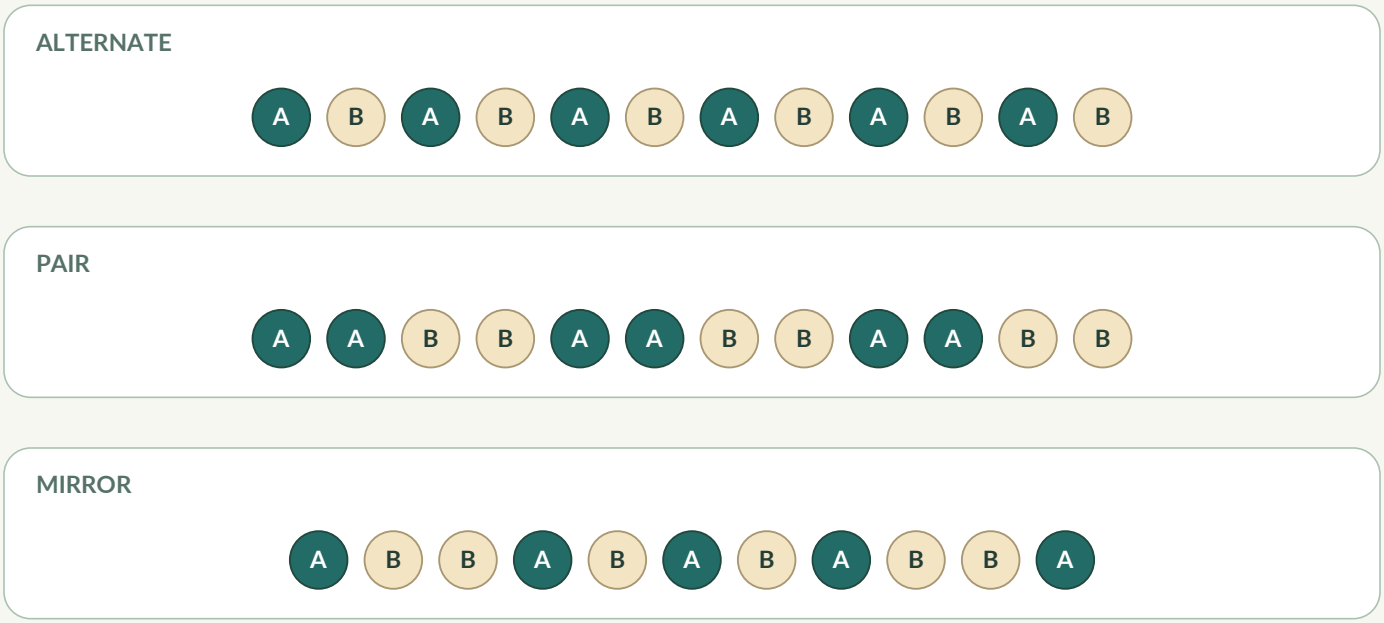
STEADLEAF PRESS

MAKE / BEADS & WEARABLE KEEPSAKES

Plan a Balanced Two-Color Bead Pattern



14 practical steps · Rhythm, counts and boundaries

Compare repeated and mirrored designs. Includes two original pattern sheets and two printable maker records.

FREE GUIDE + PRINTABLES | STP-MAKE-F110

Before you start

A pleasing bead pattern is more than an equal number of two colours. Alternating beads create a fine rhythm, pairs create wider blocks, and a mirrored row draws attention to a centre. A straight row can look balanced on a tray yet form an unexpected interruption when its ends meet in a circle. This guide teaches you to plan and compare these patterns before committing to a stringing material or finished accessory. You will prepare a removable 24-position layout and a shorter 11-position mirrored row. The result is a design plan, not a finished bracelet or necklace.

Materials: two colours of smooth lightweight craft beads of similar shape and nominal size, a shallow lined tray or bead board, the printable planning sheets, a pencil, a ruler, and two small labelled containers. Count out at least 12 of each colour for the worked 24-position examples, plus spares if available. For a physical layout, choose known craft components without chips, cracks or exposed sharp edges. Work in good light at a stable table. Small beads are choking hazards; keep them and all tools away from children and pets. No needle, adhesive, wire, knot or closure is required for this exercise. Do not wear, hang or lift a temporary sample.

