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free-form bracelet

*The freedom to make mistakes provides
the best environment for creativity.*
—Anonymous

This bracelet is fun to make and begs to be customized. Once you understand the technique, you can try various combinations of wire and materials. For example, adding beads or wire coils to the long, curved parts can produce interesting results. The bracelet can be lengthened to make a great ankle bracelet or choker. You can wear it on your upper arm, Cleopatra-style. Maybe you will even invent a new weave! It might be a good idea to make this bracelet in copper until you master the technique.

Materials

16-gauge (1.3 mm) round dead-soft gold-filled wire (This wire makes a strong bracelet that will hold its shape very well.)

Tools

Masking tape	Flat file
Flat-nose pliers	Wire cutters
Nylon-jaw pliers	Clamp
Round-nose pliers	Ruler
Stepped/chain-nose pliers	Sharp-pointed felt marker

Figure 1
Make a loop.



Figure 2
Wrap the loop
with masking
tape.



Figure 3
Taped wires in
the clamp

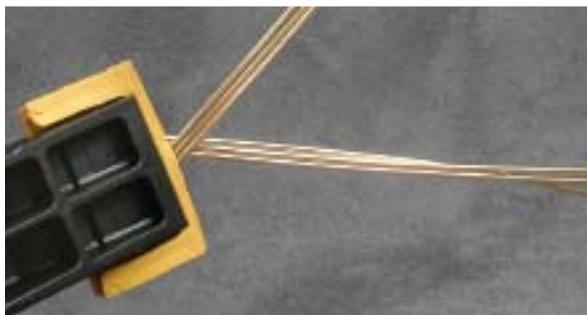
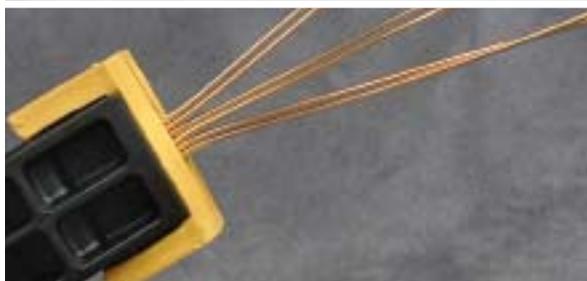


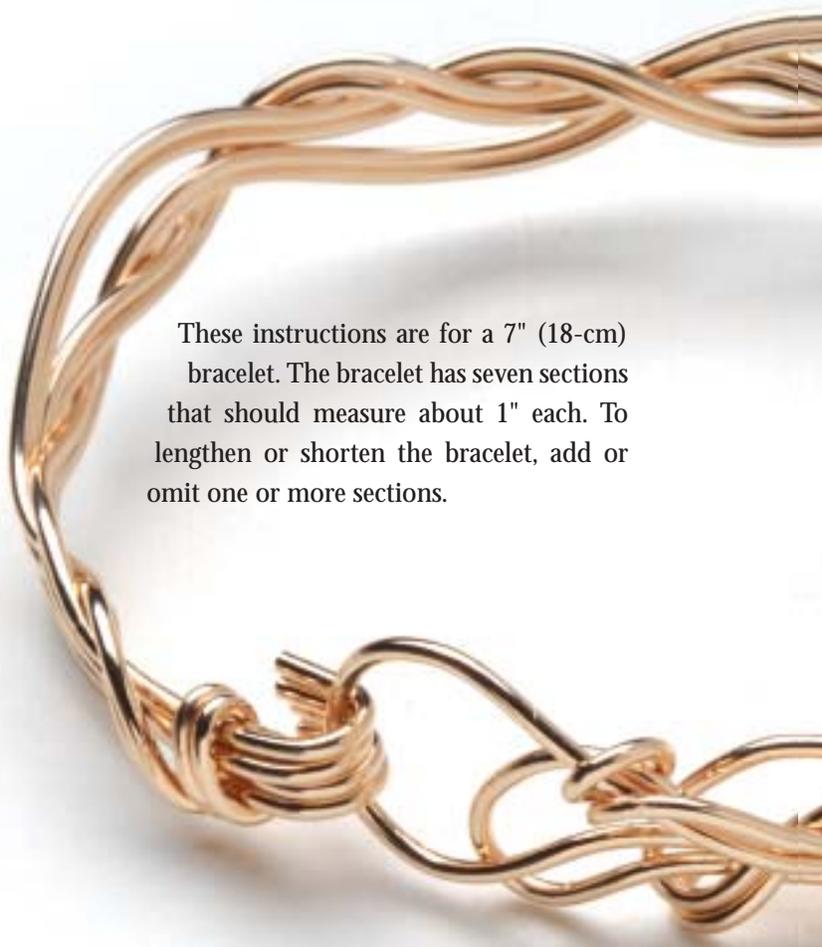
Figure 4
Wires
uncrossed and
straightened.



