

Handy Tips for Starting a Beading Group

By Karen Gibson-Brown

We can guarantee that at every bead show, the following questions will be asked:



Where is my nearest bead group?



Are there any bead classes close by?



Are there any tutors close by?

The Guild provides an annual Groups & Classes listing in the July Journal each year, which lists all groups, clubs and tutors that we are aware of at time of printing. This is a copy of the details that are available to all visitors to the Guild website: www.beadworkersguild.org.uk.

But what if there isn't a group or club close by? What to do next? Well, how about starting one? It really doesn't have to be as daunting as it sounds. Just follow these handy tips and you'll be surrounded by like-minded people in no time at all.

Decide on the size of group or club

Firstly, decide on whether you want to be part of a larger beading community or whether you want to keep it to just a few close beading friends, who meet on a regular basis.

If you don't want to pay room or hall hire you could:



Take turns in hosting a house group each week and set a minimum weekly fee to cover the cost of refreshments.



If there is a bead shop close by, ask if they have any space you could use for regular group meetings.



Visit your local Hobbycraft, as they usually don't charge for use of their in-store crafting area.



Some of the large Tesco Extra stores have community meeting rooms that can be used for free.

If you are thinking on a slightly larger scale and wish to be part of a bigger beading community, you could still start small and then expand as numbers increase. This will allow time for your group to become established, before having to advertise for further members.

As your group or club grows, so will the required size of premises, so you might want to explore the following:



Village halls or community centres



Local museums, schools, colleges or libraries



Golf Clubs, sports centres, gyms or other private clubs



Hotels



Offices that offer day rentals on a weekly or monthly basis

What type of group or club do you want to be?

Some groups and clubs enjoy just the social side of beading, meeting regularly to chat and swap ideas and do their own thing, keeping it low key. Other groups and clubs however, like to spread their wings a little further and get involved with Guild Group Challenges, trips to bead shows/fairs, in-house workshops and inviting outside tutors to teach workshops. Some group or club members also very kindly offer help on the BWG stand at events within their areas too.

Setting group or club fees

Once you know how many members you have and where you want to be, work out a cost per meeting to cover rental and refreshments etc. Once you are established and have a lot more people attending regularly, you can then consider either reducing the fees or saving towards other expenses such as guest tutors.

If you do wish to invite external tutors, you may need to think about quarterly, six monthly or annual subscription to build up a fund to cover the

costs. However, you may wish to set the fee and get the group or club established for a year to see how things are going, before plunging into additional costs of a tutor.

Another thing to consider is a visitor's fee. You could charge a different fee for ad-hoc visitors to the group from that of the usual fee, e.g. £3 for members and £5 for non-members. This makes the group or club more exclusive for its regular users.

How to choose a group or club name and logo

It would be wise to choose a name early on, so think about where you are located, what you are about, e.g. social beading, or tie it in with the name of the venue. However, that could change down the line, so you may need to give that option further consideration. You may wish to choose the name before you build the group or wait until you have a group of people to join you and then decide upon a name together. You can also decide whether or not you want a logo that can be used in future advertising and promotions. Once you have your new identity, you are set to go.

Setting up group insurance

As your group or club grows you will need to consider insurance to cover you for Public Liability and this may be a requirement of the venue you use. The Guild's policy allows for groups or clubs to be covered for up to £5,000,000 at a named venue (or multiple venues where required), plus also for theft of pieces in the event of an exhibition/event at that venue.

For a group or club to be covered under the Guild's policy, the organiser must be a BWG member. The cost is very competitive at £1.50 per person per year, with the year running from late January and a minimum payment of £10.

For any queries relating to group insurance, please see contact details on p2 of the Journal or on our website.

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Promoting your group or club

Firstly, finding your first set of members in any new area is easy. When you join the Guild, you are asked if you are happy for your details to be available to other members, and if so your name is added to the Member's Directory. The list is broken down into counties and is available to all members upon request by contacting enquiries@beadworkersguild.org.uk.

There are a couple of things you may wish to consider before requesting a list:



If you only want to meet for a couple of hours a week or bi-weekly keep the search to a 10 - 15 mile radius, as people may not want to travel any further on a regular basis.



If you wish to meet monthly and for a longer time span, e.g. 10.00am - 3.00pm, set the search a little wider, as people will travel further for a day out.

Next you need to contact them directly:



Set up an email address using your group/club name: e.g. a1beadclub@gmail.com.



Create a mass mailing to advertise your group or club, making sure to provide your full contact details. It is always best when emailing a large group to add the recipient's addresses to 'BCC' rather than 'To' or 'CC', that way you protect recipient's privacy, stop the annoyance of everyone receiving responses to your email and protect them against spam. Just copy and paste all email addresses to the 'BCC' box and put your own email address in the 'To' box. If you can't find a 'BCC' option in your email settings, search online for help.



Go online and search the local papers for their 'What's On' columns, for each of the areas you are contacting. Using your new club logo and club contact details, use as much free advertising as possible to get your name known.



Use Social Media to tell your beady friends about your new venture; it's amazing how quickly news spreads.



Go to the Beading Groups & Classes page on the BWG website and use the form provided to give the Guild details of your group, which will then be shared on the website, in the Journal & Newsletter and in the yearly groups insert.

You might also consider ongoing promotions, both in-house and externally:



Choose a particular time of year to launch or promote your group or club, such as International Beading Week and make use of all the freebies on the IBW website to help promote your group or club.



Set up an exhibition of work or a fundraiser and invite a reporter from a local paper for extra exposure.



If there is a bead shop within your vicinity, ask them to help you promote your group or club by putting up a poster in their shop, promoting you on their social media, or even providing your group members with either a group discount code for shopping or free patterns, etc.



Ask suppliers to provide a gift you can offer as a prize draw or a raffle, to help either launch your group or for a fundraising day.



Organise open days offering simple projects for visitors to try before joining.



Download the stitch instruction sheets from the Guild's website to hand out as aides for beginners.



Make up some beginner starter packs and purchase some of the Tech Sheets from the Guild to help beginners get started.

Get creative and do some leg work

You may be in an area where people respond to visual advertising, such as posters and fliers, rather than social media.

Create a poster with key information of who, what, where, when and how to get in touch.

Hit the high street and ask all your local traders to put up a poster, either in-store if they have a community notice board, or on their staff notice boards if not, e.g. supermarkets, Post Offices, clothing stores, coffee shops.

Libraries, local churches, community centres, sports clubs, gyms, doctors surgeries, dentists, hospital waiting rooms, schools, colleges, etc., all have public notice boards.

All of the above requires enthusiasm, energy and organisational skills. If you don't feel you can handle it all yourself, then delegate some of the more basic tasks to a couple of key people within your group or club to assist with collecting club fees, the refreshments, ongoing promotions etc. This will free up your time to help and nurture your new members. Then, once people become more confident and after their beading skills grow, they too can help others with the most basic of stitches.

We hope these hints and tips will help you to get your ideas of a new group or club off the ground.

Happy Beading!