

Macramé Bracelets*

by Pam Crouch, @pammalamma

I like to make all kinds of jewelry and then try to sell it at farmer's markets. It started during Covid when I had not much else to do other than doomscrolling. I decided to use some of the many boxes of jewelry parts I'd been collecting since the 1990s. Soon I had made enough jewelry that I had no room for it, so I started giving it away. But after all my friends and relatives were gifted with earrings, I still had too much jewelry so I decided to start selling it as people had been urging me to do for years.



I started at the farmer's market nearest my home. It was rough going at first having my tent blown away by rain and wind, ruining all my packaging and breaking some things, but I never wanted to let go of the wholesome atmosphere: people coming together to share good local food and handcrafts, usually on a sunny day. Seeing so many cute babies and dogs was especially comforting after the isolation of lockdown. I love it when children get excited about my jewelry and most people are extremely nice. It's fun to make

silly jewelry and see people's reactions to it, like the letter bracelet that says "antidisestablishmentarianism." (I just sold it on Black Friday 2022.)

A lot of times people say when they look at my jewelry that they like it but they "don't need it." That's true. Jewelry is a luxury that no one really needs. Technically nobody even needs wedding rings.

But when we think about why people buy wedding rings even though they don't need them, we see what jewelry is: a container for meaning. Jewelry is a fine chain that connects us with people, time, and place. It's like a physical manifestation of what we hold in our souls. How appropriate then that we like to make friendship bracelets at camp: we want those slender, colorful cords to tie us to those new friends even after we go back home to "normal" life.



At vibecamp I taught a jewelry class about how to make macramé bracelets. The project I chose was too difficult for the time allotted and people had trouble finishing, causing me to be occupying rough wooden dining tables with jewelry

parts when dinner started. A lot of people who couldn't make it to the lesson told me they had FOMO ("fear of missing out") and wished they could have attended all the events. So here are the instructions in case you missed them or didn't get to finish. Who knows, maybe we can even turn this into a tradition at vibecamp.

Happy beading, and may your camp friendships last even longer than your friendship bracelets.

Materials



- Metal central element such as a ring, washer, infinity symbol, or quatrefoil
- Needle that the cord can fit through if the cord is very flexible or silky
- Masking tape
- Flexible tape measure



- Needle nosed pliers for jewelry making, preferably two pairs if you choose to use a clasp. These should be the flat edged "chain nose" pliers, not the rounded nosed

ones. Glue such as white glue or other jewelry glue

- Scissors
- Toothpicks for spreading glue
- Optional: an even number of beads which have holes large enough for four widths of your chosen cord to pass through.
- Some type of cord or embroidery floss that is thin enough not to make the central element look small. Cut a 4.5-yard length of the cord for the slider option and 4 yards for the clasp option (see next page). You can even use leather cord.



Choose now whether you want a metal clasp or a slider made of cord which makes the bracelet adjustable.

- For the clasp option (use this for leather cord especially) you'll need a medium to large metal clasp with a large jump ring that fits through the clasp opening and a smaller jump ring that fits through the tiny attachment loop of the clasp.
- For the slider option (not for leather cord) you can optionally find two identical beads that match your central element and that fit nicely over two widths of your chosen cord.

Instructions

1. Measure the wrist you want the bracelet to fit and remember/record the measurement.



2. For the clasp option, cut four, 1-yard pieces.
3. For the slider, first cut the cord in half, one half for each side of the bracelet:

If you started with 5 yards, you should now have two pieces measuring 2.5 yards each.

Next, cut each half of the cord as follows:

Two one-yard pieces and one half-yard piece.

You should now have a total of 4 one-yard pieces and 2 half-yard pieces. This will be more than enough for one bracelet.

Be sure to stack your cords by size so you don't get them mixed up while working.

