

BEADS AND CONCHOS

BR5

Rio Rondo offers a selection of small beads that can be threaded onto lace (or embroidery thread) to produce a decorative silver ferruled look.

LEATHERS—

Larger beads such as Rio Rondo part #SF120 can be threaded onto 1/16" lace.

Smaller beads can be used on 1/16" lace (however the leather may need special trimming to be thin enough) as well as on our round lace (RL05, RL1)

ROUND LACE—

Round lace is available in approx 1/2mm (.5) diameter and 1mm diameter. All of our beads will fit on the smaller size, but some of them are too small to fit on the 1mm diameter type. The width you choose to use for your project should be based on the types of beads you wish to use, the scale of the object, and the finished look you are trying to achieve.

TOOLS—

An x-acto knife will prove handy to 'skive' a thin layer off the back side of the leather on the starting end so that your beads will thread onto the lacing more easily

An **awl** will prove useful on occasion where you may need to open the hole of a bead a little larger so that it will slide onto the leather easier.

A pair of **'crimping pliers'**, which have a little 'cutout' hole in the jaws that serves to compress the bead without truly flattening it may be desirable in some cases. Check your local crafts store or mail-order crafts outlet on this item

PLAN YOUR PROJECT—

You need to know the lengths of each piece, determine how you will attach various pieces together (by gluing tabs, using crimp beads as fasteners,) as well as adjustment areas using either buckles, or a button-and-loop arrangement.

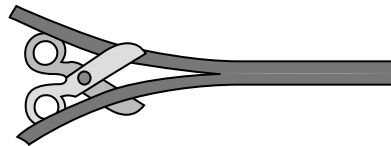
Many times you will find that it is best to build these types of items on the actual model you wish to use it on (or another

model body that is of similar proportions so that you don't damage a quality model) and measure as you go, as opposed to going by a 'formula' or strict measurement chart.

SPLITTING LACE:

This is one trick that any serious tack-maker must find a way to master, or find someone who will do it for them. Splitting lace (such as 3/32" or 1/18" widths) lengthwise (to make it 'half-width') allows you not only to thread beads onto the lace, but also offers you far more variety in the type and refinement of items you create.

I generally use a scissors, and with practice, one can learn to be fairly accurate with that method. At first it is very easy to skew off to one side and end up with lots of short pieces or irregularly cut ones. Keep any shorter pieces handy, as most pieces 1-3" long can eventually be used for some project. Practice makes perfect.



Some people have had better luck using an X-acto knife to split the lace. You may wish to try this method as well to see if it will work for you. Be careful though, it is very easy to split yourself instead of the leather with an X-acto knife!

THINNING or SKIVING THE LACE

Flat leather laces (such as 1/16", 3/32 and 1/18") can be thinned down by skiving. This can be accomplished by holding the lace firmly against a flat surface (tabletop) and carefully using an X-acto knife to "skim" or "skive" a thin layer off of the rough or flesh side of the leather. Alternatively, you can use sandpaper to sand off a bit of material from the flesh side of the lace. Many people find the sanding method to be easier and more reliable for them.

EXPERIMENT A LITTLE

Before you get started on your first beading project, you might take a little time to string a few beads onto a strip of lace about 2" long. Of course you don't need practice stringing beads, but what you might wish to do is try out different combinations of beads to achieve different looks. You can set up a 'pattern' or 'theme' of bead sequences to achieve very interesting new looks out of fairly simple beads. Alternatively you can use the same type of bead exclusively, either spacing the beads evenly, or arranging them in patterns or groups. The only problem with doing this is that you may end up with way too many ideas you want to use, and not know which one to pick!

START BEADING

- 1) Prepare your leather lace. If you are using flat lace, cut it into half-width strips if it isn't already.
- 2) Begin by cutting one end into a taper. The longer and narrower the taper, the easier it will be to thread beads onto the leather. For round lace, you should also skive one side of the tapered end down so it is even thinner. This will be important for smaller beads in particular.
- 3) If this end is an attachment end (to be attached to a bit for example) decide whether you are going to fasten the leather simply by gluing down a tab, or if you are going to use a bead to crimp it in place.

