. In other projects, my bead choices have run the gamut from semi-precious stones and crystals to wood, metal, and artisan glass beads. I believe variety makes for a more interesting necklace—

as long as you adhere to a color palette and follow the few design provisions outlined below.

## arranging your beads

After you decide on the length of your necklace (see step 1 below), lay out your accent beads on a necklace design board or other work surface. Start with the largest beads and space them apart on all three strands as a group and on each individual strand.

Heavy beads, such as the Phoenician head bead, need to be balanced by another heavy bead or a combination of beads on the opposite side of the strand. Also, position the larger beads toward the middle of a strand so they take center stage in your design and the weight is centered.

Because the first 3-4 in. (7.5-10cm) on each side will be around the back of your neck, use smaller beads than in the strands' centers. As you position the rest of the accent beads, vary color and texture as well as size.

Group two or three beads into small clusters and cap large-hole beads with smaller ones so the seed beads don't slide into the hole. There is no need to position the seed beads on your design board, but you might scatter small silver spacer beads throughout the strands to add another unifying element.

## stepbystep

- 1 Determine your necklace's length. The short strand on my necklace is 20 in. (51cm) long. The middle and long strands are 23 and 26 in. (58 and 66cm), respectively.
- 2 Plan your design as described above.
- 3 Cut 1½ yd. (1.4m) of cord and thread a needle to the center, doubling the cord. String a stop bead 6 in. (15cm)

from the tail and sew back through it in the same direction to secure it.

4 String 1½-2 in. (3.8-5cm) of seed beads before stringing the first small accent bead on the short strand. Vary the number of seed beads between each accent bead or group of accent beads, gauging the strand length as you string. When you have strung the last accent bead, you should need another 1½-2 in. of seed beads to reach 20 in. String another stop bead and go through it again in the same direction.

5 Repeat steps 3-4 for the middle and long strands, starting with 5 ft. and 2 yd. (1.5 and 1.8m) of bead cord, respectively.

6 Remove the stop beads on one end of all three strands. Tie the tails together in an overhand knot (see "Basics," p. 136). Remove the stop beads from the other end of the strands. Push the beads up so they are flush against the knot at the other end and there is no slack. Tie the tails into another overhand knot, using an awl to tighten the knot against the beads (see "Basics").

7 Cut 2 in. (5cm) of wire, positioning the wire cutters with the flat side toward the 2-in. piece of wire.

8 Make an eye or loop with the last ¾ in. (1cm) of wire (see "Basics").

9 Thread half the tail ends through the eye in each direction (photo a). Tie them to the eye with a couple of surgeon's knots (see "Basics") and glue the knot. When the glue is dry, trim the tails to ¼ in. (6mm).

10 Pull the wire end through the cone from the wide end (photo b). Cut off all but ¾ in. of the wire (photo c). Make another eye or loop as in step 8.

11 Repeat steps 7-10 on the necklace's other side.

12 Attach a split ring to each loop and connect them with a large S-hook (photo d). ●



## materials

- 75-100 Assorted accent beads and charms
- 1 Hank 11<sup>g</sup> seed beads
- 4-6 in. (10-15cm) 18-Gauge wire, half-hard
- 2 Cones
- 1 S-hook clasp
- 2 5mm Split rings
- Nylon beading cord, #1 or 3
- Beading needles, #10 or twisted wire needles
- G-S Hypo cement
- Tools: chain- and roundnose pliers, diagonal wire cutters