4. Attach the cord to the central element:

If the element has loops, put the cord through a loop and tie a very small knot to secure it as in Photo 1. (Skip next step)

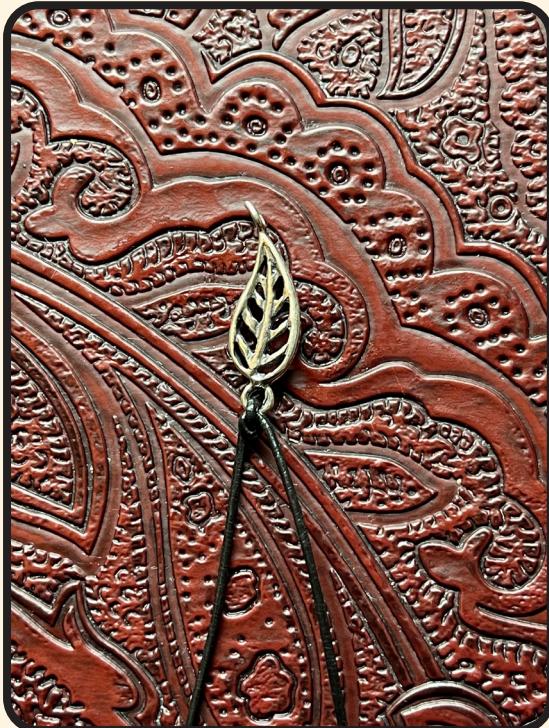


Photo 1

5. If the element has no loops, use a lark's head knot:
 - a. Bend the cord in half as in Photo 2, which shows a white leather cord being put through a black metal oval



Photo 2

- b. Put the bend through the element a short way
- c. Insert the cord ends into the bend so the cord will encircle the element as in Photo 3



Photo 3

- d. Pull both cords taut.
6. Pull the cords out straight and find another one-yard piece of cord and place it under the cord on the bracelet element. Bisect the new cord underneath the cord attached to the central element as in Photo 4.



Photo 4

This part can be kind of fiddly so if you have trouble making the working cord stay put while you work, you can try using a small piece of masking tape to hold it in place temporarily. You can use one piece of tape to hold the working cord down and another piece to keep the central element taped to the table as in Photo 5 and Photo 7



Photo 5

7. We will call the cords attached to the bracelet the “center cords” and the cord we just added the “working cord.” See Photo 6

