



## Polygon Stitch 101 with Carol Cypher



# CAROL'S TOP 5 TIPS

## 1 Mise en place

*Mise en place:* This is French for “putting in place.” During my career as a chef, this concept was a matter of daily routine. Everything necessary for the creation of the day’s menu was at hand...vegetables chopped, meat butchered, fish filleted, pans at the ready, knives sharp and at hand. No risk of curdling the eggs for hollandaise while retrieving the butter from the cooler. When beading:

- The necessary beads are placed on the beading mat
- The appropriate needle is nearly centered on an appropriate thread
- Scissors and other tools are at hand
- Lighting and/or magnification are set up



## 2 Armature safety

You will be beading around an armature in most cases. This is done traditionally with polygon and African helix stitches. It coincidentally makes the first few rounds easier to do because you have something to hold onto. Plus, it has an effect on the tension or hand of the finished beadwork. In many cases half of a barbecue skewer serves our purpose. Knitting needles, straws, stirrers and other similar rods may also be used. A word of caution: cozy up to your bead table. At a workshop once, a beader was pushed back from the table and the skewer slid out of her beadwork. By involuntary impulse, her knees slammed shut, in an attempt to prevent the item from falling to the floor. She impaled her thigh with the skewer. Even though nothing would have happened had the bamboo skewer hit the floor, it is an automatic reaction. So, stay close to your table!

## 3 Masking tape

Have masking tape at hand when beading. It has at least three good uses. \* In place of a stop bead, I ask beaders to fold a small piece of masking tape over the thread, sticky sides together, to mark the tail. Sometimes beaders will work a stop bead into the work but I have yet to see someone wearing beadwork with tape in it. \* Place a small piece of tape at each pile of beads on the bead mat if you need to label the various beads being used. \* When working tubular beadwork around an armature, once the initial ring of beads is on the armature, hold the tail parallel along the armature, below the beads, and wrap the tape around barbershop pole style. Securing the beadwork this way makes the first few rounds easier because you are not chasing the beads around.



## 4 Thread choice

To determine the best thread for your project, consider the beads you are using. \* If they are transparent, decide whether to use white or to allow the thread color to influence the appearance of the bead. \* Were the beads fire-polished and therefore have smooth holes, or are the holes sharp such as crystals and bugle beads? \* Are the beads smooth or do they have an abrasive, perhaps gritty finish? \* How many passes through the beads are necessary, and can this bead accommodate this size thread that number of times? \* How visible will the thread path be in this project?

## 5 Quality

Make your beadwork heirloom quality. Consider your beadwork enduring through seven generations... that is, use the most durable "ingredients" available and best practices for assembly. Some beads have finishes or linings that fade, peel or wear off. Others may be made to be durable but may be adversely affected by exposure to perfumes, alcohol and chlorine bleach. Begin and end threads securely. If using crimp beads, use a specially designed plier to secure the crimp bead.