



Ethnic Beaded Necklace

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If you have comments or suggestions about this project, please feel free to email me. I would love to hear from you.

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What You Will Need

Materials

Strong black tea or coffee
9 bone, hairpipe beads, 1-inch
50-inches of 18 gage sterling silver round wire
17 random shaped brass disc beads, 8mm
9 brass rondelle beads, 8mm
9 horn rondelle beads, 8mm
9 skunk Venetian trade beads, 14mm
21 red-colored African white heart beads, approximately 8mm
16 brass spacer beads, 4mm
8 black frosted glass beads, 10mm
150 18 gage sterling jump rings, 3mm
Purchased neck clasp of your choice

Tools

Cup
Flush cutters
Ruler or tape measure
Fine-tooth flat jewelers file
Round nose pliers
2 chain-nose pliers

This necklace was created with sterling silver wire and a variety of ethnic beads including skunk beads (Venetian trade beads traded in Africa), White heart beads (African trade beads), bone, horn, and brass. White heart beads are just what their name implies: white at their heart and another color on the outside. The coloring agents used by early bead makers were often relatively expensive, so making trade beads of white glass and only coloring the surface was a more economical choice.

I wanted to use bone beads in this piece and only had bleached bone beads, which are the most common and easiest to find. The bright white color seemed harsh and plastic looking next to the older beads. To solve this problem, I dropped the bone beads into a very strong cup of hot, black tea and let them soak for about half an hour. They came out looking old and worn. I accidentally forgot one in the bottom of the cup and it sat overnight. That bead came out very dark. So, if you chose to antique your beads, check them often, and remove the beads when they have reached the desired shade.

Let's Get Started



1. Once the beads have been colored with black tea, use the flush cutters to cut nine 3 ¼" - inch lengths of 18-gauge sterling silver wire. File the ends of the wires flat. Using your round nose pliers, form a loop at one end of the wire. Next, add the beads to the wire in the following order:

Random shaped brass disc bead

Bone hairpipe bead

Brass rondelle

Horn rondelle

Skunk bead

White heart bead

Brass spacer bead

When all the beads are in place, use the round nose pliers to form a loop on the other end of the wire. Repeat this process until you have added beads to all 9 sections of the silver wire. This collection of beads will be called Bead Group A.



2. Cut eight 1 ¼-inch lengths of 18 gage sterling wire into 1 ¼ inch lengths. Prepare the wire as in step 1 and then add the beads in the following order:

Brass spacer bead

White heart bead

Brass spacer bead

Form the closing loop and repeat the process until you have 8 sets. This collection will be called Bead Group B.



3. Cut four 1 ¾-inch lengths of 18 gage silver wire into 1 ¾ inch sections and prepare the wire in the same manner as in step 2. Add the beads in the following order:

Black frosted glass bead

Random shaped brass disc bead

Red colored white heart bead

Random shaped brass disc bead

Black frosted glass bead

Form the closing loop, and repeat the process until you have 4 sets. This collection will be called Bead Group C.



4. Now it is time to connect the sections together. Using the two sets of chain-nose pliers, open a jump ring. Slide on one bead set from group A and one from Group B. Close the jump ring. Use another jump ring to add another Group A set from the other end of the connected Group B set. Continue adding jump rings and bead sets until all of the Group A beads are connected to Group B beads.



5. Your necklace should look something like this.



6. Using jump rings, attach two bead sets from Group C to each end of the chain. I like to add an extra jump ring between these beads to provide more uniform spacing.



7. When all the beads have been connected, continue adding jump rings on both ends of the necklace. The number of jump rings used will vary with the fit. A double chain looks really nice and balances the weight of the beads. Once you are satisfied with the fit, connect the jump rings to a purchased clasp.