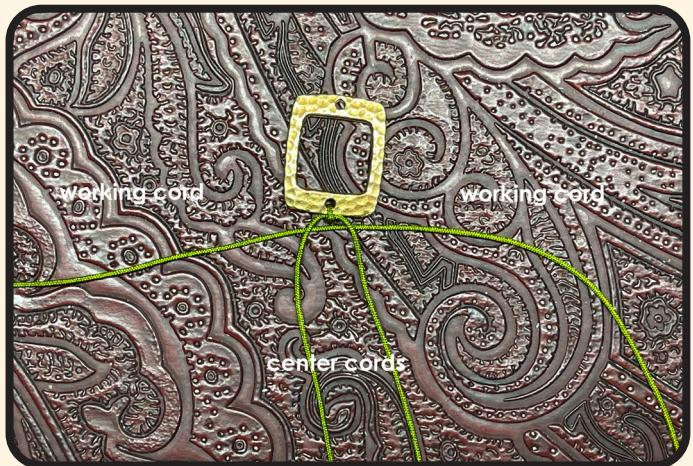


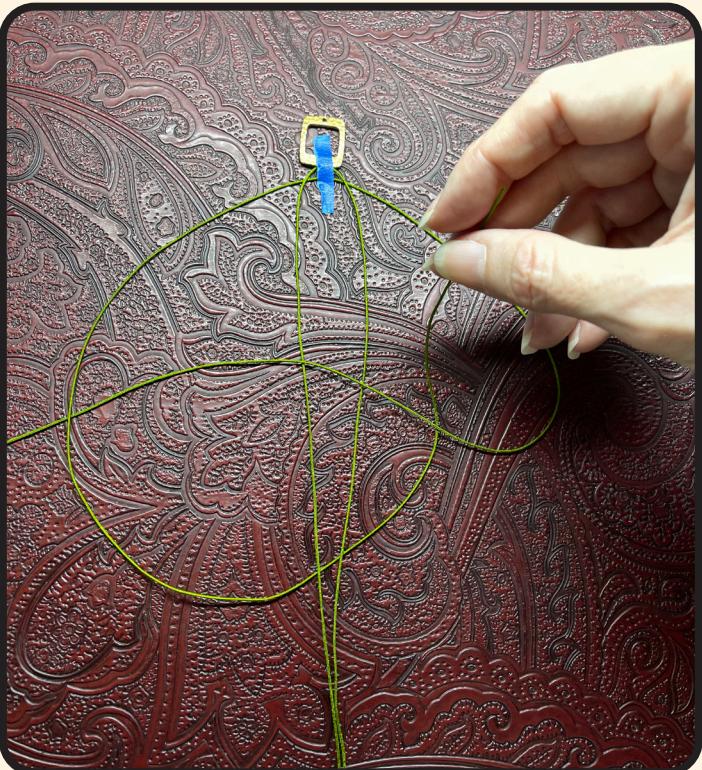
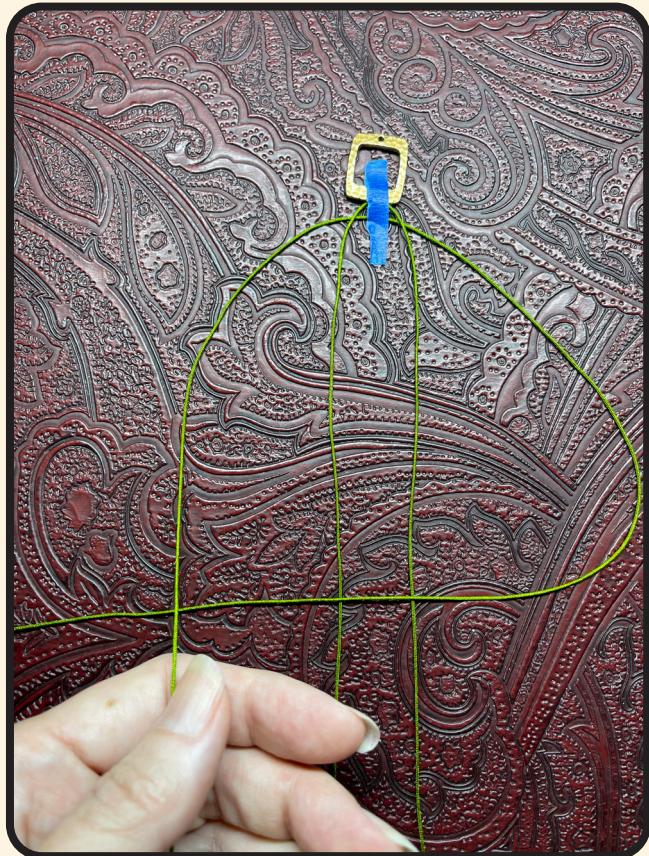
Photo 6

Cross the right working cord over the center cords as in Photo 7.