Figure 5
Wires divided
into three sets
of two wires.

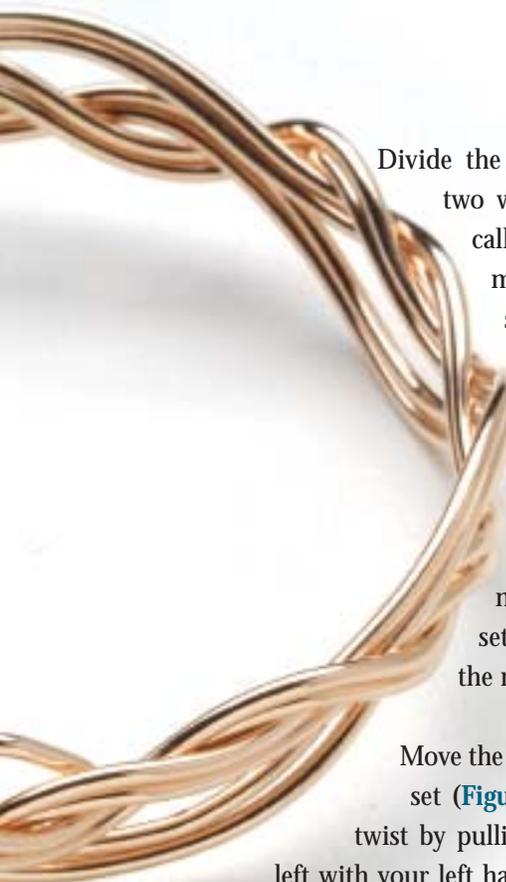


These instructions are for a 7" (18-cm) bracelet. The bracelet has seven sections that should measure about 1" each. To lengthen or shorten the bracelet, add or omit one or more sections.



Cut the wire into three 20" (0.5 m) pieces. Find the center and fold the wires in half with flat-nose pliers. The wires should form a loop that crosses in a graceful curve (**Figure 1**).

The loop's inside diameter should be about ½" (1.3 cm) at its widest part. Wrap this loop with masking tape (**Figure 2**) and place the taped loop in the clamp (**Figure 3**). Uncross the wires and straighten them (**Figure 4**). This may sound strange, but hang in there!



Divide the wires into three sets of two wires (**Figure 5**). We will call the sets the left set, the middle set, and the right set. As you weave, the sets will change position often. To avoid confusion, whichever set happens to be on the left will be called the left set, whichever set is in the middle will be the middle set, and whichever set is on the right will be the right set.

Move the middle set behind the left set (**Figure 6**). Complete the first twist by pulling the middle set to the left with your left hand and the left set to the right with your right hand (**Figure 7**). This twist should be fairly tight. Keep the wires flat and in line. Just let the clamp dangle.

