

CRAFTING HANDMADE BEADS



Mothers and grandmothers of the Ndebele ethnic group in South Africa make beaded garments and figures by hand for the girls and young women in their families. The bold and intricate patterns they create are Ndebele symbols, lovingly made to showcase a girl's stage in life.

One such stage is entering womanhood. Girls 10 to 12 years old participate in a ceremony, like a graduation, celebrating this event, and are given a handmade beaded figure, a beaded back skirt—worn throughout their lives—and wide, beaded belts to wear around their wrists, necks, and waists.

Today's project teaches you how to roll your own beads to make a bracelet to give to a family member. You can choose colors that are special to you and your family.

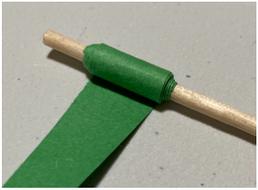
Above from left to right: *Figure (Umndwana)*. mid-late 20th century. Ndebele region, South Africa. Glass beads, grass, cloth, cotton thread, plastic. 10 7/16 x 7 7/8 in. (26.5 x 20 cm.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Natalie Fitz-Gerald, New York, BMA 1991.348.

Unmarried Woman's Apron (Ipepetu). 1950-1960. Ndebele region, South Africa. Canvas, glass beads (white, blue and royal blue, black, pink, clear, translucent and solid green), cotton thread. 13 1/8 x 16 1/8 in. (33.4 x 41 cm.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Caroline Popper, Baltimore, BMA 1991.359.

MATERIALS

colorful paper, toothpicks, glue (that dries clear), scissors, heavy string or cord

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Cut the string to about 10 inches.
- 2 Cut sheets of paper into long triangular strips. Each strip will make one bead.
- 3 Starting at the widest part of the triangular paper strip, tightly roll the paper using the toothpick.
- 4 Dip the last inch of the paper into glue.
- 5 Continue to roll the paper, spreading the glue across the roll with your fingers. After the roll is covered in glue, carefully remove the toothpick. Now you have a bead!

Tip: Make sure the paper is tight as you roll it around the toothpick. Add more glue to help seal the end of the bead.

- 6 Repeat steps 2 to 5 until you have enough beads to make your bracelet.
- 7 Lace the string through the hole in each bead. Add as many beads as you like, but make sure you leave some extra string at the ends.
- 8 Loosely tie the ends of the string together to finish your bracelet.

Now you are ready to share your bracelet or make more!



We'd love to see your work! Snap a picture of your final creation and share with us on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter using the hashtag #ArtBMAFromHome for a chance to be featured.

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