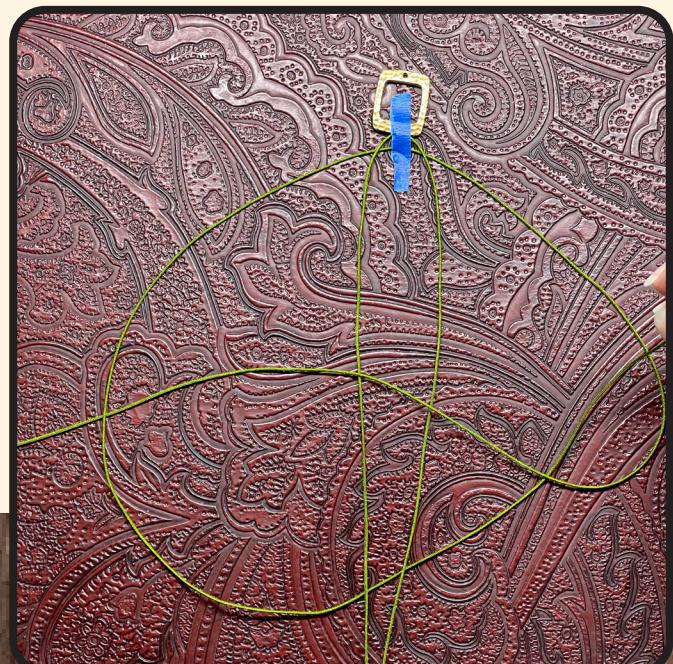


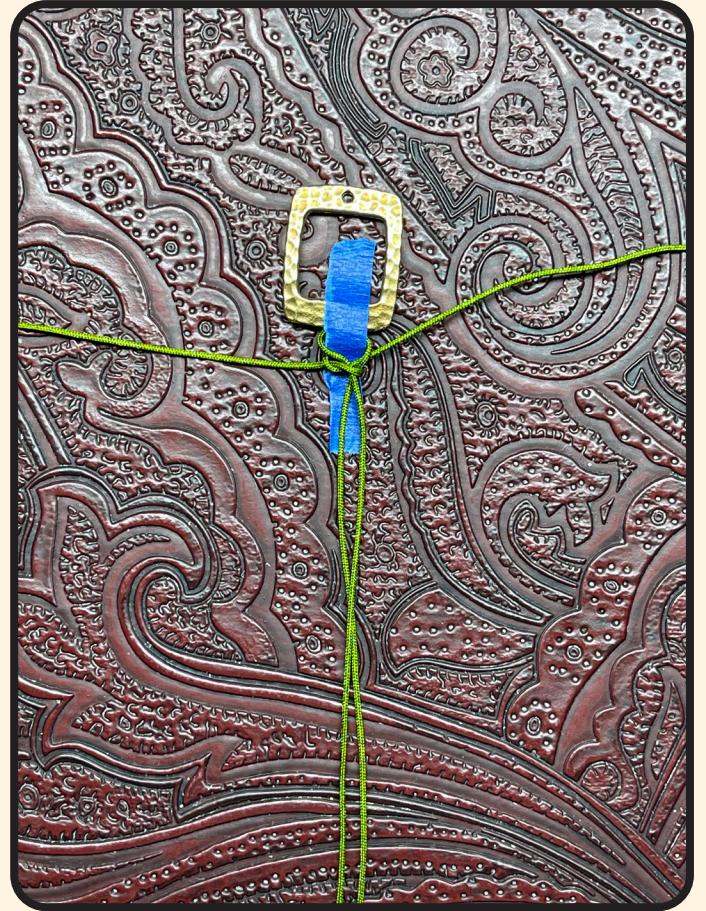
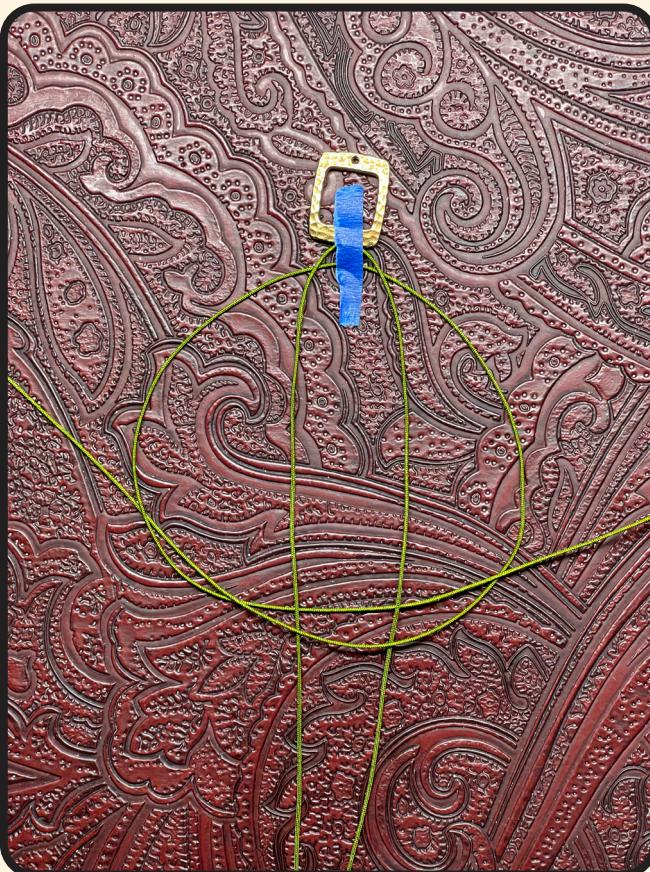
Photo 7

