

Beautiful Paper Beads



Making these paper beads is so easy and so much fun, and it is an especially good project for teenagers. We rolled strips of decorative paper into beads for necklaces and bracelets, and also used decorative papers as decoupage on wood beads for earrings, and to give new life to old plastic bracelets. The teenagers doing these projects could not wait to wear their creations! (But they had to, at least until after the photos were done.)

Materials Needed:

- Decorative Papers
- Gel Medium or Glue Stick
- Small Flat Brush
- Small Plastic Mixing Straws
- Wooden Skewers
- Clear Nail Polish
- Metal ruler
- Craft Knife
- Scissors
- Decoupage Medium
- Wooden Beads
- Old Plastic or Wood Bracelets
- Wax Paper
- Small Cardboard Box
- Jewelry Findings
- Jewelry Wire
- Beads for Spacers



For experimental purposes, this is a great way to use scraps of papers you might already have, but for a more sophisticated, personal look, you'll probably want to pick out some new papers or buy a couple of our color coordinated Decorative Paper Pack Assortments. We found that smooth, medium weight papers, such as the Indian Woodblock, Philippine Salago, and Thai 2-Layer, seem to work the best for rolling, although some cover weights can be used if lightly dampened. The softer papers, such as the Thai Marbled Momi, Thai Unryu, and Salago, work well for decoupage on bracelets and wood beads.

You'll probably want to cover your work surface, and have something to cut on. Waxed paper is great for a quick, disposable clean up.

To roll paper beads, we started by cutting several simple $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 6" strips. We coated the wrong side with a thin coat of Gel Medium (it dries quickly) and rolled the paper tightly on small plastic mixing straws. When the roll was finished and the edge glued securely, the bead was carefully removed. We used a wooden skewer of the same diameter and allowed the beads to dry horizontally on top of an empty (flaps removed) cardboard box. Thinner papers of this length will give you a small bead, so if you want a bigger bead you'll need to increase the length of your paper strip. Once you get the hang of it, you'll want to experiment with different shapes. By cutting the strips into shaped pieces, such as a long 45-degree angle, a long 30-degree angle, and other creative shapes involving cutting the middle out of the strip but leaving points to roll, we created many varieties of shaped beads. Our favorite ended up being a strip with a triangular shape cut out of the center, similar to a long flag. It was a little more difficult to roll, but the end result hourglass shape was very pleasing. After a 24-hour drying period, the beads were coated with clear finger nail polish to seal. When we had assembled a workable number of beads, they were strung on regular jewelry wire using small glass beads as filler and traditional toggle fasteners.

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Another idea is using the decoupage technique on large plain wooden beads and old plastic or wood bracelets. We used small bits of torn paper, cut paper shapes and tightly twisted papers for texture and they turned out stunningly beautiful. (Using the translucent, lighter weight papers required a contrasting color base coat on the beads, whether it's paper or acrylic paint.) Further embellishments can be added using acrylic paints if desired, but it is certainly not necessary because the colors and textures are wonderful alone. Allow the beads to dry for 24 hours on a wooden skewer, and then use a final coat of decoupage medium, or fingernail polish, to seal. The decoupage beads are relatively lightweight and spectacular for earrings, bracelets and necklaces that would definitely qualify as wearable art.