

Tips for Submitting Tutorials to Magazines

By H Ward of Continuum Designs

<http://www.continuumdesigns.co.uk> - handmade art beads and findings



Sugar Candy Bangles by H Ward - a project published in Polymer Café 2011

A Brief Introduction

Hi,

I'm not going to claim to be an expert on anything - except eating cake. You want to know how to eat cake, come to me. I rock at it. However, I know that getting into writing tutorials can be a little bit scary, so I thought I could share a few tips on creating and submitting a tutorial, based on my own experience - of both writing tutorials, and being rejected! Here we go...

Preparing and Submitting a Proposal

- Magazines often differ in how they expect work to be submitted. Usually you can take a low-res photograph of an example piece of jewellery and attach it to an e-mail, along with a brief description of the methods and materials used. However, some magazines will expect the actual item to be posted for consideration, so check their submission guidelines first. At the end of these tips you'll find a handy link list of most magazines' guidelines or contact information; many of them also include downloadable tips on writing tutorials that can be extremely helpful.
- If you don't feel confident enough to propose a tutorial, try submitting photographs of your best or most unusual work to magazine galleries, making sure to include all your contact information. This can draw attention to the techniques you have to offer, which can in some cases lead to magazine staff contacting you regarding tutorials. At the very least, if your work gets included in the galleries you'll get a great confidence boost, and the thrill of seeing your work in print!
- Make sure you know what the focus of the magazine is, and that your piece is a good fit. It's also helpful to browse some back issues to see if any similar projects have appeared recently. If you're submitting a button bracelet, it's less likely it will be accepted if a button bracelet was in the month before, no matter how unique yours is.
- Does it seem prudent to photograph all your tutorial steps before you submit your proposal, or while you're waiting for an answer? Well, often it's not. Sometimes magazines will ask if modifications to colour or theme can be made, and if you want to be published, you'll probably agree to this, rendering a lot of your previous work useless.
- Don't send the tutorial proposal to several magazines at once! What will you do if more than one actually accepts? Equally, it's advisable not to send a tutorial proposal that has already been published prominently online; magazines tend not to like second-hand tutorials.
- If it's accepted, try to get a contract, or at the very least an agreement on payment amount and date written out in an e-mail. Magazines work on a long schedule (or maybe it just seems like that when you're waiting!) and it's easy to get overlooked after you've submitted all the work.
- However, just because a tutorial is accepted it still doesn't mean it will be published in the specified issue, or at all. Sometimes magazines hold projects back for future issues, or decide the project doesn't fit after all.
- Don't take rejection personally! I know, easier said than done. But there are many reasons why a tutorial may not get accepted: perhaps it doesn't fit with the magazine's focus, or maybe they already have enough projects booked on the medium you proposed. Just see the words in the rejection e-mail for what they are - Nothing Personal - and submit your project to another magazine.

Photographing the Tutorial Steps

- Always (well, where possible) photograph on a plain white background. If you have to show steps with tools that are stationed on a work bench, at least tidy up all the extraneous tools and materials!
- A tripod is essential, but buying a good one can be expensive. You can buy ones for a few pounds/dollars/dinars but they can really wobble; to solve that problem, stick a bit of raw polymer clay or blu-tack to the legs and press it to your work surface. Then set the self-timer, press the button, and run away until the picture has been taken. Voila, no unsteadiness.
- Keep wipes or a damp cloth by your side at all times to clean off the surface you're shooting on; until you start taking macro shots, you don't realise how much dust and random debris accumulates out of thin air. I often use those handy spectacle wipes that come in individual packets to clean both my camera lens, and my shooting area.
- Details really matter; every single fault shows up in macro shots, and at the size at which they're printed in publications, they'll show up even more. So take a few test shots of your pieces, then study them on your computer monitor, or print them out at the required image size and resolution. Circle what stands out most to you, and make sure that's fixed first.
- It's okay to fudge things a little bit; if a jump ring isn't perfect, turn it around to an angle where it doesn't show. If a wrapped loop looks lopsided, hide it out of focus. I'm not, repeat NOT, saying it's okay to do this with items you're selling or giving away, but as long as you can do these techniques properly in your work, covering up a small mistake in a tutorial photograph can save you re-doing work or wasting materials.
- Use 'action' shots with pliers/your hands/tools. It makes the tutorial more dynamic, because let's face it, only showing the same components in slightly different stages can get a bit tedious. Consider adding a few relevant background props too, but be careful the shot doesn't get too cluttered, and that the focus remains on the technique.
- Make sure your nails are clean, not painted a violent shade of yellow, and are free of chipped nail varnish. Sounds obvious, but sometimes the obvious things get missed.