8. Now pull the left working cord down over the right working cord. The cords should kind of resemble a backward number 4, with a sort of point to the right and an upright part on the left.



9. Pull the left working cord under all the other cords and up through the opening on the right as shown, then pull on both cords until a knot forms. See the next seven photos.





10. Pull the center cords down and the knot tightly up against the central element.
11. You have now made your first macramé knot. The working cords have switched sides. It should look like Photo 8



Photo 8

12. To make the next stitch, simply do the mirror image of the last three steps: cross the left working cord over the center cords as in Photo 9.



Photo 9

Note: If you were to make the next knot by crossing the right working cord over instead, and you kept doing so, you would end up with a spiral macramé bracelet. So, if your cord starts to twist, check whether you have made the knots alternating left, right.

13. Pull the right working cord down over the left working cord, making the "4," as shown in Photo 10.

While you work, frequently pull down the center cords to keep them straight and not crossing over each other.

Hint for keeping track of stitches: Notice the small "bump" each stitch forms (Photo 11). Pick up the cord on the same side as the bump to start a new stitch. This is a technique that is similar to watching the purls when doing knitting.

Note: In general, as you go along, if something seems a bit off, "when in doubt, take it out" is the best policy to create a beautiful result.

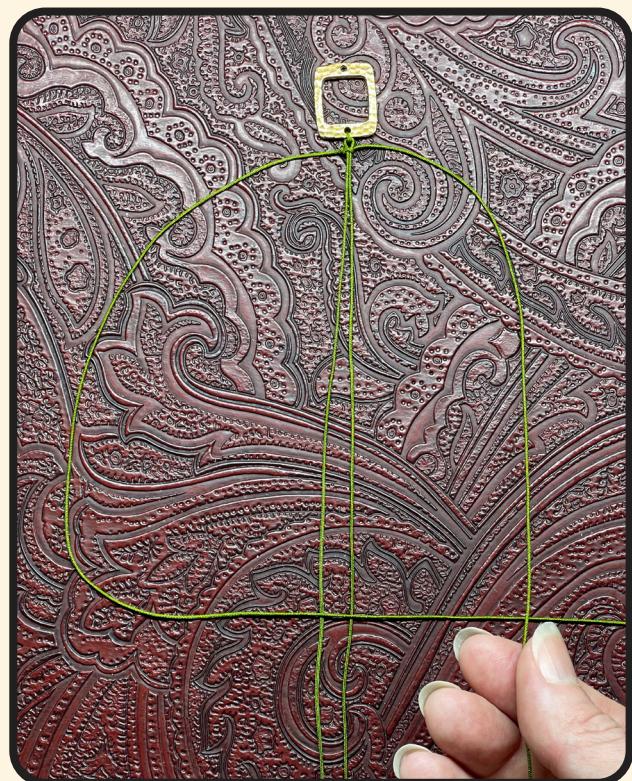


Photo 10

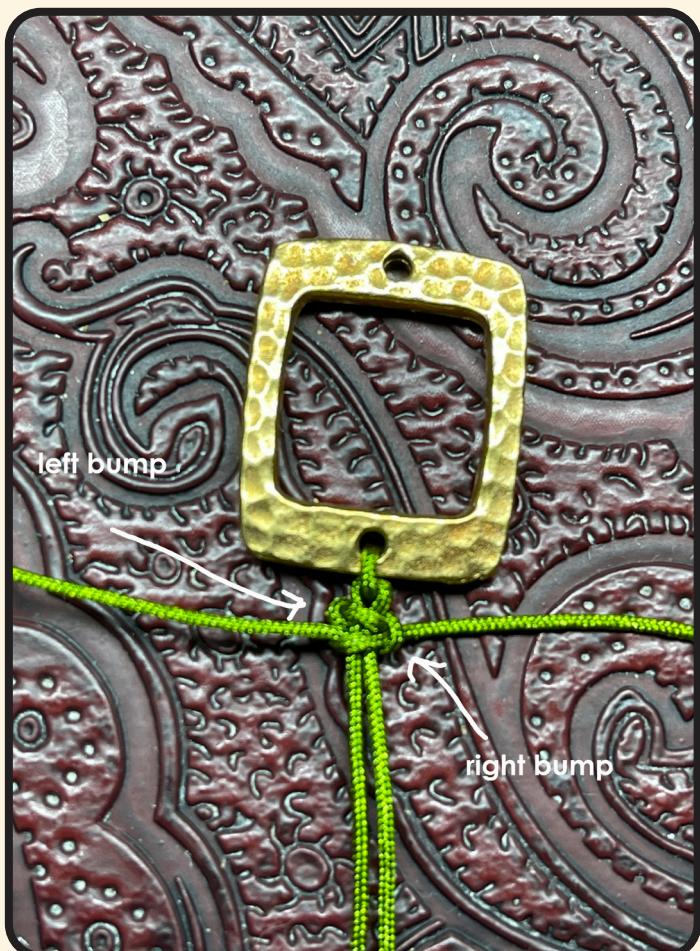


Photo 11

14. Pull the right working cord under all the other cords and up through the opening on the left as shown in Photos 12 through 14.