Grasp the top of the twist with your left thumb and index finger and spread the wire sets farther apart to prepare for the second twist (**Figure 8**). To make the second twist, place the middle set behind the left set (**Figure 9**) and bring the left set in front of the middle set (**Figure 10**). Keep a tight grip on top of the first twist throughout these steps.



Figure 6
The middle set placed behind the left set.

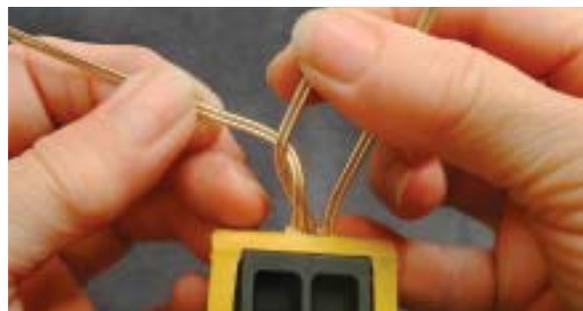


Figure 7
Making the first twist.



Figure 8
Hold the top of the twist very firmly and spread the sets far apart.



Figure 9
Place the middle set behind the left set.



Figure 10
Place the left set in front of the middle set.

Figure 11
Completing the second twist.



Figure 12
The two twists completed.



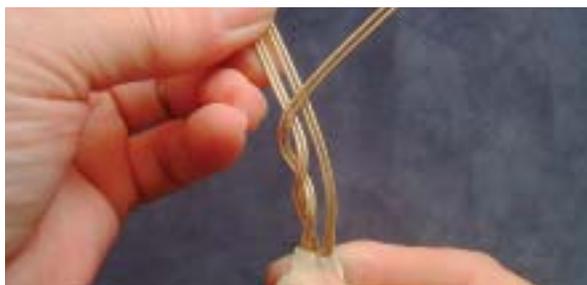
Figure 13
Grasp the right set in your right hand.



Figure 14
Curve the right set and bring it behind the middle set.



Figure 15
The left set pulled across and in front of the other two sets. The intersection is circled.



Figures 11 and 12 show the completion of the second twist.

Bend the right set of wires to the left, behind the middle set, to join the left set (**Figures 13 and 14**). Try for a graceful curve.

Pull what is now the left set to the right, across and in front of the other two sets (**Figure 15**). Grasp the place where the wires intersect (marked by the circle). Place your left hand as in **Figure 16**. This completes the first section.

Measure here to make sure this section is about 1" (2.5 cm) long. If the section is much longer than 1" (2.5 cm), you have woven too loosely. Conversely, if the section is much shorter than 1", you have woven too tightly. In either case, it would be a good idea to start over. If your sections are only slightly off, just try to keep each section the same length. Remove the clamp.

For the second section, we will make the twists on the right side of the bracelet. Keep a tight grasp and spread the sets far apart. Bring the middle set to the right and in front of the right set (**Figure 17**). Now bring the right set to the left and behind the middle set (**Figure 18**). **Figure 19** shows the first twist finished.

Bring the right set to the left, behind the middle set. Bring the middle set to the right and in front of the right set. **Figure 20** shows the two finished twists on the right side of the bracelet.

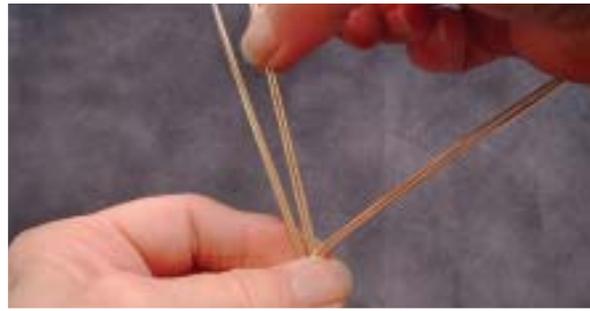


Figure 16
Grasp the intersection of the wires firmly.



Figure 17
Bring the middle set to the right and in front of the right set.

