

# A BASIC, ALMOST-FOOLPROOF METHOD FOR WORKING WITH PRESSES WITHOUT GOING TOTALLY BONKERS

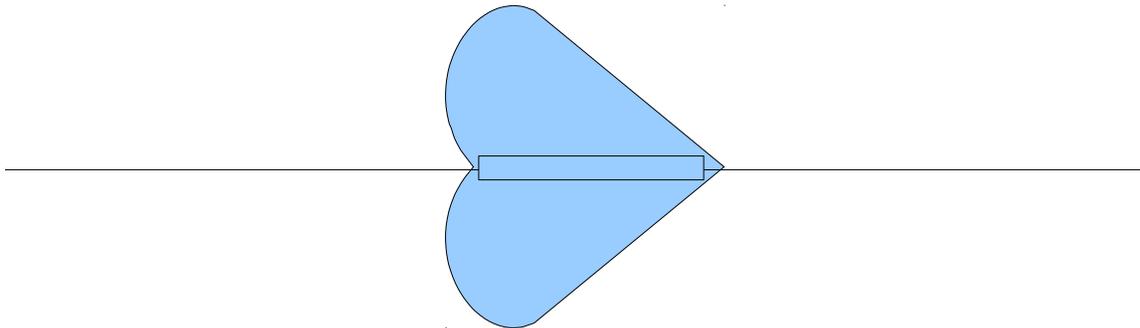
**Basic Principle:** Be mindful & intentional and work patiently.

**Premise:** Don't get buffaloed by all the different instructions. Fundamentally, all presses begin with the same step if you want a good result.

**Disclaimer 1:** Everyone who works with presses successfully will have developed a method that works for them. Their advice may conflict with mine. Take what works for you from all sources and ignore the rest. Yes, this conflicts with the Premise above. Deal with it.

**Disclaimer 2:** For many of you everything in this handout will be a) obvious and b) old hat--"Cow says moo." Feel free to file this handout in the circular file.

**STEP ONE:** No matter the shape of your press, start with a thin tube, with nice ends. The tube should be approximately 1 to 1.5mm shorter than the press's width. Lay your mandrel periodically in the press to see how much more you need to go. When you are satisfied, marver your glass into a nice smooth thin tube with good ends.



**Tips:** 1) Do not start with a lot of glass. Do not start with a football, or a cone, or a fat tube. Start with a thin tube. Period. I mean it. 2) Be **mindful** when you begin to work with a press for the first time. Pay attention to how many wraps it takes **you** to create a tube of the right length for that press. After a while you will just "know" how many wraps to use, However, don't get complacent. It is always easier to add glass than to remove it. 3) Work lightly. If you find that your bead release is flaking, work more gently or change your release.

**STEP TWO:** Now start building up your glass, generally in a shape that makes intuitive sense for your press. A lenticle will do well with a football shape, while a square press will work with a cylinder. Irregular presses will use cones, bicones, etc. **STOP before you think you have enough.**

**Tips:** 1) Be mindful--pay attention to how you are building up the glass, so you will learn what works, what doesn't, and how much glass to use. 2) And work slowly patiently. Many presses require a lot less glass than you think! If you aren't sure whether you have enough, STOP and skip to the next step.

**STEP THREE:** Working lightly and quickly, lay your mandrel in the bottom of the press and let gravity make the glass flow into shape. Your glass should be hot but not drippy. Flip and let gravity shape the other side of the bead. Do not use the top part of the press at this stage. Assess—do you have enough glass? Too little or too much? Go back to Step two and add glass, or use haemostats to remove some, if possible.

**Tips:** 1) You know it .... be mindful! Be aware of how much glass you added. And pay attention to what's going on on the ends of your beads. 2) Blow on your press to remove any flaked bead release, or keep an old paintbrush on your worktable. 3) Curved-nose haemostats work beautifully for removing excess glass.

**STEP FOUR:** Reheat your bead carefully—remember, evenly hot but not drippy. Put your bead in the press. This time, use the top and press very lightly. If you feel resistance because you have too much glass, back off. If you accidentally squish a little glass over your mandrel end, take a small scraper and pat it back into place.

**Tips:** 1) Make sure your press top and bottom aligns properly! Zozii tools have a handy dandy scribed Z, and Cattwalk tools use that lovely tool base.

**STEP FIVE:** From here out it is patience and tweaking—lather, rinse, and repeat. You may have to press four or five times to get the result you want. You can use your press as a marver to move glass from the middle to the ends by spot-heating and rocking the press top over your bead in the direction you want the glass to go. You may have to spot heat other areas to smooth out the glass. Always pay attention to your ends!

**STEP SIX:** When you are satisfied (or when the bead is as good as it is gonna get), polish out the chill marks, put your bead in the kiln or decorate it, and start over.

## A NOTE ON BEAD RELEASE

Your bead release will eventually flake—another reason to work slowly and mindfully. You can minimize flakiness and problems by working with newly or very recently air-dried release. You may be able to work with mandrels that you dipped in release a week ago, but I would work lightly with a basic shape and be prepared for lots of flaking and water-jar frit. Be mindful about your bead release brand. I change my release depending on the weather! Best Bead Release is my go-to release for summer humidity, and a mix of Foster Fire and Blue Sludge gets me to my happy pressing place when the weather is cold. As always, YMMV.

### Random Tips and Suggestions:

- ★ Start with a base of transparent glass, not soupy Moretti ivory. If you want an ivory bead, practice first or use a transparent core.
- ★ If you are going to add frit, stop adding base glass when your bead is a hair too small.
- ★ If you are going to add melted-in stringer, twisties, etc, stop when your bead is at least 1mm too small. Remember, YMMV depending on the twistie size.
- ★ Have a backup plan for the bead. Fish, funky-cut beads, plain tubes or focals ... all can get their start from a pressed bead that didn't cooperate.
- ★ Take it slowly, be mindful, be ready to laugh at yourself (after you vent) and have fun!