

Author's Note: The tube bead cutter has been attributed to Elise Winters but has really evolved through a series of artists dating back to Laura Liska (Oakes) and Lindly Huanani. If you have access to back issues of the PolyInformer (the official publication of the National Polymer Clay Guild) Elise's version appeared in Volume VII, Number 2 (1996).



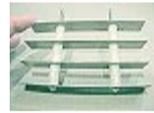
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Elise Winter's version is shown in this scan from the NPCG Newsletter. She graciously gave me permission to share it with our readers.



Here is Elise's version already made. Basically, it is a series of wallpaper blades connected with threaded rods and nylon spacers.



Linda Geer of Puffinalia has added the latest innovation of using wing nuts instead of regular nuts making it easier to put together. She may soon have the parts on her website so we can cut out the part of Elise's article that said, "finding your materials will be the most difficult part of your job."



A tube bead cutter allows you to cut multiple beads at a time and is used for the cylindrical beads popular in eyeglass leashes and multi-strand necklaces. Elise's directions call for beads formed on wooden skewers, which many have replaced with thin knitting needles or brass tubing or even wire allowing for easier removal of the beads.

Here is my version. You can see that I used five blades.

The parts: wallpaper scraper blades, nylon spacers, wing nuts, threaded rod, bamboo skewers, brass tubes or thin knitting needles. The nylon spacers come in several widths and Elise used multiples of the 1/8" size. The 6/32 diameter threaded rod fits the blade holes best. If you use a different size, be sure the wing nuts or hex nuts are the same size.



Wallpaper blades can be found at hardware and paint supply stores. They have two holes in them for inserting the rods. The original model had no holes in the blades necessitating extra steps of putting those holes in. Band-Aids were part of the supplies! The blades are very sharp and like tissue blades the cutting edge can be confused with the dull edge. **HANDLE WITH CARE.** I used to store mine in a Ziplock bag with a hole to hang on my pegboard and now it has its own drawer in my toolbox. Because you can use many configurations depending on the size and amount of beads you want cut at a time, I am not going to give you quantities. Elise's tool used six blades but I find four blades give me a longer bead and I like that better. You can also vary the thickness of your beads. And you can add more blades to cut more beads at a time.

The threaded rod usually comes in 12" lengths, easily cut with a fine hacksaw. Burrs may be filed off the ends. By the time Ravensdale '98 rolled around Elise had already further refined the cutter by using 6" threaded screws so only one end had to be secured. She sold kits containing 6 blades, 2 threaded screws and 56 spacers utilizing 4 between each of the blades.

In the interest of "science" I went out to find the supplies. I found the threaded rod, spacers and wing nuts at a hardware store. I found the blades at Home Depot which have added another innovation; a third hole that you can thread wire through for a handle or at least a marker for which side goes up. They come in a package of 5 and are made by Hyde. Also at Home Depot I found 6 inch long toggle bolts that would only need wing nuts at one end. But the diameter was smaller than the threaded rod and the wing nuts didn't fit. The toggle nuts will work fine.



Start your tool by threading all of the blades and spacers onto bamboo skewers until you get the configuration you want.

Next push your long screw into the hole pushing out the skewer as you go. Attach a wing nut at the end of each rod so the blades won't slide off. Keep the cutting edge faced away from you. And protect your work surface with a piece of scrap



cardboard. I purposely left the screws long since I am going to add more blades to make a larger tool.



When your cutter is assembled you can run a wire or cord through that third hole to mark the top edge. This is only to handle the blade assembly and should not be relied on for cutting the beads. I usually hold the cutter between thumb and fingers on either side of the threaded rod for stability.

There are a variety of ways to make the beads. Some people do them like a pen wrapping a core of scrap or other clay around the skewer, brass tube or knitting needle and then placing a second decorative layer around it like doing a bull's eye cane.



The most popular way seems to be placing a ball of clay in the middle of your bead holder and pinching and rolling this ball until it covers the needle or skewer. There is a tendency with this method to roll too vigorously causing the clay to come away from the holder and distorting the hole.

Easy does it. If you use a skewer, make sure it is not warped and powder it so the clay doesn't stick. I personally like the brass tubes. They come in many sizes and can be purchased at a hobby store that specializes in models (i.e. trains).

When you are ready to cut your beads rest your cutter on top of your log of clay and gently press and push the cutter away from you. As you cut eyeball the groove so it rolls around and meets evenly. The cut should be deep enough to make individual beads but doesn't have to go all the way through. The beads can be snapped apart after baking.



This is a great tool, fairly easy to make thanks to having blades with holes and using wing nuts. And now we have that third hole to make a handle. Who is going to come up with the next innovation?

