



How to Make a Lampwork Butterfly Bead

By Becky Mason

I originally did this tutorial for the Houston Society of Glass Beadmakers' April 2008 newsletter, but I want to share it with anyone interested in learning how to make a simple butterfly bead. There are many ways to make butterflies, but this method will produce a bead that is durable enough to be worn as a pendant. Butterfly beads like the one in this tutorial are not beginner beads, but with practice anyone can make them. You can make them with any type of glass, and the sky is the limit when it comes to decorating your butterflies.

This tutorial is being offered for free in hopes that you will consider making some butterflies for the Beads of Courage program. <http://www.beadsofcourage.net/> Beads of Courage is a program that helps children with serious illness cope by giving them beads that represent meaningful acts of courage. It takes a lot of courage to go through what these kids have to endure, but it also takes courage to make the butterflies. The reason is that the butterflies are given to the families of children who lose their battle with their illness. They are a beautiful and timeless reminder of the life of a very precious child, and that makes the beads very special. Making these beads for BOC involves not only skill as a beadmaker, but a deep commitment to give these families something they can treasure. It took me a long time to work up the courage to start making the butterflies, but once I did I never looked back.

If you visit the BOC site you can see butterfly beads that have been donated by other beadmakers, and perhaps these will give you some ideas for how you'd like to decorate the ones you make. Of course, it's OK to make these beads just for fun too. Life is a balance, after all. Here are some more of my butterflies.







And here are some photos of the butterflies my sister Diane Woodall made using my tutorial. To achieve the pressed design in the wings, just make the bead like I show in the tutorial and then use non-serrated tweezers to squeeze designs into the wings like I did on some of my newer designs. This isn't in the tutorial, but is easy to do once you have the butterfly made.



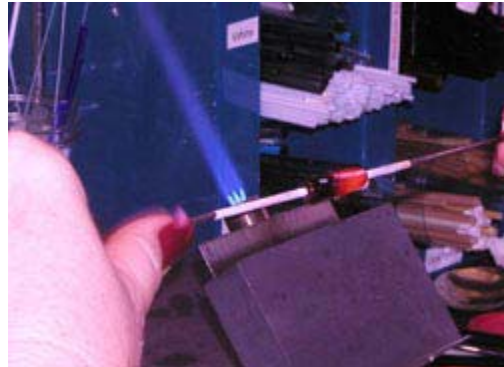
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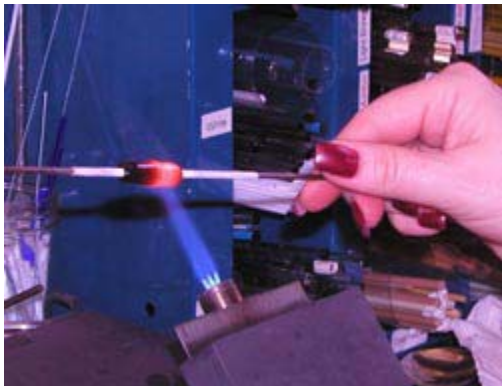
1 - Wind on a barrel about 1" to 1 1/2" long - not too thin but not too fat.



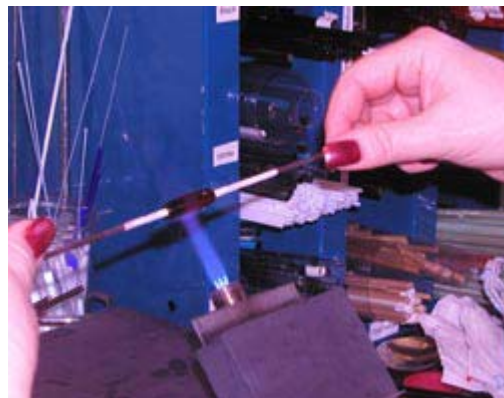
2 - Heat one end of the barrel and roll it on your marver to remove the sharp end. Repeat on the other end.



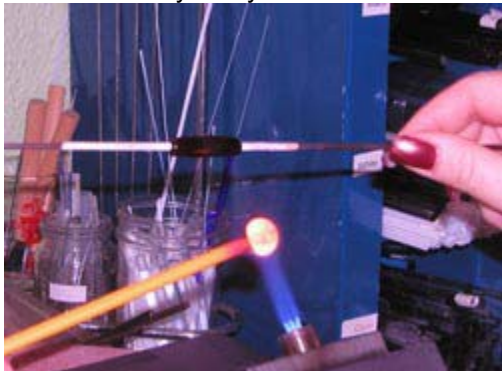
3 - You can see I have a nice end on the left and now I'm working on the right. Since I work in the middle of the mandrel, I flipped my bead so that the marvering always took place on the right hand side of the bead.



