JEWELRY MADE EASY

Janice Levi

jlevi@rightturnonly.net
www.janicelevi.com
713-410-4193

TOOLS:

Bowl gouge

Spindle gouge

Thin parting tool (or other if you don't have a thin tool)

Skew

Enhancing tools—three-point, chatter, etc. (optional)

Two waste blocks—2 x 2 x 2

2 sets of jewelry pliers or needle nose pliers

Wire cutters—small

Turning the cross grain disk

   No special jigs or chucks are required, but you will need to turn a waste block to which the disk blanks will be attached. The disk will need to be trued and the diameters can range from 1" to 1 ½". The second waste block will be the same diameter but will be slightly concave in shape.

   The larger blanks, 2-3" in diameter, should be about 3/8-1/2" thick to start. Use a compass to outline the circumference of the circle then remove most of the waste wood on a band saw.

   Using double-sided tape (I prefer SpecTape brand as it does not leave a gummy residue on the wood), adhere the disk to a flat-sided waste block that is smaller in diameter than the finished disk. Use the tape sparingly. You may have to cut the strips in half to be able to easily remove the disk.

   Before pressing the disk firmly into the tape, pull up the tail stock and line up the center mark from the compass with the live center. Do not allow the live center to puncture the turning disk. I place a barrel washer/spacer (or a pen bushing) between the point and the disk then tighten the tail stock for as long as possible.

   Use a bowl gouge and sheer cuts to begin shaping the rounded surface of the disk. Remove the tail stock and barrel washer and use light cuts to smooth the top surface. Hand sand or lightly power sand, going through all the grits.

Now remove the disk, use a center finder to mark the center of the unturned side, and mount the turned side on a concave waste block with double-sided tape. This can be a trial and error process to get the disk perfectly centered. Bring up the tail stock so that the live center can aid in the centering process, and lightly press the disk into the tape. Some adjusting may be necessary. I again use the barrel washer and apply very light pressure with the tail stock. Make light sheer cuts with the bowl gouge to achieve the final shape for the back of the disk. The outer edge should be no thicker than 1/8". You are aiming for a thin, graceful disk, not a clunky chunk of wood.

Remove the tail stock and make the final light cuts. At this point, you may choose to enhance the face of the pendant with a three-point tool or skew. Sand through the grits and remove the disk.

Apply the finish of your choice—spray lacquer, oils, or waxes and buffing.

Turning the end grain disk

Small diameter disks are turned differently. If using a pen blank, insert the blank into a chuck with small jaws as far as it will go to help avoid vibration. Turn only the very end of the blank round using a roughing gouge or spindle gouge. Then with the spindle gouge, slightly round over the end of the blank . Since the finished disk will be between 1/8"-3/16" thick, this is a quick process. Using a thin parting tool, angle the parting cut so that the back side of the disk is also somewhat rounded. Do not completely part the disk off, but leave about 3/16". Hand sand the front of the disk and as much of the back as possible, going through all the grits.

Finally, finish parting off the disk. A small tooth saw may also be used to part off the disk. Hand sand any roughness on the back of the disk and finish with your choice of finishes .

A sanding option

After turning the end grain disks, there is an area on the back side that must be sanded. This can be done by hand but an option that I prefer is to mount a 2" sanding disk in the drill press and sand the back side of the disks, going through all grits. I collect a number of disks in a small container then sand all of them at one time. Although I sometimes apply lacquer, oil or water- based polyurethanes, it is often sufficient to simply use a three step buffing system on both the front and the back sides.

Turning end grain beads

Pen blanks or even smaller end grain blanks prepared on the band saw can also be used to turn beads. Insert the square edged blank into a chuck with small jaws so that only 2-3" of wood is exposed. This will help prevent vibration. Insert a 1/16" drill bit into a Jacob's chuck placed in the tail stock, and with the lathe running at about 600 rpm, drill the center hole of the bead slightly deeper than the completed diameter will be. Use a skew point to create a small recess in the blank so the drill bit will center up properly. (Note: larger holes can be drilled but the advantage of this process is to allow for the use of finer assembly materials.)

Using a spindle gouge, turn a cylinder to the desired diameter, leaving the bulk of the blank unturned. Depending on your comfort level, use a spindle or detail gouge or a skew to shape the right hand of the bead. Then shape the left hand portion of the bead, but do not cut all the way through. Sand the bead through all grits and apply friction polish or wax. Finally, use a skew, parting tool, or small toothed saw to part off the bead. A small nub may remain. Hand sand and dab the area with friction polish or wax.

Assembling the necklace

A few tools are necessary to make the assembly process easier. I would recommend that anyone interested in jewelry making should spend some time in a local craft store looking at the many possibilities. At a minimum you will need two sets of small needle nose or jewelry pliers, round nose pliers, small wire cutters, jump rings (not the spiral kind), pins with flat heads for attaching the beads, necklace chain, and neck clasp. I have found that the gun metal color of chain is most complementary to the wood; silver and gold often detract from the wood's beauty. A handy tool to have is a Dremel and Dremel drill press with bits smaller than 1/16". Although the small holes in the disks can be hand drilled, the drill press makes the task easier.

Cut two lengths of chain, one 28" and the other 23". The longer chain will hold the disks and the shorter chain will hold the beads. Do not attach the neck clasp at this time. Use the Dremel to drill a hole about 1/8" from the edge of the feature pendant. Next, drill the holes into all the smaller disks. Depending on the thickness and density of the wood, the hole may be closer than 1/8" from the edge.

Using the two pairs of jewelry pliers, separate the jump rings. Do not pull the ends straight apart, but rather, push one end of the ring away while pulling the other end toward you, creating a spiral shape. Slide the open ring through the hole of the feature pendant then slide the ring into the center link of the longer chain. Use the two sets of pliers to close the ring. Attach all the remaining disks in the same way, mixing and matching size and color on each side of the feature pendant.

To attach the beads, insert a flat head pin into the bead and remove all but 3/8" of the wire. Use round nose pliers to shape the wire into a small loop above the bead. Open a jump ring and insert the ring through the loop, then into a link in the necklace chain. Close the jump ring. Attach beads in various sizes and colors along the chain.

When all disks and beads have been attached, use jump rings to connect the two upper links of chain to each end of the neck clasp.

The necklace is finished, but don't forget the earrings. Disks, beads or a combination of each can be attached to ear wires using jump rings and pins in the same way as to the necklace chain.

It's now time for your imagination to take over. Use your skew to cut small V-grooves or a chatter tool to enhance the disks and beads. Purchased metal bead separators add elegance. Pyrography and color can further embellish the end product. And with jewelry, the rule of the day is, "It can never be too gaudy!"

RESOURCES:
Jewelry Findings:

Michael's   Lima Beads (on line)

Hobby Lobby   Fusion Beads (on line)

Rio Grande (on line)   Panda Hall Elite (on line)

Fire Mountain (on line)

Fabric and Craft stores (JoAnn's, etc.)

Jewelry Tools:

Hobby Lobby

Michael's

Harbor Freight (small pliers)