

Reinventing the Wheel: Make Your Own Charm Bracelet

Week 2

- Rethink Your Alphas
- Repurpose Your Games, Puzzles and Toys
- Research Jewelry Making Tools
- **Reinvent Yourself: Making Your Own Charm Bracelet**

Supplies:

- Dimensional Glue
- Clear Gel Medium
- Craft Knife
- Pliers
- Measuring Tape
- Chain, Findings, Closures, Wire & Bails
- Pre Made Charms
- Glass Tiles or Pebbles
- Repurposed Bottle Caps & Game Pieces,
- Leftover Alphas, Rub-ons & Paper



Notes:

This tutorial offers some step-by-step direction in making your own charm bracelet as well as a collection of techniques that you can use interchangeably to make your own charms. Not all of these supplies are required. The supplies listed above cover the possible supplies for each of the methods of charm-making presented in this lesson. However, you can choose to make charms based on the supplies you already have or you can use the supply list above if you are interested in trying out all of the different methods for designing, making and hanging your charms.

**Step 1**

Building Your Bracelet's Chain

You have a variety of options when it comes to finding a chain for your charm bracelet.

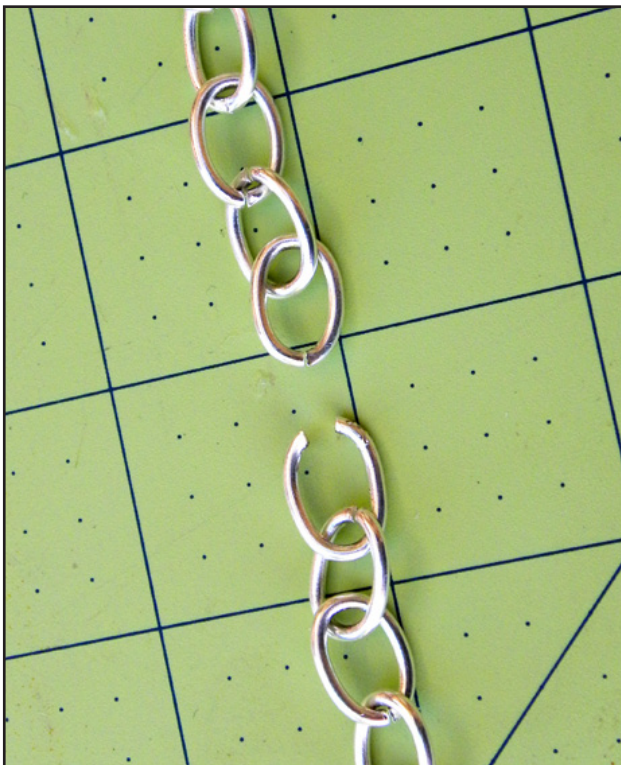
- You can buy pre-packaged chains or purchase chain by the foot at your local craft store.
- You can revive an old bracelet or necklace.
- You can repurpose chains from your home including old door chains, light pull chains and more.

If you are already working with a functioning bracelet you can skip to the next section--if not proceed with the following steps as they apply to you.

1. Measure loosely around your wrist to determine the length of chain you will require.
2. If you are working with a chain that must be shortened use your pliers to open the link just beyond that of your required length and remove the excess part of the chain.
3. If your chain has no clasp or its clasp is broken replace it with a clasp from another piece of jewelry or purchase a new closure from your local craft store.
4. Attach your clasp by opening the last link of your chain with your pliers and interlocking the two pieces. Then clamp the link back together as tightly as possible.

To add to your bracelet's overall style you could also:

- use multiple strands of chain connected together at one end with your clasp and the other with a single link.
- piece together a variety of shorter chain segments to create the length needed for your bracelet.
- spray paint your chains to add a pop of color or to create a cohesive look.

**Step 2**



Use Leftover Alphas, Rub-Ons, and Other Scrapbook Supplies:

That's right...scrapbook your charms! Design beautiful charms with all of those leftover bits and pieces that we've been working on using up!

Use Printables, Photos and Digital Wordart:

Resize and print out your digital designs, wordart and photos to incorporate into your charm's design.

Create Miniature Collages and Artwork:

Recreate your doodles, collage, painting or art journaling on a smaller scale and use them to make one-of-a-kind designs for your charms.

Use Mixed Media and Stamps to Create Fun Motifs:

Bring an element of personal style to your charms with unique motifs, patterns and textures using your stamps, paints, mists and more!



