



How To:

Bead Making



Teacher's Notes

Background

Glass was made by heating sand and wood ash to a very high temperature. Traces of metals like iron in the ashes would make the glass change colour as it was heated.

During the Viking period most of this manufacturing was carried out on mainland Europe, and Byzantium (Constantinople) further east had long been famous for its glass. Craftsmen in the British Isles would often start from glass cubes or chunks originally made by the Romans for use in mosaics.

To make the beads, they would heat the glass up and draw it into a long strand. This strand of glass could then be combined with other strands or blobs to make interesting and complicated patterns.

The patterned strand of glass was then wound around a wire and the individual beads cut from the resulting long tube.

Other materials used to make beads included: Bone Amber, Carnelian, Amethyst, Rock Crystal, Stone and Precious Metals.

Materials:

Air-drying clay (in at least two colours) - at least 20 g per person.

Thick thread or string.

These instructions will work for oven hardened polymer modelling materials like "Fimo" as well. Allow about 10 g of material per person and remember that you need an oven to harden them!

Tools

A mat to work on.

Dowel, wooden skewer, or wire of between 3 mm and 5 mm diameter.

A plastic knife or clay modelling cutting tool.

Damp paper towels and a sink for washing hands will also be useful.

Hints and Tips

Air-drying clay needs to be kept moist. Encourage the pupils to try making one type of bead at a time using two or three sausages about 10 cm long each. If their sausages are too thin, they will dry out too quickly and become hard to use.

Roll clay between your palms to make thick sausages, then between your fingers and a board to make thin ones.

If a small amount of clay dries out it will become ridged and crack up. Place it in a folded damp paper towel for a few minutes to re-moisten it.

Encourage the pupils to wash and dry their hands between using different colours of clay to avoid unwanted mixing of colours.



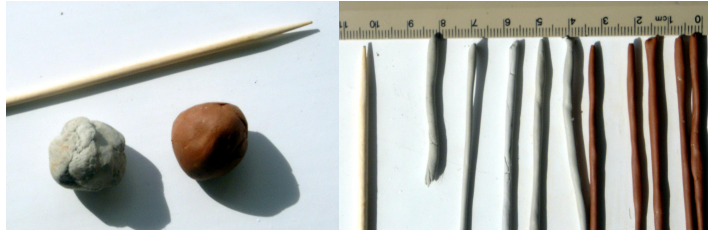


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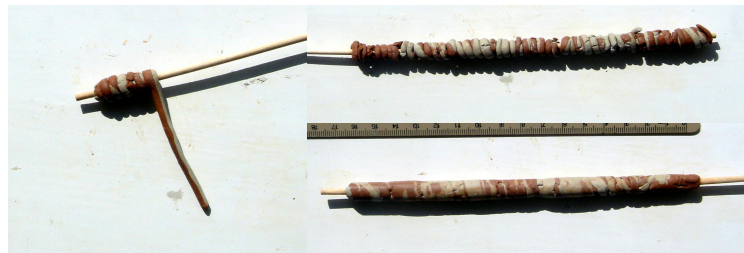
This method is very similar to how people make beads using glass which has been softened by heating it. You have to heat the glass until it is about ten times as hot as boiling water to use it though! That is too hot to use in a classroom and so today we will use clay instead.



- Choose two different coloured lumps of clay.
- Roll them out into long thin sausages between your hands. Try to make them the same thickness all the way along.

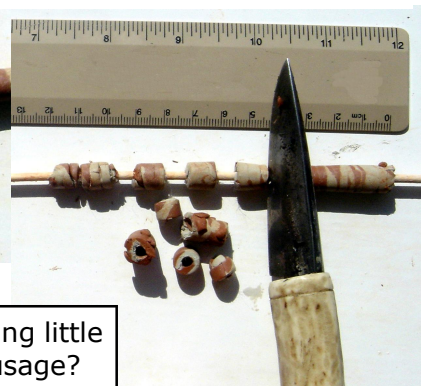


- Combine the colours to make a new sausage by: twisting sausages together; or laying them beside each other; or sticking little balls of one colour to the other.



- Roll the new sausage again to stick everything together.
- Wrap the new sausage you have made round the wire or skewer. This will make the hole in the middle of the bead.
- Gently roll the sausage again to join the coil up and make a sausage.

- Cut the sausage into bead lengths; you can make them long or short. Viking beads were usually between 4mm and 10mm long.



- Leave the beads to dry overnight.

Why not try sticking little balls onto the sausage?