4 - Now I've got the shape I want for the body, which is a slightly tapered barrel.



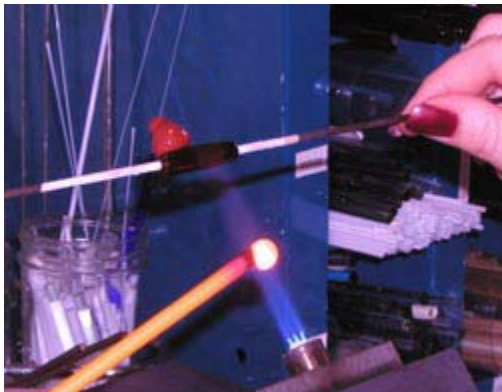
5 - Keeping the body warm in the far part of the flame, heat up a large gather of glass in the color you're using for the wings. The final size of the wings and thickness will be determined by how much of a "blob" you lay down.



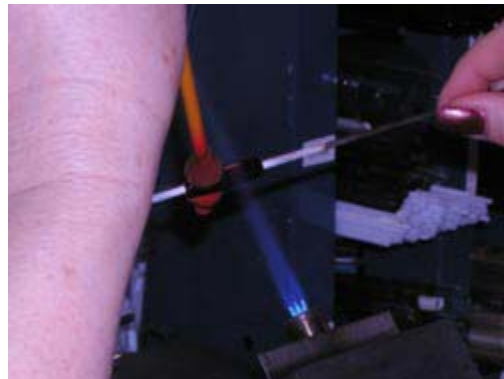
6 - Once you have enough glass melted on the end of the rod, let it cool off slightly, until most of the glow disappears, then "drop" it onto the body in the location of one of the top wings. You don't want the glass to be soupy when you do this.



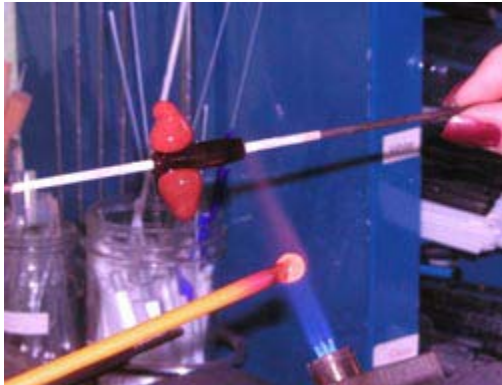
7 - Once you've melted off the first wing blob, repeat the process remembering to keep the body and the first wing blob warm.



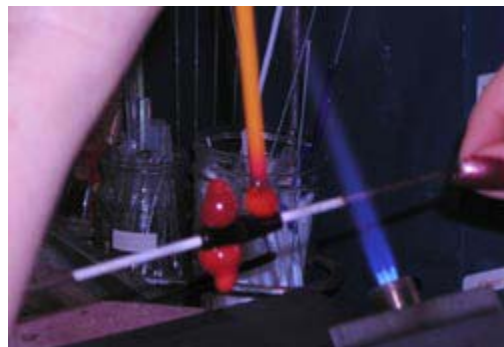
8 - Place the 2nd top wing blob into place after you've allowed the melted glass to cool slightly so that it isn't soupy.



9 - You want to repeat the same process for the bottom wing blobs, using less glass - smaller blobs.



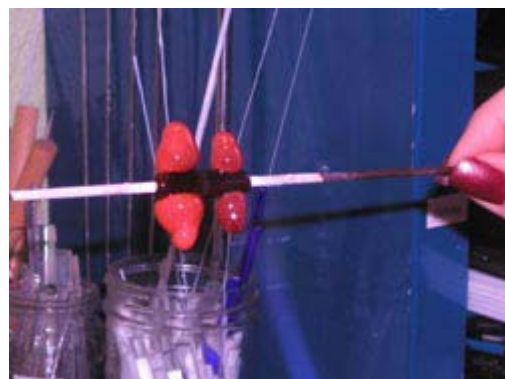
10 - Remember to keep your glass rod upright when you "drop" the glass blob into place. Once it is secure and has set up a bit you can melt off the rod.