Make Charms with Jewelry Supplies, Repurposed Items and Supplies From Your Very Own Stash!

Making your own charms is simple when you start with a pre-made charm.

These come in a variety of sizes, shapes, finishes and types. Some come with acrylic or glass toppers, others must be filled with dimensional glue--but they all offer an established structure for building your charm and a built in way to hang it once you're done. All you need to start is an image printed or designed on a medium-weight to heavy paper.

- Begin by cutting your image to size and adhering it inside the frame of the pre-made charm. Use a tacky adhesive and make sure the edges are secure and there are no bubbles or ripples under the surface of the image.
- If you are using an acrylic/glass topper coat the back side of it with an even coat of clear gel medium or decoupage. Then place the back side of the topper onto your image and press down firmly. Use a paint brush or q-tip to remove the excess gel that might squish out from the edges.
- If using dimensional glue to fill in your charm, cover your image generously with the glue and allow for at least a couple of hours of dry time. Keep a close eye out for bubbles that might form and pop them promptly with a needle or pin.



Create charms easily with glass tiles and pebbles.

This is perhaps the simplest of the charm-making methods, in my opinion. Once you've designed your image follow these easy steps to a beautiful charm!

- Cut your image down to size--I use my tile as a stencil and cut around it with my craft knife.
- Cover the front side of your image with an even coat of clear gel medium or decoupage.
- Press the image firmly to the backside of the tile, making sure to secure the edges and pressing out any bubbles.
- Allow the gel medium to dry thoroughly--which shouldn't take long.
- Then use a strong glue to attach a jewelry bail to the backside of your charm.



Quick Tip:

For a closer look at this laser-cut technique that you can pair with your glass tile and pebble charms check out this week's video technique!

Make your own bottle cap charms.

Another simple but fun approach to charm-making is the bottle cap charm. These days you can purchase bottle caps in a variety of colors and patterns from your local craft store--but you could just as easily repurpose a bottle cap--from home.

To make your own bottle cap charms:

- Adhere your image inside of your bottle cap. You can use this week's printables or another 1" circle die cut or design.
- Fill the bottle cap half-way full with a dimensional glue and let it dry completely.
- Should you decide to, you can decoupage over a second image on the back side of your charm.
- Then add a jewelry bail to the back of your bottle cap.



Turn your leftover alphas into charms.

Those leftover alphas can be turned into the perfect letter charms for your bracelet or even to be used in your pages.

To begin repurposing your alphas as charms:

- Start by covering your alpha with the finish of your choice (i.e. glitter, patterned paper, paint, fabric, etc.)
- Then punch a hole in your letter using your multi-purpose punching tool and set an eyelet in the hole for added reinforcement.
- Now apply a dimensional glue to one side of your alpha. For a fun puffy-alpha effect apply the glue generously in the center and then thin it out as you get out to the edges.
- Allow the glue to dry completely and then if you'd like you can apply a second coat to the other side.
- Remember to pay close attention to bubbles as your letter charms are drying.



Repurpose your game pieces, puzzles and toys as charms.

From wooden alpha tiles to tiny metal shoes to playing cards cut down to be used in your designs--there are countless ways that repurposed game pieces can be turned into perfect charms for your pages and projects.



Use the following tips to incorporate your old game pieces, cards, puzzles and toys into your charm bracelets.

- Simply craft a way to hang your old puzzle pieces and tiles, metal or wooden game pieces, and even small plastic toys by using one of the methods listed on page 6 of this tutorial.
- Try incorporate trivia or playing cards, word searches or crossword puzzles and picture book illustrations into the image design of your charm.
- Consider refinishing your game pieces in a pattern or color that coordinates with the rest of your charms.

Creating a Way to Hang Your Charms



In the charm making-techniques above I've included ways for you to attach your charms to your chains. However, I wanted to elaborate on how to carry out the different methods. I also want you to know that these methods are interchangeable--so use the method below that works best for you and your charm.

Jewelry Bails are useful accessories that you will most likely find at your local craft store. They have a loop at the top that is attached to a flat surface that can be adhered to another object. The surface of the object that you are attaching to your bail does not have to be completely flat--but obviously the larger the part of the surface that is attached to the bail the more secure your charm will be when hanging from your chain. Use a strong, fast-drying adhesive to attach your jewelry bails--preferably one that is recommended for use with metals.

