

# Row Counter Bracelet



A row counter bracelet is a little mini-abacus for your wrist, which you can wear while knitting or crocheting, and can help

you keep track on how many rows you've done.

These nifty gadgets have been around for quite some time, but it's hard to find clear instructions — so here for your enjoyment is a tutorial on how to make your very own. They're especially easy if you are familiar with some beading techniques, but achievable for anyone!

## Materials

- Very thin (1 mm) **smooth leather thonging**. I've used black, but other colours are available. You'll need about 36 cm (14") for one bracelet.
- **Beads** (wooden, plastic, crystal, stone, or glass)

- **10 large beads** (about 8 mm (1/3") diameter) – you may like to have one of the beads a different colour for the 5th position, or to alternate colours across all 10 beads.
- **9 small beads** (about 5mm (1/5") diameter) – you may like to have one bead in a different colour for the 5th position, or to alternate colours across the 9 beads.
- **About 10 seed beads** (about 5mm (1/5") – they need to be big enough to take 2 strands of the stretch cord).
- **A small charm**
- **Findings** (either silver or gold)
- **2 fold over clasps** (and some extra in case you need to try again!)
- Some **jump rings** – 3 or 4, and maybe a split ring

- A **clasp** – magnetic or toggle clasps (shown) are probably best in terms of how easy the bracelet will be to put on



- single handed. Lobster clasps are also good, and are what I've used in this example.
- Thin clear plastic **stretch cord** (eg *Stretch Magic*) – just a small amount (15 cm / 6")
- Bent nose **jewellery pliers**, and straight jewellery pliers
- **Source of heat** – eg gas stove or candle flame

## Method

**1.** Cut 2 lengths of leather thonging, long enough to go around your wrist comfortably. Remember that the clasp will add length to the finished bracelet, and you need enough room for the beads to move easily, so if anything err on the side of extra length – you can always trim back later. I find that about 18 cm (7") works well for me. The cord needs to be long enough to hold the 9 'unit' beads along one end and the 10 'ten' beads along the other end, without being cramped. In other words, make sure the beads all fit when put into a single line, so there's room to move beads around when it's on your wrist.

Making sure your 'ten' beads aren't too big is part of this adjustment.



**2.** Fasten the ends of both pieces with a Fold Over Clamp, using your pliers.

**3.** String your beads! String 9 small beads onto one cord, and 10 large beads onto the other cord. You can place a differently coloured bead at the '5' position on both cords, if you like, make up a pattern such as alternating colours, or whatever takes your fancy!



**4.** Add the 'marker' Charm – this marks the side of the bracelet which you count from (you need to know this for the abacus to

work!). Open a Jump Ring, add the Charm, and put it over both pieces of cord on the open end of the bracelet. Close the Jump Ring using both your pliers (one to hold the ring, and one to close it). If you're experienced at beading, you might like to put a few beads on a head pin, twist the top into a loop, and use this instead of the metal charm.

**5.** Check the length of the bracelet on your wrist, and trim the leather cord if needs be. Take into account the length your clasp will add, and make sure the bracelet isn't too tight, too. Firmly attach the second Fold Over Clamp to the free ends of the cord (ie you fold the sides of the clamp over the cord ends using pliers). This can be fiddly! Make sure you don't twist the ends of the cords (ie the bracelet should be able to lie flat). It's OK if one piece of cord is a bit longer than the other – the piece holding the larger beads generally needs a tiny bit more length.

**6.** Add a Split Ring or Jump Ring to one end of the bracelet, or one end of the Clasp. Attach the other part of the Clasp to the other end of the bracelet, using another Jump Ring if needs be.

**7.** Make the elastic divider ring – this is the most tricky part, and it's perfectly normal to get a bit frustrated at this

point! See the [readers' ideas at the bottom of this page](#), too, for some other ideas about how to make this ring. The divider is also the most breakage-prone part of the bracelet, and may need replacing at some stage.



String about 10 tiny beads onto the thin stretch cord. It needs to be big enough to stretch easily over the beads on your bracelet, but not be so big that it will slip over them without a bit of help.

When you're happy with the size of the ring, tie a whole bunch of knots (I do 4 or 5!) to secure the ring. I like to slightly melt the knot, to stop it from coming apart. To do this **PRACTICE on a scrap of stretch cord first!**

The technique I use is to heat the tip of my bent nose pliers in the gas stove flame (or a candle flame) for a second or two,



let it cool for a little bit, and then carefully compress the knot with the pliers. It is very easy to completely melt through the whole knot if the pliers are too hot, so be careful!

Don't expect to get this little fiddly ring right the first time...When you've got a melted knot (and even just a tiny



bit melted is fine), use your (cold) pliers to thread the ends back through the beads for a bit (but they may not stay put – it's not a

big deal). Pop the ring onto the bracelet, over both cords. You're done!

## Using the bracelet

The principle is simple – the smaller beads represent **1s**, and the bigger beads represent **10s**. When each row is knitted (or crocheted), simply move one small bead through the encircling beaded ring to the other side of the bracelet.

When you complete the 10th row, move all the small beads back to the 'start', and move one large bead, representing 10, through the ring.

Move small "1" beads through the beaded divider ring one by one as you complete rows, until you reach the 20th row, at which point you move all 9 small beads back to the 'start' of the bracelet (which is marked by a charm), and move a second "10" bead through to mark 20 rows – and so on.



Using this method you can count up to 99 rows, and look glamorous at the same time!

This bracelet (left) 'reads' **63** –

6 large '10' beads + 3 small '1' beads. The star charm marks the 'home' end, so you know only to count the beads that are on the left 'non-star' end of the bracelet.

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## Some ideas from readers, for that little stretchy ring:

- Start with at least 5 inches of the clear plastic cord so you have plenty of cord to knot with.
  - Use a dab of jewellery glue, beading glue or hot glue to seal the knot in the elastic. It's fine if it seeps into the beads next to the knot, as this will make the knot more secure. Let dry for a day before using.
  - Use crimp beads, with the two ends of the elastic crossed over each other.
  - Use small o-rings instead of the stretchy elastic ring.
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