

Calico Casual

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History

I needed some jewelry accessories for a rather plain sage colored top. I wanted something I could not only whip up fast, but would be fun and use materials I had on hand. I remembered how fun it was to make paper beads when I was younger, so wondered if I could modify the technique a bit and make beads with contrasting and complimentary-colored calico fabric. I rifled through my fat quarters of calicos until I found several colors that promised to really jazz up my outfit. I was more than pleased with the results and thought I would pass along this sure-to-please project.

Materials and tools for necklace, bracelet, and earrings

* Necklace, Bracelet, and Earrings: 18" X 16" total of calico in several complimentary colors. I used 6 different calico patterns.

* Necklace, Bracelet, and Earrings: Assorted matte glass accent beads (5mm – 20mm) I used 57. This number can be adjusted depending on the length you prefer your necklace and bracelet to be.

* Necklace and Bracelet: Matching stringing material in desired length of necklace and bracelet combined, plus 4". I used 39" of brown waxed linen for a 9" bracelet and 26" necklace.

- * Necklace: Hook and eye clasp
- * Bracelet: Lobster claw and eye clasp
- * Necklace and Bracelet: 4 crimp beads
- * Bracelet and Earrings: Three – 1 3/4" head pins
- * Earrings: French ear wires, kidney wires, or studs with loops – one pair
- * Toothpick
- * Fabric or tacky white glue
- * Clear nail polish – the quick dry is handy
- * See through ruler to measure and mark calico strips
- * Sharp scissors
- * Knitting needle
- * Crimping pliers
- * Round-nosed pliers
- * Wire cutters

- * Safety glasses
- * Bead board to help plan your design

Hints to make your project successful

* Don't be intimidated by the length of these instructions. The project is super simple, but I have attempted to write the instructions so that even a new-comer to beading will be able to follow them.

* Choose calico that has a lot of variation and contrast in the colors for a really distinctive look.

* Before you start stringing, lay out your beads on a bead board to plan your design and necklace length

* When sealing the ends of beads with clear nail polish, remember to have plenty of ventilation

* Read instructions before you begin and ensure that you understand each step before continuing

* Test each color of calico with the clear nail polish before cutting to ensure that it will not discolor after nail polish is applied to the ends. I did not have any trouble with any of the colors I used, but it is better to test before wasting time making beads that you will end up having to discard.

So let's do it already!!

1. Measuring and mark your calico into thirty-one (31) 18" X 1/2" strips
2. Carefully cut the calico into strips
3. Choose one strip of calico and cut it into two 12" X 1/4" strips. These will make the beads for your earrings.
4. Roll each 18" strip of calico (right side out) tightly and evenly around knitting needle. After wrapping around the needle once, use the toothpick to apply a small dab of white glue to the inside (wrong side) of the calico. This helps to ensure that your finished bead will not unwrap itself while stringing. Completely roll the calico around the needle, ensuring that the calico is winding very tightly and evenly. If you are not satisfied with how it is rolling, unwind and start over. Apply another small dab of white glue on the end of the last wrap so that the bead cannot unwind. Set bead aside until glue is thoroughly dry.
5. Repeat step #4 with the two 12" X 1/4" strips to roll the beads for the earrings.
6. Allow the glue to dry completely on your beads. Now is a good time to catch up on reading the latest issue of Bead and Button, or even better yet, to browse the back issues to see if there are any projects you didn't think you could manage at the time, but now have the confidence to breeze through.
7. When white glue is completely dry, snip off any unraveled threads, and trim the edges so that they are straight and flush.
8. Apply clear nail polish to the edges of the beads. Make sure the fabric is saturated so that it does not unravel when dry. Note: I tried Fraycheck at first, and found that it did not prevent the fabric from unraveling. Set aside the beads and allow to dry completely.
9. Reserve one of the more unique matte glass beads to use as a dangle on your bracelet. Reserve 2 more smaller, matched sets of matte glass beads for your earrings. You should have 5 beads reserved.
10. Use your beading board to plan your necklace design. Use the matte glass beads between each calico bead. For balance, try to use only matte glass beads on the part of the necklace that will go around the back of your neck.
11. Use your beading board to plan your bracelet design. Measure your wrist and use the bead board markings to design it to the correct length. Most bracelets are between 7

12" to 8" long plus clasp. Because I have large wrists, I made mine 9" long, and these instructions reflect that length. Shorten or lengthen yours accordingly. Plan both necklace and bracelet before you start stringing so that you can make adjustments or swaps with beads before stringing either.

12. Slip one end of the stringing material for your necklace through a crimp bead, then through the eye part of your clasp. Bring the end of the stringing material back through the crimp bead the opposite way you went through the first time. Snug the crimp bead up against the hook, and adjust the stringing material so that you have about a 1" tail sticking out of the crimp bead. Use the crimping pliers to flatten the crimp bead and secure the tail of the stringing material.

13. String your beads. Slide the first beads over the tail of the stringing material to bury it.

14. When last bead has been strung, hold your necklace up to test how it will hang. Make adjustments if you do not like how it hangs, or how it looks.

15. When you are satisfied with how your necklace looks, thread the end of the stringing material through a crimp bead, then the hook part of the clasp, then back through the crimp bead again as you did with the other end of the necklace. Snug the crimp bead up tight against the hook and pull the stringing material tight so that there is no slack between the crimp bead and the last bead that you strung. Hold the end taut, and use the crimping pliers to flatten the crimp bead and secure the tail. Bury the tail under your last strung beads. If desired, you can apply a small dab of clear nail polish to secure the tail under the beads on both ends of your necklace.

16. To make your matching bracelet, follow the same procedure you used to string your necklace. Before crimping the last end of your bracelet, test it around your wrist to be sure you have made it the right length and have allowed for the extra length of your clasp. If you need to make any last minute adjustments, now is the time to do so.

17. When bracelet is completed, slide your reserved matte glass bead onto a head pin.

18. Put on safety glasses, and cut head pin so that it is about 1/2" above top of bead.

19. Use your round nose pliers to make a loop at the top of the pin. To make a loop, bend the top of the head pin so that it is at a 90 degree angle to the top of the bead. Position the wire against one nose of the pliers, grip the pliers closed, and turn the wire around the nose towards the 90 degree bend for a smooth and even loop. Excellent illustrated instructions for making wire loops may be found at Jewelry Making on About.com

20. Open the loop, and attach the dangle to the eye part of the clasp. Remember to open the loop by moving the ends sideways instead of increasing the loop diameter. Increasing the diameter will weaken your wire, and it will be impossible to make it look nice and smooth when you close it again.

21. To make earrings, slide one matte glass bead, then one small calico bead, then another matte glass bead onto a head pin.

22. Make a wire loop at the top of the head pin.

23. Attach the earring dangle to a french wire earring

24. Repeat steps #21 - #23 for second earring

25. You're done! Pat yourself on the back and have fun wearing your new jewelry!

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