

— THE BASICS —



— COURSE —

Polygon Stitch 101



with Carol Cypher

African Polygon

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This tubular stitch produces a rope with flat sides. Each stitch places a segment of beads, and the number of segments per round determines the number of sides, or faces. There are several ways to alter the look of this rope, including varying the number of beads per segment, and changing the position within each segment where you make the thread-to-thread attachment. The resulting beadwork can range from lacy to dense. The projects offered here produce dense beadwork, my personal preference. Try them once again, altering the number, type and combination of beads used. Experiment boldly!



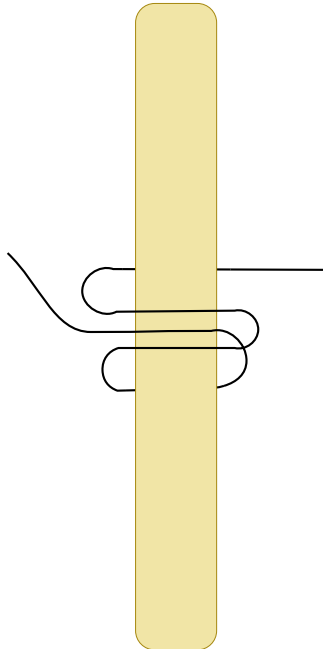


Figure 1

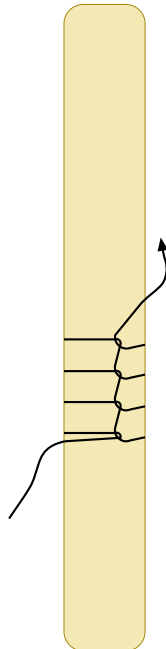


Figure 2

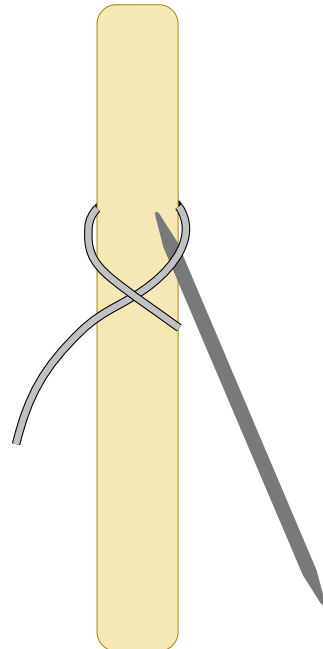


Figure 3

Like brick stitch, each stitch involves both passing under the thread *and* passing through a bead. Also like brick stitch, passing under the thread between two beads of the previous segment on this face anchors the new segment. But unlike brick stitch, where the bead passed back through is the one just placed, African polygon stitch requires passing through a bead in the next face. While in brick stitch passing through a bead is part of the anchoring process, in African polygon stitch passing through a bead positions the needle to pick up and add a segment on another face.

A stick is not just helpful for this tubular weave, it is imperative. Traditionally, the first step is to wrap the stick before even starting to weave.

Traditional Start

After the *mise en place*, fold the last 10" (25.5 cm) of the tail-end of the thread. Lay the stick on it and pass back through the loop it produces (Figure 1). Wrap with 3 more blanket stitches (Figure 2).

Cast-on Method

When first learning to knit, I was taught the simplest cast-on, wrapping the yarn around the index finger and slipping the loop produced it onto the knitting needle (Figure 3). This is a quick and easy method of producing the traditional start for African polygon stitch, too.

Basic Stitch

1 *Dress the stick as noted above, using traditional start.*

2 *Place the foundation round.* Pick up 3A (segment A). Pass under the top thread-wrap, but don't pull the beads through. Pick up 3B (segment B). Pass under the top thread-wrap, but don't pull the beads through. Pick up 3C (segment C). Pass under the top thread-wrap, but don't pull the beads through (Figure 4).

The segments should reach around the stick and may loop slightly.