If you intend to use a bead to crimp the item in place, you will need to skive (or sand) a layer off the leather (even round lace) first. Skive the round lace on one side so that it is approximately half its normal thickness.

Thread a bead onto the lace, then pass the tab through the bit ring. Now, slide the bead back down, and over the tab end. This can take a bit of practice and trial and error to get the leather the right thickness so that both layers will fit inside the bead.



Once you get your bead in place, crimp it down. Do not crimp so hard that the bead cuts through the leather,

but it should be snug enough to hold. The "loop" of leather you just made around the bit ring should be loose enough to allow the leather to slide along the loop, but should not be sloppy.

You can use a spot of super-glue on either side of the bead to help secure it into place if you wish.

- 4) If you need to attach a buckle to one end of a strap, be sure to allow ample extra length there. Flat lace can simply be folded over itself into a tab and glued in place around the buckle to secure it.
Round lace should be skived so that when it is bent over, the skived flat side will touch itself and then it is easily glued. While you can actually secure this with a bead, likely the bead will get in the way of an adjustment strap on the buckle, and would be covered by that strap in any case. So its probably not worth doing in that case.
- 5) If you are using round lace with a buckle, buckle adjustments generally are going to work best with a small buckle (B7 or B13). If your tab is not thin enough though, the adjustment strap passing through the buckle may not fit.

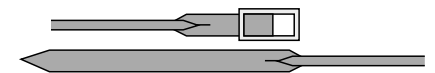
Another problem here is that round lace passing through a buckle like this can look sloppy. This problem can be avoided by splicing the round leather onto a flat strap.

Take a piece of flat lace of the desired width and cut one end into a taper.

Skive a thin layer of leather off the back side of the last 1/4" on the tapered end. On the round lace part, skive a thin layer from top side about on the last 1/4" of the piece. This should make a flat area on the top.

With an x-acto knife, pierce a small vertical slit in the leather piece, about 1/16" long.

Thread the end of the round lace through the slit on the flat lace from the top side.



Pull it through until both pieces line up with each other.

Apply glue between the layers where they join. (The flat side of the round lace

should be glued to the underside of the flat lace.) Make sure both pieces are lined up, then let the glue dry.

Now you have a flat end tab or strap attached to a piece of round lace. A short piece like this can be a tab to attach to a buckle; a long strap on the matching side of the headstall part can be an adjustment strap.

ADJUSTMENT Straps without Buckles—

In the old tradition of braided rawhide items, it was typical that a piece of tack would be made with no hardware for fastening, only ingenious methods using rawhide and leather to attach and adjust the pieces. Borrowing from this tradition, you can make a loop and button arrangement using beads. Sure the beads are hardware, but the idea still works.

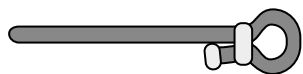
On a headstall for example, you might choose to put the point of attachment in the poll area, instead of off to the left or right (you can choose to do this any way you wish however, this is only one example)

- 1) Attach one end of the round lace to your bit and thread your beads in place, leaving 3-4 inches extra to work with.

Use a large round crimp bead (#BD26) to make a slider by GENTLY flattening the bead a little so it becomes an oval shape, rather than round.

Thread this bead onto your lace, then loop the lace around and thread the end back through. The size of the loop can be adjusted by sliding the bead up or down. Arrange the loop and the bead so that the loop will end up about at the center of the poll between the horse's ears when the bit is at the corners of the mouth.

- 2) To keep the sliding bead from sliding off, thread a smaller bead (#BD25) onto the tail end of the lace that is hanging off behind the larger bead.



Crimp this smaller bead tightly into place about 1/2" behind the tip of the loop itself. Trim off the excess length of leather.

The slider should be snug enough so

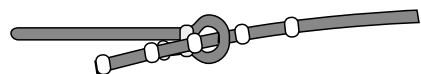
that it will only move if you move it, it should not be loose and sliding along the lace on its own. Crimp it just a little tighter if it is too loose.

- 3) For the opposite side, you can make a button attachment, OR another sliding loop.