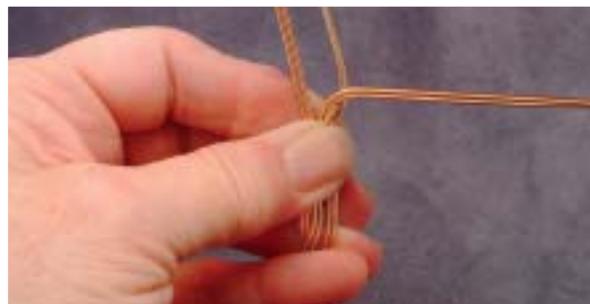


Figure 18
The right set goes to the left, behind the middle set.



Figure 19
The first twist finished.



Figure 20
The two twists are finished.

Figure 21
Curve the left set to the right.

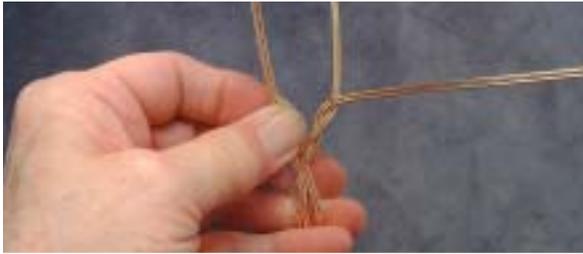


Figure 22
Bring the left set in front of the middle set to join the right set.



Figure 23
Pull the left set farther to the left.



Figure 24
Pull the middle and right sets farther to the right.



Figure 25
Bring the middle set to the left behind the left set.



Figure 26
Bring the left set in front of the middle set.



Take the left set and make another graceful curve to the right and in front of the middle set to join to the right set (**Figures 21 and 22**). This process completes the second section.

Move the left set farther to the left and move the middle and right sets farther to the right to prepare for the third section (**Figures 23 and 24**).

At this point, you should begin to see a pattern emerging. The first section has two twists on the left and a curve on the right. The second section has two twists on the right and a curve on the left. Now you will simply repeat the first section and the second section until you have seven sections (or as many sections as you need for the length you desire). Remember to measure each section to make sure each is about one inch long.

To begin the third set, bring the middle set to the left and behind the left set. Bring the left set to the right and in front of the middle set (**Figures 25 and 26**).

For the second twist, bring the middle set to the left and behind the left set, and the left set to the right and in front of the middle set. This completes the two twists of the third set.

Figure 27 shows the progress at this point. You can see that the first section has two twists on the left and a long bend on the right. This is reversed on the second section, and the third section will be identical to the first section when you make another graceful bend from right to left to complete the third section (**Figures 28 and 29**).

Note that on the odd-numbered sections, the curve goes *under* the middle set and on the even sets the curve goes *over* the middle set.

Curve the bracelet slightly in the direction of its final shape. This helps the wires lie flat and makes the whole process easier. Every section will alternate between having one set on top and two sets on top (**Figure 30**).

After making the last section, cross the left set across the other sets to the right (**Figure 31**). Use flat-nose pliers to hold the two sets in place

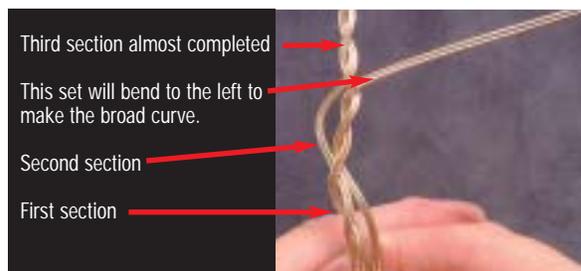


Figure 27
Reviewing the process.



Figure 28
Make a curve to the left with the right set.



Figure 29
The third section completed and ready for the fourth section.

