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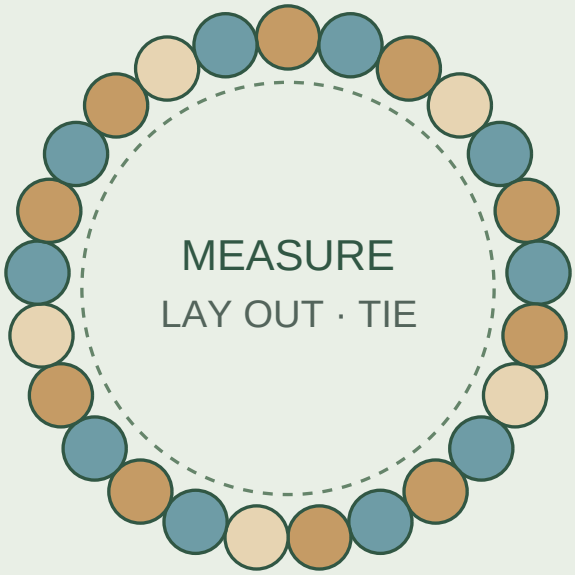
MAKE / BEADS & WEARABLE KEEPSAKES

Make a Simple Stretch-Bead Bracelet



Original illustrative layout — not a physical sample

14 practical steps · Size, knot and finish

Bead-count plan, knot route and two records

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Before you start

A successful stretch bracelet is a comfortable ring of beads with no clasp and no exposed sharp edges. It must pass over the hand without excessive force, then sit comfortably on the wrist without digging in. This project uses lightweight, smooth, round craft beads and a known jewellery elastic, specifically a product that allows a surgeon's knot and an approved finishing procedure. It is a decorative adult accessory, not a restraint, medical device, children's jewellery or a load-bearing item. This guide does not certify any bracelet's strength or skin compatibility.

Materials: a flexible measuring tape or paper measuring strip and ruler; a shallow lined bead tray; approximately 25 to 35 lightweight smooth beads of similar size (actual count depends on size); compatible labelled jewellery stretch cord; a spare length of the same cord for knot practice; adult craft scissors; a temporary bead stopper suitable for elastic; optional maker-approved larger-hole knot bead; and, where the exact cord's directions require or permit it, a compatible jewellery adhesive with its label and cure instructions. Keep beads, cords, adhesives and tools away from children and pets. Work in good light with label-specified ventilation. Never use sharp-edged, chipped or heavy beads for this beginner design.

Plan the fit and the strand

Measure the wrist at the chosen wearing position with the tape resting against skin, not compressing it. Let W be that measurement in millimetres and E a personally chosen comfort allowance. For a preliminary paper gauge only, W + E describes the target inner circumference of a comfortable relaxed bracelet. Measure around the widest part of the relaxed hand in the position used to slip on a bracelet too. It is a separate access check, not a length to add to W. If passing the hand would require excessive stretching, choose a different design, such as a clasp bracelet. Do not stretch cord past the manufacturer's limits.

Round beads make a straight laid-out row longer than its approximate inner circumference because their centres sit away from the inner edge. For nearly equal round beads, a rough starting estimate of the bead row is W + E + pi times D, where D is their outside diameter. Example: W = 160 mm, E = 10 mm and D = 8 mm give about 195 mm of bead row. Twenty-four nominal 8 mm beads span about 192 mm; twenty-five span about 200 mm. These are illustrative starting arrangements only, not prescribed wrist sizes, safe stretch ratios or a formula for mixed shapes. Actual bead widths, gaps, knot and shape matter. Compare the actual arranged ring against a paper gauge before closing it. Allow separate generous working tails for knotting; never count the whole cut cord as the finished bracelet length.

Steps 01–02

1. Choose the specific cord and beads

Read the exact jewellery elastic's packaging for its recommended bead size and weight, compatible knot and adhesive instructions, and any handling limitations. Select lightweight, similar-size round beads with smooth entrances and no visible chips, sharp rims or burrs. Check the bead hole rather than the outside size: the relaxed cord and any intended threading aid must pass freely. If a bead snags or needs force, set it aside. Do not stretch the cord thin to make it pass. This guide's worked knot is for an elastic whose own directions permit a surgeon's knot, such as the Powercord route described in the cited supplier tutorial; other cord products may specify a different finish.