Photo 12

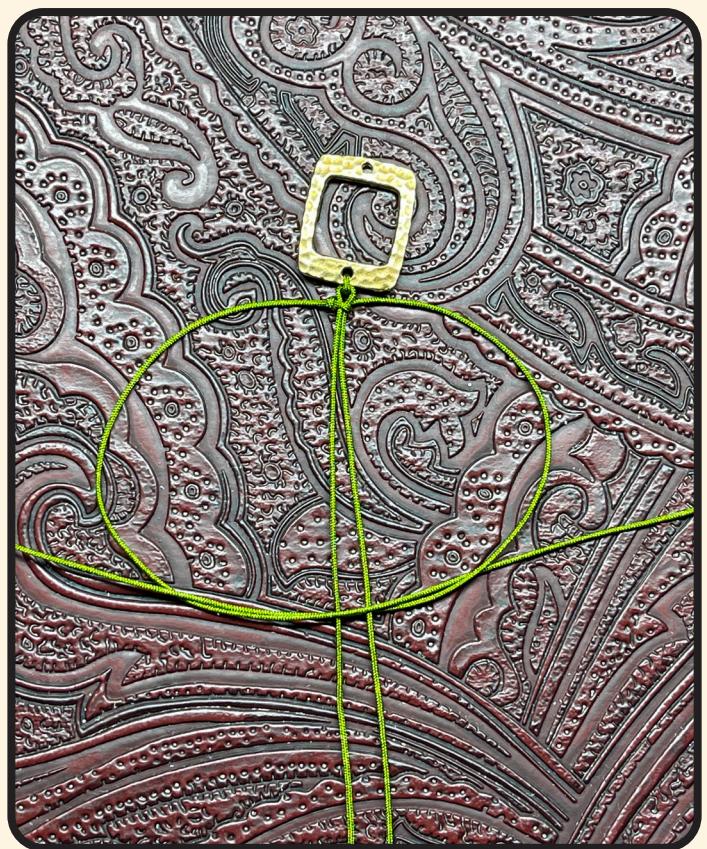


Photo 14

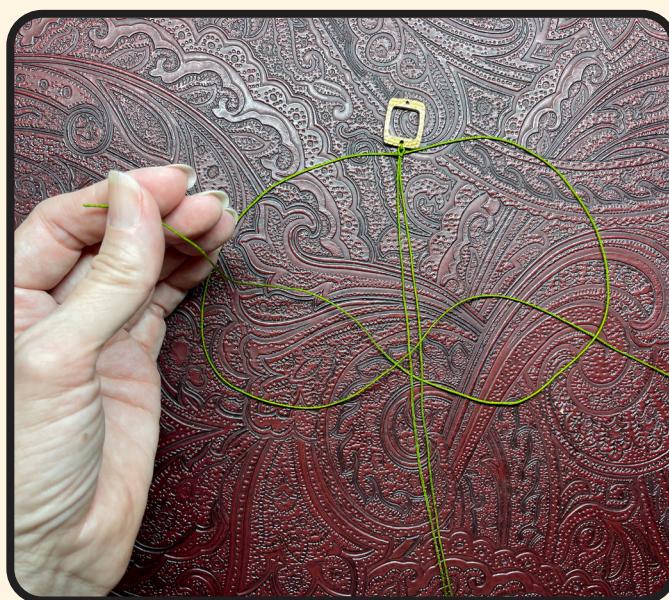


Photo 13

15. (Optional, Photos 15 through 16) After you have made from 2-5 knots, it is time to add extra beads if you wish: put all four cords through the bead and pull it up to the end of your knotted work as shown. If you do this, be careful to make sure the cords are still arranged just as they were after they exited the bead. This could require a bit of experimenting with tugging on the cords.



Photo 15

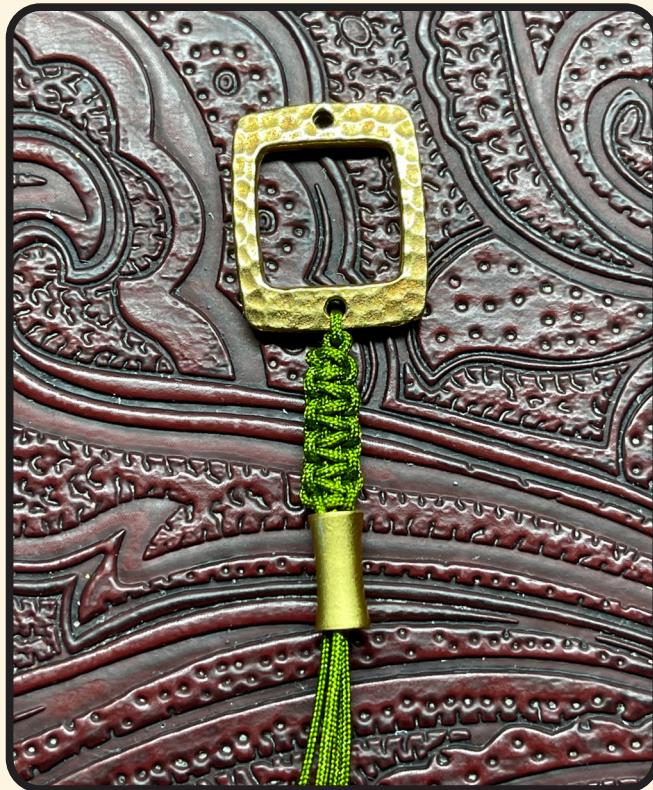


Photo 16



Photo 17

16. Continue to make knots, alternating the crossing over stage to the left and right, until you have made enough to go halfway around your wrist, which is half the measurement you recorded earlier. To measure the bracelet when checking if it's (halfway) long enough, start in the middle of the central element as shown in Photo 17.
17. Use a piece of masking tape to secure the end of the bracelet as in Photo 18, so you can finish the other side, restarting at step 6.



Photo 18

But if my instructions are too confusing, try looking at some videos about "macramé simple square knot."

18. After the other side of the bracelet is complete, tape it with some masking tape to secure it temporarily also.
19. Re-check the length of the bracelet to see if it fits or measure the length of the entire work. Photo 19

Most people like to wear bracelets that are slightly larger than their wrist so they will be more comfortable. For example in my case, my wrist is 6.5 inches meaning I would like the bracelet to be 7 inches, so I made the bracelet about 6.5 inches to allow room for the clasp. It's good to make your work

about a half inch shorter than you would like it to be, to allow for the clasp or slider.