Plan the rhythm and the count

Let A and B represent the two colours, not particular sizes. A and B are also printed inside the filled example cells so the scheme works in monochrome. For a 24-position row, (AB) repeated 12 times gives 12 A and 12 B. (AABB) repeated six times also gives 12 A and 12 B. In a circle, the last B meets the first A in both examples, so the repeat continues across the join. A perfectly alternating closed sequence needs an even number of positions. A closed AABB sequence needs a multiple of four to preserve that exact two-by-two repeat. These are rules for the count of the specified motif, not a requirement for every attractive design.

A mirrored open row of 11 positions can have the sequence A B B A B A B A B B A: five A and six B. The middle A is a focal point, and each pair of positions equally distant from it has the same letter. Mirror symmetry is not the same as strict alternation or equal colour count. If a future object has a fixed size, do not increase or decrease its bead count just to force a motif. A 22-position circular design can alternate exactly, but it cannot repeat AABB exactly across the join. Choose an alternative rhythm or deliberately identify a contrasting transition. When physical bead widths differ, compare the actual widths along the intended row; equal counts need not give equal apparent colour area or finished length.

Steps 01–02

1. Decide whether the planned design is a row or a ring

Sketch the planned shape on paper. An open row has two independent ends and may have a middle focal point. A closed ring joins the final bead to the first; their neighbours across that boundary are part of the pattern. Mark the starting position and viewing direction. The worked 24-position examples are laid flat on the tray; the circular diagrams are plans only. If your future object requires a clasp or another fitting, mark it separately rather than pretending it occupies an ordinary bead position.

2. Select and label the two colours

Choose two distinguishable colours with similar bead shape and outside size for the first exercise. For example, A may be deep teal and B may be pale cream, but choose any colours that work together in your actual light. Place each group in a separate labelled compartment. Keep A and B labels consistent across your drawings, bead counts and records. Colour appearance can vary with finish, surface, transparency and lighting. If you cannot readily distinguish the groups, choose a clearer contrast or keep physical labels beside the layout.

Steps 03–04

3. Count and inspect the available beads

Count 12 usable beads of each colour into separate groups for the 24-position examples. Put spares aside rather than mixing them into the count. Look at the actual beads for chipped rims, cracked surfaces or exposed sharp edges; set damaged beads aside without handling a broken edge. If fewer than 12 of a colour are available, choose a smaller even count or another motif and record the new plan. A neat paper sequence does not make a damaged component usable.

4. Set out the numbered working grid

Print Pattern 1 or copy the 24 numbered positions onto paper. The cells are symbolic; they are not an actual-size bead tray or a measurement gauge. Set a shallow lined tray beside the sheet and use its rim to contain the beads. Mark the first position and the direction of counting. If the beads are large, extend the tray row rather than squeezing them together to fit the paper. Leave a spare area for changes, and never place loose beads on the floor or near an open book or drink.

Steps 05–06

5. Build a fine alternating rhythm

Write AB in the first two positions of the working grid. Repeat the same pair twelve times, filling positions 1 to 24. Count the finished row: all odd positions are A, all even positions B. The totals are 12 A and 12 B. Lay the corresponding beads on the tray in order. Read the row from its marked start to the end; every neighbouring pair should contain different letters. This is a pattern comparison, not a claim that alternating colours always look better than other designs.

6. Build a broader paired rhythm

Return the beads to their labelled compartments. Write AABB as the four-position motif and repeat it six times across 24 positions. Positions 1 and 2 are A, positions 3 and 4 are B; repeat that rule. The row again contains 12 A and 12 B, but its visual blocks are twice as long as in the alternating example. Arrange the beads on the tray and compare the two patterns under the same lighting. Record which feels more suitable for the intended decorative project and why, rather than calling either objectively balanced.

Steps 07–08

7. Inspect the join in a planned closed ring

Use the circular examples on Pattern 2. In a ring the last bead is adjacent to the first. For AB repeated twelve times, position 24 is B and position 1 is A. For AABB repeated six times, positions 23 and 24 are B and positions 1 and 2 are A, so the next complete AABB unit begins across the boundary. Follow the letters around the ring from the marked start. If using a physical tray layout, simply arrange the beads loosely in a circle; no closure or tension is needed. Do not roll loose beads around on the table.