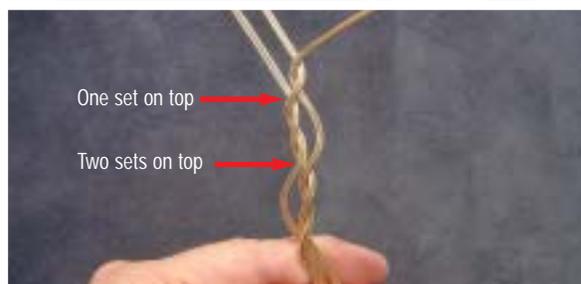


Figure 30
One set on top; two sets on top.



Figure 31
The last section.



Figure 32
Beginning to wrap the end of the bracelet.



Figure 33
Hold the set with pliers to make wrapping easier.

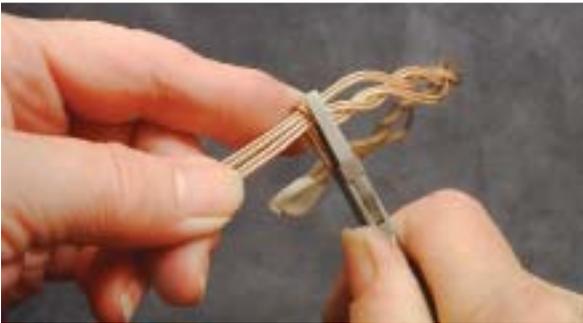


Figure 34
Wrap to the back.

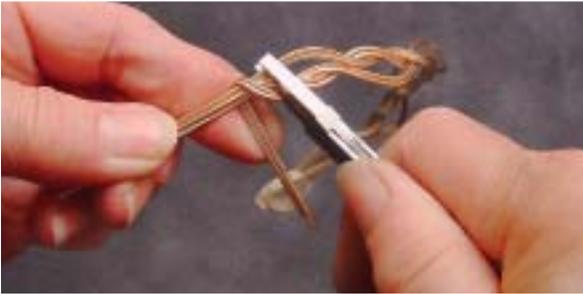


Figure 35
Bring the wrap around to the front.

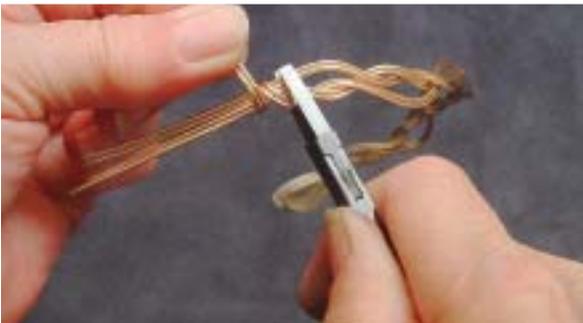


Figure 36
Making the second wrap.

(**Figure 32**) while you begin to wrap the left set tightly around and to the back of the two right sets. Now hold the wires as in **Figure 33** while you continue wrapping the left set around the other two sets.

When you have wrapped the wires to the back, tighten the wrap securely with pliers (**Figure 34**). This end will ultimately hold the bracelet clasp.

Make one more wrap by bringing the left set to the front (**Figure 35**), over, and around the back (**Figure 36**). Keep the other four wires straight and close together. When you have two wraps showing on the front of the bracelet, cut the wrap wires **only** on the back of the bracelet. File the ends and press firmly into place with the pliers. **Figure 37** shows the wires before cutting. **Figure 38** shows how the front of the bracelet should look when finished.

To finish the catch end of the bracelet, take the innermost loop and bring it to the left (**Figure 39**). Wrap this loop to the back of the bracelet and press it down (**Figure 40**). **Figure 41** shows the innermost loop on the back of the bracelet. Don't flatten it completely, just snug it against the other wires. We want to keep nice, flowing curves and avoid sharp angles.



Figure 37
The back of the bracelet before cutting off the wires.



Figure 38
The front of the bracelet, showing the two wraps.



Figure 39
Pull the innermost loop to the left.



Figure 40
The innermost loop pressed firmly to the back of the bracelet.