Make sure both sides have the same number of knots and that the knots seem consistent and well-formed.



Photo 19

20. To finish the bracelet we start by weaving in the ends. To do this you will need a thicker needle such as a tapestry needle or some chain-nosed pliers if you used leather cord.

Leaving the center cords hanging loose, take the working cord ends and work or sew them under the last two knots on the bracelet as shown in Photos 20 through 21. The side you tuck the ends into will become the “inside” of the bracelet, so just be aware of that if you have a one-sided central element.



Photo 20



Photo 21

21. Repeat weaving in ends on the other side.
The result should look similar to Photo 22

Wait until the bracelet is finished to glue the ends.



Photo 22



Photo 23



Photo 24

22. If you plan to make a macrame slider to make the bracelet adjustable to many sizes, follow the next steps, but if you plan to put on a clasp, skip to step 34.
23. (Slider only) Bring the ends of the bracelet (the center cords) to overlap each other and make a circle out of the bracelet as in Photo 23.
24. (Slider only) Use masking tape to keep the ends next to the bracelet and out of the way as in Photo 24.

25. (Slider only) Using the half-yard long cord, lead it under the back of the bracelet where you just brought the ends over each other. This will be your working cord. Begin to make macramé knots again, starting with the right working cord and alternate with the left until about a half-inch of new knotted length is holding all the ends together.



Do not pull the cords too tightly when making this macramé slider, so the slider will be able to move easily.



Make at least 5 knots, but no more than 8 knots so that the bracelet won't get too long.

26. (Slider only) To finish the slider, use the needle or pliers to pull the ends of the slider's working cord up under the stitching you made just as you did at the end of the bracelet stitching. Be careful when using fiber cords not to let the needle go through the center cords: that would attach the slider to the center cords, keeping it from moving (not good).

27. (Slider only) Test the slider to see if it can move freely.

28. (Slider only) Begin finishing center cord ends: When the slider is complete and works, pull the bracelet gently open and try to fit it on the largest part of your hand.



Keep the bracelet in this open position for the next two steps.

29. (Slider only) If desired, slide a bead onto the ends of the center cords on each side.



30. (Slider only) Tie knots about 1/2 inch from the slider as shown in Photo 25.



Photo 25

31. (Slider only) Glue the knots you just made with a small speck of glue as in Photo 26.

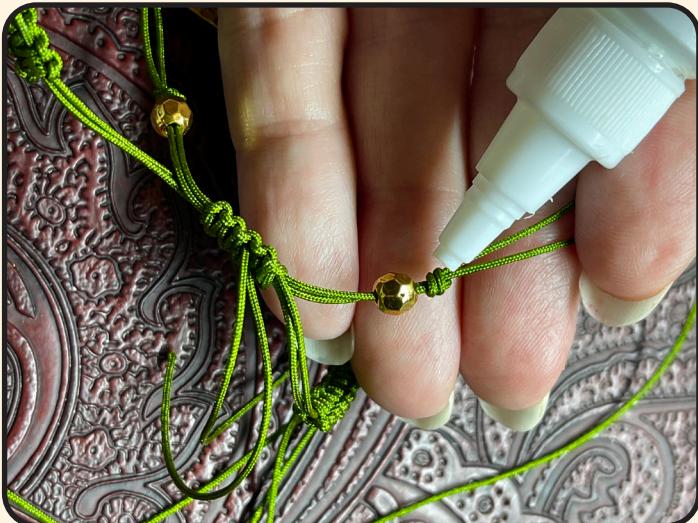


Photo 26

32. (Slider only) Also glue the place where you just wove cords back into the slider, being very careful that the glue doesn't seep through and glue the slider down. You might need to use a toothpick to apply the glue to keep it from spreading too much.

33. (Slider only) When the glue is dry, clip the ends of the cords close to the work as in Photos 27 through 28.

Skip to step 40.



Photo 27



Photo 28