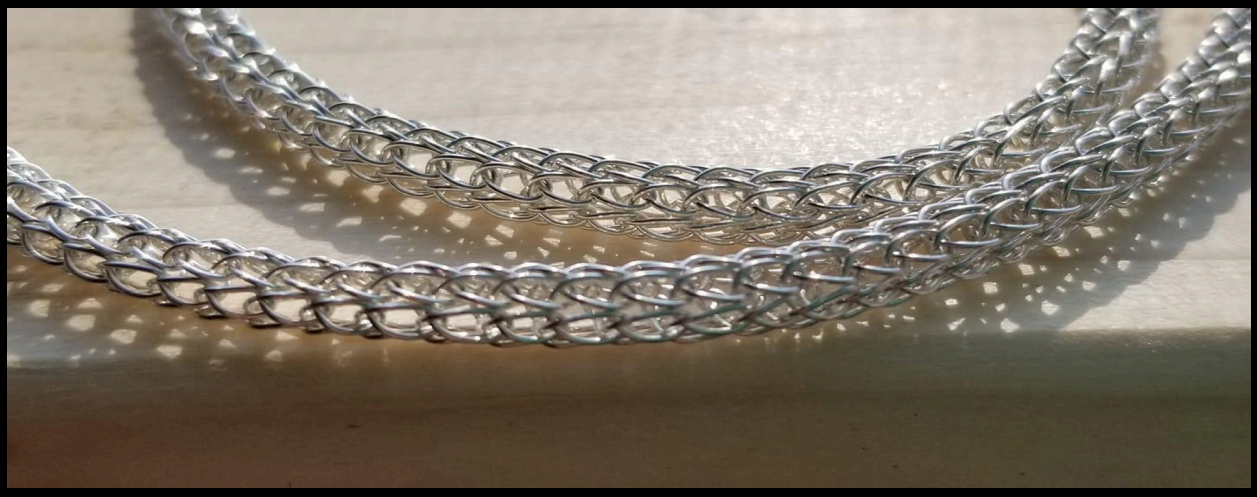
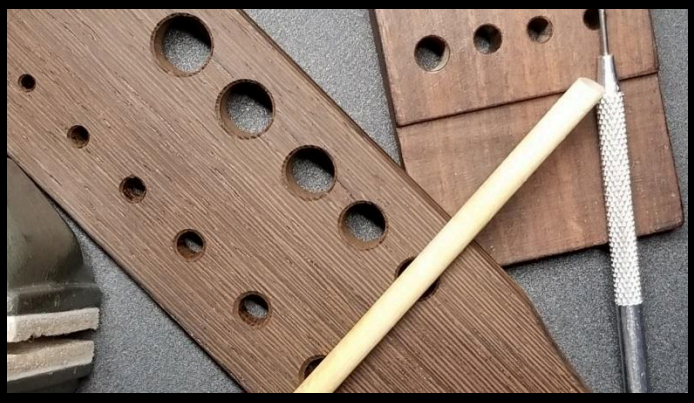


Beginnings and endings – Exploring the Viking knit

REIGNING TWILIGHT – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

Let me begin by saying, in no way do I consider myself an expert in this technique, I feel that experts spend hundreds if not thousands of hours perfecting their craft…which to be sure, I have not. That being said, I think I can hold my own and that you can as well.

There is a virtual treasure trove of tutorials on the technique, some more informative than others. My main goal of this document is to add a few insights as well as alternative methods for you to add to your creative arsenal.



Pictured: draw plates, needle tool, wooden dowel and padded bench vice

The basics:

As with anything, you need to start somewhere, so let's begin with the tools. Depending on the gauge of wire your tools may differ slightly in diameter, a larger gauge would do better on a larger mandrel with a heartier awl to lift the loops when necessary and alternately a smaller gauge would do best utilizing smaller tools. I work with smaller gauges so the tools I utilize are more on the petite side with the largest mandrel size I've used about the diameter of a pencil and that was to allow for multiple loops.

Suggested items for use to knit around; wooden dowel, Allen key (wrench), pencil, marker, coiling mandrel, Viking knit tool, or generally anything cylindrical that will allow you to freely move the weave off of it.