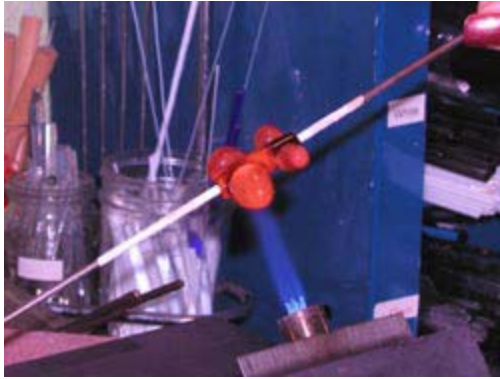
11 - Add your last lower wing blob using the same technique.



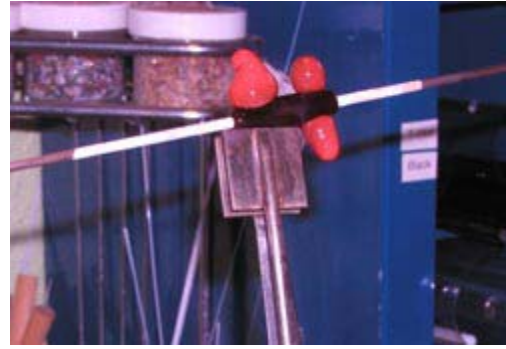
12 - Now you have all 4 wing blobs in place.



13 - I usually begin with one of the top wings. Heat the front and back of the wing so that the heat is distributed evenly. You don't want to overheat, so go easy at this stage. It's easier to re-mash than it is to un-mash.



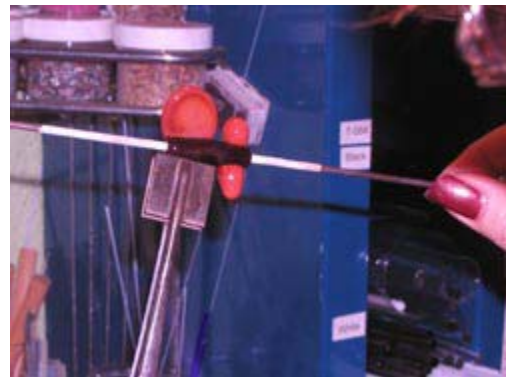
14 - Once you've got the blob softened enough to mash, take your mini-mashers and gently squeeze. I like to hold the wing in the down position to do this.



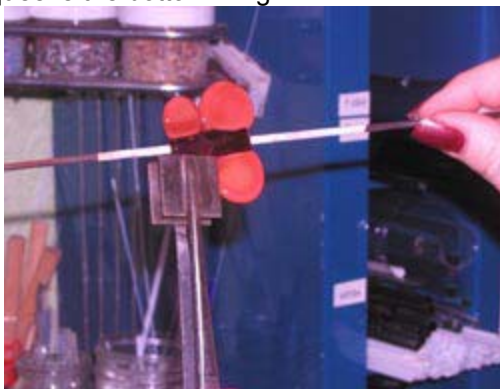
15 - If your initial mash isn't enough, reheat and re-mash.



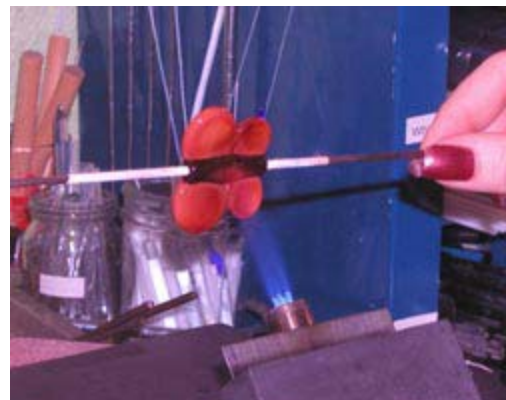
16 - Heat the other top wing and repeat the process. I also like to tip the wings slightly forward.



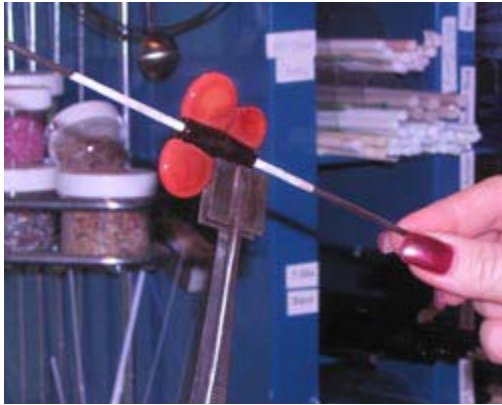
17 - Repeat the same process on the bottom wings. If you've used the right amount of glass your top and bottom wings will meet when you squeeze the bottom wing.



