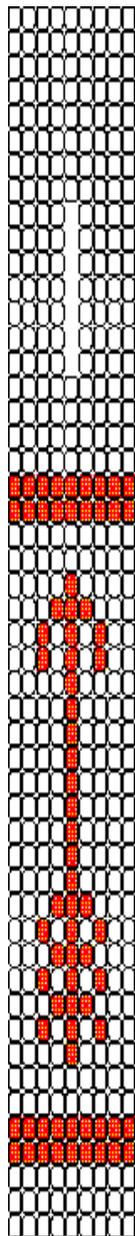


Order of the Arrow Pocket Ribbon



Pocket ribbons have become a common addition to the uniforms of many members of the Order of the Arrow. Hanging off the button of the right pocket of the official uniform shirt, the pocket ribbons are being used in place of the standard Order of the Arrow ribbon (with arrow) sold by BSA National. These ribbons, though not officially approved, come in a number of formats. Cloth embroidered ribbons are common, as well as silk-screened felt or cloth, and finally hand-made beaded ribbons. Making the beaded pocket ribbon is not difficult. To make one of good quality, however, it is necessary to get the best materials and take your time to make it properly. A few years ago, I designed a bead-pattern and worked out a procedure for making these so that the ribbon that is produced hangs freely (without cloth/leather backing), yet is strong enough to withstand years of standard uniform abuse.

Supplies

Beads

I recommend that you get the beads from a good source. You need a size 11-0. Local craft stores often don't provide great quality. The bags of beads you get are all different widths and sometimes not even common in size. Also, differing manufacturers don't seem to measure beads using the same ruler. So #10 beads from one source will be different than those from another. Also, dye lots are not always constant (even from the same vendor). You'd be surprised how different white can be from white. Buy all your beads from a project from one source. A good source I have found is *The Wandering Bull* in Attleboro, Massachusetts. They sell beads in small packages, as well in larger sizes. For the pocket ribbon, you need a package of opaque white beads, as well a package of red. To make the ribbons stand out, I like to use transparent red. These beads are often a little larger (wider) than opaque beads. It is best to actually visit the store and compare the beads prior buying, but the cost of getting an assortment is not that great, and you will probably find a use for them later — so don't fear mail order.

Thread

Don't use standard sewing thread for this. If you're going to make something of quality, you want it to last. All the better craft stores (*Tandy* leader, *Wandering Bull*, etc) have thread available that is designed for beading (Nymo, a nylon thread). It has a core that is stronger and longer lasting than the standard cotton/polyesters. I use size "OO" nymo. Also, if you move on to making larger projects consider using some cotton covered carpet thread (available in sewing stores) for the main thread on the loom.

Loom

Craft stores such as Tandy, and Michael's (in the northeast) all carry a standard wire-frame beading loom that will work fine for the pocket ribbon project. For larger projects consider buying the larger looms from Tandy, or making your own. Often an old picture frame works well.

Needles

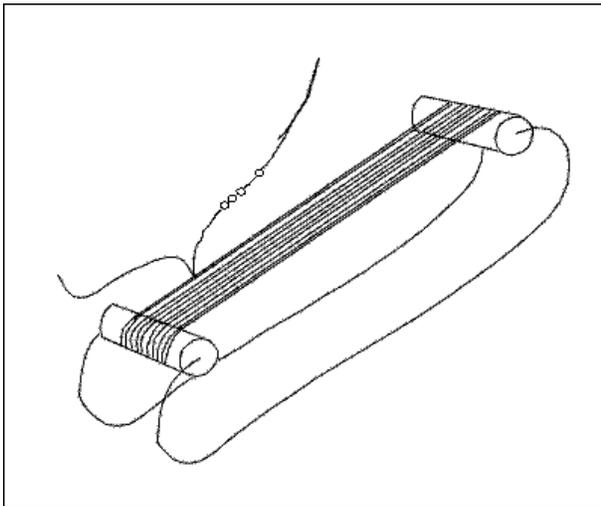
Beading needles are also very common, and can be purchased at most craft stores. Buy them in packages of five or ten, you're going to break them. Also, while you're at it, a hunk of beeswax is very helpful for coating the threads and making the needle/thread get through the beads.

