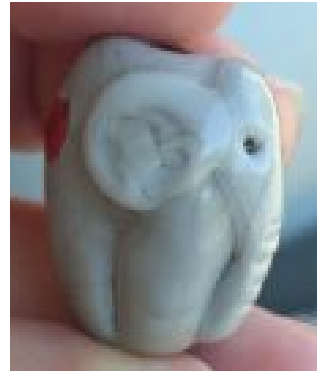


Sturdy Elephant Bead

Suitable for Beads of Courage

*Adaptable to many 4-legged creatures!

By Eileen Robbins



Supplies:

Glass:

Elephant color - rod and a thick stringer if you prefer for the smaller details. (I used Effetre Light Grey because I had some)

Clear: Optional, to make a clear core for a stiffer body, or save colored glass

Black stringer: 1-2mm or size you want "eye" to be, or other glass to make different eye, your choice

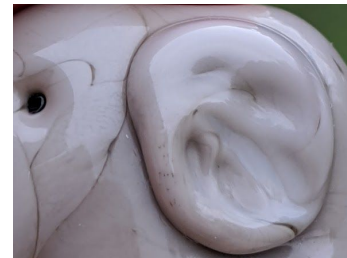
Tools:

Marver for shaping

Mashers

Some type of sharp blade to make leg grooves: a knife or a razor tool for example

A tool to press texture in the elephant's ears to shape. There are a variety of things you could use to press the ear flat and then make creases in the ear so it looks more like an elephant ear. If nothing else, you could press the skinny part of some needle nose pliers into service; anything to make a soft indent, as shown in this photo. Maybe a marver's edge corner, a dental tool, or handle of a stainless steel spoon, experiment!



Hand tools to manipulate glass as needed (ex: I like a brass punch to press the ear dots down because I like to leave a little ridge at the top.)

Steps: (photos are from a few different elephant beads)

I usually use a clear base to give the body a bit more stiffness in the flame, as well as to stretch my opaque rod color. You may want to try that, or just use your elephant color, your choice. The entire outside of the bead should be the color of your elephant.



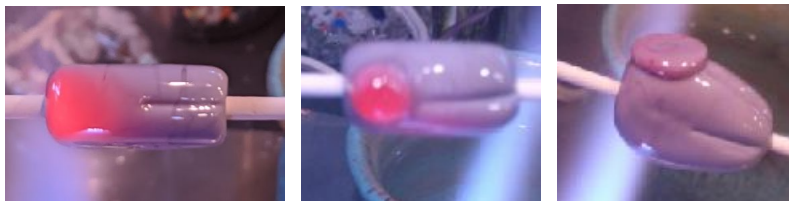
On a 3/32 mandrel, wind on your base glass and shape as a modified tube, wider at top, a little narrower at bottom. Make the narrow end flat on the end, that will be the bottom of the feet. Leave the other end (top of elephant) a little rounded to get the rump shape.

When you have the shape and nice ends, use mashers or press the bead down on a marver to flatten both sides, but don't make it too skinny. Remember the edges will be used for the elephant's face and behind.

Legs: Heating one area at a time, use your sharp blade tool to make a nice indent in the bottom half of the bead in all four sides to make "legs". They may not show much in the front when finished, but it helps orient the head and trunk. The sides look nice with a little line pressed in at the top of the leg crease to represent the belly, kind of like a capital letter T (making the horizontal part of the T into a curve, like a smile, looks good too!) This photo does not show that, but there are photos of other beads with it at the end of the tutorial.



Face: Heat a ball of glass to a good size, about large pea size depending on your elephant's size. At the same time heat the front of the elephant's head area to a glow while keeping the gather nice and warm. Touch the hot gather to the heated "face" area, and hold it there for 2-3 seconds to bond with the base bead. After the hesitation, pull away from the base and flame-cut off the rod, leaving a large, wide based "dot" of glass. Having the soft glow where you put the hot glass helps to solidly fuse the connection. Press the hot mound gently with marver. Remember to warm the bead! (see photos below)



Next, gently smooth and press the ball with a small marver or other tool to the top and sides to shape the face the way you like it. Warm the bead!

On to the trunk! Heat the rod to get a large pea sized gather, and at the same time, heat the bottom center of the face shape and continue down the crease you made earlier between the front legs, bringing that area to a glow. Put some heat in the crease on each side of the trunk, to fuse it to the body. You can also refine the shape if needed, now or later.