Suggested items for use in lifting the loops; solder pick, awl, gasket pick, needle tool (for paper craft or sculpture), T-pin, stick spudger (electronics, watch repair), or anything pointed that will allow you to pry the loops up and will not break either the tool or the wire.

Other tools; cutters, pliers (chain, flat or needle nose), small bench vice.

Note: While a bench vice is not necessary, I enjoy not having to set down and pick up my work but realize that a stationary workspace is not always possible.

Wire Lengths/gauge:

The rule of thumb seems to be a wing spread (the length between your grasps with your arms outstretched to the sides to create a t), mine would be 58" (147.32cm) which would equate to a little over 5' (1.48m) which is a little more than the 36"-48" (92-122cm) that I normally use and a bit less than 6' (182.88m) that I recently used for the pictured project. I absolutely agree with the wing spread suggestion as the last foot got a little more work hardened than I would have liked and thought the perfect working length would be about… shocker 5' (1.48m).

Why is the length important? Most importantly you want to be able to have a controllable length of wire and that may change depending on the materials used as well as the gauge, copper and fine silver are quite malleable and stay workable for a fair amount of time if you are careful not to overly work it, in the case of fine silver, it remains very malleable even in a "work hardened" state. Alternately; brass, bronze and "filled" metals lose workability quite quickly and unless you plan to anneal it (never recommended for filled), smaller lengths are advised to keep it workable.

Note: Always begin with dead soft in chain making that calls for weaving, knitting, drawing or anything that requires you to work with it repeatedly. While fine silver would most likely be fine in the Viking knit, connections would be better soldered or fused rather than using the cold connection method due to its malleability (my personal view on the matter, others may feel differently).

Picking your mandrel:

You want to choose a mandrel that will allow for the number of loops you desire and the ease of adding into the loops with the gauge wire you are using. For example: a 22ga (0.71) 6 loop knit would require a larger mandrel than a 28ga (0.38) 6 loop knit but possibly not a 8-10 loop knit in the 28ga (0.38). Alternatively you may use the same size mandrel on a 22ga (0.71) 4 loop knit that you do on a 28ga (0.38) 6 loop knit. To make it short and sweet you don't want to over crowd your loops and make it hard on yourself or have overwhelming amounts of space in between and waste wire needlessly or get a result you may not want, you will of course find your own way for both your end expectations and comfort. What you are expecting on the draw down should also be a consideration for loop number, gauge of wire and whether you are doing a single, double or triple weave.

Note: The gauge, loop number, draw down compression and weave style impact not only the look but the flexibility of your final result.

Pictured: examples of weave differences

Flowers for everyone! Aka, starting your knit

Starting your knit, it's easy… or is it? I honestly think it's a bit of a pain, to me the "flower" start is a mess with its twists and loops, whether you do the initial creation over a card or ruler.

You could of course buy the tool specifically designed for the Viking knit, create your own tool or create a "flower" as stated above, what you inevitably end up doing is up to you but I will share a few suggestions.

Do you have a bead cap? Some bead caps have cut outs just perfect for the beginning of the Viking knit (almost mimicking the top of the Viking knit tool). Take the bead cap, use the center hole to tack it to the top center of a wooden dowel and you're good to go! Remove the tack and you will

be able to push up your knit as you add, as with the Viking knit tool you will have to cut your wire off the “flower” and add wire or heavy cord to draw your completed chain through your draw plates.



I sharpened the end of one dowel to allow for easier access and added a coil to the other to accomplish the same thing.

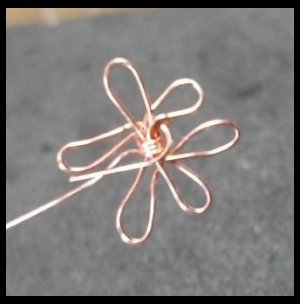
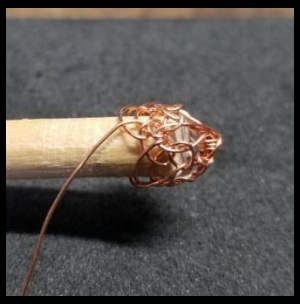
Do you have some tacks? By placing the tacks around your wooden dowel you can create a structure to loop around, once you have a few loops in place remove the tacks and you’re all set to push your knit up as you add. This method would work best with a larger dowel and ball headed tacks and as with the previous method would need wire or cord added to draw your completed chain through your draw plates. Just make sure your tacks are secure at the beginning and you remove them as soon as you have a few rows done.