2. Measure wrist and hand separately

Use a flexible tape around the wrist where the bracelet will rest. Record the relaxed wrist circumference W without squeezing. Wrap a paper strip to find a personally comfortable inner circumference with a small amount of ease E, then measure the strip flat. Separately measure around the widest part of the relaxed hand in its intended putting-on position. Do not treat that measurement as an amount to add to the wrist measurement. A small wrist with a broad hand may be better served by an opening clasp. Do not rely on a universal stretch ratio or use a tight test loop on the body.

Steps 03–04

3. Estimate a starting bead count

Use Pattern 1. If the beads are approximately equal round beads, their centres lie about D/2 outward from the inside edge of the ring. For an ideal circular layout, increasing the radius by D/2 increases the circumference by pi times D. Add that amount to the target inner circumference. Divide by the approximate centre-to-centre spacing of adjacent touching beads (about D for equal round beads), then round to a nearby whole bead count. This approximates a circular arc by a straight bead spacing; the actual layout is the deciding observation. For the illustrative 160 mm wrist, 10 mm ease and 8 mm beads, begin with 24 or 25 beads; these are alternative paper plans, not fixed sizes. For nonround or mixed beads, arrange them on a tray instead of applying this shortcut. Use real measured widths if available and keep some spare beads for adjustment.

4. Arrange the beads in a contained tray

Set the beads in the order you want. Make a small repeating colour pattern, or place a single contrast bead at the centre. Set aside a smooth larger-hole bead beside the eventual knot only if it is approved for the selected cord and can receive the knot without force. It should not have a sharp interior. Compare the laid-out row with the estimate and count the beads. Keep a few replacements nearby; never try to fix a short strand by stretching it permanently.

Steps 05–06

5. Measure and prepare the working cord

Cut a length sufficient for the intended bead row plus ample knot-working tails. The cited Powercord tutorial uses an additional four inches (about 102 mm) for handling; use your own cord maker's recommendation and allow more if you need it. For a 195 mm row, approximately 300 mm is an illustrative working length if the selected product permits it. Condition or pre-stretch the cord only as its manufacturer instructs, away from your face, with controlled gentle movement. Stop if it becomes damaged, nicked, permanently elongated or loses its return. Do not overextend it or use a sharp clamp.

6. Practise the approved knot on spare cord

On a tray, use a separate short length of the same elastic and label the two ends with paper tags A and B placed beside them. Practise the two-throw surgeon's knot described in Steps 9 and 10 only if your cord maker permits that knot. Make the first throw with two wraps and the second with one wrap in the opposite orientation. Check that the two throws lie neatly rather than forming a twisted granny-type closure. Practice is for hand coordination only; do not pull to failure, snap the elastic or infer strength from a scrap.

Steps 07–08

7. Thread the actual beads

Fit a compatible temporary stopper near one end, leaving a working tail. Use a stopper that does not damage the cord; do not clamp hard. With the strand supported in the tray, thread the chosen beads one by one. Check the intended order and hold the working end away from your face. Use only a compatible threading aid if required and do not force it through a tight opening. Stop if a bead scrapes, splits or exposes a rough edge. Replace the bead and damaged length of cord instead of concealing damage inside the finished ring.

8. Check the relaxed ring against the gauge

Before knotting, keep both tails controlled and arrange the bead row in a loose circle on the tray. Hold the ends close without tying the cord around a wrist. Compare the inner edge with your measured paper gauge or suitably sized bracelet mandrel. The beads should meet without crowding, and the cord should not have to remain stretched just to close the ring. Add or remove a bead as needed. If the ring cannot fit the wrist and pass over the hand within the maker's intended elastic range, change the design rather than forcing it.

Steps 09–10

9. Make the first double-wrap throw

Remove the temporary stopper while controlling both tails. Place the two final beads adjacent, with end A on your left and end B on your right. Cross A over B and bring A under and through the opening; bring A around B and through the same opening a second time before seating this first throw. Keep the same viewpoint and do not turn the work; after the throw, position A to your right and B to your left, as shown in Pattern 2. The two wraps belong to the first throw, not two separate completed knots. Draw both ends gradually in opposite directions until the beads meet without permanent stretch, cord crushing or sharp bends. Do not pull hard or aim the elastic towards your face. Follow your exact cord's directions for seating tension.