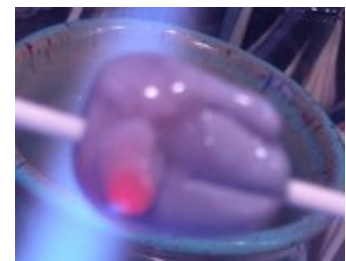
(In the 1st photo with the just added trunk, I had his “rump” too squared off, and ended up rounding it more later before I added his tail.) After fusing it better, and finishing the ears, tail, etc, I shaped it with a tool a bit to finish things off.

Touch the glowing glass on the rod to the heated place on the bottom of the face, and hold 2 or 3 seconds to allow the glass to meld, then slowly stretch and pull down the heated legs toward the feet, and flame cut. You want to move at a slow enough speed to keep the glass thick enough to be the trunk of the elephant. Heat the juncture of face and trunk just enough to make the top of the “trunk” merge into the face glass if needed. Heat the rest of the trunk as needed so it adheres to the body of the elephant. You can use your sharp blade to redefine the trunk if needed, but you want it attached to the body very securely. The heat in the bead shown is off the mark a bit, as I was trying to take a picture and heat the bead at the same time.



Warm the bead!

Ears next: Heat the rod to make a ball (pea sized or so depending on your elephant's size), and also heat the side of the head near the edge of the face. Touch the ball to bead at your heated “target”. You can swipe back a little, etc. to vary the shape some if you want. Press down, wait, pull away and flame cut off your rod. Heat gently and press with a punch or other tool, but not too flat. You will shape more later. Do the other side the same way.



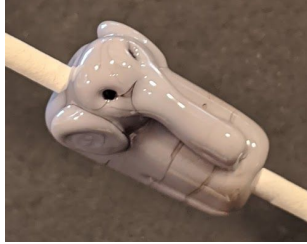
Warm the bead!

You want him warm and happy so he won't crack when you return later to add detail.

(fuzzy pic, sorry!)

Now the eyes, made with medium stringer:

I usually add the eyes now. Heat the eye area to a nice glow, so the glass is a little soft. Plunge the stringer in and wait until it cools a bit (blow on it if you want, but don't burn your lips!) and then break off the stringer when the face has firmed up enough.



(If you are not doing the plunge type eyes, you might want to wait to do the eyes until later, so you don't melt them in while you finish the ears ... try it both ways to see what works best for you)

Warm the bead!

Finish shaping ears:

Now you're going to create the texture on the ear. Heat one ear to a soft glow - don't get it too hot or it will melt in. Using a tool of your choosing, and starting at the top of the ear, create lines in a soft arc that radiate from the front of the ear out toward the edge.

Don't dawdle, or the ear will firm up before you finish. If that happens, gently warm the area not finished and continue. *Warm the bead!!*

Do the other ear the same way. The shape doesn't have to be exactly the same, the elephant's ears move and flap, etc. We want them to stay melded to the body for the most part though, so they are safe for the kids to handle and to go in bead bags without high risk of breaking. Try making them go up a little, or more round or some other natural shape.



Experiment!

Warm the Bead!!!

(In this photo, you can see the eye socket depression made by plunging the stringer. Also, it looks like the bottom edge of the ear has a crack, but that is only a color variation, not a crack!)

The Tail and finishing up:

Reheat the back and upper leg crease, and redefine if needed. Add a heart or other decoration if you like. Heat the spot where you want to put the tail to a soft glow, as well as the end of the opaque rod. Touch them together, allow to fuse, and pull down a small tail - not too thick, adhering to the heated area. Flame cut off the rod. The tail shouldn't be too long, as elephants have small skinny tails with just a bit of hair at the end.

Warm the bead, being careful to not melt in your ears, trunk, tail, etc. Heat the back of the rear legs gently, just enough to make some creases in the back of the knees. Heat the trunk gently and make some creases in the trunk. Check it out, see if you want to do anything else.



One day, I am going to try one with just a small bit of light ivory or white glass where the tusks would go - not sticking out too far, just short raised dots with no undercuts. That way they won't break off easily, similar to the horns on the brown bull in the photos at the end.

For anyone at the beginning of their glass journey: Undercuts mean the glass is sitting on the surface, not firmly fused to the underlying glass. Raised pieces should be

fused on like a marshmallow, or like half a grape with the cut side down, with the base flat and not smaller than the diameter of the dot. There should be a smooth, fused together transition between the base and the raised part. See the nice fat raised horns on the bull on the last page. Raised glass (horns, ears, dots - or any decorative protruding glass) should be securely attached and very durable when making beads for Beads of Courage.

Warm it nicely and stick it in the kiln!

Now figure out what other 4-legged animals could be made with a few alterations!

NOTES! You may find that it works best for your working style to do things in a different order. Play with it and see what works best for you, have fun, and stick in a bunch of good wishes and love for the kids as you do it! ;-)