Ok, so here we are to the wire “flower” making. I know, it’s just waste wire right?! Personally my waste wire is; overworked, compromised by deep tool marks or too short which would make it pretty unusable for a anything including a starting framework, anything else in my eyes is usable and I would rather not waste it, so… this is my method to reduce loss.

Note: This method will absolutely have to be held or tacked in place for the first few rows. If you want to be able to tape/rubber band or secure it around the mandrel this is not the method for you.



Double the diameter of your dowel and wrap your wire around a mandrel of that size. Your end count of wraps should be half the number of loops you are expecting to utilize, if you are going with an odd number you will either omit one and do two loops in one “petal” or have a “petal” that you bend out of the way or combine with another. Take your coil, you should have done 3 wraps for 5/6 loops, stretch it and wrap the center of that tightly (two or three should suffice).

Fan out your “petals” and begin your weave. Depending on how even your “petals” are, the knit will take a few rows to even out. Depending on how far you plan on drawing the chain down there shouldn’t be cutting necessary prior to drawing but you will need to wire or cord added to go through your draw plates.

I know, I know, I keep mentioning cord! I actually prefer looping a nylon cord through the end of my chain to draw it through. It so far has served me well and I don’t have to worry about the potential little bits of wire breaking off on the draw that can go flying.

Knit steps:


Image 1: Utilizing a bead cap for start. Image 2: Removed bead cap and loose cut ends.


Image 3: Aligning loops to allow for cord. Image 4: Cord inserted through aligned loops.

Kinks and connections

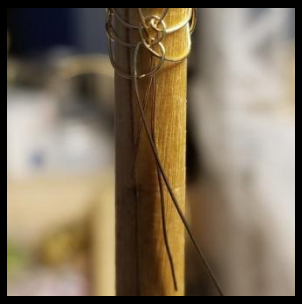
Unfortunately you most likely won't be able to finish your chain without making a connection and how you make that connection is important, not only for a chain that doesn't have ends poking out on the draw through but one without the kinks or knit inconsistencies that are often seen at the connection points (If you look at my knit examples, you will see evidence of the additions). The examples precede my preferred method which I will go over as well as a few other methods. Any of the below methods may or may not work for you and they do what they were designed to do which is to make a connection, I encourage you to try them all to find which works best for your needs.

Regardless of the splicing technique you end up utilizing, you will begin with something that looks like the above image.

Technique 1 (Credit Beadaholique)



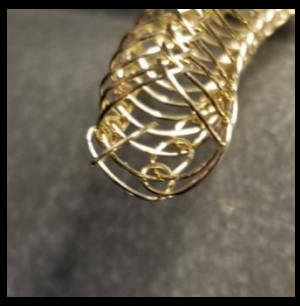
Leaving your end wire pointed downward you feed the new wire from the top and down behind the unfinished loop. Secure the two wires together, masking tape or a clip will do well for this task (either, being removed after the first few loops with the new wire).



When making loops over the tail ends, including those wires for the first 3 (ends should be contained within loops), while it wasn't mentioned, I would clip what is left of the visible tails after the 3rd rotation.

Note: While this works well for a heavier wire or multiple knit I wouldn't recommend it for thinner wire or single knit merely because it creates a somewhat rigid area where the ends are concealed and may not move or hang well. I also noted a little slide of the weave due to the wires not being secured together, since this method was designed for use on the Viking knit tool this may account for the loop slide.

Technique 2 (credit Jewelry Supply)


Remove knit from your dowel and bend end over the bottom of your loop, into the center of the knit tube. Leaving about a half inch (12.7mm) as a tail, form a second loop over the first and continue knit (the tail should be concealed within the center of the knit tube.