Figure 41
The back of bracelet showing innermost loop pressed into place.



Figure 42
Cut the outermost wire.



Figure 43
The outermost loop cut in half.



Figure 44
Hold the very end of the wire with the pliers.



Figure 45
Tuck in the left wire.



Figure 46
Tuck in the right wire.



Figure 47
Adjusting the wires for the most attractive appearance.

Now cut the outermost loop somewhere near the middle. This does not have to be exact (**Figures 42 and 43**). Grasp the ends of the cut wires with needle-nose pliers and bend them to the back of the bracelet in wide, graceful curves (**Figure 44**). To avoid marring, grasp only the very ends of the cut wires with pliers or wrap the jaws of the pliers with tape.

Tuck the left and right wires into the wrap where they will not come out and irritate the skin (**Figures 45 and 46**).

After the wires are curved to the back of the bracelet, play with the placement and position them so that the front of the bracelet pleases you (**Figure 47**). Use your imagination here. Every bracelet seems to turn out differently, which is half the fun.

The remaining loop will be the catch (**Figure 48**).
Widen the catch by placing needle-nose pliers inside the loop and pressing them open (**Figure 49**). **Figure 50** shows the widened catch.

Just to prove nothing is written in stone, look at the circled loop in **Figure 51**. We decided to untuck that loop, bring it around to the front, and do a curl around the two right wires of the catch. **Figure 52** shows the back of the bracelet with the new wraps on the left. This finishes the catch.

Now go back to the other end of the bracelet to finish the clasp. Be careful—there is only one chance to get this right.

Keeping the wires straight and close together (**Figure 53**), cut the wires about $\frac{5}{8}$ " (1.5 cm) long. File the cut ends. File lightly and toward the center from each side. Be careful, or the wires will move out of place and it will be difficult to get them back where they belong.



Figure 48
Wires tucked in.
One remaining
loop.

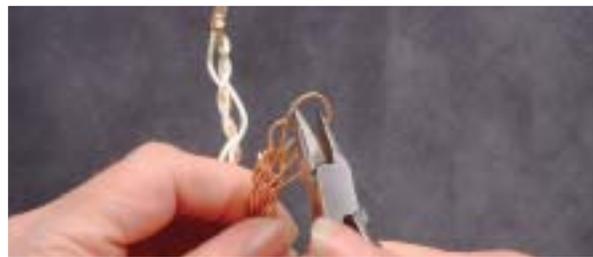


Figure 49
Widening the
catch with
needle-nose
pliers.



Figure 50
The widened
catch.



Figure 51
Be creative!
This is the front
side of the
bracelet.



Figure 52
The back side
of the bracelet
with the new
wrap on the left.



Figure 53
Cutting the
wires.

Figure 54

Place the pliers about halfway between the wrap and the cut ends.

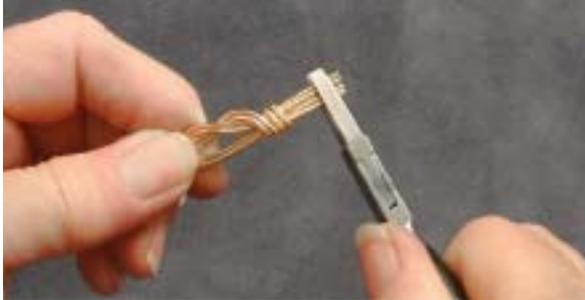


Figure 55

Bend the wires slowly.



Figure 56

Bend a little on the right and a little on the left.



Figure 57

The finished clasp.