- This is a personal preference, but I find it a lot less stressful to make up 'stage' pieces for each step; by this, I mean I don't create the components and assemble them into a full piece as I'm photographing. Rather, I make a separate piece for each step and leave it in that incomplete stage, so that if I have to re-take any photos, I can just get out that 'set-piece' and re-photograph it without having to undo any further work.
- If some of your 'steps' have more than one direction to the reader, consider showing the series of actions evolving from left to right in one of your photographs; for example, a bead on a headpin, a loop turned in the headpin above the bead, and finally a loop in the final stages of wrapping.
- Ensure that your pictures are of a high resolution. Many magazines ask for a setting of 300 dpi (dots per inch) which means (very simply!) that they will look good printed at a larger size. If you're not sure how to get 300dpi, don't worry too much; simply set your camera settings to the best quality you can get, and make sure the pictures are sharp and in focus.

Writing the Instructions:

- For these, make up a test piece, writing down every single thing you do as you go, even if a step seems like it would be intuitive (this is more important if you're doing a beginner piece, obviously).
- Find a friend who is at the level of expertise that your tutorial will expect and ask them to read it through to make sure your directions are clear. If you don't know anyone who will/can do this, try to make your tutorial piece yourself by doing only the things specified in your instructions; if it's not in the instructions, don't do it. Now see if this resulting piece looks like it should. If not, you may have to add some extra steps.
- No matter how much you love words, you're going to have to cut down on them if you're writing to a publication's specifications. Edit, edit, edit the heck out of the steps, removing unnecessary adjectives, adverbs etc. Basically, use the absolute fewest words you can without sounding like Tarzan ("You, cutters, wire. Snip snip.") You'll probably still be over the word count by the way, but if by some miracle, you're not, you can add in some details and verbal scenery afterwards.

Finally:

Good luck, and feel free to get in touch if you want to ask anything else. I can't promise I'll know the answer, but I might know someone who does!

Links List: Submission Guidelines for Magazines

US magazines:

Art Jewelry

<http://art.jewelrymakingmagazines.com/en/Magazine/Submission%20Guidelines/2004/09/Submission%20guidelines.aspx>

Belle Armoire

<http://www.stampington.com/submissions/callsChallenges.html#jwl>

Bead Unique

<http://www.beaduniquemag.com/resources/submissions.shtml>

Beadwork

<http://www.beadindaily.com/content/SubmissionGuidelinesforBeadworkMagazine.aspx>

Step-by-Step Wire

<http://www.jewelrymakingdaily.com/content/StepByStepSubmissionGuidelines.aspx>

Stringing

<http://www.beadindaily.com/content/StringingContributorGuidelines.aspx>

Bead Unique

<http://www.beaduniquemag.com/resources/submissions.shtml>

BeadStyle

<http://bds.jewelrymakingmagazines.com/Magazine/Submission%20Guidelines/2003/08/BeadStyle%20Contributor%20Guidelines.aspx>

Bead and Button

<http://bnb.jewelrymakingmagazines.com/en/Magazine/Submission%20Guidelines/2001/07/BeadandButton%20Submission%20Guidelines.aspx>

UK Magazines

Make Jewellery

<http://www.makejewellerymagazine.com/index.php/contact>

Bead

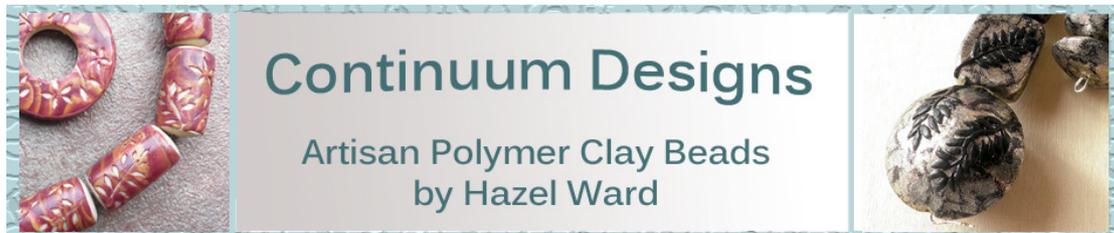
<http://www.beadmagazine.co.uk/gettinginvolved.html>

Beads & Beyond

<http://www.beadsandbeyondmagazine.com/article.aspx?a=3790>

Making Jewellery

<http://www.makingjewellery.com/MJContact.asp>



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