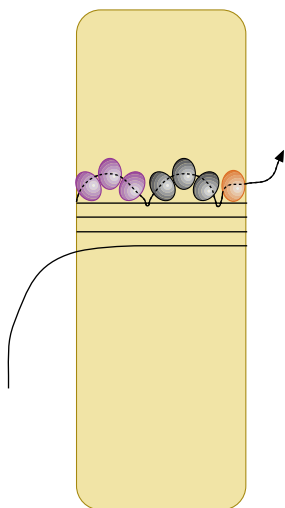


Figure 4

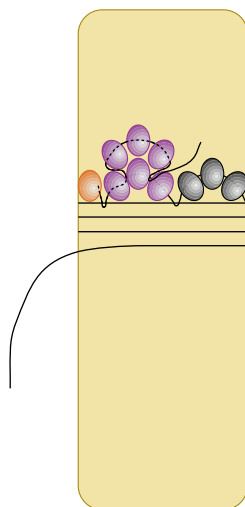


Figure 5

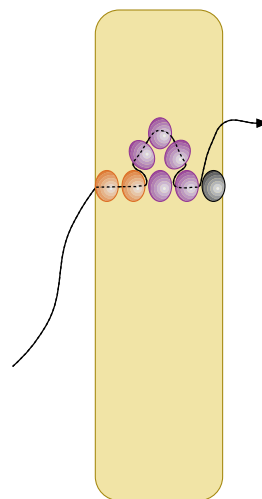


Figure 6

3 Weave for the desired length. Pass through the first A of segment A. Pick up a new segment A. Pass under the thread between the second and third A beads of the previous round. Push the new segment up while pulling the thread taut (Figure 5).

Repeat for segments B and C around.

To remove the work from the stick, undo the wraps from around the stick and slide the stick out. Secure the tail with more knots before cutting.

Wrap-less Start

When students ask, "What's with the thread-wrapping?" I can only reply, "That's the way it's done." It also results in thread showing. With all due respect to tradition, but in the spirit of innovation, I offer this alternate start that requires no wraps:

1 Establish the diameter of the rope. Pick up 2C, 2A, 2B. Tie a knot to make a ring and pass through the 2C. Put on a stick (skewer, knitting needle, etc).

2 Build the foundation round. Pick up 3A (segment A), skip a bead, pass under the thread, pass through a bead (Figure 6).

Repeat for segments B and C.

Follow Step 3 as for the traditional start above.

(The generic recipe in Step 1 is the number of beads per segment you'll use in Step 2, minus the number of beads on the end of the new segment.)

Triangular Rope Bracelet



Seen from the end, this rope is triangular. The sides are flat, not curved as in other ropes. The first bead of a segment or stitch is diagonal, the second or middle one is horizontal, and the third or last is vertical. The effect baffles the uninitiated and intrigues the seasoned beader. A fun, fast and rewarding stitch, this places nine beads per round in just three stitches.

Ingredients

16 g each in three colors of size 8° seed beads
(A, B, C)
3 charms (3 brass hands in sample)
Fireline 10# or size D beading thread to match
the dominant color of the beads

Tools

Size 10 beading needle
Knitting needle, skewer, or dowel

Setup

Mise en place



1 Prepare to weave the rope. Use Carol's Wrap-less start (page 4).

2 Place the first round. Follow Step 2 of the basic stitch (if you started with the traditional start) or Step 2 of the wrap-less start (if you started with the wrap-less start).

3 Follow Step 3 of the basic stitch (on page 4). Continue to add beads until the bracelet reaches the desired length (the measurement of your wrist minus the length of the clasp).

4 Finish the bracelet. Place segments A, B and C. Pass down through the column of C beads, making half hitches. Continue weaving the thread through the column of C beads (Figure 1).

5 Attach charms for the closure. Weave back up to the last bead placed. Pick up 3A and a charm. Pass back through the A beads. Repeat 3 times, placing 3 charms on short fringes off the tip of the bracelet. Weave in the thread, making half hitches.

6 Weave a loop for the closure. Slide the tape from the tail. Thread the tail on the needle. Pick up 15A (enough to just fit over the largest single charm). Pass through the first bead of the bracelet again. Weave in the tail, making half hitches.

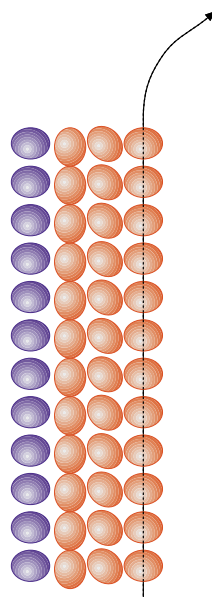


Figure 1

Try this . . .

Notice that one bead of a side carries over to show on the adjacent side, so no side is a solitary color. Explore other versions using a greater number of beads per segment, or using several colors or bead styles within a segment. For longer segments, rather than weaving into the first bead of each segment, weave through the second or third, and pass under the thread before the third-to-last or second-to-last beads, rather than before the last.