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Beads of Every Color and Shape

In Africa beaded jewelry has been popular for thousands of years. Children and adults often wear beaded jewelry such as armbands, headdresses, earrings, headbands, belts, and hair ornaments. Beads may be made from wood, glass, metal, clay, seeds, animal bones, precious stones, or plastic. Some beaded jewelry is worn for decoration and beauty. In some countries the colors, patterns, and even the number of beaded necklaces tells something about the person wearing them. Glass beads were once used as currency in some regions of Africa. You can make your own beaded jewelry to wear. The directions below show two ways to make your own beads. You can also use any beads, macaroni, buttons, pieces of cereal, or pieces of drinking straws.

Clay Beads on a String

Materials

- self-hardening clay
- paint or markers
- yarn or string
- plastic knife
- toothpick

Directions

1. Roll a ball of clay into a long "noodle" shape.
2. Cut the clay into small pieces.
3. Roll the clay pieces into round, oval, or square beads.
4. Make textures and patterns on the clay beads.
5. Use a toothpick to poke a small hole through the center of each bead.
6. After the beads are dry, decorate them with paint or markers. Thread the clay beads on a piece of string or pipe cleaner.
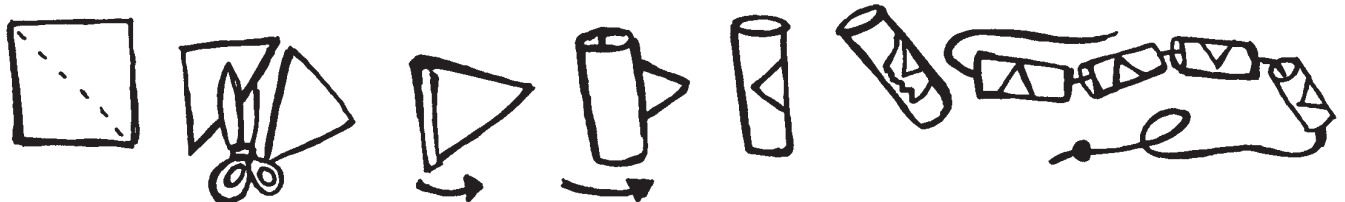
Paper and Metallic Beads

Materials

- wrapping paper
- aluminum foil or colorful pages from magazines
- clear tape
- string

Directions

1. Cut the paper or foil into small triangle shapes.
2. Begin at one side of the triangle and roll the paper into cylinder-shaped beads.
3. Tape the end of the triangle to seal the bead.
4. Thread your beads onto a piece of string.

African Games (cont.)

Yoté

Yoté is a popular game predominantly played in West Africa. Pebbles and sticks are used to play this outdoor game.

Playing the Game

Create a Yoté board by digging 30 small holes (six columns and five rows) into the dirt or sand. Each player begins with 12 markers. One player uses pebbles, and the other player uses small pieces of a stick. The game begins when the holder of the rocks places one rock into any hole. The stick player then places a stick into any open hole. Only one marker may be played per turn. A player is not required to put all of his or her markers around the Yoté board. At any time a player may choose to move one of his or her previously placed markers. These markers may only move one space up, down, left, or right and only into an empty hole. A player may capture an opposing marker (remove it from play) by passing a marker over it and into an empty hole. The capturing player is then allowed a bonus capture, removing from play an additional opposing marker from the board. The winner is the first player to capture all of his or her opponent's markers. However, the game may be called a draw if both players have three or fewer markers remaining on the board.

Achi

This game is played by the children of Ghana.

Playing the Game

To play this game, you will need eight game pieces (coins, pebbles, beans, etc.) and two players. Before the game can begin, the players need to draw a game board, using the diagram below. Each player begins with four game pieces. The players take turns placing one piece at a time onto an empty point anywhere on the game board. When all eight game pieces are on the board, the players will take turns moving one piece at a time along a line to an empty point. The object is for a player to get three of his or her pieces in a row. The first player to do so is the winner.