To make another sliding loop, you do the same thing as you did on the first side, EXCEPT you thread the leather through the first loop before threading it back through the slider bead. By sliding the lace through each side, you should be able to adjust the headstall for different models.



- 4) To make a button attachment instead, you simply space out several small beads (3 to 5) along the end of the round lace and crimp each one into place. Each bead will serve as an adjustment marker.



Move the slider back a bit to open up the loop, then thread the beaded end through the loop. Snug the slider back in place.

These are just the basics of getting started with creating beaded items. I will advise anyone doing this to begin with very simple projects first. It takes a lot of planning and careful work to work in all the parts that need to be in order and end up with a useful item.

The best piece of advice I can give is to not be too stingy with the leather, particularly round lace. Always cut the pieces you are working with to be an inch or two (or more) longer than you need, on each end, just in case you mess something up, then you can continue without having to start completely over.

Also, avoid fully crimping or glueing beads in place until your project is fully assembled. If you should make a mistake, but have extra length you can move the beads onto, you won't have to start over from scratch.

KEEPING BEADS IN PLACE

Some beads will fit pretty snug on your leather and go nowhere, while others will slide everywhere and all your careful placement work will be undone immediately. When your projects is assembled, you can choose to either crimp or glue the beads into place.

For beads that slide very easily, you can move the bead off the desired spot, apply a dab of glue on the spot, then slide the bead back into place.

For beads that don't slide that easily, but will if you manually move them, you can apply just a touch of glue to one side or the other of the bead to 'anchor' it. If possible, place the dab of glue on the backside of the item so it will not be visible. (Reins are difficult because they really don't have a 'back side' that won't be seen.)

Beads can be crimped (or squished) into place using a crimping tool (which will keep the shape mostly round) or with your pliers. If using pliers, keep in mind that the bead will become somewhat flattened, so try to crimp only enough to hold the bead in place, but not so much that the bead flattens out. (unless of course, you are trying to get the bead flat on purpose).

When using beads in a sequence, (for example, a round bead, a short plain ferule and then a round bead) it is only necessary to anchor the beads on the ends, which will in turn, hold the bead(s) between them firmly.

TIP BEADS

Sterling Silver Tip Beads (#SF510) are very large round silver beads (also available in gold plate) and are the easiest way to get a silver tip onto the end of a flat strap of leather.

Start by gently crimping down on the bead with the flat portion of the jaws of a pair of needlenose pliers. You should crimp it down just enough to get it slightly oval.

Check to see that the bead fits over the leather. Once you get the bead to slide on the flat leather (3/32" is best, 1/8" usually needs to be trimmed a bit on the very end to fit), remove the bead.

Place a little dab of glue on the top and bottom side of the leather where the bead is going to be.

Now, slide the bead back on and with the smooth part of the pliers, crimp the bead down flat into place and let the glue dry a few minutes.

Take a pair of cutters and snip the tip end into a taper. Snip right through the metal and the leather under it.

If you choose to be more creative, you can use a fine bur on your moto-tool, or a scribing tool that will etch a bit of a design on metal and 'engrave' or 'inscribe' a design, or your initials perhaps, onto the flat surface.

CONCHO BEADS

Concho beads have a hole in the middle that allows you to thread them onto a stick pin or head pin. The edge of the bead sticks out around the pin's head, and the result looks like a slightly rounded concho with a decorated edge around it. These are best used for the 6 traditional conchos found on a saddle, but also can be useful for fastening together stirrups or other items.

Our sterling silver concho beads (#CB6) are shipped to us oxidized. This means that the crevices in the decoration around the edge are notably dark. If you would prefer a brighter, shinier look, I recommend cleaning the beads in a regular silver cleaning solution to remove as much of the dark areas as possible before using the beads on your tack project.

Dip the beads in rubbing alcohol afterwards to remove any residue and wipe dry with a plain kleenex (no perfume, no aloe). You can then coat the bead with clear gloss nail polish to seal out future tarnish. Allow the nail polish to dry THOROUGHLY before using the beads. If you don't, you risk marring the polish, and any place where the polish has been removed will tarnish in the future.

CONCHOS

Rio Rondo offers a large selection of conchos, of various types and uses.