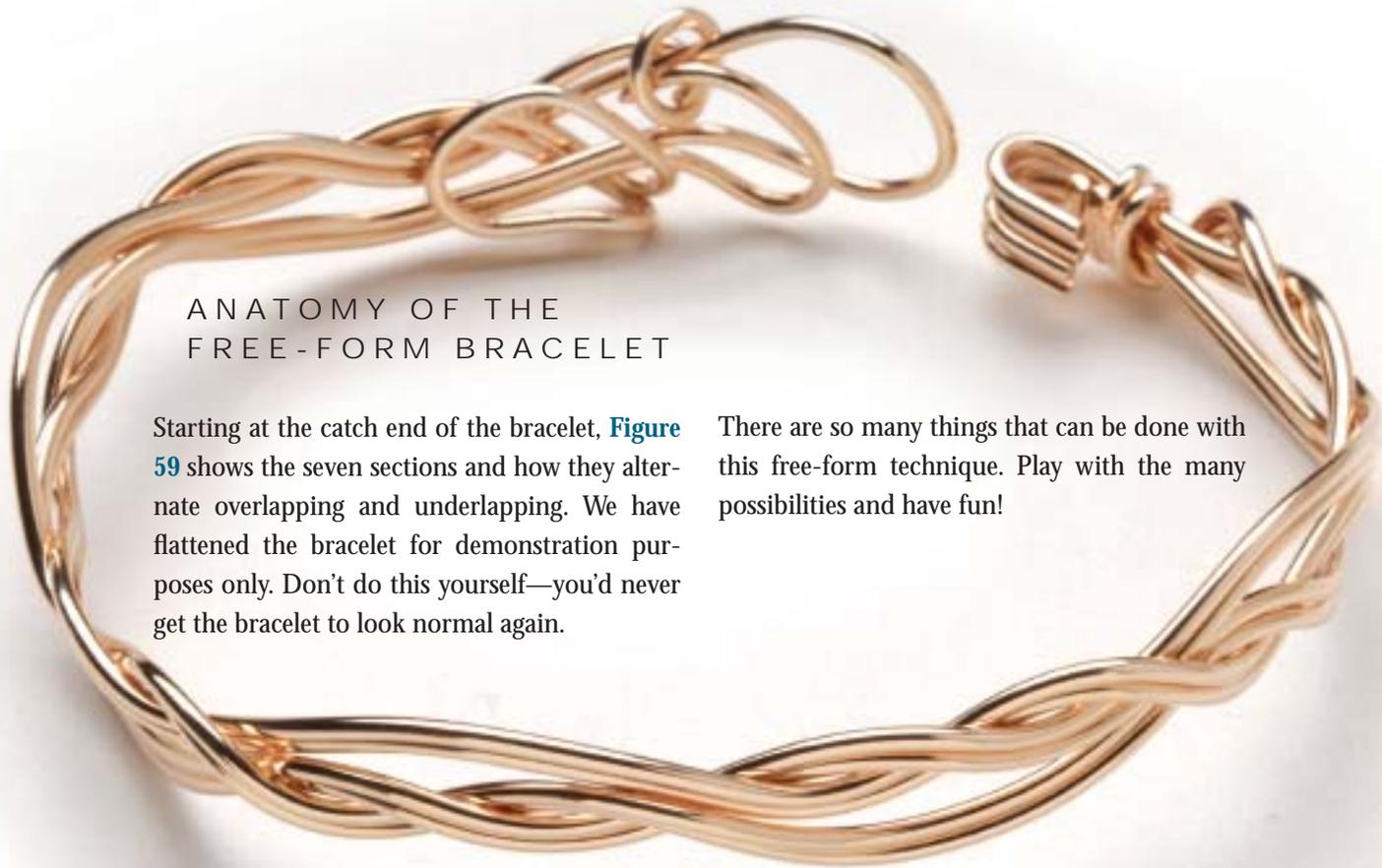
Figure 58

Bracelet formed into a smooth oval, catch and clasp joined.



Place either flat-nose or chain-nose pliers about halfway between the wrap and the cut ends and bend the four wires into a hook-shaped clasp (**Figure 54**). *Work slowly.* If you bend the wires down from just one side, the clasp will be crooked. Bend the wires down from the left side a little (**Figure 55**), then reposition the pliers on the right side and bend down a little more (**Figure 56**). Work back and forth until the wires form an even clasp (**Figure 57**).