When you have completed the first rotation, catch both loops of the addition from behind.

Note: This method does a good job of securing the wires so that there is no loop slide but it does have a double loop that may be noticeable on the final result and add a very small area of rigidity that may make a visible kink on a smaller wire knit or single weave.

Technique 3 (credit Kary Kilmer & MarioBud)
These two techniques are so similar I couldn't rightly list them as separate techniques.



Begin by bending the end over the complete loop and into the knit tube. Using round nose pliers create a hook


Feed your addition wire through the same loop as you did for your end loop. The hook you created should hook onto the wire leading into the loop above your last. Keeping the hook in place with your finger continue on with knit, after the first few loops it should be held in place with its own tension.



Variation: Instead of ending with the tail over your loop and bending it inward into your knit tube, you slide it under and connect the hook to the same wire as the previous method and continue on with your knit, holding the hook in place until it is held with its own tension.

Note: This is probably suited to a heavier gauge wire or denser knit, I did find it mildly problematic and with other techniques I wasn't happy with the double loop that was created. At the very least I would elongate the hook if I utilized this method again, preferring the second variation.

Technique 4 (credit Lily-Tree & Raftark)
As with technique 3 these two methods are so similar I couldn't rightly list them as separately.



Begin by feeding your addition wire from behind on the last loop, the addition wire should be positioned closest to the dowel so that the loop is sandwiched between the tail and the new wire.

Holding the tail wires together, bend the addition down to look like it is an extension of the loop and continue the knit. You will be catching the wire tails within the loops for the first 5 rotations.


After reaching the end of the 5 rotations, cut off ends and continue knit.


Variation: Instead of leaving your tail straight, you will bend it up and into the center of your knit tube.

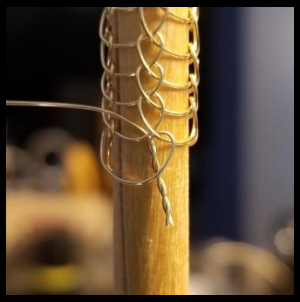

Feed new wire behind the last loop and fold over and continue knit as if it is an extension of the original wire.

Note: The main difference between these two methods is the extended area of rigidity in the first variation. The second variation was my go to until recently.

Technique 5 (credit Reigning Twilight)



On your last loop, do not loop into the loop above, consider it a half loop. Your splice will be behind the loop so that it is completely hidden, no double loops. Add your addition wire through the other side of the loop and secure them together, masking tape or a clip will work well for this temporary task.




Twist tail wires together, you will want to secure wires but be careful not to tighten so much that you affect the natural loop that would have formed if there had been no addition, remove excess tail so long as you have twisted the wires well enough that they will not come undone. Continue on with your knit, do not catch twisted ends in any loops, it will remain inside of the knit tube.

Note: I created this method so that I would never see a double loop or the seam of the addition. When utilizing this you may notice that the addition loop ends stick out slightly from the knit, merely push them flat against the dowel so they lay flat like the rest.

Technique 6 (credit Yvonne Williams & The Siren and The Pirate)
These are virtually the same method with one merely being a more relaxed twist than the other.



Add addition wire through the loop past your end loop as if you were continuing knit. Draw through until tail lengths are similar and twist them together.


Continue on with knit, you may wish to cut some of the twist end off so that you have less hidden within the knit tube.

Note: This method effectively achieves what technique 6 does in regards to hiding the splice and alleviating a double loop, provided that it is drawn down far enough.

Professional endings!

Nothing says professional like a prefinished end cap. These come in a variety of shapes, sizes, metals and attachment options; crimp, tension, solder, one only needs to be aware of what diameter chain and choose the correct inner diameter option, and have the appropriate skill to complete the attachment process, but… is buying prefinished for you? Let's explore some alternate methods.

Creating your own end cap is not only the artistic and personalized option but it also opens up sizing and material options that may not be readily available and you don't really need any heavy duty metalsmithing skills.