10. Add the opposite single-wrap throw

Keep the work facing the same way. Confirm A now emerges on the right and B on the left; do not rotate or swap the ends to relabel them. Cross the current right end A over the current left end B, bring A under and through once, then seat the throw. This reverses the handedness of the first left-over-right crossing. If you lose track of the ends, loosen and restart the practice knot rather than guessing. Seat this second throw evenly, following the cord maker's guidance. Pattern 2 shows the wrap order and changing left/right positions; the pictures are enlarged route schematics, not a measured knot. If the two throws twist, creep, leave an uncertain crossing or cannot be seated, do not disguise the defect with glue. Unthread and start with fresh compatible cord if the elastic has been kinked or damaged. A neatly seated knot is an appearance check, not a strength guarantee.

Steps 11–12

11. Finish exactly as the cord and adhesive makers direct

Write the exact brand and finish instructions in Record 1 before stringing. For the Powercord example only, its supplier tutorial adds a small amount of compatible jewellery adhesive, moves the knot into a suitable bead hole, allows the adhesive to dry as directed, then trims the ends. Beadalon's Elasticity/Elonga directions instead describe drying the glue before moving the knot into the closest bead. Choose only the row in the finish plan matching the actual product in hand; if it is neither of these products, use its own instructions instead. Do not mix these sequences or assume either applies to an unknown product. Use adhesive only if the exact cord and adhesive instructions support the combination, observe ventilation and contact precautions, and avoid spilling it on beads or skin. If the required cure or compatibility is unclear, stop and consult the maker. Never substitute hot glue, flame, solvent or a metal crimp for a knot on elastic. Do not force the knot into a small hole.

12. Wait for full cure and trim correctly

Leave the bracelet in a stable tray, away from children and pets, for the applicable complete cure and handling time. Do not try it on while uncured or tacky. Trim only when your exact cord finishing instructions allow, leaving the maker-specified tail length. Do not cut the knot or the adjacent elastic. If no tail-length direction is known, ask the maker instead of trimming flush by guesswork. Move or hide the knot only in the order permitted by that finish procedure. Record the actual completion date and inspect the knot visually before use.

Steps 13–14

13. Inspect the bracelet and assess comfortable adult fit

Inspect the ring, exposed cord, bead rims and seated knot over the tray. If the knot moves, beads separate, cord appears cut or stretched out, or adhesive is tacky, retire the candidate and remake it rather than performing a tug or failure test. Only after the maker's full finish is complete and no warning sign is visible, assess fit gently by rolling the ring over the hand, never pulling it from one side. Stop immediately if it does not slide comfortably, causes pain, numbness, skin irritation, tightness or marks. Remove it gently; if it cannot be removed easily, get assistance rather than yanking. This fit observation does not certify strength, wear life or suitability for sensitive skin.

14. Complete the maker record and care for the accessory

Record the actual bead count, cord product, relaxed dimensions, knot route, required finishing instructions, complete cure status, and fit observation. Mark PENDING until all required steps are complete, CHANGE/REMAKE for a questionable fit or finish, or DECORATIVE ONLY for the visually intact completed adult accessory. Remove it before sleep, bathing, strenuous activity or work around machinery; keep it away from heat, chemicals, rough surfaces and children or pets. Inspect it periodically and discontinue use if cord, knot or beads deteriorate. Store it relaxed, without weight or tension. No lifetime, load or safety rating is claimed.

Fix, care and preserve

The beads meet only when the cord is stretched. Reopen the plan and add a suitable bead or revise the size. The relaxed ring should not depend on sustained elastic tension. The planned size must also allow a comfortable passage over the hand without forcing.

The knot looks twisted or slides. Stop. Revisit the two-wrap first throw and opposite single-wrap second throw only if the product allows them. Follow the manufacturer's finish and replace damaged cord. Glue is not a way to salvage a defective knot.

The knot will not fit into a bead. Choose a compatible larger-hole bead in the design phase or use a maker-authorised visible-knot finish. Never enlarge a bead with a drill, clamp the knot with pliers or push it through by force.

The finished bracelet feels tight or irritates skin. Remove it gently and stop wearing it. Adjust the design with suitable materials or choose an opening clasp instead. Do not rely on stretching it permanently or on a numerical wrist-size estimate.

The cord frays or becomes slack. Retire the accessory; do not add glue to an aged elastic as a repair. Recover only visibly intact beads and restring using fresh compatible supplies and the actual instructions.

Source & evidence boundary

Original Steadleaf text, sizing approximation, bead layout, knot-route teaching drawings, cover and worksheets. Technical context from the following product-specific references; consult your exact products and current directions, which take precedence.

