

Seashell Tutorial

Written by Photographed

By Dawn Scannell

Tools and Materials

1/16" Mandrel dipped in bead release

Graphite Marver with handle

Pointed Tweezers (non serrated tips)

Stainless Spatula Tool (or other blade type tool)

One rod of Ivory 5-6mm

One Ivory Stringer 2mm

One Pastel Pink Stringer 2mm

One Medium Pink Stringer 2mm (see stringer tip)



Introduction

Although I made my first seashell by mistake, I now look at pictures of real shells for inspiration. The conch shaped shell is my favorite. I often do sets in "fantasy colors", and while they are very pretty, I still prefer the more realistic colored shells.



Using your ivory rod, wind enough glass onto your mandrel for the size bead you want. Marver it into an off centered bicone shape with a shorter side, which will be the top of the shell, and a longer side which will be the bottom of the shell. If you decide to add decorations such as melted in dots or stripes, do it at this point and then heat and reshape your bead back to your off centered bicone.



Heat the top (shorter side) of the bead until glowing. Using your spatula tool, spiral an indentation starting from the point of the bead and continue around until you have spiraled the entire top of the bead. Remember to warm the lower half of the bead at this point so it doesn't get too cool and crack.



Right at the point where the spiral ends, "paint" a line down the length of the bead with your pastel pink stringer. Then paint another slightly curved line below that forming a narrow, backwards letter "D". Now fill in that area with your pastel pink, heat and lightly marver back into shape. Now apply the darker pink using the same method, but in a smaller section right on top of the pastel pink. Heat and reshape.



Heat the lower section of the bead, concentrating heat on the pink area until it has a good glow. Using your spatula tool, quickly stab the bead on the flat edge of the pink "D" shaped section. You may have to reheat and stab it again until you get a nice indentation. This will create a flap of glass along the side of the bead.



Heat just the flap area until it glows. Using a quick pinching and slight pulling motion, pinch up a "lip" on the seashell. If your tweezers get too hot, quench them in water, reheat your bead and keep pinching until you have formed a nicely shaped lip.



Spot heat sections of the lip, and starting at the top and working your way over, ruffle the edge with your tweezers. Do this by heating a small section and with your tweezers, twist slightly clockwise. Heat right next to it and twist counterclockwise and so on until you have a nice ruffled edge.



Using your ivory stringer, apply small dots to the top section of your shell as shown. Melt the dots in about halfway and you're done! Pop that beautiful shell in the kiln and anneal according to your usual schedule. Now you have a gorgeous, everlasting seashell to use in your next jewelry design. It also looks nice to place a group of shells in a crystal bowl for home decor. Have fun.



www.art-insomnia.com

Stringer Tip

For the medium pink I either pull a stringer from a nice medium opaque frit, or you can mix a small amount of Rubino Oro with pastel pink to get a darker shade. To pull a stringer from frit, I heat the tip of a 1/8" stainless mandrel until red hot, dip in frit, melt in and repeat until there's a pea sized gather to pull a stringer from. To mix a darker pink, heat the end of a pastel pink rod, then using a thick 3mm stringer of Rubino Oro, stir the gather of pastel pink, melting in the stringer color as you go, then pull into a thin 2mm stringer.

Finishing Tip

For an even more realistic look to your shell, you can etch your bead, leaving the inner pink lip area shiny just like it is in real seashells. You can mask the pink inner lip area by painting on regular white glue with a small paint brush. After the glue is completely dry, dip your bead in etching solution for 4 minutes, then rinse right away, using an old toothbrush to scrub of any glue residue. Even a mermaid would have to take a second look to see if it's real or not!