CAST CONCHOS

Most of our cast conchos come with either one, two or three pegs on the back side for mounting, depending on the type of concho. Oval conchos have 3 prongs on the back side. These can be removed, and the parts simply superglued into place.

Three Prong Conchos

If you look at the pegs on the oval conchos, you will notice they are arranged in

a triangle. The two pegs on one end can be bent across each other to form a loop. Extra length can be trimmed off and the result is a 'bar'. The third peg can be trimmed and bent into a little 'hook' and thus, the concho is magically transformed into a doll-scale belt buckle, or one very fancy concho/buckle for use on an extravagant halter.

Three-prong conchos can also have the prongs bent so that they hook over the center ring of a breastcollar, making an attractive decoration there.

TWO Prong Conchos

Conchos with two pegs on the back can be used similarly by bending the pegs so they cross over each other to form a 'bar', and then they can be attached to browbands easily. Alternatively, for heavier items such as breastcollars, holes can be made in the leather, the pegs passed through the holes and crimped down on the back side for a firm attachment of the item.

CC50, CC51 and CC57 are available with two prongs.

SINGLE Prong Conchos

Simply make a hole in the leather item, then pass the peg thru and bend it over for a secure fit. All of the non-oval conchos are available with a single prong (some styles with two as noted above).

Because there is only a single peg to hold the part in place, you will need to apply a touch of glue to the back of the concho, to make sure that it does not rotate.

SPECIAL NOTE:

If you will be using the conchos to decorate items on a halter or bridle OTHER than the ends of a browband, its best to snip off the mounting pegs and use super-glue instead. The mounting pegs generally are far too bulky to be used on bridles and halters.

SILVER CONCHOS

A traditional stand-by, our hand-made silver conchos can be used similarly to cast conchos. Silver conchos come in plain, wire-mounted and pin-mounted versions. The plain ones can be super-glued in place. This is most useful for horn caps.

Wire-mounted conchos feature a single wire on the back side that can be passed through a hole and then crimped down for secure attachment to most items.

Pin-mounted conchos are best suited to be used in lieu of plain pins for the traditional 6 saddle fastening conchos.

To use pin-mounted conchos for this purpose, the best way is to use a round-nose pliers to gently bend the pin at a 90 degree angle about 1/16 or so below the head of the pin. Then the pin can be held with a pair of needle-nose pliers and pushed through the layers of leather. Pulling the pin snugly into place around the 'corner' will seat the concho properly. Leave about 1/8" of pin past the "bend" and snip off the excess length

For a firm attachment, gently use a pair of pliers (flat jawed rather than serrated is best) to crimp the concho into place and seat the snipped-off end on the back side.

SOLDERING

Silver conchos can be soldered to many items. A quick-n-dirty way to do it is to use Kester Rosin Core solder (thin/narrow gauge suitable for electronics) over a candle flame.

You can attach your own pins to conchos by melting a 'bead' of solder to the pin-head first, then using a pair of pliers in each hand, hold both parts over the flame together (about an inch above the wick) and the solder will flow into the concho. Carefully pull both parts *together* away from the heat and allow them to cool. (This can be tricky and takes some practice not to accidentally pull them apart.)

Wires can be soldered to the back of a silver concho likewise. Bend a little 'hook' or right-angle 'foot' onto one end of the wire, then apply a bead of solder to that. Then place the soldered end onto the backside of the concho and hold the two pieces over the flame until the solder flows.

You can solder a concho to a plain etched bit by applying a dab of solder onto the backside of the concho. Place the concho where desired on the etched bit.

Hold one end of the bit with your pliers, with the concho on top of it (keep it horizontal). Move the bit over the flame until the solder flows, then remove from the heat and let it cool.

Using a polishing cloth you can shine up both pieces to good as new condition.

Practice makes perfect!

NOTE: do NOT attempt to solder pewter items such as cast conchos or bits over a candle—the items will MELT as pewter is a very low-temperature metal.

Soldering Castings requires a soldering iron and extreme skill and caution, and is **not** advisable. Please note that Rio Rondo is not responsible for replacing any items you may modify (or ruin).

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