Basics of Wire Wrapping

BY NICK REGINE  In this step-by-step article, Nick Regine, Swarovski’s Professor of Crystal, along with Wyatt White from Beadalon, show you the basics of wire wrapping to create beaded chain, and settings for jewelry stones. With a few simple tools, techniques, and practice you can learn to create a variety of jewelry, accessories, and more.

What You’ll Need…
- Crystal beads and fancy stones.
- 20 or 24 gauge wire for beaded chain, and 20-22 gauge half-round wire and 20-24 gauge square wire for creating settings for jewelry stones. (Note: The higher the gauge you choose, the more wire you will have showing in your design.)
- Round nose pliers.
- Curved chain nose pliers.
- Flush wire cutters.
- Wire banding pliers.

The Steps…
A. Creating a beaded chain
1. Cut a piece of 20-24 wire approximately 6” long (the length will vary depending on your project). Hold the piece of wire with the round nose pliers about 1” in from the end and bend the wire to the side to create a right angle.
2. Take the top wire (the short end) and bend it back around the top of the pliers to make a loop. Bend the wire just past the longer length of wire.
3. Turn the pliers to the side slightly and continue to wrap the wire around the pliers to form a complete loop.
4. Using the curved chain nose pliers to hold the loop, take the short end of the wire between your thumb and forefinger.
5. Wrap the short end of the wire around the longer end three or more times, depending on your design.
6. Remove the curved chain nose pliers and use flush cutters to cut off excess wire.
7. Add a bead. Repeat steps 1-5 on the other side of the bead.
8. Squeeze the wrapped wires tightly with round nose pliers to make sure the edge of the wire is not poking out, then cut off the excess wire with flush cutters.
9. Repeat steps 1 and 2. Connect this new wire to one of the loops in the wire-wrapped bead. Repeat steps 3-8. Continue the process until you have the length of beaded chain desired.
B. Creating a jewelry stone setting

10. Straighten the square wire with your hands. (The wire comes in a spool and is easier to work with if it is straight.)

11. Cut one piece of the square wire, approximately 10" in length (the length of the wire will vary depending on your project), then cut three more pieces, about 6" each.

12. Cut one piece of the half-round wire, approximately 6".

13. Center the half round wire into the wire banding pliers and close the pliers to make a double right angle.

14. Place the four pieces of square wire that were cut in step 11 into the double right angle of the half-round wire, with the longest piece of wire on the inside of the half-round wires.

15. Use curved chain nose pliers to hold it all together in the center.

16. Pull one of the ends of the half-round wire up and the other end down and tighten by squeezing gently with the pliers.

17. Bend one end of the half-round wire over the square wires, creating a band; again, squeeze with the pliers. Repeat this step a few more times until you feel a structure take form. Finish folding over the wire as needed, then use cutters to trim any excess.

18. The finished band wire.

19. Bring the long ends of the square wires straight up, and fan out the shorter wires to build the prongs.

20. Place a large jewelry stone in the center of the wire structure and bend the “prong” wires over the stone one at a time to secure it.

21. The finished pieces. You can simply loop the “prong” over on top of the stone or create a more decorative setting by making swirls with the wires on top of the stone. Use the longer ends to create a bail for a pendant necklace, a ring shank, or other items.

The Professor of Crystal, Nick Regine is the star of Swarovski’s “Ask the Professor” video series, which gives expert instruction on how to master such tasks as gluing, hot fixing, soldering, and basic jewelry making. For a step-by-step instructional video on soldering, go to MJSA Journal Online at MJSA.org or visit Swarovski’s “Create Your Style” YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/createyourstyletv.