8. Plan a mirrored row around one central bead

For a separate 11-position open layout, write A B B A B A B A B B A. Position 6 is A. Compare positions 1 and 11, 2 and 10, 3 and 9, 4 and 8, and 5 and 7. Each pair matches; the count is five A and six B. Use the example as one starting point rather than a universal rule. A mirror layout may have an even number of beads with a centre between two positions instead. Mark whether your centre is a bead or a gap before duplicating the two sides.

Steps 09–10

9. Adjust an incomplete repeat without hiding the change

Suppose your planned ring needs 22 positions. An AB motif fits exactly eleven times, but AABB does not: five complete four-position units leave two positions. Adding AB to those five units gives equal colour totals but interrupts the exact paired rhythm. Record that interruption as intentional or choose the 22-position alternating option. An odd number of positions cannot alternate perfectly across every boundary of a two-colour ring. If the planned fit requires an odd count, use a planned transition, a different motif or a distinct fitting boundary; never tighten or stretch an object just to reach a preferred count.

10. Compare apparent visual weight, not just totals

Lay the two patterns under similar light on the same neutral tray. Step back and look at the row as a whole. Darker, brighter, larger, glossy or textured beads can attract more attention even when there are exactly twelve of each colour. Try swapping the roles of A and B on paper, or choose a mirrored focal layout when one colour dominates. If you change the motif, recalculate both counts and mark the change. The preferred result is a design choice, not a universal rule about colour perception.

Steps 11–12

11. Account for differences in bead width

When using mixed shapes or sizes, measure the accessible width of each bead in the direction of the intended stringing axis; do not insert a measuring tool into the bore. Use a gentle straight tray layout to estimate the occupied row length and compare it with the future design requirements. For an illustrative row with 12 beads at 6 mm and 12 at 8 mm along the axis, the nominal straight sum is 168 mm, excluding gaps, knots and findings. Equal counts have produced different nominal widths for the two colour groups: 72 mm and 96 mm. This is a planning estimate only, not the inner circumference of a wearable ring or an actual fit measurement.

12. Preserve the planned material route

Before turning a pattern into a real accessory, identify the actual stringing material, bead holes and any necessary return passes or fittings. A smaller hole or a bulky end can rule out the intended route even if the colours look right. The Beadalon FAQ discusses the smallest bead hole and diameter for its specific beading wire and the use of a bead board for layout. Do not apply wire-specific finishing advice to elastic or fibre cord. For this guide, stop at the unstrung tray arrangement; use the appropriate material and finishing instructions for a later project.

Steps 13–14

13. Transfer and verify the final pattern card

Copy the selected sequence into the blank 24-position grid or use only the positions required by the revised plan. Cross out unused cells and record the total number of A and B. Check the start, viewing direction, motif length, centre or join and each neighbouring pair against your intended design. Use a paper tick mark for each bead as you compare it with the corresponding tray position. If you change a single position, check the whole local repeat and, for a ring, the boundary as well. Record the actual tray observation and leave unknown dimensions unfilled.

14. Record the design and put the supplies away

Complete Record 2 with your chosen motif, actual count, length estimate if relevant, whether the pattern is open or closed, and any planned interruption. Mark PLAN READY, CHANGE or HOLD. PLAN READY means the pattern is recorded and the loose layout matches it; it does not approve a finished object or establish fit, strength, skin compatibility or durability. Return the beads to their labelled closed containers and count loose pieces back in. Keep the worksheet with the supplies so the pattern can be reproduced later without guessing.

Fix, care and preserve

The two colours are hard to distinguish. Change the colour pairing or use labels beside the tray. Check the actual beads in normal diffuse light; screen colours or paper swatches may differ from the materials.

One position is missing a bead. Do not silently skip it. Leave the position marked, count the supplies again and replace it with a compatible bead or redraw the complete motif and its totals.

The circular join looks wrong. Read across the last-to-first boundary. A 24-position AB or AABB example closes the repeat exactly, while the 22-position paired example does not. Choose another rhythm or plan a visible transition without forcing the final object to fit.