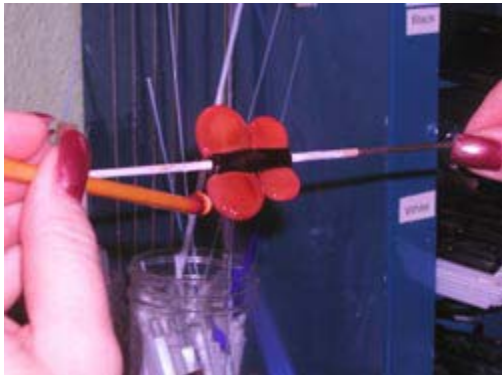
18 - It may be necessary to add a little heat to the junction of the wings to fill in the gap. You can also use your pick to "ease" the glass together.



19 - If you've re-heated to fill in the gap, go back and re-squeeze to get the wings just right.



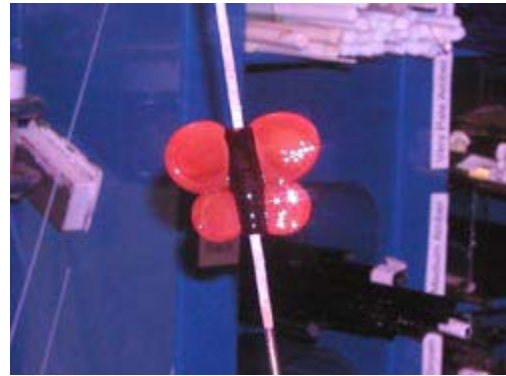
21 - If you want the wing to be more pointed, you can add some glass to the tips.



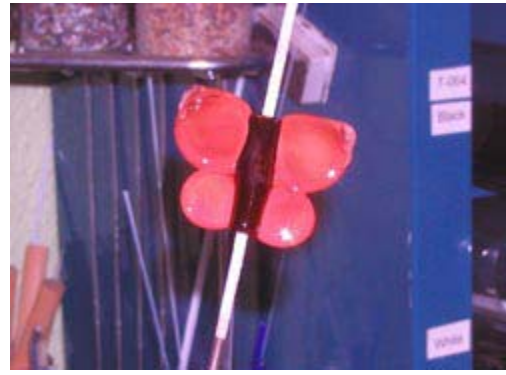
23 - Be sure to add some heat to the back so that you don't develop cracks on the back side.



20 - Now you're done with the basic design. From here you can decorate and/or alter the wing shape.



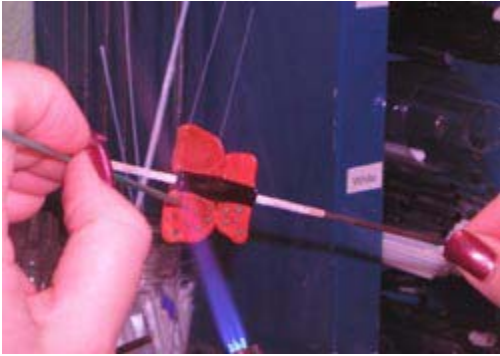
22 - I've added a small amount to the tips of the top two wings.



24 - I also added a small amount of glass to the tips of the bottom two wings.



25 - Next I added some dots in turquoise.



27- If necessary, you can use your mashers to flatten the design, and to reposition the wings.



29 - It's kind of hard to see with my hand in the way, but I'm adding some black to the tips of the wings. I will then go back and pull the tips out to an even more pronounced point.



26 - After adding all of the dots, I gently melted them in.



28 - Don't forget to add heat to the back, which is very important to do. When you're decorating the front it is easy to forget to heat the back.



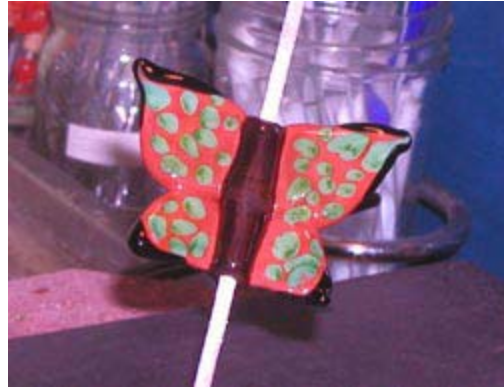
30 - I've added all of the black, now with a warm black rod I'm going to pull the wings to a point.



31- I heat up the edge of the black, then with my warm black rod I drag the black up towards the tip of the wing and gently burn off the rod, or in some cases, you can blow on the rod and it will snap off. Then if you need to remove any excess black you can use your tweezers.



32 - After repeating the heat and drag on all 4 wings my butterfly is finished and ready for the kiln.



The end.....