Pull and form the bracelet until it is a smooth, oval shape. **Figure 58** shows the completed bracelet. For a nice finish, put the bracelet in the tumbler for several hours or overnight.



ANATOMY OF THE FREE-FORM BRACELET

Starting at the catch end of the bracelet, **Figure 59** shows the seven sections and how they alternate overlapping and underlapping. We have flattened the bracelet for demonstration purposes only. Don't do this yourself—you'd never get the bracelet to look normal again.

There are so many things that can be done with this free-form technique. Play with the many possibilities and have fun!

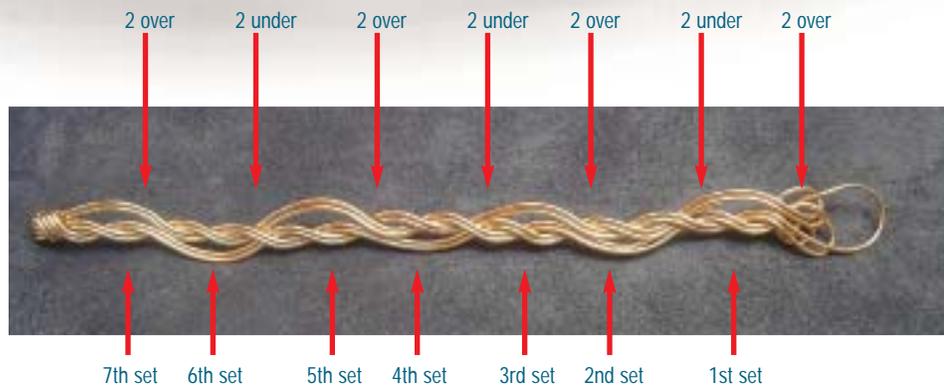
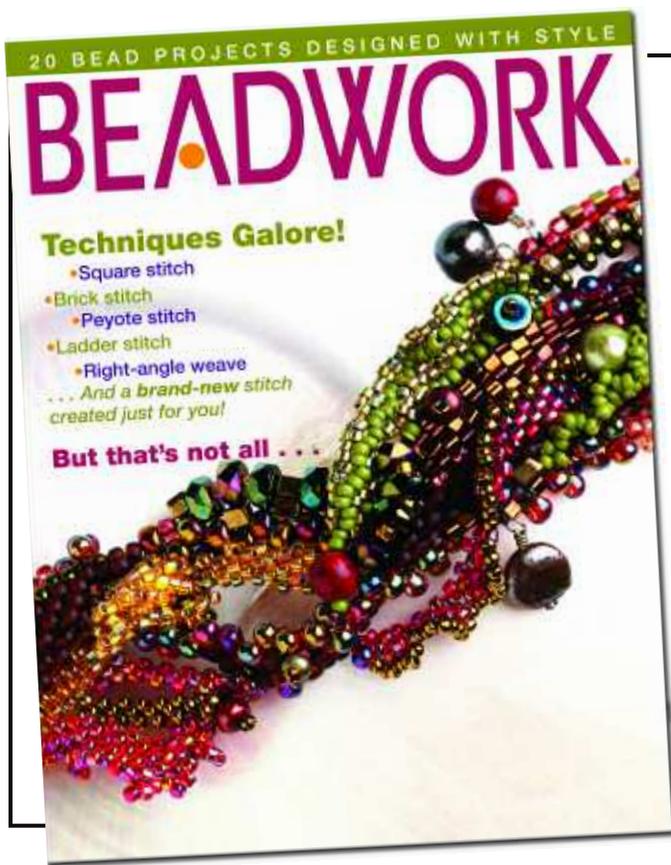


Figure 59
The sets and how they over- and under-lap.



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