The colours are equal in count but one looks dominant. Compare bead widths, surface and contrast. Try a different focal placement or a revised motif; equal counts are only one design option.

The final stringing material is unknown. Keep the plan on paper and the loose beads stored separately. Verify compatible bores, cord or wire and finish before starting the next project. Never force a bead or alter its bore for this exercise.

Source & evidence boundary

Original Steadleaf English prose, colour sequences, arithmetic, cover, diagrams and printable records. Factual context: Beadalon Learning Center FAQ, bead board layout and wire-specific selection by the smallest bead hole. https://www.beadalon.com/products/learning_center_FAQs.asp . No borrowed imagery, pattern or protected instructional text. The publisher has not physically counted, measured, arranged, threaded, worn, printed or tested any beads. Numerical examples are symbolic or nominal design arithmetic. This guide is adult tabletop planning only, not a certification of fit, strength, finished jewellery, durability or safety.

Repeat comparison and working grid

Symbolic positions only. A and B are colour labels; the grids are not actual-size templates.

A / AB × 12 | A = 12, B = 12

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B

B / AABB × 6 | A = 12, B = 12

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	A	B	B	A	A	B	B	A	A	B	B
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
A	A	B	B	A	A	B	B	A	A	B	B

C / YOUR WORKING GRID

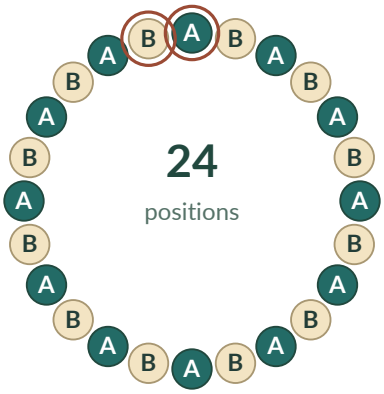
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24

Cross out unused cells. Mark a start, direction and chosen repeat. Record the actual number of A and B beads. For a ring, inspect the last-to-first boundary as well.

My motif: _____ A: _____ B: _____

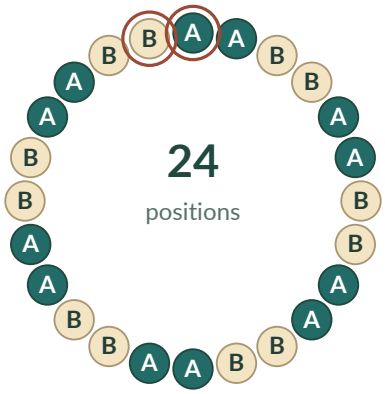
Closed boundaries and mirror symmetry

Schematic only. The outlined beads are positions 24 and 1. Read clockwise from position 1.



AB × 12

B | A at join



AABB × 6

BB | AA at join

22 POSITIONS / choose or mark the interruption



Five AABB units + AB: 11 of each colour, but the last two positions interrupt the paired repeat. AB × 11 closes exactly.

11-POSITION OPEN MIRROR / focal bead at position 6



Compare 1 with 11, 2 with 10, 3 with 9, 4 with 8, and 5 with 7. A = 5, B = 6. The row is symmetric without equal counts.

Materials and design choices

Use the actual supplies and design requirements; do not enter unobserved results.

Bead A: colour / product / material / axial width / usable count

Bead B: colour / product / material / axial width / usable count

Shape: OPEN ROW / PLANNED RING / OTHER

Target position count / future length requirement

Motif / motif length / complete repetitions / remainder

Exact ring repeat possible? YES / NO / NOT APPLICABLE

Start / direction / centre or planned join

Future cord, wire, bore and finishing compatibility to verify

Design choice / reason / adjustment needed

Final arrangement and comparison

PLAN READY applies to an unstrung design only, not a finished accessory.

Chosen pattern and actual A / B counts

Symbolic position count / nominal straight width sum (if relevant)

Actual loose tray arrangement / width observation (or NOT CHECKED)

Boundary or mirror pair comparison

Apparent visual weight / contrast observations

Intentional interruption / changed positions / reason

Future material or component verification needed

Disposition: PLAN READY / CHANGE / HOLD

Date / notes / supplies returned to labelled containers