

# Homemade Beads: 3 Ways

Stringing beads is a fun way to give boredom the boot. And most preschoolers, both girls *and* boys, enjoy taking a crack at it. Beyond fueling creativity, beading also has another trick up its sleeve: it helps young kids practice patterning, or sequencing, which lays the groundwork for math, reading, and science. You can buy a sack of beads at any craft store. But here are 3 inexpensive ways for kids to make their *own* beads, from scratch.

## Pasta Beads

### What You Need:

- 3 cups of uncooked pasta with holes (use just one type: penne, rigatoni, macaroni, etc.)
- Food coloring in 3 different colors
- 3 bowls
- Measuring cup
- Rubbing alcohol
- Spoon for mixing
- Yarn
- Scissors
- Masking tape

### What You Do:

1. Scoop 1 cup of uncooked pasta into each of the bowls. The pasta should all be of the same type.
2. Add a few drops of food coloring (using a different color for each bowl) to each. Stir. Keep adding a few drops at a time until the pasta begins to change color.
3. Add  $\frac{3}{4}$  Tablespoon of rubbing alcohol and stir until evenly coated.
4. Transfer the colored pasta to a cookie sheet lined with wax paper (or aluminum foil) and let it dry overnight.
5. Once the pasta is dry, it's ready for beading. Cut a piece of yarn into the appropriate length for your child's necklace or bracelet, wrap a piece of masking tape around one end to make stringing easier, knot the other end, and set them to work!

## Clay Beads

### What You Need:

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup salt
- Tempera paint powder in at least two colors
- Warm water
- Several mixing bowls
- Pencil, knitting needles, or toothpicks
- Yarn
- Scissors
- Masking tape



This recipe is enough to make one color of bead. Double or triple it for each additional color.

### **What You Do:**

1. Combine the flour, cornstarch, and salt. Mix a little bit of tempura paint powder into the warm water and add it a little bit at a time to the dry mix, until it forms a sticky dough. The consistency should be similar to clay.
2. Roll the dough into small balls (these will be your beads) and poke a hole into each one with a pencil, knitting needle, or toothpick. Make sure to make the hole big enough for yarn or string to pass through.
3. Put the clay beads on a covered cookie sheet and allow them to dry outside on a sunny day. Depending on the weather, this can take up to a week. (NOTE: If you'd rather not go through the work of dividing the dough into multiple bowls for coloring, you can make this recipe with plain water, without the tempura powder, and allow your child to color the beads by hand once they're dry, using ready-made paint.)
4. When the clay is dry, it's ready for beading. Cut a piece of yarn into the appropriate length for your child's necklace or bracelet, wrap a piece of masking tape around one end to make stringing easier, knot the other end, and set them to work!

### **Paper Beads**

#### **What You Need:**

- Several colors of construction paper
- Pencil or knitting needle
- Glue
- Scissors
- Yarn
- Masking tape

#### **What You Do:**

1. Cut the paper into strips (5 inches long and ½ inch wide). Roll each strip of paper around a pencil or knitting needle. Once you've formed the shape, slide the paper out and put a drop of glue on the end to hold the paper in place. Press firmly until the glue dries. Repeat using at least two colors.
2. Once the beads are dry, they're ready to use. Cut a piece of yarn into the appropriate length for your child's necklace or bracelet, wrap a piece of masking tape around one end to make stringing easier, knot the other end, and set them to work!

Whichever recipe of bead you use, this is a great excuse to talk about patterns. Teach your child to string a simple sequence of A-B-A-B. Make sure to say the pattern aloud to help her make the connection between what's on her piece of yarn, and what she hears. You can say, "This is an A-B-A-B pattern" or "This is a red-yellow-red-yellow pattern".

Once she's mastered the simplest patterns, try something more difficult, such as A-B-C-A-B-C, or A-B-A-B-C-A-B-A-B-C.

Let your child make a pattern for you to copy. And be sure to make a few mistakes. Correcting you is a kick for young kids, and it will help your child focus more closely on following the pattern, and making predictions about what comes next in line.

