

The Essential Stringing Supply and Tool List for Knotted Cord Jewelry

By Sandra Younger

Making knotted cord jewelry has never been easier or more fun! The Knotty Do-It-All miraculously removes both the frustration and mystery from this process through simple-to-understand instructions and knotting techniques. Along with your new Knotty Do-It-All tool, however, you'll also need a few specific supplies and materials. What are these? The following is a list of essentials you'll want to have on hand:

Stringing Materials

Stringing materials fall into two distinct categories: *synthetic* and *natural*. Synthetic cords are human-made materials, usually nylon-based, which can be melted using a thread burner or lighter. Natural cords are leather, silk and cotton cords that require glue since they cannot be melted and will only burn when heat is applied. Although there are many different kinds of cord available, the following stringing supplies are what I personally like and use most often:

Synthetic Materials

Nylon stringing cords are strong, durable, resistant to water or fading, and can be easily melted. In my opinion, there are no drawbacks to using synthetic cords for jewelry making.

The brands I most often use are Waxed Jewelry Cord, Waxed Cord 2, S-Lon, and Faux Leather.

[Waxed Jewelry Cord](#) comes in both Round & Flat. The Round is available in two thicknesses, .90 mm and .50 mm, and is a two-ply cord that can easily be split if you need a thinner strand. The wax coating is very light and does not squish out when knotted -- it has tack but is not gunky. This cord is great for macramé, braiding, and general bead knotting.

[Waxed Cord 2](#) is a three-ply cord. It has a different look and feel than the Waxed Jewelry Cord. It is available in three thicknesses, .45 mm, .55 mm, and .65 mm. This cord is excellent for braiding, bead crochet and micro-macrame.

[S-lon](#) is available in several thicknesses: #400, #18, fine, micro, and “D”. You can use beeswax to give these cords more stay/memory. What is “stay” or “memory”? When you are doing macramé, for example, the knots will sometimes tend to spring apart just after being tied, but beeswax will help keep them tight and in place. For synthetic cords, I highly suggest using a Thread Burner to melt cord ends in order to keep them from coming undone. S-lon is great for micro-macrame, knotting beads, bead crochet and braiding.

[Faux Leather](#) is another variety of synthetic cord. It is smooth, cannot be split, and is available in several thicknesses -- I most often use .5mm, 1.0mm, and 1.5mm. The ends of this cord fray very easily but you can make stringing easier by melting these in advance. This cord is a great choice for making single-strand pieces, multi-strand bracelets or necklaces, and ladder-stitch items. It is also an excellent base for macramé, macramé slide knots, and coil knots. Faux Leather is a great alternative to natural leather as it never degrades with time and use. I

suggest using a lighter to melt the ends of this cord in its 1.5mm variety since it is quite thick.

Fishing line (Fireline) in .006mm thickness has a very special place in cord knotting so I'll explain when and how I use it. When using fishing line, however, you will also need English Beading needles. The brand I prefer is John James, sizes #11 and #15, with which I make ["leadered" needles](#). See video [here](#).

Natural Materials

Natural stringing materials are widely used because they come in a variety of textures, have artesian appeal, and have been traditionally used for knotted cord jewelry; however, care must be taken to preserve their beauty and durability. It is strongly suggested that jewelry items made with natural materials not be exposed to water any more than necessary.

[Cotton Cord](#) comes in many colors and thicknesses, although color and thickness ranges are not so broad as are available with the synthetics. This cord is economical, durable, and holds knots well. It will fade and puff out if exposed to water. I do not mind the faded, puffed look and as a matter-of-fact sometimes intentionally soak my pieces in water to get that time-worn quality. Cotton cord is ideal for single-strand and multi-strand bracelets or necklaces. The adhesives I recommend include Super New Glue or Hypo-cement.

Silk is one of the most historically respected stringing materials. It is the most luxurious and softest of all cords. One

of silk's most desirable characteristics is its smooth "drape," a primary reason it is considered the best choice for traditional pearl knotting. Silk can also be braided. Not all silk cord is created equal, however. When choosing silk be certain it does not stretch. Another problem with silk is that it can break more easily than its synthetic counterparts. The best adhesives to use on silk are either clear nail polish or Hypo-cement for fabric. Never use Super Glue on silk as stiffness and discoloration may result.

Leather Cord has perhaps been the most traditionally popular material for bracelets and necklaces. It is available in a wide range of colors and finishes including polished, natural, stressed, and metallic. Leather's most widely used thicknesses include .5mm, 1.0mm, 1.5mm, and 2mm. Leather cord is a great choice for ladder bracelets, multi-strand necklaces or bracelets, and particularly, Moose Knots. When knotting leather, be careful not to pull your knots too tight as the leather may break. I recommend the very thin .5mm only for braiding as there is virtually no stress placed upon individual cord strands and the chances of breakage are considerably lessened. I suggest using Super New Glue for finishing leather knotted pieces.

For a complete guide to Stringing Materials offered at my website and their uses, please refer to this chart:

STRINGING MATERIALS GUIDE

TECHNIQUE

CORD RECOMMENDATION

	knotting	macrame	braiding	crochet	tassels	ladder frame	slide knots	macrame endings	pearl knotting
waxed cord 2 all sizes	✓*	✓	✓	✓*		✓		✓	
waxed jewelry cord round		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
waxed jewelry cord flat	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
s-lon	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
nylon 12	✓	leadered needle highly recommended							✓
Griffin cord	✓	built in needle available in several sizes							✓
Beadsmith #6	✓								✓
tassel cord					✓				
faux leather						✓	✓		
Chinese knotting cord	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Earth Elements cotton	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
leather 1 mm			✓			✓			
leather 1.5 & 2 mm	✓	✓				✓			✓
silk	✓	leadered needle highly recommended							✓

synthetics
can be melted

natural fibers
might need glue

* waxed cord 2 cord must be stretched before use.

Other Supplies and Tools

Scissors and Large Nail Clippers: sharp Scissors are great for trimming nylon cord; Nail Clippers are excellent for trimming leather.

Thread Burner and Lighter with adjustable flame: along with your Thread Burner, I suggest a set of rechargeable batteries as half-charged batteries do not melt cord sufficiently well. A lighter *with an adjustable flame*, used on the lowest setting, is ideal for melting the thicker ends of Faux Leather.

Pearl Knotting Needle: this Needle is long and significantly speeds up pearl and bead knotting.

Glue: Super New Glue, Hypo-Cement for fabric, Clear Nail Polish, and 3D Crystal Lacquer. Do not use Super Glue Gel, as it will not absorb well and clumps on the surface of your cord.

Permanent Markers: useful for coloring in the ends of leather after it's been cut or trimmed.