Pictured: filigree tube beads and paracord beads

Creating an end cap from a tube, tube bead, barrel bead, paracord/knife bead:

The materials you need are; corresponding metal tube or tube bead (already sized to application in both length and inner diameter), 22ga (0.71) of corresponding wire to create the loop for the jump ring and/or closure attachment, bailing pliers (or mandrel) & cutters.



Begin selecting a bead with the same inside diameter as the chain's outer diameter, my chain was about 2mm. Next measure your beads height, this one is about ¼" (6.35mm). You will need a measure of wire that will be capable of being; bent in half (loosely), extend beyond your bead (forming a link to attach a jump ring or clasp) and fold in the ends to grasp your chain. I used 2 lengths of 1.5" (38.1mm). Fold your wire over evenly to form a "U", select the appropriate length to bend in your ends, do this on both sides.



Cut off any extra at the ends, you only want them to extend into about half of the width of the chain, you may also choose to hook the ends up to grasp the chain better but a 90 degree bend should be fine. Make a hole in your chain to accommodate the bent ends, the top of your chain should not extend beyond the top of your bead, my bead measured ¼" (6.35mm) so I placed my hole a little less than that. Be sure your hole is in the center of the chain rather than off to one side.



You need to check if the top of your loop will fit through your bead, if it doesn't use flat nose pliers to adjust the "U" bend so that it makes it through. You will need to open this back up at the end so only reduce its size enough to clear the inside of the bead. Once you have the loop sized, attach it to the chain by pinching the sides in so that the loop is closed over and able to be inserted into the bead. Feed the link end of chain through bottom of bead (depending on design) be sure that the chain feeds smoothly through, using your flat nose pliers to condense the weave if necessary but only enough to fit snuggly through bead (you don't want your bead to be able to slide onto your chain). Once your loop is through your bead, you may need to enlist some round nose pliers to accomplish this task, keep feeding it through until the connection to your chain is just out of sight,

hidden by the bottom of the bead. Now open up the top of the loop to secure the bead, otherwise it will slide off at the top.

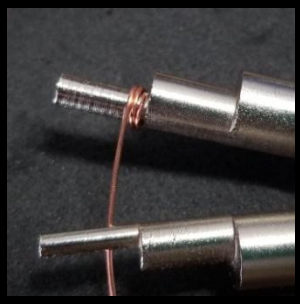
Note: This method should work with any metal bead provided it's sized appropriately.

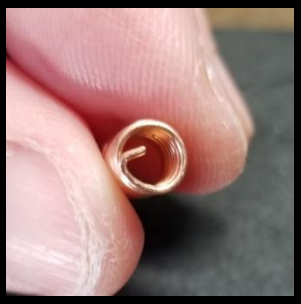
Pictured: closed top loop top coil end cap with stop to keep chain secure and wire edges concealed

Creating a coil end cap:

You could actually purchase coiled end caps but they are so simple there really isn't much of a reason not to make your own. For these coiled end caps I used 2 - 6" (152mm) lengths of 22ga (0.71) wire.

The materials you need are; 22ga (0.71) or larger of corresponding wire, bailing pliers (or mandrel) of the same size or very close to the drawdown diameter of your chain & cutters.





Begin by coiling your wire around the appropriate sized mandrel, once your coil is of your desired length (provided you are working from a spool) cut and bend a small portion in toward the center. The length should not extend further than the center of your coil. This bend will secure your end cap to your chain and hide the end of your coil so that it does not snag or catch anything but the chain, removing the need for any filing to smooth out the raw cut edge. You could also cut the end at an angle to make it easier to push into the chain.



For the top you will also bend a portion in but this should reach to the inside of the opposite side. This closed loop with a flattened bottom will be stronger than the simple coil bent into an upward position. Pry up and bend at a 90 degree angle to complete the end loop.



Securing the chain is as easy as pushing it into place, the end of the chain should meet up with the bottom of the end loop. Using pliers bend in securing end catching it between the weave loops and finish it by smoothing out the coil so that it is straight and even.

Note: The more compact and even you make your coil, the better the end result.

I hope you have found this write up helpful, encouraging or inspiring.

All ready to become their future selves with some clasps, charms or both.