Fire Mountain Gems and Beads, Learn How to Finish Elastic and Powercord Jewelry

https://www.firemountaingems.com/learn/categories/jewelry-medium/bead-stringing/how-tos-on-bead-stringing/A904-video-tutorial-with-instructions.html

Fire Mountain Gems and Beads, Stretch Cord sizing

https://www.firemountaingems.com/learn/categories/ask-the-experts/QM2Z-ask-the-experts.html

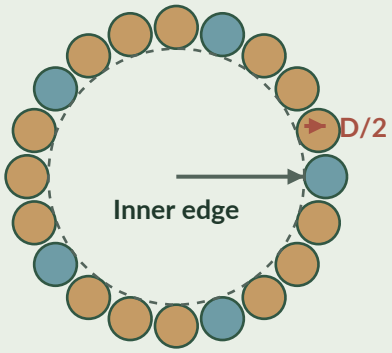
Beadalon, Learning Center FAQ (Elasticity and Elonga finishing)

https://www.beadalon.com/products/learning_center_FAQs.asp

No third-party imagery, template or protected instructional passage is reproduced. The publisher has not physically made, fitted, knotted, glued, cured, worn, printed or strength-tested the bracelet. All numerical examples are planning estimates, not physical measurements or certification. Adult decorative use only; not children's jewellery, restraint, safety equipment or load-bearing use.

Size, bead-count and layout plan

Use your actual measurements. The ring is a schematic, not a wearable or actual-size template.



W = relaxed wrist circumference

E = chosen comfort allowance

D = equal round bead diameter

Target inner circumference = W + E

Approx. centreline = W + E + πD

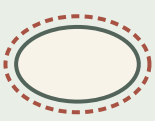
ILLUSTRATIVE SIZE EXAMPLE

W = 160 mm, E = 10 mm, D = 8 mm. Inner target 170 mm; centreline estimate 195 mm. Try 24 beads (192 mm) or 25 beads (200 mm) on a tray. Check the actual relaxed ring against a measured paper gauge.

HAND ACCESS: measure the widest relaxed hand separately. Do not add it to the wrist figure. If access would require excessive stretching, choose a clasp design.

25-POSITION DESIGN ROW / mark colours and optional knot bead







50 mm calibration line — print Actual Size

Surgeon’s knot practice sequence

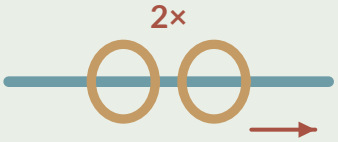
Enlarged route cues, not a measured knot or a strength rating. Use only if your specific cord permits it.

1 Start: A left / B right



Cross A OVER B.

2 First throw: two wraps



A under and through twice.

3 After first throw



Keep viewpoint; B left, A right.

4 Second throw: one wrap



Right A OVER left B, under and through.

Seat the two throws gradually according to the actual cord maker. The second crossing reverses the first. If the ends are lost or the knot twists, restart on spare cord. No snap or pull-to-failure test.

FINISH PLAN — choose only your actual product

Powercord example: compatible adhesive → tuck into a suitable bead → dry/cure per product → trim as directed.
Elasticity/Elonga example: compatible glue → dry as directed → trim and move knot as the exact maker directs.
Other cords: follow their own instructions. Never force a knot into a bead.

Material and size plan

Record real measurements and current product instructions; the illustrated sizes are only planning examples.

Cord product / material / labelled diameter

Bead product / lot / diameter / hole compatibility

Wrist W (mm) / personal ease E (mm) / inner target (mm)

Separate hand circumference (mm) / maker range or unknown

Bead diameter D / estimated row length / measured widths

Bead count and colour order / optional knot bead

Cut length / working tails / maker conditioning directions

Exact maker-approved knot / finish / compatible adhesive

Actual relaxed paper-gauge check / change needed

Hand access decision / reason

Knot, finish and fit

Record observations, not strength claims. PENDING until the maker's finish is complete.

Practice knot observation / two wraps then opposite one

Actual bead order and count / relaxed dimensions

Actual cord and maker-approved knot route

Compatible adhesive / label cure directions (or authorised none)

Finish completed on / tail length per maker

Visual inspection: bead rims / cord / knot / warning signs

Adult fit observation, only after complete cure

Disposition: PENDING / CHANGE-REMAKE / DECORATIVE ONLY

Reason / adjustment or care instruction