An Eyelet can be added to anything that you can punch through. Making the materials that you can construct your charms from virtually endless if you own a heavy-duty punching tool like a Crop-A-Dile. For a list of materials to try, refer to Week One's: Researching Multi-Purpose Punching Tools. If you are working with a material whose punched hole may tear due to the strain of being hung from a stronger material, an eyelet will help to reinforce the punched hole and keep it intact. It can also add a nice finished detail to your charm as well. Remember to consider the direction you want your charm to hang when deciding on the placement of the eyelet on your charm.

A Punched or Drilled Hole may be the way to go if you are working with wood, metal or other heavy-weight materials--as you are not worried about tearing or stretching. Consider the design and density of the material you're working with when choosing between these methods. And stay away from brittle materials that may shatter, split or break under the pressure of being drilled or punched.

Remember, if you intend on using your charms in a way that doesn't require them to be hung you can save yourself the time and skip this step.

Attaching the Charms to Your Chain

Here are two methods by which you can attach your charms to a chain--both of which will require the use of needle nose or jewelry pliers.

Use metal findings to attach your charms if:

- you want to wear your bracelet and need the charms to dangle freely so they don't inhibit the use of your hand.
- you are working with a heavy duty chain whose links aren't easily manipulated.
- you want to manipulate how low or high your charms hang.
- your chain's links are not large enough to fit around your charm or the hole in which you've created to attach it.
- your chain or link is too wide to thread through your charms hole or bail.

To attach your charms to your chain using a finding, open each finding with your pliers--wide enough for your charm and chain link to be threaded through. Thread the finding through your charm and then through an individual link in your chain. Then close the finding inside your chain's link making sure the ends meet together tightly. Unless you want your charm to be able to move freely along your chain--then you could simply close the finding around the entire chain after you've threaded it through your charm.

You'd be fine to attach your charms directly to your chain if:

- you are using your bracelet as a decoration.
- your chain's links are easily manipulated.
- you are creating a single pendant or series of charms that you want to be able to move freely.

Attach your chain directly to your charm by opening a link in your chain and threading it through the opening of your charm and then closing back down. Or you could simply thread your chain through your charms should you decide that you'd like them to move freely across your chain.

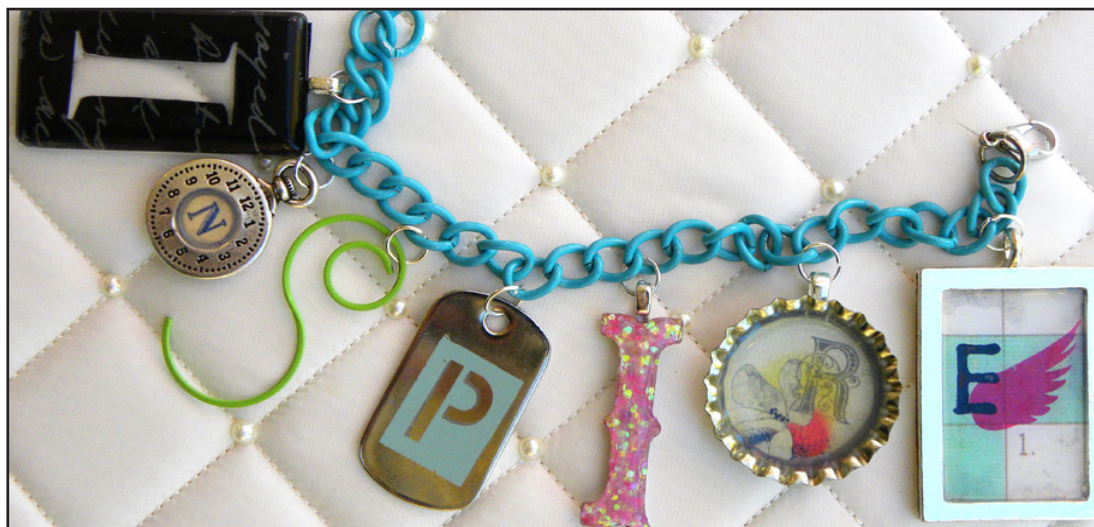


Use split-loop findings.



Attach directly to your chain.

Now it's your turn!



Not a jewelry person--that's OK!

Here are a few other ideas for using your handmade charms on your scrapbook pages and in other projects:

- Create flair-style embellishments for your pages using your glass pebble charms.
- Use your charms as beautiful sentiments on your handmade cards.
- Create eye-catching centers for your floral embellishments.
- Use glass tiles or pre-made charms to make personalized key chain accessories.
- Turn your charms into magnets by attaching a disc magnet to the back.