Other

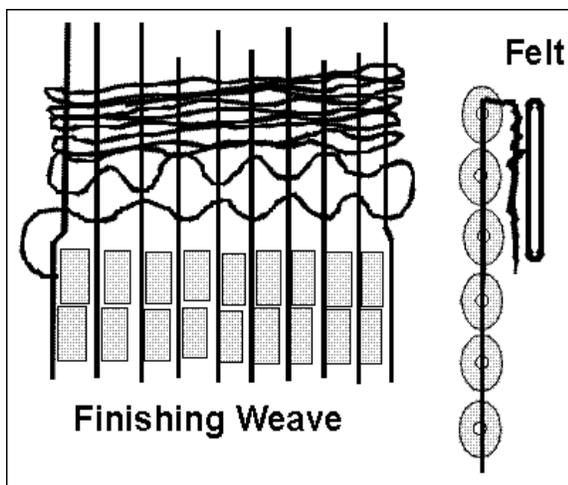
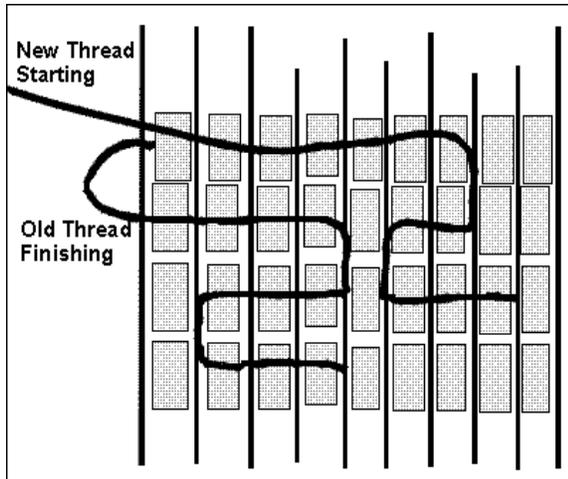
The pocket ribbon will also need some felt and some glue that can be used to glue the felt to the thread and beads.

The Project

This project should only take about an hour. Often, I have used a larger loom and made three or four of these at once, but they still take about the same time to bead and finish each of them.



1. Thread the loom. For this pattern we will need to have nine beads across, so the loom needs ten of these warp threads. Be sure that the strings are tight, but not overly so. They are fine if they are all about the same tension, and are reasonably tight (no single loose threads).
2. Cut a piece of beading thread that is about 2-3 feet long. Tie one end to the leftmost warpstring, leaving about a foot of excess string and two feet to use for beading. Following the instructions from the beading loom, you start to weave lines of beads onto the warp threads. Follow the pattern below, starting from the bottom.
3. When you near the end of a thread (about 6 inches), complete the row you are on and then weave the thread back through the beads already on the loom. Do not tie



- off this string, as the knot will stand out and reduce the quality of the final product. Weaving back and forth through a few rows of beads should be sufficient.
4. To start a new string, do the same as above. Weave a new thread through a few rows of beads already on the loom, so that the string comes out of the last row of beads that you completed weaving. Then continue adding rows of beads as normal. When completing a string, or adding anew one, be sure to pay attention to how many strings already go through a bead before you try to send the needle through again. If you overstress a bead with the needle, one of the two will break. If a bead breaks within the pattern, the only thing to do is to remove all the rows back to that bead and replace it.
 5. Weaving the beads around the button hole is not difficult. Just bead up one side and then down the other, finishing off the string within the main section of the pattern. Then start a new string right after the button hole to complete the beading of the project.
 6. I like the ribbon to hang freely, without having to be backed with fabric. To do this you need to finish off the ends so that they are solid and will not release the warp strings. On each end of the project, weave the excess thread back and forth through the warp threads as though you were weaving a fabric. This weaving should continue for about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch. It is important to keep this weave small and tight. It will not be visible, but will hold your project together for its lifetime.
 7. After the weaving of the warp threads is complete on both ends, cut the project from the loom, close to the point where the weaving ends. Be careful not to pull the warp threads out of the weaving at this point.
 8. Cut a small piece of white felt, about inch by $\frac{3}{8}$ inch. Put a good supply of glue on

the felt (enough so that it sinks in, but not through the felt). Place the felt glue-side down onto the 3/8 inch of woven threads on one end of the project, and fold both the felt and woven thread behind the beaded pattern. The felt and beads need to sandwich the woven thread between them, with the felt fitting cleanly behind the beads. Repeat this on the other end and let the glue dry.

Patterns

