

# Bead Pick-up Wand DIY

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Like most makers, I occasionally browse the crafting videos on line, and I noticed several folks using a bead pick-up tool for working with small trims.

At first I couldn't figure how the thing worked: the beads seemed to cling lightly and release easily once they were placed. I could readily see how handy such a tool would be for my own craft projects, but first I wanted to know how it worked.



A bit of research gave me the answer: the tool is basically a stylus tipped with sticky wax. Aha! I know that stuff. It's the sort of thing that museums use for keeping artifacts in place firmly but temporarily, without damaging the item or the surface.



It seems that almost everybody needs such a thing at one time or another, evidenced by how many products there are on the market that serve the same function.



For example, sticky wax is sold, under various brand names, as an aid for securing candles in their holders.

Florists too have their own version, handy for securing flower arrangements in a vase.



Most everyone has used one of the brands of stick-tack, to hold posters temporarily on the wall.



Securing objects in place is also one of the uses of plasticine, as I learned from a product photographer I know.





And here's a free source, if you like cheese: that red stuff on the outside of Babybels is actually the same sticky wax that museums use to secure fragile items for display. Its only potential drawback is its red colour, which conceivably could stain some objects or surfaces. (Just to be clear, I've personally never had an issue with

staining, though I often use this wax to keep Christmas decor items safe from Scampers).

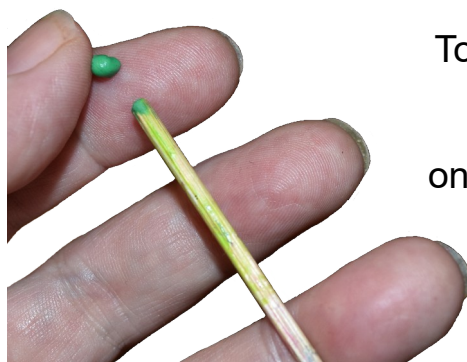


So: what about those pick-up tools?

For starters, they aren't terribly expensive – around \$10-\$15 or so – but once I realized how they work, it didn't make much sense to buy one when I already have all the necessary bits on hand to make my own simple version.

My first task was to select a handle for my home-made pick-up tool. I considered using an exhausted ballpoint pen, but then decided I wanted something less bulky, to make it easier to see exactly where I'm placing the beads. Bamboo skewers are just the right slender size. They are readily available, cheap, and easy to obtain, and I have lots of them around here.

For the sticky tip, I have quite a few choices, since I also have a supply of stick-tack, plasticine, sticky wax, and floral adhesive. I decided to try each of them to see which will work best.



To make the pick-up tool itself was ever so simple: all I did was to press a tiny ball of my chosen adhesive material onto the end of the skewer. Doesn't get much easier than that.

For my test cases, I made four different pick-up tools, using stick-tack (mounting putty), plasticine (modeling clay), sticky wax (museum putty), and floral adhesive (floral clay).

Although each of these materials successfully picked up my sample bead, and any of them would work for this task, I found that I preferred two of them.

First up is poster mounting putty (stick-tack). It holds well for putting up posters, but it turned out to be only so-so for my bead pick-up wand. The bead did cling, sort of, but I feared that it might let go before I got it positioned on my project. For that reason, I'll probably go with one of the other options, since I think I'd need something with just a bit more stick-to-itiveness.



Next is the plasticine. Once again, while it did adhere well enough to pick up the bead, I found the hold to be somewhat weak and uncertain, and wasn't confident that the bead would hold until I got it placed. In a couple of my trials, it didn't. So I'll likely set the plasticine aside too.



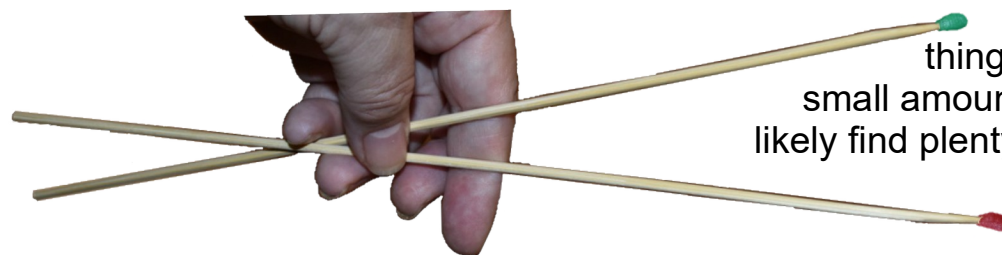
My third trial was sticky wax (candle stickum, museum putty, or the red wax from the Baby Bels). Now we're talkin': with only a light touch of the wand, the bead stayed put until I placed it on my project. It's a keeper.



Last on my list is the floral adhesive (also sold as floral stick clay or floral putty). Like the wax, this stuff is nicely sticky, so it takes only the lightest touch of the wand to hold the sequin or bead until you've placed it where you want it on the project, and it's unlikely to fall off the skewer before you're ready.



The results of my test were more or less as I anticipated: the sticky wax and the floral adhesive were better for this purpose than the plasticine and stick-tack, so I will use one or the other of them to make my wand. If you're looking to purchase one of these products, search museum putty, sticky clay, or candle adhesive; they're all



pretty much the same thing. The wand takes only a small amount of clay/wax, but you'll likely find plenty more uses for it in your crafts and decorating.

As for the skewer, it's an ideal handle – long and thin enough to let you see exactly where you're placing the beads, for greater accuracy. And, should you break it accidentally, it's easy to replace.

Now I can't wait to use my new bead pick-up wand on my next sequined project!